PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Originally this work was sponsored by the Pakistan Historical Society. Now it is published by the PAKISTAN PUBLISHING HOUSE, Pakistan chowk, Karachi-1.
Social and Cultural History of Bengal

Vol. I

(1201–1576)

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M.A. Ph.D. (London)

Reader in History

University of Karachi

PAKISTAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
30, New Karachi Cooperative
Housing Society
Karachi-5
1963
DEDICATED

to

DR. MAHMUD HUSAIN

IN ADMIRATION OF HIM AS A MAN, COLLEAGUE,
SCHOLAR AND EDUCATIONIST
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PREFACE

History is the mirror of life and measure of its performances. It reflects human life in all its passing phases and evaluates its works through ages. History unfolds the great romance of human experiences in the past. It is through this mirror that a people can know themselves and also guide themselves properly. But only a perfect mirror can serve this great function. A fuller study of history only can provide a true mirror for a faithful reflection of life.

Until recently, the study of history, particularly of the Muslims of Indo-Pakistan, was imperfect and partial. It centred round the kings and a few personalities and the great human drama of the vast mass of the people received little attention. There are however the signs of a slow change-over from the study of personalities to the peoples' history. The trend to this shift may be said to have begun with Dr. K.M. Ashraf’s work, "The Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan." Dr. I. H. Qureshi’s monumental work, "The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent", is a land-mark in this quest for a history of the people. With its publication there is a stir among scholars to unravel the great social and cultural romance of the Muslim people during centuries. It is really refreshing that the interesting field of the development of the society as a whole and the growth of the social and cultural institutions of the Muslims of this subcontinent are engaging the attention of our scholars.

If some attention has been paid to a fuller study of the history of this subcontinent, the provincial histories have long since remained almost neglected. To understand fully the history of the Muslims of this land, a study of the history of the provinces is of vital importance. Of all the provinces of Indo-Pakistan,
Bengal played a distinctive role of its own for several centuries, favoured by some natural peculiarities and circumstances. Because of this fact, an investigation into the social and cultural development of the people of Bengal is a paramount necessity. For the Hindu period in this province, there are some works which provide a full picture of the people of the time. These are, *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, published by the University of Dacca, and *Bengalir Itihasha* compiled by Nihar Ray. Some works have been done on political life in the Muslim period. *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, published by the University of Dacca, is a significant work in this field. But no research work of significance on the social and cultural life of Muslim Bengal has been compiled until now. There has been of course an attempt by Dr. A. Karim in his book, "Social History of the Muslims in Bengal"; but it is more a political narrative than a social history.

I felt an attraction for this field of social and cultural history of Bengal when I was serving as a lecturer at the University of Dacca and I began collecting material and contributing articles on aspects related to this subject ever since 1949. While preparing my Ph. D. thesis at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1952-54 on the *History of the Afghans in India*, with especial reference to their relations with the Mughuls (1545-1681), I collected, at the same time, much material from the British Museum and the India Office Library for the 'Social and Cultural History of Bengal'. After my return from London in 1954, I continued my interest and investigation in this field and took several trips from Karachi to Dacca and Calcutta in the summer vacations to collect materials.

In 1959 the Pakistan Historical Society accepted a project to compile the History of the Muslim People of Indo-Pakistan in several volumes. At that time it planned to have a research work on the Social and Cultural History of Muslim Bengal and this work was assigned to me. The Society financed my trips to the libraries of East-Pakistan and Calcutta in 1960 in connection with this research work.
I have projected two volumes for the Social and Cultural History of Bengal during Muslim period. Volume I begins from A.D. 1201 and comes down to 1576. Volume II will cover the period from A.D. 1576 to 1757. The present work, volume I, is a study of the origin and the development of the Muslims in several significant aspects of their life in Bengal. An investigation has been made of their social life and socio-cultural institutions in the period. Due notice has been taken of the interaction of Islam and Hinduism. Although this work is mainly on the Muslims, sufficient reference has however been made of the development of the Hindus as well as their social, cultural and religious life and institutions. The geography of Bengal has been reviewed and its influence on the political, social and economic life has been assessed. Cognisance has been taken of the military and economic life of the province during the period under review.

In the preparation of this work, I received encouragement from Mr. Fazlur Rahman, the President of the Pakistan Historical Society, and also from Dr. S. Moinul Haq, the Director of Research and General Secretary of the Society. I am indebted to Dr. Haq for his valuable advice in many controversial issues in this field, particularly for his suggestion for the inclusion of a chapter on the Development of the Art of Warfare in Bengal. Great indeed is my debt to Dr. A. Halim, Professor and Head of the Department of History, University of Dacca. He assiduously went through the pages of the manuscript copy of this work and enlightened many obscure and unknown points for me. With his wide range of study, Dr. Halim made also significant additions and suggested substantial improvement in several chapters. His generous appreciation of this work encouraged me to submit it for publication and this also moved the Pakistan Historical Society to decide for its immediate print.

While feeling the urgency of its publication, the Pakistan Historical Society did not have adequate fund to meet the cost of its printing. At this time, The Asia Foundation, Karachi, came forward with a liberal grant of Rs. 5000/- to help its publication. But for this financial subsidy, the publication of this work would
have been long delayed. The Pakistan Historical Society and myself in particular record the deep sense of appreciation of The Asia Foundation's help and its Representative Dr. Curtis Farrar's interest in the research project.

In the printing I had to face several other problems. There is no press in Karachi fully equipped with materials for printing research work. Even a big press like The Times Press, which printed this book, is ill-equipped. Forced to print under these limitations, I had to abandon diacritical marks and Bengali compositions in many places. I however thank the Press people for their cooperation. I also thank my colleague Mr. S.A. Rahman for his help in preparing the index of this work.

University of Karachi

3. March. 1963

M. A. Rahim
TRANSLITERATION

In transliterating Arabic and Persian terms, the system of F. Steingass (Persian-English Dictionary, London 1930) has been followed.

![Transliteration table]

Vowel signs: short vowels—а, і, у; long vowels — ă, ļ, ĕ, о, ā.
ABBREVIATIONS

'Abbās — Tārikh-i-Sher Shāhi of 'Abbās Khān Sarwānī.

Ā‘īn — Ā‘īn-i-Akbarī of Abūl Faḍl.

A. N. — Akbarnāma of Abūl Faḍl.

Badāunī — Muntakhab al Tawārikh of Mūllā 'Abd al-Qādir Badāunī.

B. M. — British Museum.

B. P. P. — Bengal Past and Present.

Bahāristān — Bahāristān-i-Ghaybī of Mīrzā Nathan.

Barānī — Tārikh-i-Firuz Shāhi of Zīā al-Dīn Barānī.

Elliot — Elliot and Dowson’s History of India as told by its own Historians.

JASB — Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.


Tabaqāt — Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī of Niẓām al-Dīn Ahmad Bakhsī

Tūzuk — Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī.
INTRODUCTION

This work has aimed at presenting a picture of the society and culture of Bengal in the period, A.D. 1201-1576, with special reference to the development of the Muslim people. In view of the influence of geography on the life and history, the physical and natural characteristics and peculiarities of Bengal have been studied and an assessment has been made of their effects on the political, social and cultural life of its inhabitants. The natural features of the land have indeed been greatly responsible for a largely independent political career of Bengal for several centuries and also for the growth of distinctive social and cultural institutions among its people. The independent Sultanate in Bengal and the development of the Bengali language and literature testify to this fact. The geography of the land has left profound impression on the mind and body of the Bengali people. It has made them mystical and speculative in their life and thought. It has also conditioned their mode of living, dwelling, dress, food, etc.

In writing of the social life of the Muslims of Bengal, an investigation into the growth of the Muslim population forms an essential part of the study. While reviewing this important aspect of the Muslim society, due notice has been taken of the controversial issue of the origin of the Bengali Muslims. The disclosure of an unexpectedly large Muslim population in Bengal by the Census of 1872, 1881 and 1891 was a big surprise to the British administrators and they cut the ‘Gordian Knot’ of this puzzle, observing that the conversion of the mass of the Hindus of the lower strata accounted for the growth of the Muslim
majority in the province. This theory of Risley, which was conveniently accepted by the English and Hindu writers, has prevailed ever since. An honest attempt has been made to solve this question by a study of all contemporary records. It has yielded significant results, which have exploded the view of Risley and have exposed his mischievous notice of humiliating the Bengali Muslims. It has thus given the Muslim people of Bengal their rightful place in the social life of the country.

In the development of the Muslim society of Bengal, the shaikhs and 'ulama made substantial contribution by their missionary, educational and humanitarian works. They elevated the morals of the society, popularised their monastic cult among the masses and contributed to the spread of education and enlightenment. They also helped in creating a feeling of Muslim solidarity and were responsible for building a spiritual and intellectual heritage among the Muslims of the province. It is noteworthy that there was an animated intellectual awakening in Bengal during the Muslim rule. It was the time when a large number of Muslim scholars and divines shed their lustre and many illuminating seats of learning grew up in many places of Bengal. The renown of the Bengali Muslim divines and scholars spread far and wide and drew pupils from all parts of India. Several celebrated saints and scholars had their education under the Bengali teachers and preceptors in the seminaries of Bengal. There was also a remarkable progress of Arabic and Persian literatures and Islamic learning in this period.

Because of the influence of the shaikhs and 'ulama and their teachings, the Bengali Muslims of the time represented a highly developed spiritual, moral and intellectual life. They were deeply devoted to the faith, punctilious in the performance of religious rites and regular in their habits. The contemporary Hindu poets praised the devotion of their Muslim neighbours to their religion. The foreign travellers spoke very highly of the integrity of the character of the
Bengali Muslims. They recorded that the Muslims of Bengal were noted for their honesty and sincerity and they respected their plighted word even at a great loss to themselves.

The Muslim conquest was a great blessing to Bengal. It integrated the Bengali-speaking peoples into one politico-social union and laid the foundation of the history of Bangalah and the Bangalis. It was this great integration as well as the patronage of the Muslim rulers that stimulated the growth of the Bengali language and literature. Had there been no Muslim conquest of Bengal and the Hindu rule continued for some centuries more in this province, the Bengali language would have languished and remained a thing of the past, unnoticed and forgotten. Apart from this, the Muslims substantially enriched the Bengali literature by introducing in it a new tradition, themes, idiom and vocabularies from the prosperous Arabic and Persian literatures of the time.

It is also to be noted that the Muslims, who had a natural interest in all branches of knowledge, extended patronage to the study of Sanskrit. It was because of the enlightened atmosphere of the Muslim rule that Navadvip developed into a great centre of Sanskrit learning.

The Muslim rule offered scope to the Bengali people to display their genius in various walks of life. They showed their talent in literary and intellectual fields and made significant contribution to the progress of knowledge. The Muslim rule also opened before them an ample opportunity to exhibit their endurance and fighting qualities as well. The ambitions of the Muslim governors of Bengal to set up an independent rule in the province and to expand their territorial limits naturally brought them into conflicts with the Sultanate of Delhi and the neighbouring kingdoms of Orissa, Koch Bihar, Kamrup, Tripura and Arakan. Thus the Bengali soldiers fought battles against the forces of
Northern India and other kingdoms. In these warfare, they excelled as intelligent and clever fighters, and not only maintained their independence, but greatly extended the frontiers of Bengal so as to include Bihar, Orissa and other territories in the east, such as Kamrup and Tripura. Indeed their military distinction of that period belies the current notion that the Bengalis are unfit for military service.

The Muslim rule conferred immense benefit on the Hindu society. It produced a revolution in the social and intellectual life of the Hindus. It emancipated the degraded humanity from the social bondage, accorded equal treatment to all and opened equal opportunities for all classes of the people of that community. The mass of the Hindus now found scope for displaying their intellectual capabilities and improving their life. Being relieved of the Brahmanical tyranny because of the security insured by the Muslim rule, the lower class Hindus could now without the fear of damnation take to education and the study of their own religious subjects which were the exclusive monopoly of the priestly aristocracy in the pre-Muslim period. As a result, education reached the lower strata of the Hindu society and even the people of the class of barbers, washermen and others distinguished themselves in literary and intellectual pursuits. Even the lower class of Hindus could read their scriptures and understand their religion because of the blessings of the Muslim rule.

Clever and intelligent, the Kayasthas received the highest benefit under the new dispensation of the Muslim rule. They made rapid advance in the intellectual field, and by merit and attainments as well as devotion to the service occupied a status of respectability and influence in the State. The rise of the Kayasthas to a position of eminence in intellect, office, land and wealth is a remarkable feature of the Hindu society during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal.

With the Muslim conquest and settlement, there came
the ideas of their equality and brotherhood in Bengal. The simplicity of their religion, the equality of their social order and the decency in their way of life influenced the Hindu society and effected momentous changes in the socio-religious system of that community. Coming in contact with their Muslim neighbours, the Hindus appreciated the superior ideals of the life of their conquerors and adopted many of their ideas in their life. Thus there arose the worship of one God and the idea of a casteless society among the Hindus. The rise of the Dharma-Thakur Puja illustrates this fact. Again, many enlightened Hindus felt the necessity of preserving the Hindu society by reforming it on the lines of Islam. This feeling is expressed in Valmikiyam of Sri-Chaitanya of Navadvip. Chaitanya eliminated the caste distinctions and established the creed of love to one God, Vishnu. The Satya Pir or Satya Narain Puja also represents the Muslim influence on the Hindu society. The Darveshia cult which originated with Sanatan Goswami, a Hindu saint of Gaur, represented the Muslim influence. The followers of this cult wore tasbih-mala (beads), put on dhakeli like Muslim fazirs and sang songs with the name of Allah, Khuda and Muhammad.

In many other respects, the Hindu society reacted to the Muslim influence. The Muslim contact produced several conservative reform movements among the Brahmins. These aimed at maintaining the Kulinism or the integrity of the orthodox Brahmin society and saving it against the onrush of Muslim ideas and other external influence. With that end in view, Pandit Raghunandan and Nulo Panchanon advocated and carried through a scheme of reform to tighten the basis of orthodoxy by prescribing some rules regulating the life of the Brahmins. Datt Khan, Udayanacharya Bhaduri and Devibar Ghatac also reformed the Brahmin society on orthodox lines. They however had, to a certain extent, liberal approach to certain issues of social life. As for instance, the reformers of the school of Raghunandan and Nulo Panchanon declared a person as an out-caste from Kulinism on account of his contact with the Muslims. The
latter class of Brahmin reformers did not treat him so harshly. According to them, he was to form a distinct group in the Brahmin society with other persons of similar situations.

It is also to be noted that the Muslim contact led to the creation of several social groups among the Brahmins of Bengal. Because of association with the Muslims, many Brahmins fell from their kulinism and they formed a caste by themselves. Thus there arose the Sher Khāni Brahmins, the Pir'ali Brahmins and Srimant Khāni group of Brahmins in the Hindu society of the Muslim time.

There was also the general influence of the Muslims on the Hindus in culture, dress, food and other ways of life. The Hindu official and landed aristocracy imitated the example of their Muslim rulers in their formalities and etiquettes. They studied Persian, dressed like the Muslims, and modelled their court life on the pattern of the Muslim courts.

The Muslim rule conferred great benefit on the economic life of Bengal. The spirit of sea-faring and commercial enterprise which the Muslims brought to this province provided a great stimulus to the expansion of commerce and development of industries. The large volume of export trade on agricultural and manufactured goods accounted for the flow of gold and precious metals in Bengal and made it one of the wealthiest countries of the world. The contemporary foreign travellers and traders have spoken in glowing terms of the prosperity and wealth of Bengal in the Muslim time. The comparative absence of gold and silver coins in the Hindu period and their existence in large quantities during the Muslim rule is a great testimony to the remarkable economic progress of the Muslim Bengal. There was unusual abundance and cheapness of the necessaries of life in the province and in the words of the foreigners it 'was a land of all good things', 'the best place to live on the earth' and 'a paradise' in the earth. Because of abundance and cheapness, an ordinary person could have such sumptuous meals that would
excite the envy even of the present day middle class people of our country.

A study of the social life of Muslim Bengal is interesting and instructive. It unfolds the enormous benefits conferred by the Muslims on Bengal. It reveals the brilliant contributions of the Bengali Muslims to the spiritual, intellectual, cultural and economic life of this subcontinent. The ruling Muslims and the Bengali people are thus given the place to which they are entitled by virtue of their attainments and achievements.

Evaluation of Sources:

Fascinating indeed is the study of the social history; but its compilation is a tiresome task. While in research on a political problem, mass of compact materials are available, there is no such advantage in investigation into a social field. The historians and chroniclers were, and even now they are, mostly interested in discussing political history and chronicles in preference to the social, economic and cultural aspects of their issues. They wrote about the rulers, their courts, and political and military achievements. It is only incidentally that they referred to the social and economic life of the people. The materials for the reconstruction of social history are thus fragmentary and scattered here and there. It needs a very patient and diligent search to sift materials from the mass of the volumes for compiling a work on social life.

It should not however be thought that the materials for a social history of Bengal are meagre or inadequate. There are varieties of source materials for a research worker in this field; these substantially make up the deficiency of the contemporary chronicles. The records of the foreign geographers, travellers, traders and writers throw a flood of light on the socio-economic condition of Bengal of their time. The literatures of the period, such as Persian, Arabic and particularly Bengali, reflect the social life of Bengal
in the Muslim period. There are maktūbāt (letters) and malfūzāt (collection of utterances of the ṣūfīs) which give an insight into the spiritual and cultural life and throw interesting side-light on the social and economic conditions as well. The inscriptions, coins, archaeological findings etc., also supply valuable information for the compilation of social history. The Bengali folk literature to which the attention of scholars has recently been diverted would yield a lot of useful informations.

In view of the large number of contemporary works consulted in the preparation of the present thesis, it will be tiresome to discuss their merit individually. For the purpose of evaluating the source materials, these can however be conveniently classified into several categories and special reference may be made of a few of the important ones.

A. Persian histories and chronicles.
B. Persian and Arabic literatures.
C. Accounts of geographers and travellers.
D. Hagiological literature.
E. Bengali, Sanskrit and Hindi literatures.
F. Inscriptions, coins, etc.
G. Census and Statistical Reports.

A. Persian histories and chronicles:

In studying the source materials of the Persian histories and chronicles for the period under review, a few facts are to be borne in mind. Although the period is an extensive one, covering three centuries and three-fourth, the strictly contemporary works of this category are only a few in number. The Mughul period is particularly rich in the production of historical works and these supply a good deal of information about the Pre-Mughul Bengal. As the three generations of Mughul rule in this subcontinent is either contemporaneous with or nearer to the last century of the sovereign rulers of Bengal, the compilations of the time of the former may be treated as contemporary sources for the latter. Keeping in view the hisorical affinity of the works of this period and their chronological order, these
compilations may be broadly divided into two sections: (i) Pre-Mughul Sources and (ii) Early Mughul Sources. The following are a few of these well-known compilations.

(i) Pre-Mughul Sources:

Tabaqat-i-Nāṣirī  

Qīrān al-Saʿdān  
Amīr Khūṣrav.

Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī  
Zīā al-Dīn Barānī.

Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī  
Shams Sirāj Aštī.

Futūḥ al-Salāṭīn  
'Isāmī.

Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī  
Yahya bīn 'Abd al-Qādir Sirhindī.

Maliā 'sa'dān  
'Abd al-Razzaq.

Masālik al-Aḥyār  
Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī.

(ii) Early Mughul Sources:

Wāqīṭāt-i-Bāburī  
Zahir al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur Bādshāh.

Tāzkirāt al-Wāqīʿāt  
Jauhar Aftabchī.

Wāqīʿāt-i-Muṣhtaqī  
Rizq Allāh Muṣhtāqī.

Tārīkh-i-Humāyun  
Bāyazīd Biyāt.

Tārīkh-i-Sher Shāhī  
'Abbās Khān Sarwānī.

Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī  
Nichām al-Dīn Aḥmad Bakhshī.

Āʾīn-i-Akbarī  
'Allāmī Abūl Faḍl.

Muntakhab al-Tawārikh  
Mullā 'Abd al-Qādir Badāuṭī.

Rauḍat al-Tāhirīn  
Tāhir Muḥammad.

Tārīkh-i-Daudī  
'Abd Allāh.

Tārīkh-i-Salāṭīn-i-Afgānā  
Aḥmad Yadgār.

Makhtūn-i-Afgānā  
Ni'mat Allāh.

Tārīkh-i-Firīshṭā  
Abīl Qāsim Hindu Shāh Firīshṭā.

Tārīkh-i-Gujrāt  
'Abd Allāh Aḥmad bīn 'Umar al-Makki alīs Hājī Dabīr (1611).
Introduction

Tāzuk-i-Jahāngīrī ... Emperor Jahāngīr
Iqbālnāma-i-Jahāngīrī ... Mu’tamid Khān.
Bahāristān-i-Ghaybī ... Mirzā Nathan.
Ṣubh-i-Ṣādiq ... Muḥammad Ṣādiq.
Mīr’āt-i-Aḥmādī ... ’Alī Muḥammad Khān.
Mīr’āt-i-Sikandarī ... Sikandar Manjhū.

In order to have a proper appraisal of the sources, it would be useful to subdivide the contemporary histories and chronicles into three groups on the basis of the geographical affiliations of their authors. (1) A large number of them belonged to Delhi; (2) a few compilations were from other provinces or foreign countries; (3) several works were written in Bengal.

There are some noticeable features of the Delhi histories, giving accounts of Bengal. In discussing the history of this province, these histories generally represented an imperial outlook, and viewed its political life from the point of view of the sovereignty and interest of the Sultanate of Northern India. Indeed they treated this province as part of the Delhi Sultanate and very often disregarded the fact that it maintained an independent sway in its jurisdiction.

For instance, the Tārikh-i-Firūz Shāhī of Baranī as well as of Aṣḥaf conceal the fact that Sultan Firūz Shāh Tughlaq failed to suppress Sultan Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh. They give out that the Delhi Sultan, out of sympathy for the sufferings of the people in the fort of Ikdala, made peace with Ilyās Shāh on his promise to send tribute, and then retired from Bengal. But it appears from a Sanskrit verse attributed to Choda II of Kona dynasty ruling in the territory of Vizagapatam, probably a tributary to the Ganga rulers of Orissa, that he came to the help of the ruler of Pandua and defeated the Delhi Sultan. It is thought that Ilyās Shāh secured the help of the Ganga ruler of
Orissa and his vassal Choda II and with their help he forced Sultān Firūz Tughlaq and his army to leave the territory of Bengal. The Delhi contemporaries also refer to Sultān Sikandar Shāh as a rebel, although Bengal had been enjoying independent rule from the time of his father Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh. Akbarnāma and other Mughul histories condemn Sulaimān Karrānī and particularly his son Dāud Khān Karrānī as rebel against Emperor Akbar, in spite of the fact that Bengal was not a part of the Mughul Empire and it was yet to be conquered.

The accounts of the Delhi histories about the climate and health of Bengal, the social life and customs of its people, are in many cases full of inaccuracies, which expose their lack of personal knowledge and experience of the province. They have pictured Bengal as a hell and a prison-pit, full of pestilential climate. They also thought of the Bengalis as a people, who had strange customs and manners. The question is, if Bengal was a hell and as such uninhabitable, as some of these contemporaries would have us believe, then how could this province develop into the most populous part of this subcontinent? If its nature and climate caused epidemics throughout the year, then how should we account for the fact that Emperor Humāyūn gave the name of Jannatabād, or the Paradise, to Gaur, the capital of Bengal? It is to be noted that Emperor Humāyūn was so much fascinated by the beauties of Bengal that, while living here, he forgot the political problems of his empire in the north. Barani speaks of the quarrelsome nature of the Bengali people, by mentioning the province as a Balghak-khāna or the house of strife. According to Bābur’s estimate, the people of Bengal were noted for their submissiveness and meekness. Obviously the statement of one contradicts the other and these are inaccurate as well. Such inaccuracies of the Delhi histories are common and hence their evidence would need proper examination.
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Some of the Delhi historians, however, visited Bengal and thus acquired some personal knowledge of the province. Minhâj lived at Lakhnawti (Lakshmanavatī, Gaur) for two years (1242—1244) during the governorship of Malik Izz al-Dīn Tughrāl Tughrâ Khan and collected materials to compile Tabaqät-i-Naṣīrī. So, his description of the geography of Bengal and a few references about the people are particularly valuable. Amir Khusrau visited Lakhnawti twice. First he came in the train of Naṣīr al-Dīn Bughra Khan at the time of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban’s expedition in 1280. But he did not like to live in Bengal, which he termed as a prison-hole, although his patron, the Prince, remained at Lakhnawti as governor and his fellow poets and friends stayed at his court. Amir Khusrau’s unwillingness to stay in Bengal was caused by his homesickness. It also represents the natural aversion of the up-country people of the time to live in Bengal, because of their horrors of the climate of this province. But an examination will show that the climate of the province was not so bad as was imagined by the northern contemporaries and their horror of it was completely unfounded. Amir Khusrau, however, paid a second visit to Bengal in the retinue of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq in 1325. Another historian who had direct contact with this province was Bāyazīd Bīyāt, an attendant companion of Khān Khānān Mun’īm Khān. He lived here with his master until the latter’s death in 1575.

Though dealing primarily with political and military affairs, the Delhi historians have also made occasional references of the social and economic life of Bengal. So far as the economic life of this province is concerned, they appreciated its plenty and prosperity and regarded it as a fabulously rich country. They saw officers and even ordinary soldiers returning with immense gold and valuables to Northern India, after serving a year or so in Bengal. Their evidence, though based mostly on indirect sources, is however, confirmed by other contemporary accounts.
The histories compiled in other provinces and foreign countries are free from any political bias. But their authors did not possess personal knowledge of Bengal and their observations were necessarily based on indirect sources. Even then, on examination their informations are found to be true. Futūḥ al-Salāṭin of ‘Īsāml, compiled at the Bahmanī capital under the patronage of Sultān ‘Alā al-Dīn Ḥasan, and Māltā‘ Sa’dā’in of ‘Abd al-Razzaq supply some useful materials on the social life of the time. In Tārīkh-i-Firishta there are a few significant observations on the socio-economic life of Bengal. The Arabic History of Gujrat contains a few references which illuminate an important aspect of the religio-cultural life of this province in the fifteenth century. Although a late work for our period, its account has, however, been based on some earlier compilations which are not known to exist now. There are a few observations in Masālik al-Aḥsār, written in Persia by Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī; these reflect the fame of the Benga is in boat-making, sailing and sea-faring activities at that time.

No historical work is known to have been compiled in Bengal in the early period of the Muslim rule. If the contention that the Tārīkh-i-Dāudi of the Afgān historian ‘Abd Allāh was compiled at the court of Dāud Khān Karrant is accepted as a fact, then this could be treated as a contemporary work. Tārīkh-i-Salāṭin-i-Afgāna, also called Tārīkh-i-Shāhī, compiled by another Afgān historian Ahmad Yadgar, is considered to have been written in Bengal. These compilations have very little information on the social life of Bengal. Of special importance is Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi, a work composed by Mirzā Nathan, a petty officer in Emperor Jahāngīr’s army in Bengal. Although primarily a record of military campaigns in Bengal and against the petty kingdoms in the east during the reigns of Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān, Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi, proves also a valuable source for social history, if the stray observations in it are gleaned with careful investigation. Another important work was
compiled in Bengal in the time of Emperor Shāh Jahān. This was the Šubh-i-Šādiq written by Muḥammad Šādiq, a vastly learned and widely travelled man, who lived in Bengal from 1631 and completed his work in 1638. His work, which was dedicated to Prince Shujāʿ viceroy of Bengal, is an universal history with a chapter containing an account of the persons distinguished for their learning, scholarship and high official position in the province of Bengal.

A few other histories, such as Naubahār-i-Murshid Quli Khānī of Azād al-Ḥusaini, Muẓaffarnāmah of Karam 'All, Aḥwāl-i-Mahabat Jang of Yūsuf 'All, Tārīkh-i-Bangāla of Salīm Allāh, Siyar al-Mutakhirārin of Ghulām Ḥusain Ṭabaṭabai and Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn of Ghulām Ḥusain Salīm, were compiled in Bengal. These are all late works, written in the time of the Murshidabad Nawābs or in the early years of the British rule in this province. In many respects, their informations on the socio-cultural life of Bengal supplement the evidence of the contemporary sources.

B. Persian and Arabic Literatures :

A number of Arabic and Persian works, either original or translation, were compiled during the period of the Muslim rule in Bengal. Amritkand, a Sanskrit work on mysticism, was translated into Persian as well as Arabic. Maqāmāt, Nām-i-Ḥaq, Sharfnāmah, Hidayat-i-Rāmī and other compilations of scholars and poets represent the progress of learning and culture of the time. The significance of these works has been discussed in the chapter on Learning and Education.

C. Foreign Travellers and Geographers :

The records of the foreign travellers and geographers are of indispensable value in the reconstruction of the social history of Bengal. If the contemporary Muslim historians narrated principally the political affairs, the foreign geographers and travellers, most of whom were shrewd traders and measured their
experiences in terms of a profitable trade, were interested in recording about the ports and products of this province. Thus they have left a picture of the economic condition, an important aspect of the social history. Their records may not be accurate in all cases, because they visited only a few places and their stay was also very short. Nevertheless their accounts open a store-house of information which, when sifted with care, provide materials for laying down the structure of the economic life. These also reflect the conditions of the society of Bengal of that time. In estimating the records of the foreigners, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the socio-economic history of Bengal would have remained incomplete, if not blank, without their significant diaries.

The geographers were mostly Arabs and Persians, whose knowledge of Bengal was derived chiefly from indirect sources, particularly from their merchants. Our main interest in their accounts is that they supply information, though vague and confused at times, about the early Arab trade with some seaports of Bengal. The *Silsilah al-Tawārikh* of Sulaimān Tājir and Abū Zaid Sirāfī, *Kitāb al-Maṣālik* of Khurdādbeh, *Muruz al-Zahab* of Masūdī and *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq* of Idrisī are thus important for our study as they throw some light on early Arab connection with this province, a phase of the social life of Muslim Bengal that had remained obscure. The most remarkable are the accounts of Ibn Beṭṭūta and the Chinese envoys, who visited this land and noted many valuable information on the social and economic conditions of the people, for academic interests. The Moorish traveller, who lived in Bengal for a few months in 1345-46 A.D., has faithfully represented the state of plenty and the cheapness of the necessaries of life, he saw in the markets.

Several missions from the Chinese Emperor visited the Muslim court at Pandua in the early years of the fifteenth century, from 1406 to 1415. With the first Chinese embassy was attached a Muslim interpreter named Mahuan, who recorded many things
that were of attraction to him of the country, the people and of the Court. Based on the information of these Chinese missions to the Pandua Court, the Chinese authors compiled the following records on Bengal.

(i) Ying Yai Sheng lan, compiled by Mahuan between 1425 and 1432.
(ii) Sing Cha Sheng lan, compiled by Fei-Sin in 1432.
(iii) Sia Yang Ch’ao Kung tien lu, compiled by Huang Sing-ts’ eng in 1520 A. D.
(iv) Shu Yu Chou Tseu la, written by Yen Ts’ong in 1574 A. D. This is the most complete of all the Chinese accounts. It seems to have been based not merely on the information of the missions, but on other sources as well.
(v) Ming-She; it was an official compilation completed in 1739 A. D.
(vi) Tao-Yi-Che-leo, compiled by Wang Ta-Yuan about 1349-50 A. D.

An earlier work before the missions, it recorded China’s commercial connections with Bengal.

Of the European travellers and traders, the names of Varthema, Barbosa, Caesar Frederick and Ralph Fitch deserve special mention. The Italian merchant Varthema, coming from Tennesseirn, visited between 1503-1508 A.D. the city of Banghella, where he saw big merchants, rich commodities and a large volume of foreign trade. The Portuguese merchant Barbosa, who entered Bengal from the side of Orissa, sailing down the coast about 1518 A.D., referred to the existence of many sea-ports and river-ports in Bengal. Of particular interest is his account of the city and port of Bengala as a flourishing centre of export trade in textile and other commodities. The accounts of the Venetian merchant Caesar Frederick, who visited Bengal in 1563 A. D. and of the English trader Ralph Fitch, who had an
extensive tour in this province in 1585-86 A.D. to explore the possibilities of trade, are fuller in respect of the agricultural and manufactured goods, the cities and ports and their export trade and also other matters of economic interests. There are also incidental references of the social institutions and customs, such as child-marriage, slavery, etc., in their records.

Valuable information can be gleaned from the accounts of the Portuguese missionary and traveller Sebastian Manrique, the French physician Francois Bernier and the Italian Nicolai Manucci. Their records, though often reveal prejudice about the social institutions of this country, however, throw much light on the socio-economic forces of the time. Sebastian Manrique was attached to a Portuguese mission in Bengal in 1629 and he remained in Arakan for six years. In 1640-41 he travelled through Bengal and Northern India to the city of Qandahar on his way to Europe. He published his work called *Itinerario* in 1649. In Bengal Sebastian was struck by the richness of the people, the fertility of the soil and the abundance and cheapness of victuals. The most popular is however the account of Francois Bernier, a highly educated French physician and a keen observer of things. Bernier came to India in 1658 and during his twelve years' stay in this country, he served some Mughul princes and nobles, practised as a physician and widely visited the subcontinent and had tour in Bengal. The Italian Nicolai Manucci was a contemporary of Bernier and like his French counterpart, was in Mughul service from 1656 and also toured Bengal in 1662-63 A.D. His account in many respects supplements Bernier's notices about the life in Bengal and Northern India.

**D. Hagiological Literature:**

The contemporary hagiological literature, which includes biographies, malāfẓāt and maktūbāt of the ṣūfis, reflect the spiritual and cultural life of Bengal. These unfold the great contribution of the saints in the development of the Muslim society in this province. The *Manāqib al-Asfīyā* of Shāh Shu’ayb brings to light the momentous spiritual and intellectual
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awakening from the beginning of the Muslim rule in Bengal. The seminaries of Taqī al-Dīn ‘Arabī and Maulānā Shārīf al-Dīn Ābū Tawfīmāh at Mahisun and Sonargaon respectively produced great sūfīs and scholars, such as Yahyā Maneri and Shārīf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri. An account of the sūfīs who served Islam in this province are available in Siyār al-Awliyā of Ṭāhir Khurrd (a disciple of Ḥaḍrat Nizām al-Dīn Auliyā), Siyār Arīfīn of Maulānā Jamālī (a sūfī-scholar of the time of Emperor Humāyūn), Akhbār Akhyār of Shākīh ‘Abd al-Ḥaq Dehlavi (a pious and vastly learned man of the time of Emperor Akbar and Jahāngīr), Mīr ‘Īf al-Āsār of ‘Abd al-Ḥāmīn Chishītī (living in the time of Emperor Shāh Jahān) and Gulzar-i-Ābrār of Muḥammad Gauṭī Shātīrī, a Shāṭīrī scholar who compiled his monumental biographical work on the saints of this subcontinent. Khazīnāt al-Aṣfiyā of Ghulām Sarwār and other comparatively modern biographies, based on earlier sources, also supply useful materials in studying the life and works of the sūfīs. The Risālat al-Shuḥada of Pir Muḥammad Shātīrī gives the career of Shāh Ismaiīl Ghāzī. The Risālah of Muḥī al-Dīn Khādim, Rawdāt al-Salāṭīn of an unnamed author and Suḥail-i-Yaman of Nāṣir al-Dīn Ḥāдар supply some materials on the missionary and humanitarian activities of Shākīh Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet.

The malfūzāt or the discourses of the great sūfīs which were compiled by their disciples provide a valuable source for the teachings of the great spiritual leaders of the Muslims. The Fawwād al-Fawwād (malfūzāt of Shākīh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyā) of Ḥasan Sijzi, Khayr al-Majāls (malfūzāt of Shākīh Nāṣir-al-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgī-Dhelī) of Ḥamīd Qalandar, Aṣdāl Fawwād of Amīr Khusrūr and Rāṣīq al-Ārisīn (malfūzāt of Shākīh Husām al-Dīn Manikpurī) throw light on the religious and cultural life of Bengal.

There are several maktūbāt of Shākīh Nūr Qutb ‘Ālam written to some sūfīs, qādis, relations and disciples which reflect the great spiritualism of the Muslim society of the time. Further light is thrown on this aspect of life by the letters of
Haḍrat Mir Ashraf Jahāŋgīr Simnānī to his contemporary ṣūfīs and the Sultān of Jaunpur.

E. Bengali and Sanskrit literatures:

The Bengali works of the Muslim period throw a flood of light on the social life of the time. These represent the great progress of learning and literature in Bengal under Muslim rule. These also reveal the great contribution made by the Muslims to the Bengali language and literature. A good deal of valuable materials reflecting the economic conditions, ways of life, etc., are available in these works. A large number of works were compiled by the Muslim poets in this period. Of these, the names of a few, such as Yūsuf Zolekha of Shāh Muḥammad Saghīr, Rasūlvijaya of Zain al-Din, Sā'atnāma and Nosihatnāma of Muẓammil, Laila Majnūn of Daulat Wazir Bahrām, Madhumalati of Muhammad Kabīr and Ophate Rasūl of Saiyid Husain, may be mentioned. From these an idea of the life of the Muslims and their culture can be obtained.

The Hindu poets of the time compiled a large number of works which are conveniently classified into three broad categories, the Mangala-Kavyas, the Chaitanya Kavyas and Chandi-Kavyas. These kavyas represent the religious and social life of the Hindus. These also supply valuable information on the social life of the Muslims as well as the economic conditions under the Muslim rule. Indeed the Bengali literature is a store-house of materials for the social history of Bengal. The Manasamangala Kavyas of Vijayagupta, Bansibadan, Ksemananda and Vipradas, the Chaitanya Kavyas of Krishnadas Kaviraj, Vrindavandas, Jayananda and Govindadas and Chandi Kavya of Mukundaram, Dvij Hariram and others are of inestimable value for research into the Bengal society of the Muslim period.

Many Sanskrit works were compiled in the Muslim period. They show the progress of the Hindu learning under Muslim rule. The Sanskrit compilations of the time will be discussed in the chapter on the Development of Bengali.
F. Inscriptions, Coins, etc.

The coins often unfold forgotten chapters of history. The early Arab coins found in Paharpur and Mainamati speak of the Muslim contact with Bengal centuries before the Muslim conquest of this province. The existence of the plenty of gold and silver coins in the Muslim period expresses the prosperity of Bengal at that time. The inscriptions which record the erection of mosques, madrasahs and charitable institutions bear testimony to the highly religious and educational life of Muslim Bengal. The monuments of Gaur, Pandua and other places are an index of architectural attainments of the Muslim period, and the broadness of visions and prosperity and magnificence of their builders.

G. Census and Statistical Reports:

The Census Reports from 1872 to 1941 are very useful in the study of the Muslim people of Bengal. These help in solving problems of the origin of the Muslim population of Bengal and of the formation of the Muslim majority in the province. The District Gazetteers and the Annals of Rural Bengal have preserved the local traditions which would otherwise have been lost to a research scholar interested in social history.
CHAPTER I

GEOGRAPHY AND LIFE

It is a fact of history that geography plays a great part in shaping the political life of a country and moulding the socio-cultural pattern of its people. The physical features and natural peculiarities indeed reflect the life and culture of the land. The history of a country cannot be properly appreciated without a knowledge of its geography. Hence, an idea of the natural peculiarities forms an essential preliminary to the study of its history.

In writing of the social life of Bengal, a study of its geography is indispensable for more than one reason. First, it was in the Muslim period that the whole country, which comprised the pre-partition Bengal, received the name of Bangalāh. Secondly, it was under the Muslim rule that the political boundary of Bengal reached the farthest of its geographical and natural limit and these both corresponded with the linguistic homogeneity of the Bengali-speaking peoples. The Muslim rule thus integrated the Bengali peoples into a common life and placed them on one linguistic and cultural platform. From this time really began the history of Bengal and the Bengali peoples. Lastly, the geographical peculiarities of Bengal had a tremendous influence on the political, social and cultural life of its peoples. The natural features of this land, which were, and even now are, peculiar to itself, left distinctive marks on the socio-cultural institutions, mental outlook, way of life, food, dress and manners and customs of the Bengali peoples.
The name Bengalah.

It is noteworthy that the Muslims first gave the whole territories of Bengal the name of Bengalah. The terms Banga and Bengalah originated in Hindu period and were used in the Sanskrit literature. But Banga or Bengalah of the Hindu times comprised only a small portion of modern Bengal, the regions of Eastern and Southern Bengal. The first mention of Banga is found in the Aranyaka Brahmin, where it is referred to as a Janapada, a small principality. In other references of Banga or Bengalah in the Hindu period, the river-girt regions of Eastern and Southern Bengal were meant. At that time, other parts of Bengal bore different names; West Bengal was known as Radh and North Bengal was called Pundravardhan, Varendra and Lakhnawti (Lakshmanawati). Some parts of North Bengal and West Bengal were also known as Gaur. The name Gaur was occasionally used for the whole of Bengal.

Dr. R. C. Majumdar thinks that at the time of the Pala kings, Bengalah came to denote the whole of Bengal. He has no evidence to support his contention. Dr. H. C. Ray Choudhury, on the other hand, maintains that the Banga of the Pala and Sena records referred to a small area of Bengal. Dr. A. H. Dani rightly points out that the Sena kings, although they ruled over a large portion of Bengal, took pride in calling themselves Gauressvar (King of Gaur). This proves that even down to the end of the twelfth century, the name Bengalah was confined to the areas of Eastern and Southern Bengal.

Even in the early years of the Muslim rule in Bengal, only Eastern and Southern Bengal were known as Bang or

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1 Abul Fazl (Jarrett and Sarkar, F'lin II, p. 192) has given a strange explanation of the origin of the name of Bengalah. He writes, "The original name of Bengalah was Banga. Its former rulers raised mounds measuring ten yards in height and twenty in breadth throughout the province which were called Al. From this originated the name of Bengalah."

Bangalah. This is expressed in the writings of the contemporary Muslim historians. Minhāj refers to this region in recording that the descendants of Lakshmansena were still ruling in Banga at the time of his visit to Lakhnawti (1242-1244 A.D.). The other reference in the history of Minhāj prove that he was well-acquainted with the geographical divisions and names of Eastern India and he used Bang to mean the territory of Eastern and Southern Bengal. In one place he says, "Fear of him (Bakhtiyār Khalji) had seized the hearts of the people of the various parts of the country of Lakhnawti and Bihar and of the country of Bang and Kamrud (Kamrup)." It is clear from these writings that the country of Bang was different from the country of Lakhnawti and Bang was adjacent to Kamrup as Lakhnawti was in the vicinity of Bihar.

From the time of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Din Balban the term Bangalah came in use among the Muslims and this name was applied for Eastern and Southern Bengal. Barani was the first Muslim writer to use the word Bangalah and in his earlier records this name referred to Eastern and Southern Bengal. He records a statement of Sultan Balban which reads, "I have given the territory of Lakhnawti and Bangalah to my younger son, and the country is growing strong for years." Barani also quotes another statement of this Sultan: "What a large amount of blood have I shed in subduing Iqlim-i-Lakhnawti and 'Arṣah-i-Bangalah." Moreover, he refers to Balban's instruction exhorting his son Bughra Khan, governor of Lakhnawti,

1 Tabaqāt-i-Nāširi, p. 151.
2 Tabaqāt-i-Nāširi, p. 148.

3 Barani, p. 53.
4 Barani, p. 93.
for the conquest of *Iqlim-i-Bangalah.*¹ These evidences of Barani leave no room for doubt that *Bangalah* was a distinct region from Lakhnawti in the time of Sultan Balban.

The two terms, *Bang* of Minhaj and *Bangalah* of Barani, are identical in their geographical connotation. The evidence gathered from the contemporary Muslim coins confirms this view.² It is also known from the evidence of Barani that there were several regions of *Bangalah* to which the Muslims gave different names, such as *'Arsah-i-Bangalah, Iqlim-i-Bangalah, and Diyâr-i-Bangalah.*

Dr. K. R. Qanungo identifies *'Arsah-i-Bangalah* with Satgaon region (Southern Bengal), *Iqlim-i-Bangalah* with Sonargaon region (Eastern Bengal) and *Diyâr-i-Bangalah* with the combined territories of Sonargaon and Satgaon.³

Even at the time of the visit of Ibn Battuta (1345-46 A.D.), the name *Bangalah* referred to the territories of Eastern and Southern Bengal. The writings of that great Moorish traveller lend support to this contention. He says that Fakhr al-Din, surnamed Fakhra, was the Sultan of *Bangalah* and he was at war with 'Ali Shah, the ruler of the country of Lakhnawti. Ibn Battuta further observes, "The Bengalis have numerous ships on the river with which they fight the people of Lakhnawti."⁴ From the above statement it is clear that Eastern and Southern Bengal were known as *Bangalah* and the people of this area were called *Bangalis* in the time of Ibn Battuta. Fakhr al-Din was the king of *Bangalah* with his capital at Sonargaon.

It is thus seen that up to the middle of the fourteenth century Eastern and Southern Bengal were called *Bangalah* and

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¹ Barani, p. 92.
² Coins of Kaikaus (JASB 1922, p. 410) and of Firuz Shah I of Bengal (Bothan catalogue of Assam coins, 2nd edition, p. 134, no. 1).
³ History of Bengal, D. U., II, p. 57.
⁴ Ibn Battuta (French ed.), iv, p. 214.
the people of this region were given the name of Bangali. Later on the terms Bangalah and Bangali extended to embrace the territories as well as the people of Northern and Western Bengal. It was in the time of Sultân Shams- al-Din Ilyâs Shâh that this expansion of the name took place and the whole of Bengal came to be known as Bangalah. Ilyâs Shâh united the two territories, Lakhnawi and Bangalah, under his sole authority and laid down the foundation of an independent Sultânate in Bengal. He gave to the united territories the name of Bangalah and to the peoples thus integrated the name of the Bangali. He assumed the title of Shâh-i-Bangalah, and Shâh-i- Bangaliyan. His chiefs and soldiers were termed as Rayan-i-Bangalah, Lashkar-i-Bangalah and Paikan-i-Bangalah.

It is to be noted in this connection that, although Ilyâs Shâh began his career of independent Sultânate from Lakhnawi, with capital at Pandua in North Bengal, he preferred to style himself as Shâh-i-Bangalah, Shâh-i-Bangaliyan and Sultân-i-Bangalah and his contemporaries also called him by the titles, the Shâh-i-Bangalah and Sultân-i-Bangaliyan. This contrasts with the practice of the Hindu kings, who prided in calling themselves Gaureswar or the king of Gaur, even though a large portion of Bangalah formed part of their kingdom. Political considerations induced Sultân Ilyâs  

1 Even in the sixteenth century, the term Bangadesh implied East Bengal and its inhabitants were derisively called Bangal by the people of North Bengal and West Bengal. In giving an account of Chaitanya’s travel in East Bengal, his disciple Krishnadâs Kaviraj says:—

তবে কত দিন ইচ্ছায় করবেন  
বঙ্গদেশ যেখানে ইচ্ছা হীন তাহ।  
বঙ্গদেশে মহাপ্রসু হীন প্রবেশ  
অদালিসে সেই ভাগ্যে হীন বঙ্গদেশ।  
প্রাণবিং তীরে বিহিলেন গৌরচন্দ্র।

"Then the Lord, whose will is done, after sometime, wished to see Bangadesh (the Banga country). The great Master entered Bangadesh, which even now feels glorified to have the blessings of his visit. Gaur Chandra (the moon of Gaur, i.e., Chaitanya) lived by the Padma (for a few days)."

Chaitanya Charitamrita, p. 87.

2 Firishta (Newal Kishore ed.), II, p. 296.
4 Mubârank Shâh, p. 125; Barani, p. 593.
5 'Affif, i pp. 114-18.
Shāh to take the momentous decision to give to all the territories inhabited by the Bengali-speaking peoples the name of Bangalāh and to declare himself as the national monarch of this greater Bangalāh with the titles of Shāh-i-Bangalāh and Shāh-i-Bangaliyan. By this move, he wanted to enlist the support and cooperation of the chiefs and peoples of Bangalāh in his rebellion against the Delhi Sultān and in establishing his sovereign power in the province.

Sultān Ilyās Shāh thus became the founder of Bangalāh which incorporated all the territories of Bengal and integrated all the Bengali peoples into one politico-social and linguistic platform. From this time Bangalāh became the common name of the vast region from Teliagarhi to Chittagong and from the foot of the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal. This is indeed a great landmark in the history of Bengal. From this time, the people, either of East Bengal or of North Bengal or of West Bengal, passed for under the common name of the Bengalis and the people of other countries called them by this name. A few instances may be cited to prove this contention. In his letters, Haḍrat Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī referred to Shaikh Nūr Quṭb ʻĀlam, who was an inhabitant of Pandua in North Bengal, as Shaikh Nūr Bangalī. The celebrated poet Ḥafiz, in his couplet, referred to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh as the Sultān of Bangalāh. Shams al-Dīn Ahmad Shāh has also been mentioned as the Sultān of Bangalāh by ‘Abd al-Razzaq in his diplomatic dispatch to his sovereign, Shāh Rukh. The Chinese accounts of the early fifteenth century mentioned the whole country as Pang-ko-la (Bangalāh). In his Memoirs, Bābur calls ʿAlā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh and Nuṣrat Shāh as rulers of Bangalāh and their peoples as the Bangalī.

5. Bāburnāma (Elliot, Susil Publication), pp. 48-49.
Natural Boundary and Routes

The application of the name *Bangalāh* for the whole of Bengal is a significant contribution of the Muslims. This gave political, geographical and linguistic homogeneity to this land and united the Bengalis into a compact people. From this time really began the history of Bengal and the *Bengali* people. This integration developed the basis of the Bengali society and culture, Bengali language and literature. This paved the way for the distinction of the Bengali people in various walks of life. Sultan Ilyās Shāh and his successors conducted themselves as national monarchs of Bengal and followed the policy of extending liberal patronage to the talent as well as to literature and culture of this land.

Natural Boundary and Routes:

Bengal is a country with some geographical peculiarities of its own and these distinguished it from the rest of this subcontinent. Abūl Fadl gives some idea about the geography of the *Sūbah Bangalāh*. According to him, "*Bangalāh* is situated in the second clime (Iqlīm) and is four hundred *kos* in length from Chittagong to Garhi (Teliagarhi). It is bounded on the east and north by the mountains, on the south by the sea and on the west by the *Sūbah* of Bihar. Bordering on this country are Kamrup and Assam." In his *Tūzuk*, Jahāngīr writes, "It is an extensive country, situated in the second clime. Its length is 450 *kos* extending from the port of Chittagong to Garhi and its breadth, from the northern mountains to the province of Mandaran, is 220 *kos*."²

The geography of Bengal, as given in the *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*, substantially agrees with that of pre-partition Bengal. The mountain ranges of the Himalayas run along the northern side of Bengal. Its south is washed by the Bay of Bengal. The Sundarban, a vast tract of dense forests, the home of

the Royal Bengal tigers and other wild animals, sheets up the province from that side and also causes much rainfall, which contributes to its productivity. The Garo, Khasia, Jaintia, Tippera and Chittagong hills bound its east. In its Western border, there are the swift-flowing Ganges, the Mahananda and their tributaries as well as the hills of Rajmahal, the high table-lands and jungles of Jharkhand, Birbhum, the Santhal Parganas, Singbhum, Manbhum and Mayurbhungh.

In consequence of the existence of natural barriers, such as the hills, jungles, rivers and sea, Bengal enjoyed a sort of inaccessibility from outside until the introduction of the steam. Its communication with its northern neighbours, Tibet and China, was impossible and was attempted only by an adventurous spirit like Ikhtiyar al-Din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji. The mountain streams, hills and rugged tracts restricted its connection with Assam and Kamrup. With Arakan and Burma, Bengal would have communication only through the narrow strip of the Chittagong territory and by water. Because of the existence of the long line of dense forests, hills and rivers in the west, access to Bengal from Northern India, from the side of Bihar and Orissa, was not in the least easy. It was only through three hazardous passages, Teliagarhi route, Tirhat route and Jharkhand route, that Bengal could be linked with the rest of the sub-continent.

Teliagarhi is just north-west of the Rajmahal town. Teliagarhi route is a narrow passage by the southern bank of the Ganges, with the steep river-bank in the north and the Rajmahal hills in the south. Starting from Patna, this route passes via Bhagalpur, Colong and along the southern bank of the Ganges, having in the south the steep hills extending southwards for about eighty miles up to the northern boundary of the Birbhum district. Between the vast expanse of the Ganges in the north and the steep hills of Rajmahal and the rugged regions of the Santhal
Parganas and Birbhum to the south, the route narrows down at Teliagarhi. From the earliest times, Teliagarhi was known as the ‘gateway to Bengal’ and a fort was constructed in the place completely blocking the route. At the western mouth of this strategic pass, a large enemy force could easily be stayed by a small Bengali army.

The Tirhut route runs along the north bank of the Ganges by way of Oudh and Tirhut and, after crossing the Kosi, the Gandak and the Mahananda, it passes to Bengal. It is thought that the Tirhut district has been given the name of Darbanga (Dar-i-Banga) or the ‘gateway to Bengal’, because it provided passage to enter Bengal. The Tirhut route is however hazardous, since several swift-flowing rivers and inhospitable regions are to be crossed before access could be secured in the territory of Bengal.

The Jharkhand route is a trackless passage through the vast region of hills and deep forests known commonly as Jharkhand, which extends from the south of Teliagarhi to Birbhum, on the one hand, and merges into the jungles of the Santhal Parganas, Singhbum, etc., on the other. Except with the help of an expert local guide, it is difficult to make way through this terra incognita. This route leaves the Ganges on the left at Teliagarhi and after making a considerable detour through the Jharkhand reaches the Ganges at Birbhum. Dr. Qanungo thinks that Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji followed the Jharkhand route in his campaign to Bengal from Bihar town. Mir Jumla in 1659 and Peshwa Balaji Rao took this route in their campaigns. This inaccessibility on account of the natural barriers on the borders accounted for Bengal’s isolation from the rest of India, and contributed greatly to the development of a distinct life of its own.

1 Akbarndia, III, P. 108; Bhattasali, N.K. - Bengal Chiefs’ Struggle, B.P.P. 1908; History of Bengal (D.U.), II, p. 5.
Physical peculiarities: Rivers:

Within the confines of the geographical boundaries, Bengal is a land of vast alluvial plain, excepting several marginal hills in the east and south-east. The plain is watered by one of the most remarkable network of rivers in the world. Abūl Fadl is right in saying that Bengal’s rivers are countless.¹ The Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Meghna, the Karatoya, the Mahananda, the Kosi and the large number of their tributaries and distributaries played a very vital role in the life of the Bengali people throughout the ages. They were the life-line of Bengal’s economic prosperity. They also often contributed to the rise and fall of many populated towns and villages of this land.

According to the geologists and geographers, the physical features of Bengal demonstrate perpetual river changes in the past.² The evidence gathered from the literatures and the accounts of the chroniclers and travellers confirms the view that the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Mahananda and other rivers changed their courses in the Hindu as well as Muslim times. In the early Hindu period, the southern course of the Ganges, known as the Bhagirathi, took the turn from near Rajmahal and, running through the Santhal Parganas, Chhota Nagpur and Manbhum, fell into the Bay of Bengal at the port of Tamralipti (Tamluk). There is also evidence to show that the Ajaya, the Damodar and the Rupnarain, which were at that time quite big rivers, joined in this course of the Bhagirathi. Later on the Ganges-Bhagirathi again changed her course. From Rajmahal she flowed north and east and, running the course of the present day Mahananda and the Kalindi rivers and leaving the city of Gaur in the right, she turned to the south through the territory of West Bengal, and keeping Tribeni, Saptagram (Satgaon), Hugli and Bettur

¹ ʿAʾīn-i-Akbari (Sarkar), II, p. 133.
² Nafis Ahmad—The Economic Geography of East Pakistan, p. 32.
by her side, fell into the sea. The records of the early Muslim historians as well as the maps of Jaoca De Barros (1550 A.D.) and Gastaldi (1561 A.D.) prove that up to the sixteenth century Gaur was on the western bank of the Ganges. In the seventeenth century, it is seen that this river had receded about twenty-five miles south of the city of Gaur. The map of Von Den Brooke (1660 A.D.) indicates this change. The Saraswati and the Jumna, which joined the Bhagirathi at Tribeni, also called Muktaveni, were once great rivers and they followed different courses. Both Triveni and Satgaon then stood at the junction of these rivers and flourished as great centres of trade and commerce. Satgaon was particularly a big port and a capital of the Muslims in the fourteenth century. It is known from the Manasamangala of poet Vipradas that this city continued its position of importance in the fifteenth century. It declined as a port from the beginning of the sixteenth century, because of the shifting of the Bhagirathi a little to the south.

The eastern course of the Ganges, now known as the Padma, also changed its stream in the past ages. It is known from the evidence of Abul Faḍl that the Ganges divided into two streams near Qazirhatta in the sakar of Barbakabad (Rajshahi, south-west Bogra and south-east Malda districts). One of these flowing eastwards fell into the sea at the port of Chittagong. Abul Faḍl did not visit Bengal and as such he had an inaccurate knowledge of the geography of this province. So, his statement cannot be accepted without further investigation in this point. A study of Rennel’s map of Bengal (1778 A.D.) shows that the Ganges and the Brahmaputra united just above Dakshin Shimbazar and that Chittagong stood practically

1 Nihar Ranjan Ray—Bangalir Itihasha, pp. 32 and 95.
2 Quoted by N. Ray—Bangalir Itihasha, p. 96. Compare the accounts of Ralph Fitch, Hakluyt, V, p. 181.
3 Vipradas—Manasamangala (Composed in 1475 A.D.), quoted in Bangalir Itihasha, p. 95.

“Ganges, Saraswatti, Jumna big rivers.”

4 A’in-i-Akbari (Sarkar tr.), II, p. 193.
at the mouth of the united waters called the Meghna, about 60 miles below the confluence.\textsuperscript{1} This substantially corroborates Abūl Faḍl’s evidence. In a sheet map, there are probabilities of some inaccuracies in indicating places. Making allowance for that, it may be said that the eastern course of the Ganges fell into the sea at a place not very far from the city of Chittagong, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, and then it receded further west.

The Chinese records suggest that in the fifteenth century also the united streams of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra joined the sea not far from the Chittagong port. Mahuan writes, “The kingdom of Pang-ko-la (Bangala) is reached by ship from the kingdom of Su-men-ta-la (Sumatra) \ldots the vessel \ldots arrives first at Cheh-ti-gan (Chatigaon) where she anchors. Small boats are then used to ascend the river, up which at a distance of 500 ⅔ or more, one arrives at a place called Sona-urh-Kong (Sonargaon), where one lands.”\textsuperscript{2} According to this Chinese writer, who himself visited Bengal in the company of a Chinese mission in the early years of the fifteenth century, Sonargaon was reached by boat from Chittagong and the route covered a distance of 500 ⅔ equivalent to 167 miles or a little more, one ⅔ being equal to ⅓ of a mile. This indicates that there was a short-cut river route connecting Chittagong with Sonargaon in the time of Mahuan. If one has to come at the present time from Chittagong to Sonargaon by the sea and river, the distance to be covered would amount to nearly 250 miles. This difference of the route distances in the two periods suggests that Chittagong was nearer to the mouth of the Ganges in those days than it is in the present times.

If Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s Sadkawan port is identical with Chittagong, then in the light of his account it may be concluded that

\textsuperscript{1} Rennel’s map, quoted by N. K. Bhattachari — Coins and Chronology of the Independent Sultans of Bengal, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{2} Mahuan’s Account; Extracts in N. K. Bhattachari’s Coins and Chronology, etc., p. 136.
in the middle of the fourteenth century the mouth of the Ganges was not so distant from that city as it is today. This Moorish traveller, who visited Bengal in 1345-46 A.D., writes, "The first town of Bengal, which we entered, was Sadkawan situated on the shore of a vast Ocean. The river Ganga, to which the Hindus go in pilgrimage, and the river Jau model near it before falling into the Sea."¹ There are certain points which favour identifying Sadkawan with Chittagong. Ibn Bāṭṭūṭa has differentiated Bengalah from Lakhnawī and his writings indicate that Sadkawan was in the region of Bangalah and its ruler was Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh. He states that the Bengalis had numerous ships in the Ganges with which they fought the inhabitants of Lakhnawī. He adds that Fakhr al-Dīn appointed Shaiyida as his viceroy at Sadkawan. Fakhr al-Dīn's jurisdiction did not extend to Satgaon in West Bengal. But it is definitely known that Chittagong formed a part of his kingdom. It is also suggested in the writings of Ibn Bāṭṭūṭa that he journeyed from Sadkawan (Chittagong) to Sylhet to meet Shaikh Jalāl. He mentions his return journey from Sylhet via Sonargaon by river. If it was Satgaon whence he travelled to Sylhet, he would have to go via Gaur, cross several rivers and experience enormous difficulties on the way, in his journey by boat. In that case, he would have referred to this.

On the basis of Ibn Bāṭṭūṭa's reference that the Ganges and the Jau model near Sadkawan before falling into sea and also on the ground that the name of Chittagong (Chatgaon) would have been written as Jadkawan in Arabic, some scholars identify Sadkawan with Satgaon. As for the name, it may however be pointed out that Chittagong received the name from the Arabs, who called it Shat-al-Ganga, which in the time of Ibn Bāṭṭūṭa became corrupted into Sadkawan and then into Chatgaon and Chittagong. Even now the people of Chittagong pronounce the name of their town as Chhatgaon, which corresponds to Sadgaon

or Sadkaon (Sadkawan), and reminds the Arab connection with the name and the place. The term Shat al-Ganga (delta of the Ganges) indicates that in the time, when the Arab merchants visited the place, Chittagong was situated in the delta of the Ganges. The only confusing point is Ibn Batūta's mention of the Ganges and the Jaun uniting near Chittagong. The river Jaun cannot be identified with Jumna, a branch of the Brahmaputra which joins the Ganges near Goaland. Yule thinks that the great Moorish traveller confused the name of the Brahmaputra with the Jaun. It appears from Rennel's map of Bengal, that in 1778 A.D., Chittagong was situated 60 miles below the junction of the great rivers of this province. This suggests that the Jaun was the united stream of the Brahmaputra and the Meghna rivers.

There is also evidence to show that the Padma had a different course in those days and she passed by the city of Dacca. Leaving Rampur Boalia (Rajshahi town) by her side, she passed through the Chalan Bil and followed the course of the present-day Dhaleswari and Buriganga rivers. She then ran by the city of Dacca and fell into the Meghna near Feringibazar. The name Buriganga reminds that the Ganges had once her course through this river. Sripur, which was about eighteen miles from Sonargaon, was situated on the bank of the Ganges. The English traveller, Ralph Fitch, who visited Bengal in 1586 A.D., wrote that he went from Sripur to Pegu, passing down the Ganges and the island of Sandvip and the Porto Grande (Chittagong). It appears from the writings of Fitch that afterwards the eastern course of the Padma passing by Dacca and Sripur decayed and became unfit for the navigation of big ships.

1 In Arabic qaf and gain are inter-changeable. Gibb agrees with identification of Sadkawan (Satgawan) with Chittagong.
2 Quoted by N. K. Bhattacharji— Coins and Chronology, etc., pp. 146-7.
3 A study of the Campaigns of Alamgir Khan against Musa Khan and his allies given in Bahārištān-i-Ghaybi expressed that Dacca was on the bank of the Ganges. Bahārištān-i-Ghaybi (Tr. M. I. Borah), Vol. I, pp. 56, 64, 66 and 69; Bangalir Itthasha, p. 103.
4 Hakluyt (Ralph Fitch), p. 185. Fitch says that Sonargaon was six miles from Sripur. He also says that Sripur was on the river Ganges.
The Padma changed her course, receding further south of Dacca. She united with the Brahmaputra near Goaland and the united streams, joining the Meghna near Chandpur, fell into the sea near Sandvip and Chittagong. The Ichhamati, the Dhaleswari, the Buriganga, the Jalongi, the Chandana, the Kumar, the Madhumati, the Bhairab and the Arial are a few of tributaries and distributaries of the Ganges. Some of them are now almost silted and dead.

The next important river, the Brahmaputra, also called Lahuhitya, has also several times changed its passage. There was, of course, no change in its upper course up to the western bend of the Garo hills, because of its track through the mountainous regions. After that, in its course through the plains, the Brahmaputra has at least twice shifted its stream. Flowing by the west-south of the Garo hills, it passed through the northern territories of the Mymensingh district, keeping Dewangoni and Jamalpur on its south and Sherpur on its north. Then by the side of Madhupur, it made way through the middle of the Mymensingh district and the eastern part of the Dacca district and, passing via Langalband in the south-west of Sonargaon, it fell into the Ganges, now known as the Dhaleswari. This course continued down to the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century the Brahmaputra abandoned this course and it was found joining the Surma-Meghna near Bhairab Bazar. The maps of Von Den Brooke, Thornton and Rennel bear testimony to this fact. The united stream, from Bhairab Bazar to the sea near Sandvip, is known by the name of the Meghna. Again by the middle of the nineteenth century, the Mymensingh stream of the Brahmaputra up to Bhairab Bazar decayed and its tributary, called the Jumna, developed into the main current. Rising from the Brahmaputra near Phulsari, the Jumna flows by the western boundary of Bogra and Pabna districts and joins the Padma near Goaland.

The Meghna rises from the Khasia-Jaintia hills. Her upper course is known by the name of the Surma. Running through

1 Rennel's Atlas, Nihar Ray—Bangulr Itihasha, p. 106.
the district of Sylhet and the eastern boundary of the Netrokona and Kishorgong subdivisions, she unites with the Brahmaputra near Bhairab Bazar and, then past Chanpur, falls into the sea near Sandvip. The lower stream from Bhairab Bazar to the sea is known as the Meghna.¹ The Karatoya was one of the big rivers of the early times. Rising from the Himalayas from the Bhutan border, she flowed through the Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Bogra and Pabna districts and joined the Padma-Dhaleswari river. Her upper course was known as the Tiesta (Tri-sutta or three streams). It appears from the map of Von Den Brooke that from Jalpaiguri Tiesta was divided into three streams, the south-flowing eastern-most course was called the Karatoya, the middle stream was known as the Atrai and the western most current was named the Punarbhava or Purnabhava.

The Mahananda and the Kosi, which are now found flowing from Purnea into the Ganges, had also different courses in the Hindu and Muslim times. Formerly the Kosi was an east-flowing river and she used to fall into the Brahmaputra. By and by it receded to the distant west. The Mahananda had also similarly changed its stream. Geologists think that, because of the changes in the courses of the Mahananda, the Kosi and other North Bengal rivers, the territories of Gaur and Pandua turned into marshes and swamps and these once flourishing and populous cities fast declined. The accounts of Ralph Fitch, who passed through the territories of Gaur on his way from Koch Bihar to Hughli in the eighties of the sixteenth century, express the effects of the river changes. The English traveller writes, "We found but few villages but almost all wilderness and saw many buffoes (buffaloes), swine and deers, grass longer than a man (man) and very few tigers."² In Malda and other

¹ The name Meghna, according to local proverb, originated from the word Meghnad or Maghunanda Dr. Nihar Ray thinks that the name Meghna might have originated from Ptolemy's Mego (meaning great), a name which that great geographer of the second century gave to a mouth of the Ganges. This Mego might have become Megua or Mogho (great). See N. Ray—Bangali Itihasha, p. 108.
² Hakluyt, vol. V. p. 182.
northern districts, even now one comes across many marshes, swamps, etc., and the local traditions maintain that these were once the streams of the Kosi, the Mahananda and other rivers.

The rivers accounted for the great fertility of the soil, the abundance of crops, the prosperity of the people and the populousness of the territories of Bengal. Giving an account of his journey from Sylhet to Sonargaon by river in 1345-46 A. D., Ibn Batūtā writes, "By the river were water-wheels, gardens and villages on the right as well as on the left, as in Egypt by the Nile. . . . We sailed on this river for fifteen days by villages and gardens, as if we were going through a market place." The writings of the Chinese and European travellers corroborate the statement of Ibn Batūtā. Bernier's accounts also represent the river-washed Bengal as a land of plenty, prosperity and populousness.  

With the river changes there was the rise and fall of many flourishing towns and villages in Bengal. An examination of the maps beginning from Jaoo De Barros to Rennel reveals to a certain extent the work of destruction and reconstruction carried on for centuries by the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Meghna and other rivers. From the beginning of the Muslim rule, Sonargaon is found to be a great and prosperous city and port, where foreign merchant ships used to come for its commodities. Ibn Batūtā says, "On our arrival at Sonargaon, we found a Chinese junk, which intended to go to Java, which was 40 days' journey." Even at the time of Ralph Fitch's visit, Sonargaon was a flourishing city, port and a manufacturing centre. It produced "the best and finest cotton cloth in India." Fitch writes, "Great store of cotton cloth goeth from hence, and much rice, wherewith they serve all India, Ceilon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra, and many other places." The prosperity of Sonargaon waned, as the river decayed and receded, and it ceased to be a

1 Gibb—*Ibn Batūtā*, p. 271; N. K. Bhattasali—*Coins and Chronology*, p. 142.
3 Ibn Batūtā (Bhattasali—*Coins and Chronology*), p. 142.
port of consequence. Sripur, the capital of Chand Ray, was also a flourishing town when Ralph Fitch visited it in the later years of the sixteenth century. It appears from the writings of Mirzâ Nathan that the town existed in the early seventeenth century. But later on this once capital city was swept away by the Padma, leaving no trace of it.

Tanda was, in the early sixteenth century, a great city and was situated on the bank of the Ganges. It was the capital of Sulaimân Karrani and the Mughul viceroy, Khân Khânân Mun‘im Khân, made it the seat of the government after he abandoned Gaur because of plague. This city also decayed on account of the change in the course of the Ganges. This is expressed in the writings of Ralph Fitch, who says, “Tanda standeth from the river Ganges a league, because in times past, the river flowing over the bankes in time of raine did drowne the country and many villages, and so they do remaine. And the old way which the river Ganges was woont (wont) to run, remaineth drie, which is the occasion that the cities doeth stand so farre (far) from water.”

Gaur and Pandua were both flourishing capital cities, situated on the Ganges. On account of the shifting of the river course, their importance diminished and afterwards they were completely abandoned. At the time of the visit of Ralph Fitch these great historical places have turned into wilderness. Ikkdala, near Pandua, was a great fort in the time of Ilyâs Shâh and Sikandar Shâh. It appears from the accounts of Barani that this fort was by the side of a river. Because of the change of the river course, Ikkdala lost its importance and it has now become difficult to trace even its existence.

1 Hakluyt, Vol. v, p. 184.
2 Bahâristân, pp. 328 and 329.
5 Major Rennel remarks, “No part of the site of ancient Gour is near to the present bank of the Ganges than four miles and a half, and some part of it which were regularly washed by that river are now twelve miles from it.” Quoted by J. N. Dasgupta—Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, p. 119.
6 Barani, in N. K. Bhattasali—Coins and Chronology, etc., p. 160.
The Bengali literature and European accounts represent that Satgaon was a great port of foreign trade and was called ‘Porto Piqueno’ or small port, Chittagong being the ‘Porto Grande’ or the Great Port. When Caesar Frederick, the Venetian merchant, visited Satgaon in 1563 A.D., he noticed it still maintaining flourishing commerce, although the river Ganges by it was decaying. At the time of Ralph Fitch’s visit in 1585-86 A.D., the importance of Satgaon as a commercial centre greatly declined and its position was taken by the new city and port of Hughli, which had also received the name and position of Porto Piqueno.

The rise and fall of another great city and port, called Bengala, was decided by the course of the river. Lewis Varthema, an Italian merchant, came from Tenasserim by ship to the city of ‘Banghella’ sometime between 1503-1508. He observed that it was one of the finest cities he had ever visited and it had great export trade in cotton and silk-stuffs. The Portuguese merchant Barbosa, who visited Bengal about 1518 A.D., referred to the city of ‘Bengala’ as a great sea-port with a very good harbour. According to him, this city was inhabited mostly by the Muslims, many of whom were great merchants and owned large ships. The people of the city of Bengala manufactured in large quantities various kinds of fine and delicate cotton-stuffs, which along with sugar and other commodities, were exported by their merchants to Coromandal, Malabar, Cambay, Pegu, Tenasserim, Sumatra, Ceylon and Malacca. The evidence of these two foreign merchants show that a great city and port named Bengala prospered in the beginning of the sixteenth century at the head of the gulf known in those days as the Gulf of Bengal. Neither Caesar Frederick (1563 A.D.) nor Ralph Fitch (1585-86 A.D.), who referred to Satgaon, and

3 Purchas—His Pilgrims, vol. IX, p. 1; Dasgupta—Bengal in Sixteenth Century, p. 117.
Hughli and Chittagong ports, made any allusion of the port of Bengala. As a matter of fact, no mention of it is available from any source after Barbosa. There is no reference of the name of a port by the name of Bengala in the contemporary Muslim histories. Its meteoric rise to prominence and then receding to forgottenness in less than half a century is really surprising.

From the absence of any mention of the port of Bengala either before or after Varthema and Barbosa, it may be assumed that these two foreign merchants called one of the great ports of Bengal after the name of the country. It is to be noted that neither Varthema nor Barbosa has referred to any of the cities and ports, such as Satgaon, Chittagong, Bakla, Sandvip, Sonargaon, Sripur, Gaur and Pandua. Was the city of Bengala identical with one of these? According to the accounts of these two merchants who visited the port themselves, the city of Bengala had a few distinguishing characteristics:

(1) After a voyage of 11 days from Tenasserim, Varthema arrived at the 'city of Banghella'. Barbosa came from Orissa to Bengala, sailing by the coast.

(2) Barbosa distinguishes the cities in the interior from those in the sea-coast and mentions Bengala as a sea port. He says that in the kingdom of Bengala "there are many towns, both in the interior and on the sea-coast." He adds that "this sea is a gulf which enters towards the north, and at its inner extremity there is a very great city inhabited by Moors which is called Bengala, with a very good harbour."

These evidences show that Bengala was a sea-port and it was situated in a place where the Gulf of Bengal narrowed

1 Hakluyt, II, p. 144.
down. There are the islands of Hatia and Sandvip and some others, in between these two, on the extremity of the Gulf at the mouth of the united stream of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna. The ports of Satgaon, Gaur, Sonargaon and others which are river ports do not satisfy these conditions to be the port of Bengal. Chittagong, though a sea-port, is not in the extremity of this Gulf of Bengal. Bakla (Barisal) cannot be this port, because it is far away from the sea. It is also doubtful if Bakla was under a Muslim ruler. Both Varthema and Barbosa stated that the city of Bengal was under the rule of a Muslim Sultan and there were big Muslim merchants in that port.

Could the city of Bengal be Sandvip? Caesar Frederick, the Venetian merchant, and Ralph Fitch mentioned the island of Sandvip, the former visited it and the latter passed by it on his way to Chittagong, as a centre of great salt trade. But Sandvip is an well-known island and these European merchants could not have confused it by renaming it as city of Bengal. It is also unexpected that both Varthema and Barbosa would have given one and the same new name to a city which had a name of its own. Why both these merchants should make the same common mistake of the name of a great port, particularly when they belonged to two different European countries and came from different directions and visited it in different times, the former between 1503-1508 and the latter about 1518?

From the above discussion, it appears that Bengal was a port in some island in the inner extremity of the Gulf of Bengal where the Ganges and other rivers fell into the sea. There is an evidence to support this contention. A map of Asia published by Gastaldi of Venice in 1561 A. D. mentions the city of Bengal as well as Satigaon (Satgaon). This suggests that this city, situated between Hatia and Sandvip at the mouth of the rivers, was swept away in the early years of the second half of the sixteenth century.

Through centuries, the rivers had a career of destruction and construction in the province of Bengal. Indeed the rise and

1 Quoted by J. N. Dasgupta—Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 120-21
fall of many flourishing cities and villages are associated with the changes of the river courses. Because of this destructive work, the Padma has received the name of the Kirtinasha or the destroyer of the achievements and monuments of this land. Even now the Padma, the Brahmaputra, the Meghna and other rivers are faithfully following their time-honoured tradition of the work of destruction.

Nature and Climate:

An alluvial land and interspersed by numerous rivers, the plains of Bengal were submerged in water for about half the year. According to Abul Faḍl, the summer heat was temperate and the cold season was short in this province; the rains began from the month of May and continued for six months or even more and at that time the soil was under water. Even now, this is a striking feature of the Eastern and Southern Bengal and hence this region was called Bhai (Bhata, i.e., ebb tide) or the land of the tides. The water level rose in flow tide and fell in ebb tide. There were also floods and storms during the rains. Abul Faḍl has given an account of a terrible flood, accompanied with hurricane, that visited the sarkar of Bakla (Bhacketganj-Khulna) in 1584. He writes, "In the twenty-ninth year of the Divine Era, a terrible inundation occurred at three o'clock in the afternoon, which swept over the whole sarkar. The Raja held an entertainment at the time, He at once embarked on board a boat, while his son Parmanand Ray with some others climbed to the top of a temple and a merchant took refuge in a high loft. For four hours and a half the sea raged amid thunder and a hurricane of wind. Houses and boats were engulfed, but no damage occurred to the temple or the loft. Nearly two hundred thousand living creatures perished in this flood."  

1 A’in-i-Akhbar (Tr. Sarkar), II, p. 132.
2 Ibid. pp. 135-36.
The rivers and rains, bestowing the benefits of natural irrigation as well as manuring on the soil of Bengal, contributed to its great productivity and prosperity. At the same time, these were also responsible for the appearance of many marshes and swamps in the province, particularly in its northern region. The changes in the river courses left some watery portions in several places of their former beds. The long rainy season also had the effect of leaving behind some water-logged places scattered here and there. According to the contemporary reports, these marshes and swamps bred foul climate and diseases. Abūl Fadl observes, “For a long time past, at the end of the rains, the air had been felt to be pestilential and seriously affected animal life.”

All the Muslim historians of the earlier period have depicted Bengal as a land of plague, malaria and other diseases. In their statements, they have expressed the idea of the upcountry people about the climate of this province. This is best reflected in the writings of Ibn Batūta, who informs that the people of Khurasan called Bengal as a duzakh-i-pur ni'mat or a hell of all good things. The people of Northern India were frightened of the climate and rains and generally avoided serving and staying in Bengal. After the capture of Gaur, Humāyūn appointed Zahid Beg as the governor of Bengal. Far from being grateful to the Emperor for appointment to such a high office in a prosperous province, Zahid Beg said, “Your Majesty could not find a better place to kill me than Bengal.” Even in the early part of the reign of Emperor Akbar, the Mughul soldiers did not like to serve in Bengal, although they were offered double the salary. Because of the unwholesome climate, the magnificent cities of Gaur and Pandua were deserted by the Mughul viceroys and officials.

It is true that the climate of a few places, such as Gaur and Pandua became bad, on account of the receding
of the river from near these cities and also because of the rise of swamps and marshes. It is also a fact that a great plague broke out in Gaur at the time of the viceroyalty of Khan Khanan Mun'im Khan in 1575. This epidemic carried away a large number of Mughul generals, officers and soldiers, and compelled the viceroy to shift the capital of the province from Gaur to Tanda. But, to say that the climate of the whole province was unhealthy would amount to a sweeping generalisation. Even the climate of Gaur was not so unwholesome, as the Northern India contemporaries would have us believe. If it was so bad, as they say, then, how could it have continued to be a flourishing city and the capital of Bengal for so many centuries? Emperor Humayun also lived in this beautiful city for a few months and was so much charmed with its pleasant climate and surroundings that he gave it the name of Jannatabad or Paradise. Nasir al-Din Bughra Khan, son of Sultan Balban, loved the refreshing climate and the greenery of Bengal so dearly that he preferred the governorship of this province to the Sultanate of Delhi.

That the climate of this province was not so bad, as it has been painted, is revealed from the writings of Abul Fa'dl. While speaking of the pestilential climate at the end of the rains, this Mughul historian also observes, "under the auspices of his present Majesty this calamity (of pestilential climate) has ceased." It may well be argued that Emperor Akbar did not have the magic power to improve the climate of this province in the course of a few years. The rivers, rains and marshes were still the same. Then how could this extraordinary change for a better take place? This revolution in Bengal's climate was really the change of the idea of the Northern contemporaries about Bengal's natural atmosphere. In fact, the foul climate of the province was rather psychological than real; it was born out of the fear of the Northerners of the rains and water

1 Akbarnamah, III, p. 293.
2 A'in (Tr. Sarkar), II, p. 133.
in Bengal. They were for generations accustomed to live under the conditions of dry climate, and were quite naturally afraid of living in the rainy and wet climate of this province. So, they held some pre-conceived notions of Bengal’s climate and shrank back with horror from the idea of serving and staying there. At the time of Emperor Akbar they were however made to serve there. Once they lived in Bengal several years, they realized that the climate was not so notorious as they had thought; on the other hand, they had many advantages in this province. Thus the horror of Bengal climate disappeared from the minds of the upcountry people and hence it improved in the reign of Emperor Akbar.

Instances from the history of the Mughuls will best illustrate this type of psychological change in climate. Even after the acquisition of the sovereignty of Hindustan, Bābur and his nobles and soldiers did not like to live in this country. They complained of its heat and pined for the mild climate of Kabul and Central Asia. One great chief Khwāja Kalan bade adieu to Hindustan and, before leaving, he wrote on a wall in Delhi:

If safe and sound, I cross the Sind,
Blacken my face, ere I long for Hind.

Bābur also, all the four years of his reign, yearned for Kabul. But he stayed and established his family in Hindustan. The Mughuls were thus acclimatized in this country. In the reign of Emperor Shāh Jahān, Prince Murād was sent to conquer Balkh. The Prince captured much of the territories of that country. But he did not like the mountainous and rugged regions of Central Asia and became anxious to return to Hindustan. He pined so much for the plains of this country that he left Balkh without the Emperor’s permission. What a great change it is from Bābur to Murād! Bābur disliked Hindustan and longed for the mountainous regions of Central Asia.
His descendants, living in Hindustan, were so much naturalized that they disliked to stay even for a short time in their ancestral homes.

In the same way in Bengal also, when the upcountry people had once begun living, they became acclimatized and naturalized. If the climate was bad and the people died of epidemics and diseases, Bengal could not have developed into a most densely populated part of this subcontinent.

It is also to be noted that no other contemporary writer, except the Muslim historians of Northern India, has made any reference of the bad climate of Bengal. A number of European merchants and Chinese envoys visited this province and left quite interesting accounts which reflect the nature of this land and people as well as its social and economic life. They lived here for some time and had personal experience of its climate, whereas the Muslim contemporaries did not have any personal contact with Bengal. Ibn Batūta lived a few months in this province. He had all praise for Bengal. He had simply quoted the notion of the upcountry people that Bengal was a hell of all good things. But his personal experience reflects Bengal as the best country to live in. Mirzā Nathan lived in Bengal many years and had an intimate contact with and knowledge of its climate. But he has never complained of it. So the statements of the Delhi historians cannot be entertained in their face value.

It, therefore appears that the climate of Bengal was not so bad, as it was supposed in those days. Bengal had a climate that was perfectly natural in a country of rivers, rains and waters. The climate was strange to those, who were strangers to such kind of natural environment.

*Nature's Influence on Political Life*:

The geography of the country, such as the natural barriers on the borders, the innumerable rivers through its plains, the marshes and swamps in many places and the reportedly bad
climatic, which frightened the people of Northern India, had far-reaching effects on the history of Bengal and the life of its people. The natural barriers accounted for its inaccessibility and they also acted as its first line of defence against any outside invader. A small Bengal force could stay a big invading force at the passes in the northern frontier. Again, the rivers, rains and marshes provided Bengal with a second line of defence. It was not easy in those days for an enemy force to cross the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Mahananda, the Kosi and their numerous tributaries and distributaries. The long rainy season and the inundated plains were ungenial for the upcountry soldiers to carry on warfare in this province. The climate of the country which was thought, without justification, to be hellish, served as a third line of defence against an outside attack.

Because of the existence of the rivers and waters all around, the Bengali people naturally became expert in boatmanship and naval warfare. From Masālik al-Abṣār an idea of the skillfulness of the Bengalis in making varieties of boats as well as in sailing and rowing may be obtained. While speaking of the use of boats and boatmanship of the Bengalis, Abūl Faḍl observes: "They make use of different kinds (of boats) for purposes of war, carriage or swift sailing. For attacking a fort, they are so constructed that when run ashore, their prow overtops the fort and facilitates its capture." It is to be noted in this connection that the early Muslim governors of Bengal, who aspired for an independent dominion in this province, realized the advantage of naval warfare and accordingly developed the navy and trained their people in the art of naval warfare. According to Minhāj, Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Iwād Khalji first organised a navy consisting of a number of war-boats." The Bengal governors laid greater importance to the naval warfare rather than to fighting on land. The Bengal soldiers and sailors could move swiftly in the waters, attack the enemy at the vantage points and easily score the victory against the Northern soldiers, who had little experience of

1 Aṭīn (Tr.), I, p. 134.
2 Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī, p. 163.
boatmanship and naval warfare. On many occasions, a small naval force of the Bengalis achieved decisive advantages over a large enemy force. It was because of the naval superiority of the Bengalis and the impossibility of the cavalry movement during the six rainy months, abundance of trees and shrubs favourable to ambushes and surprise attacks, that the Bengal governors defied the Delhi Sultans and even the zamindars like 'Isa Khân and his allies maintained their independence in this province in the face of the strong opposition of Emperor Akbar.

The geography and nature substantially helped Bengal in maintaining an independent political career for several centuries. The kings and emperors of the north found it difficult to impose their authority on the rulers of this country in the Hindu as well as in Muslim times. Even if they somehow occupied Bengal, they could not keep their hold on it for long. Sheltered by the natural barriers and aided by the geographical features and the reportedly bad climate, the governors easily threw off the yoke and set up an independent rule in the province. Quite early in his career shrewd and farsighted Sher Shâh realized the great natural importance of Bengal and hence from the beginning he aimed at occupying it and making it the bastion of the Afghân revival. Emperor Humâyûn, before the Battle of Chausa, wanted to leave to him Bihar and other territories except Bengal. Sher Shâh did not agree; he was willing to cede to the Emperor all his territories, but not Bengal. On this occasion, he said, "For five and six years I have exerted myself and conquered Bengal by my sword. Many of my soldiers have been killed in this conquest. So I shall not give Bengal to anyone." This expresses how great an importance was attached by Sher Shâh to his possession of Bengal, on account of its geography, nature and also riches.

1 Jauhar, p. 25:
The natural conditions of Bengal facilitated its governors to rebel and to become independent. Once the governor had rebelled, his fellow chiefs also were seized with the ambition for the sovereign power of the province. Thus there were frequent strifes among the Khalji chiefs for attaining the supreme power in Bengal. So, Barani writes, “Shrewd and well-informed men gave Bengal the name of Balghakkhana, i.e., the house of strife; because from a long time past after Sultan Mu’iz al-Din Muhammad bin Sam captured Delhi, any wali (governor) that the Sultan of Delhi appointed for Lakhnawti, it being far away from Delhi, being very extensive and wide and there having been tiresome difficulties between Delhi and Lakhnawti, disobeyed and revolted. If the wali did not revolt, then others revolted against him and killed him and captured the country. For many years the revolt has become their second nature and habit. And every wali appointed there was turned away against the king by the trespassers and rebels.” Abul Fadl also holds the same view about Bengal and observes, “The country of Bengal is a land where, owing to the climate’s favouring the base, the dust of dissension is always rising. So, in old writings it was called ‘Balghakkhana.’”

Political Life: Favoured by the natural advantages, Bengal maintained an independent existence throughout the Hindu period, with the exception of a few years under Asoka and about a century in the reigns of the imperial Guptas. In the Muslim period also, Bengal remained practically independent, ever since its conquest by Ikhtiyar al-Din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1201 A.D. Of the Delhi Sultans, only Ilutmish, Balban, ‘Ala al-Din Khalji and Ghiyath al-Din Tughlaq could exercise control over the Turkoman governors of Bengal. In the later part of the reign of Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shah (1338-1349

1 Barani, p. 82.

2 Akbarnama, III, p. 183.
A. D.) established an independent kingdom in East Bengal with Sonargaon as his capital. From this time Bengal drifted away from the Sultanate of Delhi and severed even the nominal tie of subordination to the rulers of Northern India.

After this, Bengal developed completely a separate political career under the rule of several successive dynasties, such as the Ilyās Shāhīs (1342—1414), the family of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh (1415—1435), Later Ilyās Shāhīs (1436-1486), the Abyssinian family (1486—93), and the Saiyid dynasty (1493-1539) of ‘Alā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh. It was in the time of Sher Shāh in 1539 that Bengal was again yoked to the authority of Delhi and this province continued to be a part of the Delhi Sultanate down to the reign of Īslām Shāh (1543-52 A. D.). On the death of Īslām Shāh in 1552 A. D., Muḥammad Khān Sūr, the Afghan governor, declared himself an independent ruler with the title of Muḥammad Shāh and installed a dynastic rule in the province.

Bengal thus enjoyed an independent career for more than two centuries and a half. In this period Bengal became so strong and prosperous that even the great Mughul conqueror Bābūr did not dare invade this province. In the course of his Bihar campaign, his army had a skirmish with the Bengali forces of Sultān ʿUṣrāt Shāh (1517—1532 A.D.) at the border; but having failed to achieve any advantage, Bābūr made peace with the ruler of Bengal.1 At that time he defeated an Afghan confederacy of Maḥmūd Lodi, brother of Ibrāhīm Lodi, which was patronised by ʿUṣrāt Shāh, in the battle of the Scn; but he did not attempt an invasion of Bengal. The history of the independent Sultanate of Bengal closed with the defeat and death of Dāūd Khān Karrānī in the battle of Rajmahal in 1576 A. D. at the hands of Emperor Akbar’s general, Khān Jahān. This conquest, however, proved a nominal one, because, in spite of the best efforts of the Mughul generals, the Emperor’s authority could not be established in Bengal. The Bengali zamīndārs, known as the Barā Bhuyans, under the leadership of ʿIsa Khān defied his power successfully and maintained their independence in their respective territories.

1 Bābūrnāma, Elliot (Susil Public.), pp. 77-78.
It was in the reign of Emperor Jahāngīr that the shrewd ṣūbah-dār Islām Khān subjugated the zamīndārs and consolidated the Mughal rule in this province (1612 A.D.).

Bengal remained a province of the Mughal empire down to the reign of Emperor ʿĀlamgīr. The weakness of his successors and the confusion and disintegration that followed in the empire afforded opportunity to Murshid Quli Khān, the Nāẓīm-Dīwān of Bengal, to introduce a practically independent nizāmat in this province in 1717 A.D. This nizāmat of Bengal was brought to an end by the great conspiracy of the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

The distinctive marks, which geography and nature conferred on the life and character of the Bengali peoples, found ample scope for development in consequence of an independent political career of the province under the Muslims for several centuries. By giving geographical, political and linguistic unity to all the territories of the Bengali-speaking peoples, the Muslim rulers paved the way for their distinction in various spheres of life. This political unity for the first time contributed to the homogeneity of the Bengali peoples and provided them with a national bias. From this time disappeared the distinction between the people of Eastern Bengal, North Bengal and West Bengal. The Bengali language received a great stimulus to progress and the social and cultural institutions secured a common ground for development. The political expediency also dictated the Muslim rulers of Bengal to enlist the support and co-operation of the Bengali peoples. Hence they patronised the cultural and social institutions, and encouraged the talent and intellect of the Bengali peoples in every possible way. As a result, the cultural and intellectual institutions of the Bengalis, which hitherto existed in a vague form, received definite shape and also found a very congenial ground and atmosphere for development.

_Influence on Way of Life:_—The mild and temperate climate of the country made the Bengali people temperamentally mild and amiable. It also endowed them with the finer sentiments of a soft heart which sweetened their family life and social relations. Their affections and love for blood relations accounted for the existence of joint family system on a large scale in
Bengal. Their feeling for kinsmen and neighbours made them sociable and fond of intimacies and associations. This contributed to the growth of common social and cultural traditions among them. The beautiful nature all around the country gifted them with a speculative and artistic mind and liberal outlook on life. The rivers, with their career of destruction and construction in the life of the people, left so great an impression on their minds that they developed mystic inclination and indifference to material world. Even now, the local folk songs reflect the mystic mind of the common people of Bengal. The beautiful nature stimulated poetry and enriched the Bengali literature.

It is also nature that accounts for the distinctive food, dress, housing of the Bengali people. The plains of Bengal produced rice and its rivers supplied plenty of fishes. Hence rice and fish formed their main food. Abūl Faḍl observes, ‘‘Their (Bengalis) staple food is rice and fish; wheat and barley and the like not being esteemed wholesome.’’ The Mughul historian’s view about the non-taking of wheat and barley by the Bengalis is subject to modification. It is not a fact that they abhorred these as unwholesome. There is evidence that these formed the food of the Bengalis in certain areas of the province where these crops were grown. The rains principally conditioned their dress and housing. The type of dress the common people of Bengal wear (ļąngī or dhutī) is suitable in a country which is under water for half the year. In view of the changing character of the rivers, the rains and floods which are the common phenomenon, the construction of houses of corrugated iron, thatches, wood, mud and bamboos and other light, portable and cheap materials is the only appropriate course, particularly in the rural areas of Bengal. This is like the Japanese, who make their houses with paper and wood, keeping in view the nature of their country. Even with the lighter building materials, the Bengali people constructed very fine, durable and costly houses. So Abūl Faḍl remarks, ‘‘Their (Bengalis) houses are made of bamboos, some of which are so constructed that the cost of

1 Āfīn (Sarkar, Tr.), II, pp. 132-34.
single one will be five thousand rupees." It is known from Bahāristān-i-Ghaybī that during his short stay in Jessore, Mirzā Nathan constructed a three-storied mansion with the supārī trees (areca-nut trees), which, the author says, "became an object of envy of the highest heaven." Mirza Nathan states that other Mughul officers also built nice bungalows (houses) in Jessore at a cost of Rs. 1,500 each. In describing a bungalow of the Hindu Raja (Pratapaditya) in a village named Bankura near Jessore, Mirzā Nathan writes, "What a beautiful building it was! One fail to describe the height of its pillars, the beauty of its thatching and its nice workmanship. It was a thing worth seeing."

The natural conditions also determined the means of communication of the Bengali people. It may be expressed in the words of Abūl Faḍl, who writes, "Travelling is by boat, especially in the rains... For land travel they employ the sukhasan. This is a crescent-shaped litter covered with camlet or scarlet cloth and the like, the two sides of which have fastenings of various metals, and a pole supporting it is attached by means of iron hooks. It is conveniently adapted for sitting in, lying at full length or sleeping during travel. As a protection against the sun and rain, they provide a commodious covering which is removable at pleasure. Some enjoy the luxury of riding on elephants, but they rarely take to horseback." The sukhasan was the improved type of doli, which was generally used by the people in general. The bullock-carriages were also in use in North and West Bengal. Sirāj al-Daulah, in the reign of his grandfather Nawāb 'Allvārdi, left Murshidabad for Azim abād (Patna) in a carriage drawn by two swift-running bullocks.

In Bengal, the people lived, as they do now, mostly in the rural areas. This was due to the nature which was bounteous to the Bengalis in the production of agricultural products. The rivers

1 A’in (Tr. Sarkar), II, p. 134.
3 A’in (Tr. Sarkar), II, p. 134.
4 Siyar al-Mutaḥāferīn (Tr.), II, p. 94.
and rains contributed to the fertility of the plains. The productivity of the soil encouraged cultivation and attracted larger and larger number of people to settle in the plains. Thus the rural population grew rapidly in the riverine territories of Bengal, so that now in East Pakistan not a piece of land is left without cultivation and it has the densest population in the world.
CHAPTER 11

THE PEOPLE OF BENGAL

THE Muslim conquest introduced in Bengal a fresh stream of a healthy, vigorous and virile people. The population of the pre-Muslim Bengal was composed mainly of the Hindus, the Buddhists and the aboriginals and a few Jains. Although the aboriginals formed a considerable portion of the people, they however did not count in the social life of the time. The Jains were decaying. The Buddhists were still numerous. But with the loss of their political influence on the fall of the Pala dynasty and the installation of the royal family of the Senas on the throne of Gaur, the Buddhists fast declined in number, at the vigorous persecution launched by the Brahmanical Hindus. The Hindus were the dominating people in numerical majority, in political power, in social position and in economic affluence. They had also lost their vitality on account of the existence of the invidious caste system, the oppressive socio-religious leadership of the Brahmins, the degradation of the lower caste peoples and demoralisation of the social life. In a word, discord and confusion prevailed in the social, religious and cultural life of the people of Bengal on the eve of the Muslim conquest of this province.

The Muslim conquest of Bengal was much more than a military conquest and the establishment of political supremacy. The new conquerors represented the ideal of peace, order and equality in religious, social and cultural life. So, they brought not merely a martial people, but also new ideas of social system, which were destined to revolutionise the Hindu society and set in motion a ‘Renaissance’ and a ‘Reformation’ in the history of this province.
In the Muslim period, the Bengali population consisted principally of the Hindus and the Muslims. All throughout, the Hindus enjoyed the numerical superiority. In spite of the acceptance of Islam by a large section of the Buddhists and a considerable number of the Hindus of both higher and lower castes, the Muslims were less numerous than the other major community of Bengal. It was in the later part of the British rule that they are found as a majority community in the province. In the Census of 1872 they were still in minority and represented 16 million people, while the Hindus numbered about 17 million. In the Census of 1881 the Muslims recorded a majority and surpassed the Hindus by more than half a million.

Although during the period of their own political supremacy in Bengal, the Muslims were numerically inferior to the Hindus, they were however a compact, prosperous and enlightened community in this province.

Besides the two major communities and a few Buddhists, aboriginals and Jains, there were a number of the Parsees in Bengal. In the sixteenth century two new elements were added to the population of the province. They were the Portuguese and the Armenians.

The Muslim population of Bengal was formed of two composites, the foreign Muslim immigrants and the converted Muslims. The foreign Muslim immigrants belonged chiefly to the Turk, the Afgân, the Mughul, the Persian and the Arab stock of people. There was also a sprinkling of the Ottomans, the Abyssinians and other foreign Muslims. These various elements of the Muslim population were characterized by their distinctive qualities. The Turks were possessed of dashing spirit and great capacities for civil and military government. The Afgâns were distinguished as a sturdy, courageous and warlike people. They held dear the sense of individualism. A robust and energetic people, the Mughuls were noted for their organising capacity, enlightenment and culture. The Persians excelled equally well in sword, speech and wit. They were celebrated for their intellectual and literary attainments, polished manners
and pleasant conversation. The Arabs represented an attachment to the ideals of religion as well as a sea-faring and commercial spirit. The Abyssinians were reputed for their qualities of endurance and industry. These various elements of the Muslim people thus brought with them into Bengal new spirit and forces, which invigorated the moribund Bengali society and stimulated it to progress.

The Arab Settlement in Bengal:

The Muslim settlement in Bengal is generally dated with the conquest of this country by Ikhtiyar al-Din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1201 A. D. Some scholars think that a few Arab merchants had settled in the Chittagong area long before that great Turkoman general conquered Lakhnawti. Their contention, based as it is on no substantial and convincing evidence, naturally evoked severe criticism from different quarters. In dealing with the growth of the Muslim population of Bengal, it is essential to clear at the outset this controversial issue about the Arab settlement in the Chittagong locality.

In the eighth and ninth centuries of the Christian era, the Arabs were the foremost sea-faring and maritime people of the world and the Arab merchants sailed across all waters to far-off countries of the East and the West. The Arab conquest of Sind and Multan in 712 A. D. and their settlement there naturally stimulated further Arab trade with India and the East. In the course of this trade, a few Arabs settled in Ceylon and the Malabar coast. The eastern trade of the Arab merchants flourished so much that the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal turned into the Arab lakes. There is evidence to show that the Arab sea-route followed the line of the coast of Bengal and the Arab merchants established commercial relations with the sea-ports of that country, and very much prized some of its commodities.

It is known from the early Arab geographers that the Arab merchants, in their eastward voyage, visited the port of Samandar, Ornashin¹ and Abina (Burma). A careful examination of the

¹ It is a corruption of Roshang or Rokhang, the old name of Arakan.
descriptions of *Samandar*, given by the Arab geographers, leaves no room for doubt that it was a port on the coast of Bengal.1

(1) Ibn Khurdâdbeh (died in 912 A. D.) wrote that *Samandar* produced rice, and aloe-wood was imported to this place from a distance of 15 or 20 days through sweet water from Qamrun and other places.2

(2) Al-Idrīsī (later part of the eleventh century) says, "*Samandar* is a large town, commercial and rich, where there are good profits to be made. It is a port dependent upon Kanauj, king of this country. The city of *Samandar* is situated on a khawr or inlet which comes from the country of Kashmir." He also refers to the rice production of the place and the importation of aloe-wood from the country of Kamrut, 15 days' distance, by the sweet water of the river. He adds that the fine commercial city of *Samandar* was built upon the bank of a large river, which falls into the Musala. "This river Musala is called by the author of the Book of Marvels as the river of perfumes."3

Al-Idrīsī did not visit India and as such his knowledge of the geography of this subcontinent was in many cases confused. In spite of that, his account of the port of *Samandar* agrees substantially with that of Ibn Khurdâdbeh. This sea-port, according to these two Arab geographers, was about fifteen or twenty days' journey by river from a territory, which the former mentions as Kamrut and the latter as Qamrun. They also corroborate each other in saying that this territory produced abundance of exportable aloe-wood. The terms Kamrut and Qamrun are the corrupted forms of Kamrup. That the Arab geographers meant Kamrup is confirmed by the evidence gathered from other sources. Abd al-Fadl says that the *sarkar* of Sylhet and the mountains about it were noted for the production of aloe-wood.4 The mountains of Sylhet extend to Kamrup and

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1 See Dr. A. H. Dani—Early Muslim Contact with Bengal. Proceedings of the Pakistan Historical Conference, 1951, p. 195.
2 M. H. Nainar—Arab Geographers' Knowledge of Southern India, p. 89.
4 A'lm (Tr. Sarkar), II, p. 187.
Assam. Even now Kamrup is rich in aloe-wood. This identity in name and production proves that Qamrun and Kamrut of the Arab geographers was no other place than Kamrup.

It is by the Brahmaputra-Meghna passing through Bengal that Kamrup was connected with the sea and sea-ports. Kamrup, situated in the north of Bengal, is a landlocked country and has no access to the sea except through the Bengal ports. So, its export of aloe-wood could not have taken place, unless it was conveyed by the Brahmaputra and the Meghna to some seaport at their mouth. This route would cover fifteen to twenty days' journey. From this it follows that if aloe-wood was exported, it must have been from a port at the mouth of the Brahmaputra and the Meghna.

This contention agrees with the description of the Arab geographers that Samandar was situated on an inlet on the seacoast and on the bank of a large river, which united with another river called Musala. The Brahmaputra, which flowed through Kamrup, joined the Meghna below Sonargaon in those days. Their united stream fell into the Bay of Bengal near Sandvip. It was at the mouth of these rivers near Sandvip that the great port of Samandar was situated. Al-Idrisi's mention of the king of Kanauj as the sovereign of Samandar most probably refers to Dharmapala (A.D. 752-832), the king of Gaur, who also established his sway over Kanauj.¹

There is also evidence to show that Sandvip was another port which the Arab merchants visited in the course of their trade with the East. Al-Idrisi writes, "One day's sail from the city of Samandar, there is a large and populous island which was frequented by merchants of all countries. It is four days' distance from the island of Sarandib (Ceylon)."²

¹ Dr. A. H. Dani says that even now the people living near the mouth of the Meghna call the sea in that part as Samandar.
² Elliot, vol. i. p. 91.
The island of Sandvip, situated near the mouth of the Meghna, is about four days' sail from Ceylon. The accounts of the Portuguese confirm the view that Sandvip was the island meant by Al-Idrisi. The early Portuguese writings represent the island of Sandvip as a flourishing commercial centre.¹ In the early sixteenth century, this island was an entrepot of the maritime activities of the Portuguese.

The writings of the Arab geographers definitely prove that the Arab merchants were well acquainted with the coast of Bengal and they called the country by the name of Rahmi or Ruhmi.

(1) Ibn Khurdâdbeh says that the kingdom of Rahmi was situated by the seaside and the communication between the Rahmi and other kings was maintained by ships. The kingdom next to Rahmi has been mentioned as Kamrun (Kamrup).²

(2) Masûdî writes that the kingdom of Rahma extends both along the sea and the continent. It was bounded by an inland state called the kingdom of Kaman (Kamrup).³

(3) Sulaimân the merchant (living 851 A.D.) mentions that the king of Rahmi, who was a powerful king with 50,000 elephants and 15,000 army, was at war with the Balhora and the king of Jurz.⁴ This obviously refers to the tripartite struggle of Dharmapala with the Rastrakutas and the Gurjara-Pratiharas for the sovereignty of Kanauj. Thus the kingdom of the Pala king has been named as Rahmi.

The boundary of Rahmi, given by these Arab writers that it was bounded on one side by the sea and on the other by Kamrup, is identical with the geographical limits of Bengal. The chief products and exports of Rahmi mentioned by them are also

² Ibn Khurdâdbeh—Kitâb al-Masâlik, Elliot (Tr.)—Arab Geographers, p. 16.
³ Masûdî—Maraz al-Zahab, Elliot—Arab Geographers, p. 32.
⁴ Siyâlah al-Tawârîkh; Elliot—Arab Geographers, p. 5.
peculiar to Bengal. Sulaimān refers to the fine and delicate cotton-stuff and aloe-wood as well as cowries of this country.\footnote{1} Khurdādbeh also makes mention of these commodities of Rahmī.\footnote{2} In the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea there is the reference of the finest quality muslins which were Gangetic,\footnote{3} i.e., of the Gangetic country of Bengal. These evidences confirm the view that Rahmī and Bengal are one and the same country.\footnote{4}

The name Rahmī traces its origin from Ramu, a place in Cox Bazar in the southern part of the Chittagong district. Ralph Fitch, who visited Bengal in 1585-86 A.D., refers to the kingdom of Recon (Arakan) and Rame (Ramu) situated between Chittagong and Arakan, all three being subject to the king of Recon at the time of the visit of the English traveller.\footnote{5} This expresses that even in the sixteenth century the territory between Chittagong and Arakan was called Ramu. Being a coastal region, Ramu came in direct contact with the Arab merchants and became popular with them. Hence they gave this name to the whole territory lying between the sea and Kamrup. The name Banga or Bangalah did not come into use at that time, because the Palas called themselves king of Gaur. So this name was not known to the Arab merchants.

It is clear from the above discussion that the Arab merchants visited the coastal regions of Bengal from the mouth of the Meghna to Cox Bazar and prized its commodities, such as the fine cotton cloth (mulin) and aloe-wood.

There is no direct evidence to show that the Arabs settled in Chittagong areas or in the coastal regions of Bengal in the course of their trade in the period prior to the Muslim conquest of the province. It is however gathered from an Arakanese chronicle that a few Arab merchants, after being ship-wrecked near the coast of Arakan, were settled in some villages of that country by its

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Silsilah al-Tawārīkh}. Elliot—Arab Geographers, p. 4.
\item Elliot—Arab Geographers, p. 6.
\item Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, edited by Wilfred H. Schoff (1912), p. 45.
\item Hodiwala agrees with the identification of Rahmī with Benga.
\item Purchas—His Pilgrims, vol. X, p. 183.
\end{enumerate}
king Ma-ba-toing Tsan-da-ya (788-810 A. D.). Dr. Enamul Haq interprets another Arakanese chronicle to prove the settlement of the Arabs in Chittagong in the early years of the tenth century. According to this chronicle, the Arakanese king Tsu-la-Taing Tsan-da-ya (951-957 A. D.) invaded Bengal and defeated Thu-ra-tan. He set up a stone trophy as a memorial of his victory at a place called Tset-ta-going (Chatgaon or Chittagong). He abandoned the expedition, because in the Arakanese language Tset-ta-going meant that to make war is improper. It is supposed that from this time the town and territory of Chittagong came to be known by that name.

According to Dr. E. Haq, Thu-ra-tan is an Arakanese corruption of the title Sultān. From this he concludes that there was an Arab kingdom at that time in Chittagong which extended from the mouth of the Meghna to the Naf in the east and its ruler bore the title of Sultān. Dr. Haq's structure of an Arab kingdom in Chittagong and Noakhali has been based on the foundation of a very weak evidence. There are however strong circumstantial evidences which suggest that the Arabs settled in Chittagong area in the ninth century.

(1) It is definitely established that the Arab merchants visited the Bengal coast and had trade connections with its sea-ports, such as Samandar, Sandvip, etc. It is also known that the early Arab merchants settled in many places of the East they visited in course of their trade. Thus they settled in the Malabar, Ceylon, Java, Sumatra, Malaya, Borneo and other islands in the Indian Ocean. It is not unlikely that, being attracted by the prosperity and valuable commodities of Bengal, a few Arab merchants settled in its sea-ports.

(2) Again, the islands of Sandvip, Hatia and the coastal territories of Bengal were not conquered by the Muslim rulers

1 JABS, 1844, XIII, p. 96.
2 JABS, 1844, XIII, p. 96.
3 E. Haq—Purva Pakistāne Islam Prachar, p. 17.
in the fifteenth century. Yet when Varthema and Barbosa visited the city of Bengal at the mouth of the Meghna on the coast of the Bay of Bengal, they saw many Arab, Persian and Abyssinian merchants and other Muslims living there. How did these Muslims come there? This supposes that they came and settled there in the course of their trade with the sea-ports of Bengal.

(3) The origin of the name Chittagong indicates long connection of the Arabs with this place. The accounts of Ibn Battūta, the Chinese writers and Abūl Faḍl indicate that Chittagong was near the mouth of the Ganga (Ganges). Because of its situation at the delta of the Ganga, the Arab merchants gave it the name of Shat al-Ganga (the delta or extremity of the Ganges), which in course of time turned into Chatgaon as well as Chittagong. On the basis of the Arakanese chronicle, some scholars think that the name Chittagong originated from the Arakanese king’s remark, Tset-ta-going, meaning, to make war is improper. This view is untenable, because after the Arakanese king had already made war, conquered the place and built a stone trophy there, he could not reasonably be expected to utter a remark which is attributed to him. It is rather appropriate to suggest that when he approached the place in his expedition he was confronted with its name, Shat al-Ganga, which in the Arakanese tongue sounded as Tset-ta-going. This obliged him to abandon further campaign. Chittagong was thus a local variation of the Arab name, Shat al-Ganga.

The name Shat al-Ganga is a memorial of the intimate Arab contact with the port of Chittagong in the tenth century, if not earlier. As it was a very convenient port, since it was situated on the coast and at the mouth of the Ganges, the Arab merchants made it a great centre of their trade in Bengal. To obtain the regular supplies of the valuable commodities of this country,
they stationed in Chittagong a few of their own people. Being an educated, enlightened and wealthy people, this body of merchants became influential in the port-town. In an alien land, these Arab merchants must have necessarily lived as a compact body under one chief. This Arab chief was the Thu-ra-tan, whom the Arakanese king Tsu-la-Taing Tsan-da-ya (951–57 A. D.) claim to have defeated in his expedition. Dr. Haq’s reading of the term Thu-ra-tan as Sultân cannot be dismissed as fantastic. No Hindu, Buddhist or Arakanese name or title corresponds with the formation of this term. Of course, in Hindi the term Sultân is pronounced as Surtan and it may be argued that it is a Hindi variation of the Muslim name or title. But the Arakanese chronicle connects this term with an incident that took place in Chittagong in the middle of the tenth century. It may be pointed out that the Hindi language was yet to be born at that time. In the circumstances, it is reasonable to suggest that the term Surtan is an Arakanese corruption of Sultân. The Sultân was however a chief of the influential community of Arab merchants in the Chittagong locality, not the ruler of a kingdom converging the Chittagong and Noakhali districts, as it is supposed.

(4) The greater Arabicization of the coastal territories of Chittagong and Noakhali than the rest of Bengal points that these must have longer and closer association with the Arabic-speaking Arabs. Mere contact of the people of these localities with a few visiting Arab merchants could not have produced such a deeper Arabicization in language, manners and customs. Nothing short of a settlement of the Arabs and their centuries of constant intercourse with the local people could leave this impression. The Muslims conquered North Bengal in the opening years of the thirteenth century, while Chittagong area was conquered in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, in the reign of Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shah of Sonargaon.1 This shows that Chittagong area came under Muslim rule more than one century after the conquest of North Bengal and other places. If this was the fact,

1 History of Bengal, D. Us, II, p. 99.
then it is to be said that Arabicization should have been greater in those territories than in Chittagong. Under Muslim rule, those regions developed centres of Islamic learning and culture earlier than Chittagong and in normal circumstances they should have surpassed the late beginner in the progress of Arabicization. It is quite unexpected that Chittagong area far outdistanced the earliest beginner of Islamic learning and culture in Bengal. What did account for this? The only explanation for this surprising development is that the Arabs settled in Chittagong locality at least two centuries before the Muslim conquest of Bengal.

According to the linguists of the Bengali literature, there is a great admixture of Arabic words, idioms and phrases in the local dialect of Chittagong and Noakhali. Even in the writings of the Bengali poets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of Chittagong area, Arabic vocabularies have been extensively used. Many places of this locality bear Arabic names and many Arab customs and even games are prevalent there.¹

The Bengali literature also reflects the growth of Muslim influence in East Bengal in the second half of the thirteenth century. It grew so much that many Kulins Brahmins, to avoid being contaminated by the Muslims, left their homes in East Bengal and settled by the Ganges in West Bengal. Krittivas, a Hindu poet of the fourteenth century and author of the Rāmāyana in the Bengali language, observes that a great danger (pramād) caused great anxiety to the Brahmins and, abandoning their homes where they had been living happy life, they came to West Bengal. The poet informs that his ancestor Nara Singh Ujha, a courier of Dhanujmardhanadev (a zamindar of Sonargaon in the time of Sultān Balban), was one of those Brahmins who left East Bengal at that time.²

1 See Dr. E. Haq-P—urva Pakistānī Islam Prachar, p. 19.

पूर्वे आहिल श्रीदास (Sri-Dhanuj) महाराज |
तार पात्र आहिल नारसिंह ओझा।
देश जे नाम राज्यः अधिकार ।
बजा वोहे जुडे तिह खुद्रे संगार ॥
झरदेश माधव हाइल सकले अखिर ।
झरदेश छाड़ि ओझा आहिल गण्यातार ॥
The danger (*pramāda*) referred to by Krittivas, which obliged the Brahmins to leave their ancestral home in East Bengal, could be no other than the increase of the Muslim population in that area. It was a time when Sonargaon and other eastern territories, if these were under the Muslim rule, were very recently conquered by them. Then how did, in a territory recently acquired, the Muslims increase in such a number that the Brahmins were faced with the situation of losing their *Kulinsm* and caste on account of contamination? This indicates that Islam was progressing in East Bengal long before the Muslim conquest of this area. This progress was probably the work of the Arab traders or other preachers, who might have entered East Bengal either through Chittagong or North Bengal.

There are also references of the Muslim contact with Bengal before its conquest by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī. A coin dated 172 H. (788 A.D.) of the great Caliph Harūn al-Rashīd (786-809 A.D.) has been found in the ruins of the Buddhist monastery at Paharpur, in the Rajshahi district. A few other Arab coins have also been discovered in the ruins of Mainamati, near Comilla. How could these Arab coins come to Bengal? There is strong presumption that these were brought by some Arab trader or preacher in the eighth or ninth century of the Christian era.

A statement of Minhāj, author of *Tabaqaṭ-i-Nāṣiri*, conveys the idea that the Muslims had trade with Bengal in the Hindu period. Minhāj says that when Muḥammad bin Bakhiyār Khaljī with 18 horsemen approached Nudia (his main army following behind) the people of the place thought that his party were traders and had brought horses for sale. So, they did not suspect that they had come to conquer their city. This suggests that the Muslim traders used to come to Bengal in the pre-Muslim period.

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1 K. N. Dikshit—*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No 55, Delhi, 1938, p. 87.
2 F. A. Khan—*Recent Archaeological Discoveries in East Pakistan*, Karachi, p. 11.
3 *Tabaqaṭ-i-Nāṣiri* (Elliot), p. 557.
According to local traditions, some Muslim saints, mostly Arabs and Persians, settled down in Bengal and preached Islam in different localities of this country in the time of the Hindu kings. Such saints are Bābā Ādam Shahīd (Vikrampur in Dacca district), Shāh Sulṭān Rūmī (Netrokona in Mymensingh district), Shāh Suṭlān Māḥisawār (Bogra district), Makhdūm Shāh Daulah Shahīd (Pabna district), Makhdūm Shāh Ghażnavi (Mangalkot in Burdwan district) and others.\(^1\) It is difficult to ascertain the reliability of these traditions about the time of these early saints of Bengal. These, however, give the idea that some of them might have come to this country before the Muslim conquest. Minhāj writes that Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī built \(khanqāhs\) in Bengal.\(^2\) This indicates that some saints were already carrying on missionary work in Bengal before Bakhtiyār conquered it and hence there arose the necessity of building \(khanqāhs\).

**Muslim Settlement after Muslim Conquest:**

With Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār’s conquest in 1201 A.D., the gate to Bengal was open to the Muslim immigrants. The Muslims of all nationalities entered this land as governors, administrators, generals, soldiers, missionaries, teachers, traders, and fortunesseekers. The Arab Muslims also came in the wake of this Muslim immigration. These Arab immigrants were mostly \(sufis\), missionaries and merchants. Of the several hundred saints, who preached and taught Islam in this newly-acquired province, a large number belonged to the Arab stock of people. It is said that everyone of the saints was accompanied to this country by 120 disciples and followers.\(^3\) Shaikh Shāh Jalāl was followed by 360 disciples and they all settled down in Bengal. This illustrates that quite a good number of the Arabs came to Bengal as \(sufis\) and missionaries of Islam. The writings of Varthema, Barbosa, Caesar Frederick, Ralph Fitch and also of the Portuguese indicate that in the sea-ports of the Bengal coast

\(^1\) See Chapter III, pp. 73-84.
\(^2\) Tabaqqī-l-\(Nūṣīr\) (Elliot), p. 540.
\(^3\) Shāh \(Imā'īl\) Ghāżī (G. H. Damant), JASB, 1876, XLIII, p. 215.
and in Satgaon andHughli there was an influential community of the Muslim merchants and residents and many of them were Arabs. In the later part of the fifteenth century the Arabs were a fairly influential body in Bengal and this facilitated the establishment of an Arab dynasty on the throne, in the person of Saiyid ‘Alā- al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh (1493–1517 A. D.). This Saiyid dynasty had a prosperous reign till it was overthrown by Sher Shāh in 1538 A. D. The rule of an Arab dynasty naturally attracted the Arabs of other places to migrate and settle down in Bengal.

In the Bengali population many families draw descent from the Arab saints and settlers. Shaikh Ākhi Siraj al-Dīn ‘Uthmān, the first great saint of the Chishtia order in Bengal, was an Arab of the Quraish tribe. The illustrious family of the celebrated saints, Shaikh ‘Alā al-Ḥaq and Ḥadrat Shaikh Nūr Qutb ‘Ālam, belonged to the Arab stock. From the contemporary Bengali literature numerous references of persons claiming Arab descent are available. One old Muslim poet Muhammad Khān (alive in 1646 A. D.) claims to be a descendant of the saintly Arab immigrant named Māhīsawār, a contemporary of Badar Shāh, a famous saint of Chittagong, who was held in high respect by Kadal Khān Ghāzi, a general of Sultan Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh and the first Muslim conqueror of Chittagong. Māhīsawār married a Brahmin girl at Chittagong and had by her a son named Ḥātim. Ḥātim’s son was Siddiq and the latter’s son Rāṣṭi Khān was governor of Chittagong under Sultan Bārbak Shāh (1459–1474 A. D.) and was the builder of the ‘Alawal Masjid (Inscription, 878 H./1473 A.D.). Rāṣṭi Khān’s son Minā Khān is identified with Parāgal Khān. Sultan Ḥusain Shāh’s governor of Chittagong. Minā Khān’s son Gabhur Khān is identified with Ḥusain Shāh’s distinguished general Chhuti Khān and the conqueror of Tippera and Arakan. Gabhur Khān’s son Hamza Khān was Amirzā Khān of the Portuguese writing which referred

2 There are a few families in Dacca which claim descent from the saint Shāh ‘All Baghdādi.
to him as governor of Chittagong in the reign of Sultan Mahmud Shah. Mubarriz Khan, father of the poet Muhammad Khan, was a great-grandson of Hamza Khan.\(^1\) Many such families tracing descent from the Arab saints, merchants and others are found in different places of Bengal. Though there is difficulty in substantiating the claims of many, yet these leave the general impression that a fairly large number of Arabs settled in this province after the Muslim conquest.

During the period of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate, the Persians, who spoke the Arabic language and represented Arab culture, were a sea-faring and commercial people, like the Arabs, and carried on trade with the countries of the East. So it is reasonable to think that among the early Muslim settlers in the Chittagong localities there were a few Arabic-speaking Persians. After the Muslim conquest of Bengal, the Persians came in large numbers as merchants, saints, preachers, teachers and fortune seekers and settled down in this country. In the writings of Minhaj, the earliest Muslim historian in India, references of Persian merchants are available. Minhaj writes that at the time of Al-Din ‘Ali Mardan Khalji, an Isfahani merchant of Lakhnawi, lost all his belongings. Being in distress, the merchant solicited for the help of the Khalji ruler of Bengal.\(^2\) This shows that there were Persian merchants in the cities of Bengal from the beginning of the Muslim rule. The accounts of the foreign travellers, such as Varthema and Barbosa, give an idea that a large number of Persian merchants lived in the ports and cities of Bengal.\(^3\)

Persia was the early home of \(\text{Sufis}\). Majority of the \(\text{Sufis}\) or mystics who came to Bengal as well as in other parts of India were Persians. The celebrated saint Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi, who preached Islam in North Bengal immediately after the

\(^2\) S. S. Husain—Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali M.S.S., p. 360;
\(^3\) A. H. Dani—Early Muslim Contact with Bengal, published in the Proceedings of the Pakistan Historical Conference, 1951, pp. 201-02.

\(^2\) Tabaqat-i-Nâṣīrî (Eliot), p. 579.
\(^3\) Purchas—His Pilgrims, vol. IX; Hakhuyl Society, II, p. 144.
Muslim conquest, was a Persian. It is known from a letter of Ḥadīrāt Mīr Saiyid Ashraf Jahāṅgīr Simnānī that many disciples of the great saint of Tabriz and of Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī blessed Bengal with their holy presence. Ḥadīrāt Sharf al-Dīn Aḥnā Tawwālmaḥ was a great Persian sūfī and scholar who settled down with his family and brother at Sonargaon.¹

There were Persian officers from the beginning of the Muslim rule in Bengal. According to Minhāj, Bābā Kotwāl of Isfahan was the kotwāl of Nagor at the time of Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī.² The Mongol invasion of the Persian territories drove away many Persians to Hindustan and a few of them came to Bengal. With the Mughul conquest of Bengal, a considerable number of the Persians were introduced in this province. The Persians served Prince Shujā as officers, generals and soldiers when he was viceroy of Bengal. Mir Jumla and Shayesta Khān, who governed this province, many years, were Persians. There was a great flow of the Persians as officers, generals, soldiers, scholars, teachers and physicians in Bengal during the time of the Murshidabad Nawābs, who, being themselves Persians, extended liberal patronage to the people of their original homeland. Nādir Shāh’s invasion of India and the consequent turmoil, civil strife and confusion that convulsed Northern India obliged many Persian families to find home under the rule of the Persian dynasty in Bengal. Again, the disorders in Persia after the death of Nādir Shāh brought many Persian immigrants to Bengal. From the contemporary histories, we get references of many distinguished Persian refugees in Bengal. ‘Allī bin Tufayl ‘Allī Khān, author of Tārīkh-i-Manṣūrī, who was himself a Persian, says that Nawāb Shujā’ al-Dīn granted many favours to the Persian immigrants.³ Ḥakīm Mīr Muḥammad Hādīl, a court physician of Nawāb Shujā’ al-Dīn, was a

¹ Shāh Sulṭān Mahsawār, extract in Maktūbāt-i-Ṣadī, pp. 339-40. Shāh Sulṭān Mahsawār was a prince of Balkh. He took to asceticism and preached Islam and settled at Mahasthan in Bogn. Shaikh ‘Abd Allāh Kirmanj was a Persian saint who settled at Mangat-Kot in Bhandaw.

² Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣīrī (Elliot), p. 574.

³ Tārīkh-i-Manṣūrī, ASB, Calcutta, MS., 171.

The historians, Yūsuf 'Alī, Ghulām Ḥusain Ṭabarānī, Kāram 'Alī and others, were also Persians. These show that the number of Persians who settled in Bengal in the period of the Nawābī was indeed considerable.

The Abyssinians were introduced in this country mostly as slaves. It is known that Bārbak Shāh had at one time in his service eight thousand Negro slaves, well-mounted and armed, and, finding them faithful and attached to him, he promoted several of them to high rank and responsible offices.\(^3\) Islam does not make any distinction between the master and the slave. Hence by merit, the Abyssinian slaves rose to high positions at the court and their influence increased so much that they succeeded in establishing a dynasty that ruled Bengal for a few years. Many of these Abyssinians were later on expelled by Sūltān 'Ala al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh because of their highhanded manners, but a few of them, who had settled, were in course of time merged into other Muslim population of this province.

The Turkoman Muslims must have come to Bengal in large numbers. A strong force must have accompanied Muḥammad

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1 Styar (Tr.), II., pp. 69; 107; 158-84.
2 Ibid, 158-84.
3 C. Stewart—History of Bengal, p. 100.
bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī to conquer Bengal from a powerful Hindu king Lakshmansena. Minhāj says that Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī led a cavalry force of 10,000 in his Tibet expedition. This suggests that he must have left behind a considerable force under his chiefs to maintain control over the newly acquired territories of North and West Bengal and to conquer such territories as Jajnagar, etc. Moreover, the Khaljī Turks, who came to Bengal as conquerors, soldiers or fortune-seekers, were accompanied by their wives and children. It is known from Minhāj that the wives and children of the Turkoman soldiers, who fell in the Tibet expedition, reviled the adventurous general Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī, holding him responsible for the loss of their husbands and fathers. It is also known from the Tabaqat-i-Nāṣirī that Ghyāth al-Dīn 'Iyad Khaljī (originally Husām al-Dīn 'Iyad), a lieutenant of Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī, came with his family.

The Turkoman Muslims continued to pour into Bengal with every new governor and chief. A considerable body of Ilbari Turks accompanied Balban’s governor Muḥīth al-Dīn Tughrāl to this province. A strong force was essential for him to establish his authority in view of the opposition of the Khaljī Malikis, who were ousted from power. In his campaign against the rebellious governor Tughrāl, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban was accompanied by a huge force, consisting of soldiers, camp followers and traders numbering three lakhs. After suppressing Tughrāl, the Sultān appointed his younger son Nāṣir al-Dīn Bughra Khān as governor of Bengal. Bughra Khān had a considerable following of his own and his father must have provided him with a strong force to preserve his authority in the province. When Balban’s dynasty was overthrown by the Khaljīs in Delhi, more Ilbari Turks left for Bengal, seeking home and employment under Nāṣir al-Dīn Bughra Khān, who had established a dynastic rule in that province. At the time of the Tughlaq

1 Minhāj, p. 152.
2 Minhāj, (Ravet Tr.), p. 572.
3 Minhāj (Ravet Tr.), p. 581.
4 Barānī, p. 92.
Sultanate of Delhi, a number of the Qarauna Turks came to Bengal with their governors and chiefs. Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shâh, who established his independent rule in East Bengal, and Hajj Shams al-Din Ilyâs Shâh, the founder of an independent Sultanate in Bengal, had their own following to support them in throwing off the authority of Delhi.

Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, after the transfer of capital from Daulatabad to Delhi, found the city and the adjacent territories in the grip of a terrible famine. For the relief of the people, the Sultan arranged for the shifting of a number of its inhabitants to the provinces. Accordingly, many people with their families and followers trekked to Bengal where foodstuffs were in plenty.¹

The Afghans came to Bengal as hirelings in the army of the Turkoman generals and rulers. The Habshi Sultan Mu'azzafar Shâh had a few thousand Afghans in his army. In the reign of Sultan Husain Shâh, a body of Afghân soldiers are found in his service.² Maḥmūd Lodi, brother of Sultan Ibrâhîm Lodi, and his family and followers took refuge with Sultan Nuṣrat Shâh, son and successor of Husain Shâh. They received the grant of jāgars and allowances and settled down in Bengal. Nuṣrat Shâh also married a daughter of the late Sultan Ibrâhîm Lodi.³ After the loss of Northern India and fall of the Karrânî rule in Bihar and Bengal and the Lohâni rule in Orissa, the Afghans retreated into Bengal and gradually made it their home. It is said that the last Karrânî Afghân ruler Dâaud Khân had a force of 40,000 cavalry, 14,000 infantry, 3,600 elephants, 20,000 pieces of cannon and several hundred war-boats.⁴ This expresses that there were large number of Afghans in this province.

There is reference of another refugee royal family in Bengal. After being ousted from Jaunpur by Sultan Sikandar Lodi, Sultan Husain Sharqî took refuge in Bengal. The Bengal Sultan 'Alâ al-Din Husain Shâh extended his hospitality to the

¹ Tabaqât-i-Akbari, I, p. 208.
² Riyâd al-Salâtin, pp. 128 and 133-34.
³ Firshita, II, p. 302.
⁴ Stewart—History of Bengal, p. 152.
dispossessed Sharqi Sultan and suitably provided for his maintenance as well of his men.¹

In the Mughul period, many Mughul officers, soldiers and others served in Bengal. According to Badāuni, Emperor Akbar exiled many ‘ulema to this distant territory of his empire.² As it was a great problem to establish Mughul rule in this province, in view of the strong opposition of the Bara Bhuyans, and the Mughul Emperors had also to subject the neighbouring Hindu kingdoms in the east, such as Koch Bihar, Kamrup, Kachar, Jaintia and Tippera, a large army had necessarily to be posted in Bengal. From Bahāristān-i Ghaybī and Subh-i-Sādiq references are available that many of the Mughul officers and soldiers were serving and living in this province for two or three generations from the time of Akbar. Mirzá Nathan informs that some officers including the author himself built bungalows in Jessore.

It is known from Akbarnāma that Emperor Akbar liberally granted jagīrs to the officers and soldiers in Bengal. According to Abūl Faḍl, at one time the Emperor assigned several hundred jagīrs to the soldiers in this province. It appears from the writings of Mirzá Nathan that Emperor Jahāngīr also followed his father’s policy of liberally granting jagīrs (assignment on revenue) in Bengal to his officers and soldiers. Mirzá Nathan’s father Iḥtimām Khān had his jagīr in the pargana of Sunabazu, which he parcellled among his own subordinate officers for their maintenance. Tuqmuq Khān was possessed of a jagīr in Shahzadpur. A statement of Mirzá Nathan expresses that most of the Mughul officers serving in Bengal in the reign of Jahāngīr held jagīrs in this province. This Mughul soldier-author in one place incidentally writes, “When the rainy season began and it became impossible to continue the Thana at Alapsingh, all the officers under orders from Islām Khān returned to their respective jagīrs to make their own arrangements to proceed to the expedition of Bhatti at the appearance of the Canopus.”³ Many of

¹ History of Bengal, II, p. 145.
² Badāuni, II, p. 278.
³ Bahāristān-i Ghaybī (Tr.), I, pp. 29 and 32.
these officers, particularly the soldiers, who had their jāgīrs and lived in Bengal many years, must have settled down permanently in this province.

Prince Shujā' had a large following of the Mughuls. After his defeat and retreat to Arakan, many of his people did not accompany him to that half-civilized land. They also could not return to the service of the Empire for fear of punishment. These soldiers took the road to the rural areas and got mixed up with the village people.

Thus a considerable number of the Muslims of different racial affiliations—Arab, Persian, Turk, Mughul, Afghān, Abyssinian and others—found home in Bengal in different times.

The Origin and growth of the Muslims:

In studying the Muslim people of Bengal, it is essential to know the proportion of the immigrant Muslims to the converted Muslims and to investigate into some questions that have long agitated the minds of the scholars and the intelligentsia of the country. These questions are: how did Bengal, one of the last provinces to be conquered by the Muslims, develop into a Muslim majority area and what was the origin of the Bengali Muslims?

The question of the growth of the Muslim majority in Bengal was a big surprise to the authors of the Census Reports. They reflected that in Delhi, Agra and other places of Northern India, which had long been the centres of Muslim rule and culture, the Muslims represented only a fraction of the total population, whereas Bengal, one of the last territories to be acquired by them, grew into a predominantly Muslim country, and recorded 41% of the total Muslim population in 1901. H. H. Risley remarked, "It is easy to understand why the Muhammedans should be found in large numbers in the Punjab and Sind, which lie on or near the route by which successive hoardes of Afghān and Mughul

1 Census of 1901, vol. I, Pt. I, pp. 66-69 and 384. Total Muslim population of Bengal was 25½ million.
invaders entered India, but it is not at first sight apparent why they should be even more numerous in Bengal proper." According to the Census of 1941, the Muslims formed about 55 per cent of the total population and in East Bengal they were 66 per cent of the population.

The question of the Muslim majority in Bengal puzzled the English administrators since 1872 when the first regular census was held in India. H. Beverley and H. H. Risley cut the ' Gordian Knot' of the unexpected Muslim majority with the thoughtless observation that the Bengali Muslims were mostly converts from the low caste peoples of Bengal. Their view dominated the minds of the administrators and writers. Beverley wrote, "But probably the real explanation of the immense preponderance of the Mussalman religious element in this portion of the delta is to be found in the conversion to Islam of the immense low castes (the Chandals and Rajbansis), which occupied it." In support of his contention, he stated that there was a close resemblance between the Mussalmans and their fellow country- men, the low caste of the Hindus, in identity of physique and similarity of manners and customs. By a show of the anthropological examination of 185 low class Muslims, mostly jailed, of East Bengal, H. Risley concluded, on the basis of their nasal index, that the Bengali Muslims were converts from the Chandals, Pods, Rajbansis, etc.

It is to be pointed out here that Risley took the measurement of the nose of very lower class Muslims, while, on the other hand, he had the nasal examination of the persons of all classes of the Hindus. I quote below the results of his anthropological examination.

3 Census Report of Bengal, 1872, p. 132.
4 Census Report of Bengal, 1872, p. 133.
5 H. Risley—Tribes and Castes in Bengal, p. 91.
6 Census Report of Bengal, 1872, p. 132.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Average nasal height</th>
<th>Average nasal width</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussalman</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayastha</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagdi</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandal</td>
<td>96.2</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalah</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kybatta</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mochi</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pod</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajbansi</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadgop</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nasal feature of a few lower class jailed Muslims can never represent the physical characteristics of all the Muslim community. A fair examination will show that the average Bengali Muslims have finer nose, thin and erect, than the average Hindus of upper classes. Mr. F. Rubbie rightly points out that Mr. Risley held this biased type of examination with the definite intention of lowering the prestige of the Muslims of Bengal. Without a proper anthropological examination, on the basis of cephalic (head) index and nasal (nose) index, it will be far from accurate to affiliate the Muslims of Bengal to a particular group of people. Their racial affiliations may however be determined on the evidence of some historical facts.

The Census Reports of the time of the British rule, beginning from 1872, reveal one very important fact with regard to the Muslim population of Bengal. There was an enormous increase of the Bengali Muslims during the period of the British rule in this country. In the Census Report of 1891, C. J. O. Donnell observes, "In 1872 Muhammadans were nearly half a million less numerous than the Hindus in Bengal proper. Now (1891 A. D.) they surpass them (Hindus) by a million and half."  

1 Census of India, 1891, vol. II, p. 2. In 1872 Hindus were 16.8 million and the Muslims were 16.3 million people. In 1891, the Hindus recorded 18 million, while the Muslims numbered 19.5 million.
also writes, "It is statistically proved that since 1872, out of every 10,000 persons, Islam has gained 100 persons in Northern Bengal, 262 persons in Eastern Bengal and 110 persons in Western Bengal, — on the average 157 persons in the whole of Bengal proper." Mr. Donnell further observes, "The Mussalman increase is real and large. If it were to continue, the faith of Muhammad would be universal in Bengal proper in six centuries and a half, while Eastern Bengal would reach the same condition in about six hundred years." 1

The above evidence is self-explanatory. It reflects the great increase of the Bengal Muslim population on account of high birth-rate. "Between 1872 and 1881 Hindus increased in Bengal proper by less than one per cent. and Mussalmans by more than seven per cent. Since 1881 (to 1891) the advance of Mussalmans has been by 9.6 per cent and the Hindus by only 4.7 per cent." 2 According to the subsequent Census Report, there was consistently higher growth of the Bengali Muslims, so that they recorded an increase of 10 per cent in the Census of 1901 and 10.4 per cent in 1911. It is to be noted that the increase was highest in Eastern Bengal where the Muslims added 12.3 per cent in the period from 1891 to 1901. 3 The Hindu increase was 4.8 and 3.9 in 1901 and 1911 respectively. In 1872 the Hindus were numerically superior to the Muslims. In the Census of 1911, however, the Muslims represented 52.3 per cent and the Hindus 45.2 per cent of population of Bengal. 4

In 1872 the Muslim population in Bengal proper was 16,370,967, in 1901 it rose to 24,237,228 and in 1941 it numbered about 37 million. Thus in less than 70 years, the Muslim population rose from 16.3 million to about 37 million. While in the same period (1872—1941) the Hindus increased from about 17 million to 31 million only. The following chart will show the increase of the Muslim population:

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2 Census of India 1891, vol. II, p. 2. The Muslim increase in 1881 was more than 9 per cent.
### Increase of the Muslim population in the period 1872—1941.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Total population in India</th>
<th>Total Muslims in India</th>
<th>Total population of Bengal Proper</th>
<th>Hindu population in Bengal Proper</th>
<th>Muslim population in Bengal Proper</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>255 million</td>
<td>36,769,735</td>
<td>16,370,967</td>
<td>18,102,348</td>
<td>16.8 million</td>
<td>Many Animists were enumerated with Hindus. The actual Hindu population was 16.8 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>49.95 million</td>
<td>35,607,628</td>
<td>17,863,411</td>
<td>17,254,120</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall of total population because of separation of Sylhet and its inclusion to Assam. Its population was 10 lakhs in 1881 and 11 lakhs in 1891.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>287,223,431</td>
<td>38,277,338</td>
<td>19,582,481</td>
<td>18,068,655</td>
<td></td>
<td>In 10 years Muslim increase was 10 % and Hindu increase 4.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td></td>
<td>38,277,338</td>
<td>21,907,980</td>
<td>20,150,541</td>
<td></td>
<td>In 10 years Muslim increase 10.4 and Hindu 3.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24,237,228</td>
<td>20,945,379</td>
<td></td>
<td>N.B.—(1) In 70 years (1872—1941) Indian Population increased by 52 per cent. (2) In 60 years (1881—1941) Indian Muslim population nearly doubled (from 49.95 million to 94.45 million). (3) In 70 years (1872—1941) Bengali Muslims more than doubled (16 million to 37 million); 131.2 p.c. increase. (4) In 1872 Bengali Muslim population was half a million Hindus; in 1891 they surpassed Hindus by a million and half. (5) In 70 years (1872—1941) Hindu increase was highest in E.a (17 million to 51 million) 14 million i.e. 82.3 p.c. increase. (6) The increase of Muslim population was highest in Eastern Bengal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is evident from the above discussion that the rate of the growth of the Muslim population was higher than the Hindus in India, higher still in Bengal, and the highest in Eastern Bengal. In Bengal proper the Muslims recorded an increase of 131.2 per cent, in 70 years. This great growth of the Muslim population in the days of their political and economic misfortunes was a big surprise to the authors of the Census Reports. They ascribed high birth-rate as the main cause of this increase. The compilers of the Census Report of 1891 observed, "It is certain that the growth of Mussalmanism in Bengal proper is connected with physical than doctrinal forces." Mr. J. A. Vas, quoting the Census Report of 1901, says, "The Mohammedan population is growing at a relatively much greater rate than the Hindus. This is not due to conversions, of which very few are recorded. The greater fecundity of the Mohammedans is explained by the prevalence of polygamy and widow marriage, the lesser inequality between the ages of husband and wife, the greater nutritiveness of dietary and their greater material prosperity."

No other factor can account for the great rise of the Muslim population of Bengal in the British period than their high birth-rate. It was a time when the number of conversions was few and the immigration of the Muslims from other places had stopped. If material prosperity, nutritiveness of dietary and polygamy are accepted as the causes of their fecundity during the period of the British rule, when their economic life was shattered and ruined, then these must have contributed to the greater birth-rate of the Bengali Muslims in the days of their own political and economic supremacy in the country. The Bengali literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reflects the high birth-rate among the Muslims. Poet Mukundaram says that the Hajjans, who followed the profession of circumcising the Muslim children, were so busy in their works that they did not get time for rest.

In the period of their political sovereignty and economic prosperity, polygamy was common among the Bengali Muslims.

1 Quoted by F. Rubbie—Origin of Bengal Muslims, p. 120.
2 District Gazetteer, Rangpur, 1911, p. 44.
3 Mukundaram—Chandikarya, p. 345.
The rulers, amirs, merchants and well-to-do people married more than one wife and maintained big female establishments. This is reflected in the literatures of the time. In speaking of Hasan, a farmer of Hasanhati, Poet Vipradas says, "Hasan spends his time in enjoyment with his hundred wives".¹ In his poetic enthusiasm Vipradas mentions that Hasan had hundred wives. A Muslim however cannot have more than four wives at a time. Hasan might have four wives and there were many maid-sages in the harem to attend these wives. The Portuguese traveller Barbosa referred to the prevalence of polygamy in the city of Bengala among the Muslims. He wrote that the well-to-do Muslims each of them had three or four wives.² Polygamy prevailed even among the common people. Poet Vipradas says, "There in Hasanhati every Muslim marries frequently and lives in happiness."³

Widow-marriage is prohibited in the Hindu society, while it was encouraged among the Muslims. In view of the great inequality between the ages of husband and wife, there was a large number of widows among the Hindus. In the Bengali literature we get ample evidence of girls of 10 or 12 years married to old men of 50 or 60. There were also many instances of old Kulin Brahmins, each marrying many young girls and leaving them widows after a year or so. This accounted for the fall in the birth-rate of the Hindus. On the other hand, widow-marriage among the Muslims added to their growth.

In 70 years (1872—1941) the Muslim population of Bengal increased by 131.2 per cent. As the Census figures of 1941 of both the Hindus and the Muslims are considered inflated on account of their political passions, it would be better to base the increase of population on the Census Reports of the period from 1872 to 1911. In this period of 40 years, the Bengali Muslims increased (from 16 million to 24 million) by 50 per cent, and the Hindus did (from 17 million to 21 million) by 23.5

³ Vipradas—Manasamangala, p. 67.
per cent. So, in 100 years the Muslims and the Hindus had the increase of 125 per cent and 58.6, say 60 per cent. respectively. ¹

According to the Census Reports, there were very few cases of conversion during the British period. ² Even then, we allow 25 per cent increase on account of conversion of non-Muslims to Islam and the immigration of the upper India Muslims to Bengal in connection with trade, industry and government employment. So the Muslims recorded an increase of 100 per cent on account of birth-rate in 100 years. Calculating on this basis, the Bengali Muslim population was 8 million in 1772. In studying the Bengali population of the period previous to 1772, the great famine that visited Bengal in 1770 and carried off more than one-fourth of its population, has to be taken into account. Before this great calamity overtook Bengal, the Muslims and the Hindus numbered 10.6 million and 14.1 million, respectively and the total Hindu-Muslim population was 24.7 million, or say 25 million together with the Buddhists, the Animists, and others.

It has been previously discussed that a considerable number of the Muslims of various racial affiliations settled down in Bengal in different times. In the most modest estimate, 1,000 Arabs came to Bengal by 1220 A.D. and 2,000 settled in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, particularly during the reigns of the Ilyās Shāhi and Ḥusain Shāhi dynasties. Similarly 1,000 Persians entered Bengal in the earliest period and 50,000 in the period of the Mughuls and the Nizamat of Murshidabad. The conqueror of Bengal, Muhammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī must have been accompanied by a sufficient force. It is known that after the conquest of Bengal, he led an army of 10,000 soldiers in his Tibet expedition and at the same time provided for the security of the newly-acquired province and the conquest of Jajnagar by his lieutenants. Many of these Khaljī Turks came to Bengal with their wives and children. From these it is reasonable to conclude that at least 40,000 Khaljī Turks, male, female and

¹ In the Census of 1872 many Animists were enrolled among the Hindus. So the Hindus would number about 17 million instead of 18 million.
² See page 60.
children settled in Bengal in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. At the time of Nāṣir al-Dīn Bughra Khān, son of Sulṭān Balban, 15,000 Ibari Turks, male, female and children, adopted Bengal as their home. At least 5,000 Qarauna Turks similarly came to Bengal in the time of the Tughlaq Sulṭanate of Delhi. The number of the Abyssinians was 8,000 in the time of Sulṭān Bārbak Shāh in the middle of the fifteenth century. The number of the Afghāns, male, female, etc., could not have been less than 200,000 at the time of their supremacy in Bengal.¹ The number of the Mughuls, soldiers, officers, women and others, may be estimated at 15,000 in the time of Emperor Jahāngīr. The Mughuls continued to come and settle in this province down to the reign of Emperor ʿĀlamgīr and they must have numbered several thousands. An idea about the increase of the immigrant Muslims may be available from the following chart:

**Original Settlers:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1770 A. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arabs.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1220 A. D.</td>
<td>1,000 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400-1500 A.D.</td>
<td>2,000 “ 3 centuries = 16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persians:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1220 A. D.</td>
<td>1,000 “ 5¼ centuries = 48,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1576-1756</td>
<td>50,000 “ 1½ centuries = 150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Khalji Turks:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1220 A. D.</td>
<td>40,000 “ 5½ centuries = 1,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ibari Turks:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1300 A. D.</td>
<td>15,000 “ 4½ centuries = 420,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qarauna Turks:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1320 A. D.</td>
<td>5,000 “ 4½ centuries = 120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abyssinians:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1450 A. D.</td>
<td>8,000 “ 3 centuries = 32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afghāns:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1570 A. D.</td>
<td>200,000 “ 2 centuries = 800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mughuls:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620 A. D.</td>
<td>15,000 “ 1½ centuries = 37,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32,71,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ An idea of the number of the Afghāns may be obtained from a statement reported to have been made by ʿĪsām Shāh to Maulānā ʿAbd Allāh Sulṭānpūrī: "There are nine lakhs of Afghāns to replace me; but if you die, another like you may not be born in India for ages." 150b.

*Afṣâr-i-Shāhān, 150.*
In 1770 before the great famine, the total Bengali Muslim population was 10.6 million and of these 3.27 million belonged to the stock of the immigrant Muslims and 7.33 million were from the converted Muslims. Calculating on the basis of 100 per cent increase on account of birth-rate, we find that the stock of the immigrant Muslims and the converted Muslims numbered about 8 lakhs and 19 lakhs, respectively, two centuries before. Thus in 1570 the Bengali Muslim population was 27 lakhs and the Hindus were 41 lakhs, in a total population of 68 lakhs, say 70 lakhs with the Buddhists and others, in Bengal. The Muslims represented 39.5 per cent of the total population of the province. In the growth of this Bengali Muslim people, the foreign element contributed 29.6 per cent and the local converts 70.4 per cent.

Converts from upper class Hindus and Buddhists:

Of the converted Muslims a considerable portion represented mixed blood and converts from the upper class Hindu community. There are many instances of the immigrant Muslims marrying the Hindu women of the Brahmin and Kayastha families. The Muslims, who were the ruling and prosperous people at that time, did not certainly marry in lower class Hindu families, which did not have much contact with them. It is the educated and enlightened Brahmans and Kayasthas, who generally came in political and social contacts with their Muslim neighbours. This naturally prepared the ground for social intimacy and matrimonial relations between the Muslims and the upper class Hindus.

According to a Hindu tradition, Shams al-Din Ilyās Shāh, the Bengali Sultan, married a beautiful Brahmin widow, who was named Phulmati Begum. The Sultan had several sons by this Hindu wife. It is known from poet Mūhammad Khān that his great ancestor Māhisawār married a Brahmin girl. By this

1 Durgadas Sanyal—Banglar Samajik Itihasha, p. 58 and N. K. Bhattacharji—Coins and Chronology, p. 83.
marriage Māhīsawār left behind an illustrious family which produced some distinguished governors and generals of the time of the Ilyās Shāhi and Ḥusain Shāhi Sultāns.1 Vijayagupta, a Hindu poet of the fifteenth century, refers to the marriage of a qādī with a Hindu woman of upper class, who was well acquainted with the Hindu Sāstras. The qādī had several sons by this lady.2 In the local traditions, there is reference of the marriage of Masnad-i-Alt Ḥān, the chief of the Bara Bhuyans, with Sonamayi, a beautiful sister of Kedar Ray, a great Brahmin zamīndār of Sripur. By Sonamayi Ḥān had two sons, Ādam Ḥān and Birām Diwān, who are also said to have married two daughters of Kedar Ray.3 Shamsher Ghazir Puthi mentions that Shamsher Ghāzi married a Brahmin girl.4

All the instances cited above show that the Muslims married in the upper class Hindu society. Even if some of these instances referred to in the local traditions might not be accepted as authentic, yet these reflect the prevailing practice of the Muslims marrying the Hindu women of the Brahmin and Kayastha families. I have cited only a few typical examples. Many more instances could be added, illustrating such marriages of the Muslims with the Hindu ladies of the aristocratic class.

It is not correct to say that the converted Muslims were recruited mostly from the lower class Hindus. There are evidences to show that Islam attracted large converts from the educated upper class of the Hindu community. The Brahmins and the Kayasthas were educated and enlightened. They were naturally the people who occupied position at the Muslim court and held offices in the Muslim State. As officers, neighbours and influential and leading people of the Hindus, they came in direct and frequent contacts with the Muslim rulers. Because of their education and enlightenment as well as their intimacy, the Brahmins and the Kayasthas had better opportunities to understand and appreciate the Muslim society and their faith. Being attracted

2 Vijayagupta—Padmapurana, p. 56.
4 T. C. Dāsgupta—Some Social Aspects of Bengal, p. 86.
by the superior ideals of Islam, many of them entered its fold. It is known from the Amritkand, a Sanskrit work, that a Vedic- 
ist Brahmin, called Bhojar Brahmin, came to Lakhnawti in the early years of the Muslim rule. He discussed philosophy with Qādi Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandi and accepted Islam at his hands. The same book also refers to another Brahmin sage of Kamrup, Ambhavanath by name, who embraced Islam about this time. The acceptance of Islam by Jadu, a son of Raja Kans, is too well known to need mention. He belonged to an influential and aristocratic Brahmin family. After conversion he was named Jalāl al-Dīn and was elevated to the royal dignity under the name of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh. He left behind a line of kings and princes in Bengal. Kālā Pāhār, the famous general of Sulaimān Karrānī and Dāūd Karrānī, was a convert from the Kayasthas. He distinguished himself in the conquest of Orissa in the reign of Sulaimān Karrānī. Kālā Pāhār was seriously wounded in the battle of Rajmahal in 1576 A. D., and most probably he died of it. Nothing is known about him from the contemporary historians after this battle. The father of Isa Khan, Kalidas Gazdani, was a Rajput Kshatriya in the service of the later Husain Shāhī Sulṭān of Bengal. He embraced Islam and was named Sulaimān. Sulaimān married a princess of the Husain Shāhī family and Ismāʿīl and Isa were his sons by this wife.

Māhmūd Tāhir, a wazīr of Khān Jahnān ‘Ali of Bagherhat, belonged to an influential Brahmin family. He was better known as Pir ‘Ali. It is known from Mirzā Nathan that Raghu Ray, son of Raja Ray, zamīndār of Shahzadpur in the Pabna district, accepted Islam at the time of Islām Khān’s governorship. It is also to be remembered that Murshid Qulī Khān, the Nawāb of Bengal, was originally a Hindu Brahmin of the Deccan.

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3 A. N. III, pp. 181-82.
4 A. N. III, pp. 432-33.
6 Bahārīstān-i-Ghaybi (Tr.), vol. I, p. 32.
The social history of the Hindus of Bengal supplies numerous instances that many Brahmin and Kayastha families became outcaste, because of their contacts with the Muslim rulers, and they escaped the social degradation by entering the fold of Islam. Kamal al-Din Choudhury and Jamal al-Din Choudhury, the zamindars of Singhatia, were originally Brahmins and they accepted Islam at the hands of Pir Ali in order to be relieved of the social odium, on account of their intimacy with the Muslim ruling class. Such social outcastes had sometimes to form a distinct class by themselves. In this way arose the Pirali, the Sher-Khan, the Srimanta Khani and other classes of the Brahmins and Kayasthas in Bengal.1

That a large number of the Brahmins and Kayasthas voluntarily accepted Islam, either on religious and social or on material grounds, was noticed by the contemporary poets and travellers. In his Chaitanyakamangala, the poet Vrindavandas says, "In the Hindu community even the Brahmins came and voluntarily embraced Islam."2 The Portuguese merchant Barbosa, who visited Bengal in 1518 A. D., observes, "The king who is a Moor is a great lord and very rich; he possesses much country inhabited by the Gentiles (Hindus), of whom everyday many turn Moors (Muslims), to obtain the favour of the king and the governors."3 The contemporary Bengali literature reflects that if a Brahmin accepted Islam, he persuaded his relations and brethren to come to the fold of Islam. The Rasal Vijaya Kavya of Shaikh Chand refers to three Brahmins, who embraced Islam, and induced his relations to accept this faith.4 In many cases, the defeat of the Pandits, the religio-social leaders of the Hindus, in religious debates with the Muslim divines and 'ulema, resulted in the conversion not only of their families including themselves, but of their followers and relatives. In Shek Subhodaya there is

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2 Chaitanyakamangala (Vrindavandas), pt. I, verse 16.
mention of religious discussions between Shaikh Jalâl al-Dîn Tâbrîzî and the Pandits of the Court of Raja Lakshmanse-na and their acceptance of the discipleship of this great Muslim saint. This account has no basis on fact. It however reflects that such instances of the conversion of the Hindus to Islam, following the defeat of their Pandits, were known in this period.

From the above discussion it is evident that quite a large number of the Brahmins and Kayasthas were recruited to the Muslim society, so that the Bengali Muslims represented a substantial percentage of the people whose ancestors belonged to the aristocracy of the Hindu community. To this must be added the bulk of the Buddhists, who flocked to Islam to escape from the persecution of the Brahmanical Hindu society. The Buddhists were mostly Kshatriyas or Kayasthas, because we know that Buddhism as well as Jainism were a rebellion of the Kshatriyas against the domination of the Brahmins and these religions spread mainly in this second class of the Hindu community. So, the acceptance of Islam by the Buddhists meant the acquisition of a large number of the people, who were the remote descendents of the Kshatriyas.

In view of these above facts, it may be concluded that, of the 70 per cent converted Muslims, at least half of them came from the upper strata of the Hindu and the Buddhist communities and the rest was recruited from the lower class. Thus the Bengali Muslim population was formed of about 30 per cent converts from the upper class non-Muslims and 35 per cent converts from the lower strata of the Hindu society. This explodes the theory that the Bengali Muslims were converts mostly from the low caste people of the Hindus. No society of the subcontinent could claim to represent a larger percentage of the immigrant Muslims and converts from the upper class Hindus as well as the Buddhists.

The authors of the Census Reports assigned two causes which resulted in the conversion of the non-Muslims to Islam; one was the force and the other was the caste system. Beverley
says, "The Mohammadans were ever ready to make conquests with the Koran as with the sword. Under Sultan Jalaluddin (Jadu), for instance, it is said that the Hindus were persecuted almost to extermination. The exclusive caste system of the Hindus again naturally encouraged the conversion of the lower orders from a religion, under which they were no better than despised outcastes, to one which recognised all men as equals." The allegation of forcible conversion is baseless and unwarranted. Even the evidence gathered from the Census Reports of the time proves that this accusation is absolutely without foundation. The Census Reports of 1891 and 1901 show that in that period there were a few cases of conversion in Bengal. It is be to noted that even during the period of the British rule, when the Muslims were politically and economically crushed, new converts were acquired to Islam. Nobody can say that the Muslims used force under the British rule to gain converts to their faith. Conversion in this period definitely proves that the ideals of Islam attracted these non-Muslims to come to its fold. The allegation that Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Shāh (Jadu) exterminated the Hindus does not stand the test of evidence. Far from persecuting the Hindus, he favoured them and promoted their culture. He was a patron of the Brahmans and Sanskrit. The Hindu scholars, poets, and men of letters flourished in his court. He conferred the *Ray Mukut* and five other titles on the Sanskrit scholar and poet Vrihaspati. He seated the poet on an elephant and gave him riches and jewels. Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn might have been severe with the unprincipled, greedy and fanatical Brahmans, who prescribed the *Suddhi* (purification) ceremony for his reversion to Hinduism, but even after the *Suddhi* they treated him as an outcaste. If the Muslim rulers used force, no non-Muslim would have been left in Bengal during the period of their five and half centuries of rule in this country. The Muslim rulers were tolerant and liberal and hence Bengal remained predominantly Hindu in population under the Muslim rule. It was because of their toleration that *Vaishnavism* could develop as a great force in the Bengali society of the time.

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1 Census Report of Bengal 1872, p. 132.
2 District Gazetteers, Rangpur, 1911, p. 44.
3 Sahitya Parishada Patrika, 1354, p. 40.
The real cause of the spread of Islam in Bengal was its great inherent quality which fascinated the educated and enlightened Hindus and offered equality, justice and a status of respectability in society to the degraded and persecuted humanity. Islam came as a great deliverance to the persecuted Buddhists of Bengal. The Brahmins were persecuting the Buddhists in a worst form. It is known from an inscription at Nalanda that the army of the Hindu king Jayavarman of the Varman dynasty burnt a portion of the Buddhist vihara at Sumpur.¹ The Tibetan Buddhist monk Taranath, who visited Bengal in the sixteenth century, left an account of the Brahmanical tyranny on the Buddhists in the Sena period. He observed that the persecuted Buddhists welcomed the Muslims and helped Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī in the conquest of Bengal.²

The early Bengali literature also expresses how the tyranny of the Brahmins drove the Buddhists and lower class Hindus to take refuge in Islam. Ramai Pandit, a poet of the fourteenth century, says, "There are sixteen hundred families of the Brahmins in Jaipur. They go to different places demanding perquisites (dakshina); where they do not get any, they pronounce their curse and thus burn the world. At Malda they levy a regular tax upon all without distinction. There is no end of their knavery. They have grown very strong; ten to twenty come together and destroy the worshippers of Dharma. They pronounce the Vedas; fire issues forth incessantly; every one trembles before them. Being aggrieved at heart, people say, 'O Dharma! protect us. Who is there other than yourself to rescue us?' Thus do the Brahmins destroy the creation. This is worst form of injustice. From his seat in heaven (Vaikuntha), Dharma knew all this in his mind. He produced illusion and darkness. He assumed the form of Yavana (a Greek, a foreigner, a Muslim) with a black cap on the head and bow and arrow in hands. The good is attained without fear, uttering the name of one God (Khudā), who is formless and without any attribute and

¹ Nihar Ray—Bengalir Itihasa, p. 524. Sumpur is also known as Kusumpur. It is in Bogra district.
² Nihar Ray—Bengalir Itihasa, p. 528.
incarnate in Paradise (Behisht). They utter the name of Madar (Shāh Madar, a saint). All the gods with one accord wore trousers in great delight. Brahma became Muḥammad, Vishnu became the Prophet; Siva became Ādam; Ganes became Ghāzi, Kartika became Qādī and the Hindu sages (muni) became Shaikhs (Muslim saint) and Indra became a Maulānā (a scholar of Muslim theology). The sun, the moon and other gods turned foot-soldiers and all began to play martial music. Chandika became Eve and Padmavati became Bibi Nūr (Lady of the light). All the gods in concert entered Jaipur, broke the temples and images, seized properties and called out to catch hold of this man or that man."

Poet Ramai Pandit has thus revealed a dark chapter of the Brahmanical tyranny which alienated the Buddhists and the common Hindus so much that they welcomed the Muslims as great liberators. According to the poet, even the gods, being unable to tolerate the inhumanities of the Brahmans, came as the Muslim prophets, saints, 'ulema and religious warriors and destroyed the tyranny of the Brahmans. Hence, the Muslims delivered the suffering people and in this work of deliverance the prominent role was played by the saints and the 'ulema.

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For original text, see Appendix A.
CHAPTER III

THE SAINTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY

Section A

Sufism and the Early Saints

During the period of Muslim rule, Bengal was a land of ṣūfīs, who played a very significant role in the development of the Muslim community in the province. Their achievements, either in the spread of Islam or in the expansion and consolidation of Muslim rule or in the education and enlightenment as well as in the elevation of the mind and morals of the Bengali peoples in general and the Muslims in particular, had been more substantial than those of the Muslim generals, conquerors and rulers. By their religious fervour, missionary zeal, exemplary character and humanitarian activities, they greatly influenced the mind of the masses and attracted them to the faith of Islam. To the physical conquest of the Muslim generals, they added the moral one by recruiting converts and followers and thus provided a source of strength and stability to the Muslim rule in the land of a non-Muslim population. The khāngāhs of the ṣūfīs, which were established in every nook and corner of Bengal, were great centres of spiritual, humanitarian and intellectual activities and these greatly contributed to the development of the Muslims and the elevation of the Bengali society in various ways.

Rise of Ṣūfism:

Ṣūfī is the name which is generally associated with the mystics and saints in Islam. It is thought that they were so-called, because they used to wear a garment of coarse undyed wool known as ṣūf. There are also other views about the origin of the
name ūfī. 1 The name however came in common use in the second century of the Hijra. The ūfīs draw their inspiration from the Qur’ān and interpret some of its verses as the source of esoteric knowledge. They regard the Prophet as the first and Ḥaḍrat ‘All as the second spiritual teacher and guide. Professor Massignon observes that the ūfīsm or the mystic movement was the direct heir of the primitive Muslim asceticism, itself derived from the Qur’ān and the practice of the Prophet. Though Islam is generally regarded as the least ascetic, yet amongst the very earliest generations of the Muslims there were many who lived a life of devotion and austerity and to whom Islam was a discipline of the soul and not merely a collection of external rituals. 2 They always thought of the transitoriness of this life, of the Day of Judgment and of eternal punishment. They accepted the worldly duties with a deep sense of awful responsibilities. “The highest type of this early asceticism”, says Professor Gibb, “is al-Ḥasan of Basra (643-728 A. D.), whose memory remains fragrant in Islam to this day.”

Originating among the early Arab Muslims, ūfīsm flourished the most in the mystic soil of Persia. In the early stage, ūfīsm was based on fear of God and the Day of Judgment. But soon the concept changed and ‘union with God, the Beloved’ through love became its basis. The woman saint Rabī‘a of Basra (713-881 A.D.) was its first conspicuous exponent. She said, “Love of God hath so absorbed me that neither love nor

1 Some scholars are of opinion that ūfī has its origin in the Arabic word ṣafā, meaning purity. Others hold that it is from ṣūf, meaning class. Those who are nearer to God are known as ṣūfīs.

Professor Gibb (Mohammedanism, p. 102) quotes a statement of Ibn Sirin (died 729 A. D.) to show that ūfī is from ṣūf, a coarse undyed garment of wool worn originally by Christian ascetics. Criticising the Muslim ascetics, who wore ṣūf in imitation of Jesus, Ibn Sirin said, “I prefer to follow the example of the Prophet who dressed in cotton.”

There is another view about the origin of the word ūfī. A number of the companions of the Prophet, noted for their piety and ascetic life, had neither home nor family. They lived in the mosque built by the Prophet and were known as the men of the ṣuffa, or the terrace, over which they slept.

A. M. A. Shustery—Outlines of Islamic Culture p. 347.

2 The four pious Caliphs, Salman, Mu‘āz bin Jabal and many other early Muslims led a life of piety, devotion and austerity.
hate of any other thing remains in my heart." From the tenth century ṭifs began to drift from its anchorage towards Pantheism, a tendency favoured by the influence of Greek philosophical ideas, especially that of 'emanation'. It is also thought that there was the influence of Indian Monism or the Vedantist philosophy. Pantheism consists in the mystic belief that God is imminent and He is the creation and the creation is He. He expresses Himself in the creations and He has no separate existence from the creations. The Muslim ṭifs however strongly maintain their belief in the principle of God transcendent as well. He is not confined in the creations; He is above and beyond the creations also.

According to the ṭifs, the Qurʾān has two meanings, external and esoteric or hidden. They give prominence to the esoteric knowledge of the Qurʾān called maʿrīfat. The ṭifs base their doctrine on the principles of love and prefer the course of love to other means of reaching God. They consider love to be the essence of religion and of the cause of creation and its continuation. Love is the surest way to union with the Beloved, God. Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī says:

"Happy the moment when we are seated in the palace,
thou and I,

With two forms and with two figures, but with one soul,
thou and I."

Ṣūfism is the development of the soul through intense love for God. In the words of J. A. Subhan, "Ṣūfism speaks of advancement in the spiritual life as a 'journey' and the seeker after God as a sālik or traveller. Its teaching is intended to guide the traveller to the attainment of perfect knowledge (maʿrīfat) of God, the only Reality diffused through all things. Subsequently the wandering soul is led onwards by slow stages (maqmāt) and through the experience of certain states (shāwil), along a path (tārqa) to the desired goal of union with God called fana'.

1 H. A. Gibb—Mohammedanism, p. 103.
fil-haqiqat or the annihilation of self in the Reality." The fan is the stage of self-effacement or self-dissolution, when the seeker forgets everything in his abiding love for God. The last stage called baq' bi-Allh is attained when the sufis reaches the spiritual perfection and lives absorbed in perpetuity with the Reality.

In the mystic life, the suf passes through several stages of training. First, he must discipline his mind by living strictly in accordance with the injunctions of the Shari'at. His mind is thus trained to obey and serve. After this he passes to the stage named targa, the path in which he needs the help of a spiritual guide called pir or shaikh, who teaches him to purify his inner self. The slik lives in the khanqah of the pir, attends him and follows his directions in spiritual exercises. Dhikr and samā' (spiritual songs) are adopted as methods to illuminate the mind with divine love. In the next stage, ma'rifat, the purified mind is illuminated with divine knowledge. It is through self-discipline, devotion and virtues that the suf attains the stage known as fanā'fi-Allh or the dissolution of self and baqā'bi-Allah or achieving the nearness to God, and living with his Beloved in eternal bliss.

The sufis devoted themselves not merely to the development of their soul, they also dedicated their lives to the cause of Islam and to humanitarian work. They considered service to people as a work of great devotion and love to God. Jalāl al-Din Rūmī says, "To win the people's heart is the greatest pilgrimage; and one heart is more than a thousand Ka'bas. Ka'ba is a mere cottage of Abraham; but the heart is the very home of God." It was with these ideals of missionary and humanitarian works that the sufis of early Islam came to India.

Within a few years of its rise, sufism developed into many orders; their number is reckoned above 175. A few of these orders spread their branches in India and left lasting impression on the mind and morals of the people of this subcontinent. Khwāja Mu'in al-Din Chishti (1142-1236) was the founder of the

1 J. A. Subhan—Sufism, its Saints and Shrines, p. 67.
Chishtia order in India. Shaikh Bahâ’ al-Din Zakaria (1169-1266) of Multan founded the Suhrawardia order in this subcontinent. The Qadiriya order of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani (1078-1168 A. D.) was introduced in India by one of his descendants, Gauth Gilani, in 1482 A.D. He settled in Uchh and died there in 1517 A. D. Khwâja Bahâ’ al-Din Naqshband (died in 1388) of Turkistan was the founder of the Naqshbandia order. Khwâja Bâqi bi-Allâh, one of his disciples, migrated from Turkistan to Delhi where he died in 1603 A. D. Thus was founded the Naqshbandia order in India. Sharf al-Din 'Ali Qalandar, a famous saint who died at Panipat in 1324 A. D., founded a new order known as the Qalandaria. Besides these, many other sufi orders also flourished in this subcontinent.

Sufism in Bengal:

Hundreds of sufis came to Bengal in different times from the lands of Islam in Western and Central Asia as well as Northern India. They belonged to various orders, particularly to the Chishtia and Suhrwardia. Though imported from outside, Bengal proved to be the most congenial field for the development of sufism. It spread throughout Bengal, even to the remotest villages, so that khângahs and shrines grew up in every nook and corner of the country. Sufism had prospered so much in the soil of Bengal that several new mystic orders developed on the basis of the teachings of some of the distinguished Bengal sufis. An idea of the prosperity of sufism in Bengal can be obtained from a

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1 Shaikh Shihâb al-Din Shurawardi (died 1235 A. D.) was the founder of this order in Baghdad.
2 The other orders are considered to be subdivisions of the above four.
3 Sharf al-Din 'Ali is well known as Bû 'Ali Qalandar.
   He was, according to the author of the Akhbâr al-Akhîyâr (p. 120), a disciple of Khwaja Quîb al-Din Bâkhîyâr Kâkî or Hâdhrat Nizâm al-Din of Delhi. Though the period of his advent cannot be determined with certainty, it is however presumed that he belonged to a time before Hâdhrat Nizâm al-Din. In the time of this great Saint, the Qalandars are found in Northern India as well as in Bengal. It was a Qalandar, who stabbed Hâdhrat Nizâm al-Din. The chief of the Qalandaria order hacked to pieces the mysterious mystic Sidi Maula at the suggestion of Sultan Jalâl al-Din Khalîli. Some scholars are of opinion that Bû 'Ali Qalandar Panipati was the founder of the Qalandaria order.
letter written by Ḥadrat Mīr Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī (died in 1380 A. D.), a distinguished disciple of the great Bengali ṣūfī Shaikh ‘Alā al-Ḥaq, to Sultan Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jaunpur. He writes:—

“God be praised, what a good land is that of Bengal where numerous saints and ascetics came from many directions and made it their habitation and home. For example, at Devgaon seventy leading disciples of the Shaikh of Shaikhs Ḥadrat Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī are taking their eternal rest. Several saints of the Suhrawardī order are lying buried in Mahisun and this is the case with the saints of the Jalā'ī order in Deotala. In Narkoti some of the best companions of Shaikh Ahmad Damishqī are found. Ḥadrat Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Tawwānah, one of the twelve of the Qudir khānī order, whose chief pupil was Ḥadrat Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Manerī, is lying buried at Sonargaon. And then there was Ḥadrat Badr ‘Ālam and Badr ‘Ālam Zāhīdi. In short, in the country of Bengal, what to speak of the cities, there is no town and no village where holy saints did not come and settle down. Many of the saints of the Suhrawardī order are dead and gone under earth, but those still alive are also in fairly large number.”

From the letter of Ḥadrat Mīr Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī, we get the reference of a few new ṣūfī orders that developed in Bengal. The Jalā'ī order began with the celebrated saint Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī, in whose honour Deotala received the name of Tabrizabad. The ‘Alā’ī order originated with the great saint of Pandua, Shaikh ‘Alā al-Ḥaq. ‘Alā al-Ḥaq was descended from the famous Quraish general Khālid bin Walid and hence his order was also known as Khalidīa. The ṣūfī order that started with his illustrious son Ḥadrat Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam was called Nūrī. Shaikh Husain Dhukkarposh, a disciple of Shaikh ‘Alā al-Ḥaq, introduced the Husainī order. There was another order known as Rūhaniya. Besides these, Qalandāria and Shāffārīa orders also flourished in the soil of Bengal. The existence

1 The letter has been translated and published by Prof. H. Askari in B.P.P., Vol. LXVII, No. 130, 1948, pp. 35-36.
of these mystic fraternities and the innumerable khanqahs and dargahs illustrate the popularity of Ṣūfism in Bengal.

Ṣūfism in Bengal and Northern India:

Bengal Ṣūfism was an expansion of the Ṣūfism of Northern India and Western Asia. Hence, it drew inspiration from these sources. But in course of time, it was largely influenced by the environmental condition. In Bengal the Ṣūfis came in more intimate contact with the mystic ideas of the Hindus and the Buddhists. As a result of the translation of the Sanskrit mystic work, Amrīkand, into Persian and Arabic and the acceptance of Islam by the Hindu ascetics and a large number of Buddhist monks, the Ṣūfis became familiar with the spiritual ideals of the people of this land. They appreciated the yoga system and took interest in its exercise. In consequence, the Bengal Ṣūfis developed a more liberal outlook than their brethren in the North. As time passed on, some of them advanced to such extreme liberalism in their approach to the religious questions that to them the essential distinctions between the Muslim Ṣūfī and Hindu ascetic were practically lost, and in the mystic fraternity known as the Baul, the two spiritual organisations found a common platform. The Bauls counted both the Hindus and Muslims in their mystic order.

Being a spiritual expansion of the Ṣūfism of Northern India, the Bengal Ṣūfis represented the supremacy of the North in the spiritual as well as political fields. Shaikh Ākhi Sirāj, the great founder of the Čishtia silsila in Bengal, was indeed a representative of the spiritual supremacy of his celebrated preceptor Shalikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya in this province. This spiritual supremacy helped the political power of the North in maintaining its hold on Bengal. So, it is found that Sultān Firūz Šāh Tughlaq, while advancing to suppress Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Šāh, issued a proclamation, asking among others the šaikhs not to support the rebel governor of Bengal. Later on the Bengal Ṣūfis drifted away from the spiritual authority of the North. Politically also there came a change in their ideas. They became
supporters of the independent Sultanate of Bengal. So it is found that Ḥaḍrat Nūr Qutb Ālam exerted himself in persuading Sultan Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jaunpur to abandon his scheme of occupying this province.

Like their brethren in the North, the Bengal ṣūfīs devoted themselves to missionary, educational and humanitarian activities. Their work had unprecedented success and their teachings had deeper impression on the minds of the people, particularly of the Hindus, accustomed to adore the supernatural and their masses prone to astrological beliefs and superstitions. The Muslim majority in Bengal and the development of the mystic mind of the Bengalis is a substantial proof of their achievement in this province.

*Early Saints in Bengal:*

Traditions preserved in the minds of the people for generations connect a few Muslim saints with the pre-Muslim Bengal. But there is no definite evidence to support the traditions. It is therefore necessary to ascertain their reliability in the light of the circumstantial evidence.

*Bābā Ādam Shahīd:*

A tradition current in Vikrampur in the Munshiganj subdivision of the Dacca district connects a Muslim saint named Bābā Ādam with a Hindu king Ballalasena. It is said that this saint came from Makkah with seven thousand disciples to redress wrongs done to a certain Muslim of Rampal in Vikrampur by Ballalasena. He established his *astanah* (resting place) at Abdullapur near Rampal and sacrificed cows. Being informed of this, Ballalasena issued forth from his capital known as Ballalabari in Rampal, and fought with Bābā Ādam. But he failed to achieve any success in the engagement. The saint then offered his own sword to the king, saying that he could be killed only with his own sword. Ballalasena killed the saint with that sword. He, however, did not survive Bābā Ādam Shahīd.
The irony of fortune made him as well as the members of his family sacrifice their lives in fire. A Sanskrit work entitled ‘Ballala Charita,’ written by Ananda Bhatta, has substantively corroborated the story of the tradition, excepting that the enemy of Ballalasena has been named as Bayadumba and the Mlechhas numbering a force of 5,000. Bayadumba can obviously be taken as a corruption of Bābā Ādam and the Mlechha is the name the Hindus generally use for the Muslims.

The authenticity of Ananda Bhatta’s Ballal Charita as a work on the great Sena king Ballalasena is questioned by some scholars. There is no evidence that Ballalabari in Rampal was a capital of Ballalasena and he ever lived there. Moreover, it cannot be believed that more than half a century before the Muslim conquest of Bengal a body of five thousand Muslims penetrated as far as the interior of the Dacca district, particularly in the reign of Ballalasena who was one of the most powerful Hindu kings of Bengal. N. N. Basu has pointed out that Ananda Bhatta’s Ballala Charita refers not to king Ballalasena of the Sena dynasty but to a Vaidya zamindār of the name of Ballalasena, who flourished in Vikrampur in the later part of the fourteenth century. It was a time when the Muslim rule had been established in Bengal including East Bengal, and a few Hindu zamindārs were still continuing their existence here and there. It may be that Ballalasena of the tradition with whom Bābā Ādam Shahīd fought was this zamindār of Vikrampur.

There is a simple grave of Bābā Ādam Shahīd at Rampal, in front of a mosque built by a malik, named Malik Kāfur, in 1483 A. D. during the reign of Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Faṭḥ Shāh. The inscription of the mosque does not refer to the name of the saint Bābā Ādam Shahīd. It can however be inferred that the building of the mosque was connected with the shrine of the saint. Rampal

1 JASB, 1889, vol. LVII, pp. 18-19.
2 JASB, 1873, p. 285 and J. N. Gupta—Vikrampur Ithihaṣa, p. 46:
   Atha barsantare prapte daibakrat sudarunat;
   Vikrampur madhye ch Rampal grama tatha;
   Bayadum nam mlechhaha gou yuddharthang samupagata.
3 JASB, 1873, p. 285 and Vikrampur Ithihaṣa, p. 46.
was just a village with a small Muslim population. Such a village could never have been chosen by an Abyssinian chief for the construction of a mosque, unless it had some special significance. The shrine of Bābā Ādam Shahīd gave it religious sanctity and importance and made it a place of veneration and assemblage of the Muslims from different places. For the congregational prayers of these Muslim visitors, an Abyssinian chief in the service of the Ilyās Shāhi Sulṭān built this mosque. So it is reasonable to conclude that the shrine was much older than the mosque and Bābā Ādam Shahīd was so well-known in the locality that his name needed no special mention in the inscription.

Shāh Muḥammad Sulṭān Rūmī:

A saint Shāh Muḥammad Sulṭān Rūmī is said to have preached Islam in Bengal in the pre-Muslim period. His shrine is at Madanpur in the Netrokona subdivision of the district of Mymensingh. According to a document, dated 1671 A.D., in the possession of the Khādim of the dargah, the saint came to Madanpur in 445 H./1053 A.D.¹ There is also a local tradition that the great spiritual power of Shāh Muḥammad Sulṭān Rūmī attracted a Koch king to embrace Islam and that king made the donation of the village Madanpur to the saint.² The Koch kings established their sway in the Netrokona locality after the fall of the Senas. This would mean that the saint received the land-grant in the early part of the thirteenth century and hence lived in that period.

Shāh Sulṭān Māhisawār:

At Mahasthan in Bogra district is situated the shrine of a great sufī, Shāh Sulṭān Māhisawār, supposed to be a prince of Balkh who preferred asceticism to the comforts of the palace and dedicated his life to the cause of Islam. After renouncing the world, he became a disciple of Shaikh Tawfiq of Damascus, who then sent him to serve the cause of the Faith in the non-

¹ E. Haq—Bangle Sufi Prabhava, p. 135.
² District Gazetteer, Mymensingh, 1917, p. 152.
Muslim land of Bengal. It is said that Shāh Sulṭān came to Bengal by sea via Sandvip and, because he sailed in a boat shaped like a fish or with the figure-head of a fish, he was known as Māhīśāwār, meaning, fish-rider. When he came to Harirampāt nagar its Hindu king Balaram, who opposed him, was eventually killed in fighting and his minister accepted Islam. Then he proceeded to Mahasthan where he fought against Raja Parsurām and his sister Sila Devi. The king fell in the engagement and Sila Devi drowned herself in the Karotoya.  

There is a sanad of Emperor Aurangzeb, dated 1096 H/1685 A.D., to Saiyid Muhammad Tahir, Saiyid 'Abd al-Raḥman and Saiyid Muhammad Rida which confirmed their right to the rent-free land attached to the shrine of Shāh Sulṭān Māhīśāwār. This sanad also refers to the land-grant made by the earlier Sulṭāns. If those farmāns connected with the previous grant to the shrine were available, they would have helped in deciding the time of the Māhīśāwār saint. But none has yet come to light.

The traditions reflected that Raja Parsurām was a tyrant and he was particularly very ruthless towards the Muslim subjects. So the people were seething with dissatisfaction. From this H. Beveridge infers that Shāh Sulṭān Māhīśāwār led a rising of the people against his tyranny and bigotry. Even the lower class Hindus joined this popular rising. It is known from the tradition that a sweeper of Parsurām, Harpal by name, regularly supplied the saint Māhīśāwār with information about the king.

Makhdum Shāh Dawlah Shahid:

According to tradition, Makhdum Shāh Dawlah was a son of Muʿāz bin Jabāl, a companion of the Prophet. With his father's permission, he left Yaman and was accompanied by a number of followers, including his sister and sister's sons. On the way he met Jalāl al-Dīn Bukharti, who gave him two pigeons, and
then he sailed eastwards until he arrived at Pataja, near Shahzadpur in the Pabna district. Makhudum Shah Dawlah and his followers settled there, built a mosque and devoted to missionary work. Intending to destroy these settlers, the Hindu king launched an attack on them and in the battle the saint and several of his followers were killed. The Makhudum’s sister sacrificed her life by throwing herself into the water of a pool to avoid dishonour at the hands of the Hindu king. Since then that pool was called Sati Bibie Ghat (the bathing place of a chaste lady). The head of the Makhudum was taken to Bihar. The Hindu king, perceiving in it celestial radiance, summoned the Musalmans of the place and buried the head and constructed a mosque there. The surviving nephew of the Makhudum, Khwaja Shaha Nur by name, buried the saint’s headless body at Shahzadpur near the mosque, which was constructed at the time of the settlement. His nephews and followers were also buried by the side of his grave. At Shahzadpur there are in all 21 graves of the saint and his followers. It is also said that the place was called Shahzadpur after the title of Makhudum Shah Dawlah, who was a Shahzada of Yaman.

The tradition claims Shaikh Shams al-Din Tabrizi as the spiritual preceptor of Makhudum Shah Dawlah Shahid. Shams al-Din Tabrizi was also the teacher of the famous Sufi-poet Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-73) and he died in 1247 A.D. The tradition has referred that the Makhudum met Shaikh Jalal al-Din Bukhari. Shaikh Jalal al-Din Bukhari blessed Multan with his holy presence and he lived between 1196 and 1291 A.D. He is the grandfather of Shaikh Jalal al-Din Bukhari, better known as Makhudum Jahaniyan, who died at Uchh in 785 H. (1383 A.D.). If these are to be entertained as facts, then it is to be concluded that Makhudum Shah Dawlah Shahid came to Bengal in the early half of the thirteenth century. The tradition has also referred to him as the son of Mu‘az bin Jabal. It is known from a reliable source that Mu‘az bin Jabal died in 17 or 18 H./640 A.D. This is a case of the difference of six centuries. This suggests

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1 JASB, 1904, pt. I, No. 3, pp. 260-711
2 J. A. Subhan—Sufism, its Saints and Shrines, p. 236.
that Makhdum Shāh Dawlah Shahīd was not a son, but might be a descendant of Muʻāz bin Jabāl.

His shrine at Shahzadpur attracts even today hundreds of visitors and reminds of his great sacrifice to the cause of Islam in Bengal. To the mosque attached to the dargah has been endowed 722 bighas of land by the Muslim rulers.¹

Makhdum Shāh Maḥmūd Ghaznavī:

The dargah of the saint Makhdum Shāh Maḥmūd Ghaznavī exists at Mangalkot in the district of Burdwan. He is commonly known as the Rāhā Pīr. According to the local tradition, the saint came to Mangalkot in the reign of a Hindu King named Vikram Kesari and began to preach Islam. The bigoted Hindu king persecuted him and the Muslims in every way. The saint wrote to the Delhi Sultan complaining against him. The re upon a Muslim force was sent to Mangalkot. The saint joined them and defeated Vikram Kesari in a battle. The Hindu king fled to East Bengal and Mangalkot passed in the hands of the Muslims.²

There is reference of king Vikram Kesari in the Sanskrit work Shek Subhodaya as well as in early Bengal literature. From these it is thought that Vikram Kesari was a petty king of the Mangalkot locality in the days of the Muslim conquest of Bengal. This suggests that the saint Rāhā Pīr played some part in the conquest of Mangalkot and he lived and preached in the early part of the thirteenth century.

Bāyazīd Bistāmī and Shaikh Farīd:

Tradition also connects the great sūfī Bāyazīd Bistāmī (died 874 A. D.) with Bengal. There is a shrine of this famous saint at Nasirabad, a village near Chittagong.³ But no evidence is available to show that Bāyazīd Bistāmī ever visited Bengal in his life-time.

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² E. Haq—Bange Sufi Prabhava, p. 129.
³ E. Haq—Bange Sufi Prabhava, p. 147.
The name of the saint Shaikh Farid passes in everybody's lips in Bengal. There is also a fountain at the foot of a hill in Chittagong which is called Chashm Shaikh Farid. 1 From this it is thought that Shaikh Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shakr (died 1269 A. D.), who travelled many places of India to preach Islam, might have visited Chittagong. It is known from Rahât al-Qulub that Shaikh Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shakr was present at the time of the death of Shaikh Jalâl al-Din Tabrizî. 2 Shaikh Jalâl al-Din Tabrizî died in 1244 A. D. at Deotala near Pundua. If the evidence of Rahât al-Qulub is accepted as a fact, then it can be said that Shaikh Farid Ganj-i-Shakr visited North Bengal. If he visited North Bengal, it is not unlikely that he visited Chittagong and also Faridpur, which is supposed to have been named after the name of this celebrated saint.

Shaikh Jalâl al-Din Tabrizî :

Shaikh Jalâl al-Din Tabrizî was the most celebrated of the early saints in Bengal. It was his missionary zeal and great spiritualism that accounted for the spread of Islam and the development of the Muslim community in North Bengal in the early days of the Muslim rule in this province. Indeed by his piety, ideal character and humanitarian service, Shaikh Jalâl al-Din Tabrizî left such profound impression on the minds of the people and morals of the society that his memory has for ever been enshrined in the hearts of the millions of the Bengali people.

Tabrizî and Shâh Jalâl : There is some confusion about the time of Shaikh Jalâl al-Din Tabrizî's visit to Bengal. Some scholars confuse him with Shâh Jalâl, who is connected by tradition with the conquest of Sylhet. In his translation of Ibn Baṭṭuta's Travels, Dr. Mahdi Hasan has referred to these two saints as one and the same person. 3 Similar view has

1 E. Haq—Bange Sufi Prabhava, p. 168.
2 Rahât al-Qulub, p. 64. It is a maññūzāt written in 655 H. (1645 A. D.) by a person named Nizâm al-Din Ahmed, who calls himself a disciple of Khwâja Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shakr.
been expressed by Stapleton, Abid Ali and Storey.\(^1\) In his translation of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Prof. Gibb has refrained from making any comment on this issue. There is also a vague notion in certain quarters that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi and Shāh Jalāl are two different saints. But nothing substantial and documentary has yet been produced in support of this contention. In dealing with the career of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi, it is essential that this prevailing confusion is cleared in the beginning.

The view that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi and Shāh Jalāl are one person is not unwarranted in view of the fact that it has its basis on a contemporary and direct evidence. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa who met Shāh Jalāl at Sylhet in 1346 A. D., mentioned him as Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi in his accounts.\(^2\) Secondly, the author of Shek Subhodaya, a Sanskrit poetical work supposed to have been written by Halayodha Misra, a court-poet of Lakshmansena, has referred to Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi as Makhdūm Shaikh Shāh Jalāl Tabrizī,\(^3\) and has thus combined the names of two saints into one. Thirdly, there is no contemporary and reliable evidence about the date and place of the death of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi. It is only the writers of the nineteenth century who have referred to the date of his death; but they gave different dates and did not produce any contemporary evidence in support of their statement.

The direct evidence of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa indeed commands weight and force. This great Moorish traveller met the Shaikh personally, talked with him and stayed at his khānqah as a guest for some days. So his evidence that the Shaikh of Sylhet was Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi cannot be discredited by a vague general notion and superficial statements. One direct evidence is worth a hundred indirect ones. Hence, it would need quite a few forceful indirect evidence to prove the unreliability of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's direct and contemporary evidence.

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2 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (Text), II, p. 144.
A minute study of the *Travels* of Ibn Battūta shows that his accounts are often confusing and contradictory and these cannot be relied unreservedly. It will be seen that he has confused Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī with Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet and has thus confounded his readers.

1. All the *malzām* and biographies of the saints, written from the thirteenth century onwards, agree that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī, as a dārveš, had a wider fame in Northern India, particularly in Multan, Delhi and Badaun. Ibn Battūta, who lived in Delhi for about six years and associated with the saints and ṣūfīs there, might have heard of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī at that time. He then met Shaikh Jalāl, popularly called Shāh Jalāl, at Sylhet on his way to China. Having visited China and many other places of Asia, he returned to his native land Morocco and recorded his experiences about twenty-five years after his visit of Shāh Jalāl. It is known that Ibn Battūta did not write the accounts of his travel himself, but narrated them at the court of Fez and he did it practically from memory. His accounts were written by one of the court secretaries, Muhammad Ibn Jawzī. In writing or narrating accounts from memory of the events that had happened and of persons whom he had met twenty years earlier, one is bound to confuse dates and names, particularly identical names. Falling in the confusion of this nature, Ibn Battūta has added the epithet of *al-Tabrizī* to the name of Shaikh Jalāl (Shāh Jalāl).

That Ibn Battūta was confused with these two identical names is further illustrated by the fact that, in one place he has mentioned the same saint he visited by the name of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Tabrizī and in another place by the name of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Barsamī,1 which has rightly been read as *Shirāzī* by some scholars. One person cannot belong to both Tabriz and Shiraz, as one place is quite far off from the other. This is clearly a confusion.

The confusion in Ibn Battūta's account considerably weakens...

1 *Ibn Battūta*, (Text), II, p. 145.
the force of his otherwise direct evidence and gives occasion for
doubting the accuracy of his statements.

2. As for the Sanskrit poetical work, Shek Subhodaya,
which has combined the names of the two saints into a common
name, 'Makhdum Shek Shâh Jalâl Tabrizî', not only its claim
as a contemporary compilation is doubted, it is even considered
spurious. The artificial use of the Arabic and Persian words
and the style of the Bengali verses in this Sanskrit composition
indicate that it was written when the Hindus of Bengal had become
sufficiently acquainted with Arabic and Persian and the Bengali
language had fairly developed. Such a development did not
take place before the fifteenth century and hence this work
cannot be accepted as a compilation of the time of Laskshman-
sena. It may be that the names of the two saints, who were
dead long before, passed as a byword in Bengal and, being
identical names, they, in course of time, passed into a common
name and tradition to the common people. The poet of the
Shek Subhodaya has also kept this tradition of common name for
the two saints.

3. A study of the career of Shâh Jalâl in the light of other
references of Ibn Battûta as well as the traditions preserved in
the Suhail-i-Yaman will show that the saint of Sylhet was
a different person from Shaikh Jalâl al-Din Tabrizi.

(i) According to the evidence of Ibn Battûta, he met the
Shaikh at Sylhet in 1346 A. D. and he received the news of the
Shaikh's death in the following year from Burhân al-Din Sagharj
at the Chinese capital Khan Balîq (Peking).1 This traveller also
informs us that he learnt afterwards from the disciples of the
Shaikh that he died at the age of 150 years.2 An age of 150
years is an unusually long life. The Suhail-i-Yaman informs
that the Shaikh died at the age of 62 years.3 If Ibn Battûta's

1 Ibn Battûta, (Text), II, p. 145.
2 Ibn Battûta (Text), II, p. 144.
3 JASB 1874, vol. XLII, p. 278.
statement is accepted, then this saint was born in 1197 and died in 1347 A.D. at the age of 150 years.

(ii) Ibn Battūta also says that the Shaikh told him that he had seen the ‘Abbasid Caliph Mu’tasim billah at Baghdad and was present in that city at the time of his assassination. Mu’tasim billah was the last ‘Abbasid Caliph, who was killed by the Mongol general Halaku in 1258 A.D.

(iii) Shāh Jalāl is also traditionally connected with the conquest of Sylhet which took place in 1303 A.D.²

The above discussion produces four significant dates of the life of Shāh Jalāl; he was born in 1197; he was at Baghdad in 1258 A.D.; he came to Sylhet in 1303 A.D. and he died in 1347 A.D.

(iv) An analysis of the career of Shāh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi in the light of the contemporary references will prove that he was born at least 35 years before 1197 A.D., the date of the birth of Shāh Jalāl. There are substantial evidences which conclusively establish that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi had died nearly a century before the death of Shāh Jalāl.

The malfūzāt of Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyyā compiled by his worthy disciple Amir Hasan Sizji under the name of Fawā’id al-Fawād is considered very reliable. It was written in 1315 A.D. in the life time of the great Auliyyā. It has made frequent references of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi. These are also corroborated by other contemporary malfūzāt and biographies of the saints. On the basis of these references, the following facts about Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi are available.

(i) Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi was a disciple of Shaikh Abū Sa’id Tabrizi.³ After the death of his Shaikh, he attended

1. Ibn Battūta, II, p. 144.
2. JASB, 1874, p. 278.
3. Fawā’id al-Fawād (Urdu Tr.), p. 146 and Firishta (Urdu Tr.), p. 500.
Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1144-1235 A.D.) at Baghdad for seven years and attained distinction in his discipleship.\(^1\)

(2) It is also known that Khwāja Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishti (1142-1236 A. D.) had the association of Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī and Abū Saʿīd Tabrizi before he left for Hind-Pakistan and Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi was acquainted with Khwāja Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishti at Baghdad.\(^6\)

Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi attained spiritual perfection (kamāliyyat) in the discipleship of Khwāja Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī and also met Khwāja Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishti at Baghdad before the renowned Khwāja came to Hind-Pakistan. According to Abūl Faḍl, the Khwāja came to this subcontinent at the time of Muhammad Ghorī’s conquest of Delhi and Ajmir,\(^3\) i.e. in 1192 A.D. This leads to the conclusion that before 1192 A.D., Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi was a mature man and was aged at least 30 years. So, in 1197 A. D. when Shāh Jalāl was born Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi was aged at least 35 years.

(3) It is also gathered from the contemporary sources that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi extensively travelled Arabia, Iraq and Iran and met Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn Ṭūtūr (512-627 H./ 1118-1229 A. D.) at Nishapur.\(^4\) He then set out for Hind-Pakistan and at first came to Multan, where he stayed for sometime in the company of his intimate fellow-disciples Shaikh Baha’al-Dīn Zakariyā (1169-1266 A. D.) and Khwāja Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Ushī (died 1235 A. D.)\(^5\) Nāsir al-Dīn Qubaicha was the ruler of Multan at that time. He ruled Multan from 1206 to 1216 A. D.

(4) Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi left Multan while Nāsir al-Dīn Qubaicha was still the ruler of that territory. He came

\(^{1}\) Fawāʾid al-Fawāʾid, p. 146 and Akhbār al-Akhbār, p. 44.
\(^{2}\) Fawāʾid al-Fawāʾid, pp. 500 and 506.
\(^{4}\) Fawāʾid al-Fawāʾid, p. 204; Akhbār al-Akhbār, p. 45.
\(^{5}\) Fawāʾid al-Fawāʾid, p. 88; Firishta, p. 506 and Sīyar al-Auluṭā (Urdu T.,) p. 47.
to Delhi and was honourably received by Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish,1 who, himself a saintly character, held the saints in great respect. Iltutmish reigned from 1210 to 1236 A.D. Since Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi had come to Delhi before Sultan Iltutmish ousted Nasir al-Din Qubaicha from Multan, the date of that great saint's arrival at Delhi may be placed about 1211-12 A.D.

(5) In Delhi Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi lived in the company of his friend Khwaja Qutb al-Din Ushi, who had earlier come from Multan.2 He lived in Delhi for a short time. His great reputation as a saint and the Sultan's veneration for him made the Shaikh al-Islam Shaikh Najma I-Din Sughra, jealous of him and he brought several false accusations against him. To investigate into these, a conference of the shaikhs and the ulama was held. Shaikh Bahaa' al-Din Zakariya came from Multan and attended this conference. On investigation, the accusations were found to be false and malicious. Thereupon Sultan Iltutmish dismissed Shaikh Najm al-Din Sughra from the office of Shaikh al-Islam.3

After this incident Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi left for Lakhnawti, most probably in 1212 A.D., as his stay in Delhi was very short.4 On his way he halted at Badaun, where he blessed a boy who was the future Maulana 'Ala al-Din Usuli, a teacher of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya. At Badaun, he also converted to Islam a Hindu dacoit, who afterwards became celebrated with the name of Khwaja 'Ali.5 Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi arrived at Lakhnawti about the year 1213 A.D. and established his astanah and khangah at Pandua near a Hindu temple.

(6) If Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi was Shah Jalal, then he must have again gone to Baghdad from Lakhnawti to be present there at time of the assassination of Caliph Mutasma al-Hillah in

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1 Rauda-i-Aqtab, p. 6; Khazinat al-Ashfiya, p. 28 and Firishta, p. 506.
2 Faw'id al-Fawad, p. 123 and Firishta, p. 506.
3 Faw'id al-Fawad, p. 117; Akhbar al-Akhvur, p. 44; Khazinat al-Ashfiya, p. 278.
4 Faw'id al-Fawad, p. 92.
5 Faw'id al-Fawad, pp. 108 and 134.
1258 A. D. Then he should have returned to Bengal before 1303 A. D. to help in the conquest of Sylhet by the Muslims.

Had this happened, it would have been noticed by the contemporary saints and authors of Mafṣūzāt, such as Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakr, Maulānā ‘Alā al-Dīn Usūli, Khāwja ‘Alī, Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya, Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan, all of whom had great respect and appreciation for the saintly attainments of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī. Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya in particular, in his daily discourses to his disciples, very often referred to the statements, Kamāliyat, and Karāmat of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi. He did never say that he had seen Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi or that great saint was alive. On the other hand, his references gave the idea that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi had died long before.

Amir Khusrau, who was a devoted disciple of Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya and heard much of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi from his preceptor, came to Bengal with Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq in 1325 A. D. In his Mafṣūzāt, Afdal al-Fawā‘id, he has quoted the sayings of Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya about the miraculous performances of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi and his conversion of the Hindus to Islam, but he does not say that the Tabrizi saint had been living in Sylhet at the time he visited Bengal.

These evidences go to show that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi died long before the time of Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya (1235-1320 A.D.) and of the death of Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakr (1269 A. D.). Rahat al-Qulub, a Mafṣūzāt supposed to have been written in 655 H/1256 A.D. by a person Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad, who calls himself a disciple of Khwāja Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakr, quotes a statement of his preceptor in a majltis (assembly) that he was present at the time of the death of Shaikh

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1 As is known from Akhbar al-Akhbar (p. 44) that Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi met Farid al-Din Ganj-I-Shakir and blessed him. It quotes Jawami Kalim of Shahib Gislar.
2 Fawaid al-Fawaid, p. 108 and 192-93.
3 Akhbarr al-Akhbar, pp. 101 and Badauni, I.
4 Afdal al-Fawaid, p. 47.
Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī and that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī had been smiling at the time of his passing away. A friend asked, "How is it that a dying man is smiling?" It was said that it was the sign of knowledge into the mystery of Allah."¹ It corroborates the conclusion that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī died before 1269 A. D., the date of the death of Shaikh Farid al-Dīn Ganji-Shakr. Since this malfūṣat, informing the death of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī, was compiled in 1256 A. D., it can be said that he passed away before this date. The Khażīnat al-Asfiyā’ mentions that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī died in 642H/1244A.D.² Although it is a comparatively modern work and does not refer to its sources, yet it confirms the impression that the Tabrīzī saint died before 1256 A. D.³

The above discussions prove that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī was born at least 35 years before 1197 A.D. and he had died nearly a century before the death of Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet. This clears the confusion and establishes that they were two different saints.

An inscription of the time of Sultān Ḥusain Shāh, dated 918 H./1515 A. D., found in the dargah of Shāh Jalāl, mentions the Shaikh of Sylhet as Shaikh Jalāl Mujarrad bin Muḥammad. Another inscription of the same reign, dated 911 H./1505 A. D., refers to him as Shaikh Jalāl Mujarrad Konyā-i, i.e., Shaikh Jalāl, the hermit, of Konyā.⁴ This further confirms the view that Shāh Jalāl and Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī were not one person.

His Mazār:

A good deal of confusion prevails among scholars about the mazār (burial place or grave) of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī.

¹ ṫaḥār al-Qulāb, p. 46:

"az mūrāfat shīkh jalāl al-dīn ḥakāyat frumūd kā wāqt nāl o hājir bōdum ḥūn khudet jalāl al-dīn az šāhān rū✿hā nīmūd dr tāmīm bōd usūzīy nūzūyīk šūd būsīd kā mādīrā na tāsm jīst gūtmān kī nūsān mūrāfat xuṣārīy ūzzī jībī mūfī tū✿rī
dr tāmīm bōd usūzīy nūzūyīk šūd būsīd kā mādīrā na tāsm jīst gūtmān kī nūsān mūrāfat xuṣārīy ūzzī jībī mūfī tū✿rī

² Khażīnat al-Asfiyā’, p. 283.
³ The date 1337 A. D. given in Thūrisd Jalān Numā’ is obviously incorrect.
⁴ A. H. Dani—Inscriptions in Bengal, pp. 7, 15, 58.
A tomb (9 ft. 6 inches long and 6 ft. 2 inches wide) of the Shaikh exists at Pandua in North Bengal (in Hindustan) and it is known as the Bari Dargah and also Bais Hazari Dargah, because the property attached to the dargah yielded an income of twenty-two thousand rupees.\(^1\) The mutawallis (custodians) of the dargah, however, say that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī was not actually buried in that place; he was buried at Aurangabad (old Khirki) and the shrine at Pandua was a mere jawāb (imitation-vault). Blochmann, Stapleton and others believe that he was not buried at Pandua.\(^2\) In the biographies of the saints of the Deccan and the chronicles and traditions of Aurangabad, no mention of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī or his tomb is available. So the view that the Tabrizī saint was buried at Aurangabad cannot be credited.

According to Maulānā Jamālī and Abūl Fadl, Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī’s grave was in Bandar (port) Dev Mahal.\(^3\) Blochmann and others have suggested that Bandar Dev Mahal was either the port of Diu in Gujarāt or the Maldive islands. But neither in chronicles nor in traditions is there any reference of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī’s connection with Diu or Gujarāt.

Maldive’s original name, Devat al-Mahāl (ديو المحل) of Ibn Baṭṭūta and Dev Mahāl (ديو محل) of ‘Abd al-Razzāq,\(^4\) apparently supports the view that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī was buried there. Beyond this superficial resemblance of names, there is hardly any evidence to connect Maldive with the memory

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4 Ibn Baṭṭūta (Tr. Mahdi Hasan), p. 197. Delbar is pronounced as the feminine of del (island). Mahdi Hasan thinks that Mahāl being the capital, all the islands became collectively known as al-Mahāl and its modern name is the combination of Mal (Mahāl) and dive (dīvī or dīvīnp meaning island) of the island of Mahāl, which is a port as well as capital.
‘Abd al-Razzāq visited the court of Vijayanagar as an envoy of Sulṭān Shāh Rukh of Herat in 1441 A.D. Malṭa‘ al-Sa‘dān, Elliot VI, p. 96.
of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi. No grave of this saint and tradition of his name existed in Maldive in 1344 when Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited the place. Had it existed, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who lived in this island for eighteen months would have noticed it. On the other hand, he has referred to a tradition current in Deibat al-Mahāl (Maldive) that a Westerner named Abū al-Barākāt, the Berber, came to the island and saved the people from the troubles of a demon by reciting the Holy Qur’ān. This attracted the king and his people, who were idol-worshippers, to accept Islam at his hands. This shows that a person different from Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi spread Islam in Maldive.

All the sources, contemporary or otherwise, state that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi went from Delhi to Badaun and then to Lakhnawti in Bengal. Nowhere has it been mentioned that he went to any other place from Bengal. So Dev Mahal must be a place somewhere in Bengal. Abūl Fadl writes, “From Delhi Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi went to Bengal. His sleeping-place is Bandar Dev Mahal.” The author of Siyar-al-ʿĀrifīn says, “When Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi went to Bengal the people of that country flocked to him and became his disciples. The holy Shaikh built a Khānqah and opened a langar (free kitchen). He purchased some gardens and lands and dedicated (waqf) them for the maintenance of the langar. From there he went ahead and that bandar (port) is called Dev Mahal. There is a well there. An infidel built an idol-temple at an immense cost. The holy Shaikh destroyed that temple and made the buildings of that idol-temple as his takiya or resting-place, and converted many non-believers to Islam. His only tomb is now situated on the site of that very idol-temple and half of the income of that bandar is dedicated to that langar.1

This statement expresses that half the income of the bandar (port) of Dev Mahal was dedicated to the langar that Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi established in Bengal, and his grave was also there. As the maintenance of the langar was drawn from

that *bandar*, these two were not very far off from one another. Since it is definitely known that the *langar* was in Bengal, the *bandar* Dev Mahal was also in or near Bengal. It is known from a statement of Saiyid Jalāl al-Din Makhdum Jahānian Jahān Gasht (died at Uch 1383 A. D.) that he saw Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizi in a dream at his shrine at Sonargaon. In Sonargaon there is no shrine of Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizi. It however gives the idea that the Shaikh was buried in Bengal.

In his letter to Sulṭān Ibrāhim Sharqī of Jaunpur, Mir Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngir Simnānī stated that *Julālia* saints were buried at Deotala. Deotala is a place near Pandua in North Bengal. The Bengali word *Deotala* is the Persian equivalent of *Dev Mahal* and both mean the place of demon. The A’in-i-Akbarī gives the names of a few *mahals* (revenue divisions) and other places of North Bengal which begin with *Deo* (*Dev*), such as Devpura Mahal, Deviapur Mahal, Deviya Mahal and Devkot. These names express the popular belief that this region was infested by the demons. This agrees with a story given by Amir Khusrau in *Afḍal al-Fawā’id* that when Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizi went to a town in Bengal (Lakhnawi) the people of that locality were greatly troubled by a demon. The demon used to eat man every night. Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizi seized the demon and confined him. Being charmed at this miraculous power of the Shaikh, the governor and his people, who were Hindus, accepted Islam at his hands. He built a *Khānqah* there and then he went ahead.

At Pandua in North Bengal, there still exists a *langar* estab-

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1 *Speeches*, vol. II.; quoted by Mofīt Azharuddin Ahmad—Shah Jalal, p. 64.

2 *Bengal Past and Present* 1948, p. 32; A. H. Dani, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, p. 3. Deotala is now a village 22 miles from Old Malda and 15 miles north of Pandua, on Malda-Pandua-Devkot Dinajpur road. It is about 20 miles from the old fort of Devkot (Ekdala or present Gangarampur Damduma).

The infestation of the demon implies that at that time brigandage and murder prevailed in these areas, as these are found even now in some riverine areas of Bengal.

3 *Afḍal al-Fawā’id*, p. 47.
lished by Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi and a big estate now known as Bals Hazari was dedicated to it. The lands of Deotala are included in this waqf estate. So its income even now goes to the maintenance of the langur of Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi at Pandua. There is evidence to show that Deotala was an important place in the early Muslim period and it bore the memory of the great Tabrizi saint. An inscription, dated 868 H./1464 A. D. in a mosque at Deotala, mentions the place as qaşbah Tabrizabād. An inscription of the time of Sulaimān Karrani clearly mentions the place as Tabrizabād ‘urf Deotala, i.e., Tabrizabad known as Deotala. It shows that Deotala was known as Tabrizabad or the territory of the Tabrizi. Another inscription dated 934 H./1528 A.D. of the time of Sulṭān Nuṣrat Shāh, found in the chillakhana of the dargah, records that a mosque was built in the territory of Shaikh Jalal Muḥammad Tabrizi. Thus, Deotala was a qaşbah (a small town) and was called Tabrizabad after the name of the Tabrizi saint, whose name has been given in the inscription as Shaikh Jalal Muḥammad Tabrizi. Deotala is on the road to Devkot, which is on the side of the river Tungan. This suggests that Deotala was a river port.

There is good reason to believe that the saint Shaikh Jalal Muḥammad Tabrizi, whose shrine exists at Deotala, is the celebrated Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi. He is the only Tabrizi saint who exercised a tremendous influence on the mind and imagination of the people. So it is natural that they gave Deotala the name of Tabrizabad in his honour. The word ‘Muḥammad’ has been added to his name in the form of an adjective, meaning ‘the praised one’, just as the adjective Mujarrad, i.e., ‘the Bachelor’ has been added with the name of Shaikh Jalal of Sylhet.

The conclusion that Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi died and was buried at Deotala agrees with a story which was current

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1 A. H. Dani—Inscriptions of Bengal, No. 35.
4 Mirzâ al-Masrâr (MS. D. U., f. 19)) of ‘Abd al-Rahman Chishti calls the saint by the name of Abūl Qāsim Makhdūm Shaikh Jalal Tabrizi.
about his death. It is said that at the time of his passing away one of his followers, named Ḥāji Ibrāhīm appeared simultaneously at all the chillakhānas (places of forty days of disciplinary prayer and fast) frequented by the Shaikh and, having reported the death of the Shaikh, himself died at each place. This indicates that the various chillakhānas of the Shaikh were nearer to one another and this accounts for the existence of his grave in more than one place. Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi died and was buried at Deotala. His tomb at Pandua was built long after his death. According to Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn, it was built by ʿAlā al-Dīn ʿAli Shāh in 1342 A.D.

His Spiritualism:

Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi was a great saint, who attained the highest degree of spiritual perfection.¹ He was noted for his renunciation, asceticism, devotion and esoteric knowledge. Even the great saints, such as Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zakariyyā, Wāḥīd al-Dīn Kirmānī, Farīd al-Dīn Gānj-i-Shakr, Niẓām al-Dīn Auliyyā, Ṭūrā Khusrav and Amīr Ḥasan Sījī remembered his name with profound respect and referred to his extraordinary spiritual advancement in their daily discourses and their malfūzāt. All the contemporaries and even the Hindu author of the Sanskrit work Shek Subhodaya credit him with miraculous powers. Although many of their stories relating to his supernatural powers cannot be explained and accepted in history, these however reflect the deep impression he left on the society by the force of his great personality. Indeed, by his exemplary life and spiritual attainments he acquired a unique position, so much so that even his friend the celebrated saint Shaikh Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zakariyyā carried his shoes and said, "It is obligatory for me to make the dust of the shoes of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī as the collyrium of my eyes."²

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¹ Siyar al-ʾArīfīn, p. 164
² Siyar al-ʾArīfīn, p. 169.
Absolutely free from all attachment, Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizi devoted his life to the service of God and people. He said, "One who has attachment for woman and wealth can never attain any good." His service to his preceptor Shaikh Shihāb al-Din Suhrawardi was a noble example of spiritual devotion. His devotion earned him the blessings of his preceptor, who once said, "Shaikh Jalāl al-Din has taken all." In his absorbing devotion he saw nothing but the splendour of spiritualism before his eyes. In the prayer he would stay long and would not prostrate until he saw the seat of Allāh.

By the force of his great spiritual personality and humanitarian services, Shaikh Jalāl al-Din wrought miracles in Bengal. The down-trodden and persecuted Bhudhists and Hindus flocked to him for deliverance and accepted Islam. Thus he laid down the foundation of a strong Muslim community in North Bengal. He also contributed substantially to the consolidation of the newly established Muslim rule in Bengal. By acquiring converts and followers he provided the Muslim rulers with a source of strength in the land of a non-Muslim population. His khānqah and langar, which served as a spiritual, intellectual and humanitarian centres, developed the moral and cultural life of the Bengali society and helped the poor and the distressed people in various ways. The influence of Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizi was great on the Muslims as well as on the Hindus. He was so much adored by the Hindu masses that they invoked his blessings even centuries after his death. This adoration of the Hindus to a Muslim saint introduced in course of time the cult of Satyā- pīr in the Hindu society and did much to liberalise and develop that community. It is because of his abiding influence on society that Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizi's memory is enshrined in the minds of the people of Bengal.

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1 Fawā'id al-Fawād, p. 81.
2 Fawā'id al-Fawād, p. 146.
3 Fawā'id al-Fawād, p. 146.
4 Fawā'id al-Fawād, p. 193.
Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet:

Shaikh Jalāl, popularly known as Shāh Jalāl, was a great saint of Bengal. Although he was not of so wider fame as Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizi, he had however as great a share as his namesake, the Tabrizi saint, in the development of the Muslim community in Bengal. He is credited with the acquisition of Sylhet and the north-east Bengal to the faith of Islam.

There is no authentic account of the life and career of Shāh Jalāl. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and two inscriptions of the time of Ḥusain Shāh (1493-1517) have incidentally referred to him. Gulzār-i-Abrār, compiled by Muḥammad Ghauṭhil Mandalvi, a Shaṭṭari scholar, in 1613 A. D., has left some account of Shāh Jalāl. This author claims to have drawn his material from an earlier work, Shahr-i-Nuzhat al-Arwāh, of Shaikh ‘Ali Sher, who was a descendant of Shaikh Nūr al-Huda, a disciple-companion of Shaikh Jalāl in Sylhet. The Suhail-i-Yaman composed in 1859 A. D. by Nāṣir al-Din, a munṣif, gives some details of the life of the saint of Sylhet. It is based mostly on local traditions. Its author also refers to two earlier chronicles, Risālah of Muḥi al-Din Khādim and Rawdat al-Salaṭin of an unknown writer, which provided him materials for his work. Though fanciful in its accounts, some of the records of Suhail-i-Yaman are however corroborated by other contemporary references. Hence, it cannot be dismissed as absolutely a fiction.

All the sources, epigraphic or otherwise, connect Shāh Jalāl with the conquest of Sylhet and substantially agree in discussing his career and achievements in Bengal. The only major difference is found in the accounts of his early life. According to Gulzār-i-Abrār, Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Mujarrad (Shāh Jalāl) was a Turkistan-born Bengali and a disciple of Sultān Saiyid Aḥmad Yesvi. An inscription mentions him as Shaikh Jalāl Mujarrad of Konya.²


2 This inscription was found in the dargah of Shāh Jalāl and is dated 911 H./1505 A. D. See Dani—Inscription, No. 92.
These two sources indicate that Shāh Jalāl originally belonged to Konyā (Iconium or Rūm) in Turkey (Asia Minor). The Suhail-i-Yaman, on the other hand, refers to him as a Yamani of the Quraish family. His father’s name was Muḥammad and his mother was a Saiyidah. He was a disciple of his maternal uncle Saiyid Aḥmad Kabīr Suhrawardī, a distinguished disciple of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī.1 Two inscriptions also mention him as Shaikh Jalāl Mujarrad (the Bachelor), son of Muḥammad.2 But no other source confirms that Shaikh Jalāl was a Yamani-Arab. It may be that the chronicle has confused Saiyid Aḥmad Kabīr with Saiyid Aḥmad Yesvi who was an important saint of the order of the Khwājas of Turkistan (which later developed into a Naqshabandi order) and was mentioned in Rashnat of Mullā ʿHusain Waʿiz Kashifi. He was a contemporary of Ḥaḍrat Azizān Khwāja ʿAlī Ramīnī, who died in 715 H./1315-16 A. D.3

After the completion of his spiritual training, Shaikh Jalāl, son of Muḥammad, received the Khilafat from Saiyid Aḥmad Yesvi and with his preceptor’s permission left Konyā to serve the cause of Islam with 700 followers. It was a time when the Mongols were destroying the Muslim rule and culture in Central and Western Asia. So, the Shaikh thought it his pious duty to fight in the way of God. According to Ibn Battūta, Shaikh Jalāl was in Baghdad when Halaku killed the last ʿAbassid Caliph Muʿtasim billāh and sacked his capital in 1258 A. D. Gulzār-i-Abrār informs that Shaikh Jalāl fought holy war against the enemies on the way and obtained victories. He left several of his followers in charge of the conquered territories to propagate and teach Islam among the people. It also refers to his arrival in Sylhet with 313 followers and his victory over the Hindu king Gaur Govinda.4

Suhail-i-Yaman gives a more detailed account of Shaikh

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1 JASB, 1872, p. 278.
2 JASB, 1922, p. 413.
4 Gulzār-i-Abrār, pp. 96-108.
Jalāl’s conquest of Sylhet. It says that when he came to Hindustan he met Shai kh Niẓām al-Din Auliyyā, who made a gift of a pair of pigeons to him. Then he proceeded to Bengal with his followers. From an inscription it appears that Shaikh Jalāl assisted the Muslim general Sikandar Khān Ghāzi in the conquest of Sylhet. The inscription reads, “By the grace of the Shaikh of the Shaikhs, Jalāl, the Bachelor, son of Muḥammad, the first conquest of the city (and) Arγah of Srisat was at the hands of Sikandar Khān Ghāzi during the reign of Sultān Firūz Shāh Dehlī in the year 703 (1303 A. D.). The inscription is dated 918 H. (1512 A.D.). It is stated in Suhail-i-Yaman that to redress the wrongs done to a Muslim named Shaikh Burhan al-Din by Gaur Govinda, king of Sylhet, the Bengali Sultān Shams al-Din Firūz Shāh, son of Nāṣir al-Din Bughra Khān (son of Sultān Balban) sent his sister’s son Sikandar Ghāzi to Sylhet. Sikandar Ghāzi occupied Sonargaon on the way, but failed thrice against Gaur Govinda. Thereupon the Sultān sent his sipahsālār and governor of Satgaon, Nāṣir al-Din, to reinforce Sikandar Ghāzi. At Tribeni near Satgaon his force was morally strengthened by the holy presence of Shaikh Jalāl and his 360 followers in the army. The combined forces this time succeeded in conquering Sylhet.

After the conquest of Sylhet, Shāh Jalāl settled there and devoted himself to preaching and humanitarian activities. Ibn Battūta’s account gives an idea of his life of austerity, devotion and service. When the Moorish traveller met him, the Shaikh was very aged. He was thin and tall and had little hair on his cheeks. He kept fast for nearly forty years and broke it after ten consecutive days. He had a cow and her milk was his food. He used to remain standing all night in prayer.

Ibn Battūta also says that it was by the labours of this Shaikh that the people of that territory were converted to Islam, and for that reason he settled among them. The khāngah he established there was the resort of the hermits, travellers and the distressed. People, both Hindus and Muslims, held him in high respect. They brought gifts and presents for him and with these the

1 JASB, 1922, p. 413.
people were fed. Ibn Battūta has recorded many miraculous stories he heard about the Shaikh. Traditions have also preserved many such miracles of the Shaikh. These, in fact, reflect his great spiritualism and humanitarianism, which impressed the masses so deeply that they looked upon him as an extraordinary man.

Shāh Jalāl was a great saint and remarkable was his contribution to the history of Muslim Bengal. He shares the credit for the establishment of Muslim rule in north-east Bengal. It was because of his missionary zeal and selfless service that Islam spread in this remote part and this area of Bengal could develop into a Muslim majority area. Indeed, by his works Shāh Jalāl reserves a high place among the builders of Muslim Bengal. His ideal life and great devotion to the faith and the cause of suffering people won him the adoration even of the non-Muslims of Bengal. So, he still lives in the common traditions of the country and his memory is enshrined in hundreds of folk-songs. The great saint died in 1347 A. D. at the age of 150. His shrine at Sylhet is even now a place of pilgrimage to all sections of people.

Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah:

Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah was a great sufī and scholar who played a very significant part to the promotion of the Muslim society in Bengal. The spiritual and intellectual light that emanated from his khāngah and Islamic academy at Sonargaon illuminated not only Bengal but Northern India as well. The celebrated sufī and scholar Makhduum Maulānā Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri was his distinguished pupil in the Sonargaon academy. Shaikh Abū Tawwāmah was indeed the builder of the glory of Sonargaon and East Bengal.

Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah was born in Bukhara and educated in Khurasan. Soon he became reputed for his piety and learning. He was well versed in theology, jurisprudence, traditions as well as in chemistry, natural sciences and magic.

1 Ibn Battūta (Text), II, pp. 144-45.
He came to Delhi in the beginning of the reign of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Baibjan (1260 A. D.). Shāh Shu'ayb, author of *Manāqib al-Asfiyā*, an almost contemporary work, gives an idea of the profound influence he produced among the people by his piety, character and knowledge. He writes, "At that time the fame of the wisdom, holiness and learning of Maulānā Ashraf al-Din (Sharf al-Din) Tawwāmah had spread in the western regions of India as well as in Arabia, Iran and other countries. He was accomplished in all sciences; even in chemistry, natural science and magic he was possessed of perfect knowledge. The learned people used to consult him in religious sciences and the people in general, including the amīrs and the mālikās, were devoted to him."¹ The author says that, seeing the devotion of the people to the Shaikh, the Sultan felt uneasy, lest he snatched the kingdom from him. So the Sultan tactfully persuaded the Shaikh to proceed to Sonargaon. At that time the country of Bangalah was under the ruler of Delhi. The Shaikh understood the motive of the Sultan and, feeling that it was incumbent to obey the ruler, he left for Sonargaon.²

Shāh Shu'ayb informs that, while journeying towards Sonargaon, Shaikh Sharf al-Din Abū Tawwāmah halted for a few days at Maner, where he was visited by Shaikh Sharf al-Din Yahyā Maneri, the future great saint and scholar of Bihar. According to this author, Shaikh Sharf al-Din Yahyā Maneri, who had reached the age of maturity and acquired proficiency in religious learning, was impressed by the learning and wisdom of Shaikh Sharf al-Din Abū Tawwāmah and felt a desire to study religious sciences under such a vastly learned man. Shaikh Abū Tawwāmah also admired the talent and manners of Sharf al-Din Maneri and thought that he would prove a worthy pupil to receive knowledge in religious sciences. So, with the permission of his parents, Sharf al-Din Maneri accompanied Shaikh Abū Tawwāmah to Sonargaon.³

³ Ibid.
When did Shaikh Sharf al-Din Abū Tawwāmah come to Sonargaon? There is no definite evidence about the date. It is however known that Shaikh Sharf al-Din Yahyā Maneri accompanied him. Sharf al-Din Maneri was born in 661 H./1262 A. D. According to Shāh Shu'ayb, Sharf al-Din Maneri had reached maturity in age and attained proficiency in religious learning. But from a statement of Sharf al-Din Maneri himself it appears that he was still a boy and did not consider his elementary education as satisfactory. He observed, "In my boyhood, they made me get by heart many books, the Maṣādir and the Miftāḥ al-Lughat." This suggests that Sharf al-Din Maneri was aged between 12 and 15 years at the time he enlisted himself as a pupil of Shaikh Abū Tawwāmah and followed him to Sonargaon. So, they came to Sonargaon between 1274 and 1277 A. D. It is said that Sharf al-Din Maneri studied for many years under Shaikh Tawwāmah and, after completing his studies, he learnt from a letter that his father had died in 1291 A. D. While yet a pupil, he married his teacher's daughter and had by her three sons, two died at Sonargaon and one, Shāh Dhaki al-Din, survived and accompanied him to Maner. In view of all these facts, the date of the arrival of Shaikh Sharf al-Din Abū Tawwāmah cannot be pushed later than 1277 A. D.

The writings of Shāh Shu'ayb express that Sonargaon was a dependency of the Delhi Sultanate at the time of Shaikh Abū Tawwāmah's arrival in 1277 A. D. This author mentions that the country of Bangalah was under the ruler of Delhi. The early Muslim historians used the term Bang or Bangalah for Eastern Bengal which included Sonargaon. They called North Bengal as Lakhnawati. It was only when Muslim's established sway in Eastern Bengal that the whole country came to be known as Bangalah. Again, when Sultan Balban advanced to punish the rebel governor Tughral in 1281, the Hindu chief of Sonargaon

2 Dr. S. H. Masumi—Sonargaon in Learning, Islamic Culture, 1953, p. 8; Calcutta Review, 1939, pp. 197-210.
Danuj Ray paid him homage and was entrusted with the duty of keeping watch on the rebel in that quarter. This indicates that Danuj Ray was a dependent chief. Moreover, while leaving his son Bughra Khan as governor of Bengal, Sultan Balban warned him, saying that, if any governor, be he of Hind, Sind, Malwa, Gujrat, Lakhnawti or Sonargaon, ever revolted, he would receive terrible punishment. This corroborates the impression that Sonargaon was a dependency at that time. Further more, there is a numismatic evidence that Sultan Rukn al-Din Kaikaus issued coin from the kharaj (land tax) of Bang in 690 H./1291 A. D. This proves that in 1291 A. D. Sonargaon was under Muslim rule. There is no definite evidence that Muslims conquered Sonargaon before 1300 A. D. Yet the coin claims the Muslim suzerainty over that territory in 1291 A. D. How could that happen? This confirms the view that Sonargaon was a dependency of Bengal from before the time of Balban's Bengal campaign.

Shaikh Sharf al-Din Abu Tawwamah settled down in Sonargaon with his family and devoted himself to preaching and teaching. He established a khangah for his disciples and an academy for the students. A large number of disciples and pupils flocked to Sonargaon to acquire knowledge from the distinguished saint and scholar. Sonargaon thus developed into an illuminating centre of religion and learning. The khangah and Islamic academy of Shaikh Abu Tawwamah produced men of religion and education, the most illustrious of them was Shaikh Sharf-al-Din Yahya Maneri. Thus Abu Tawwamah promoted Islam and learning in East Bengal. He died in 700 H./1300 A. D. and was buried in Sonargaon.

Makhdum al-Mulk Shaikh Sharf al-Din Yahya Maneri:
Makhdum al-Mulk Shaikh Sharf-al-Din was a son of Shaikh Yahya of Maner in Bihar. He was born in 1262 A.D.

1 Barani, p. 93.
2 A. Karim—Social History of Bengal, p. 7.
In his boyhood he acquired Islamic learning. His thirst for knowledge was so great that at the age of about 15 he accompanied the celebrated ṣūfī and scholar Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah to Sonargaon as his pupil. In Sonargaon he was so much absorbed in study that he did not have time to read the letters he received from home. After the completion of the educational career when he opened the letters he found that one contained the news of his father’s death. Sharf al-Dīn Manerī also avoided taking meal in the gathering of the pupils and disciples of his teacher as it took much time and interfered with his deep devotion to the acquisition of knowledge.

Sharf al-Dīn received knowledge in Islamic sciences and also spiritual training under Shaikh Abū Tawwāmah for more than fifteen years and attained perfection. In appreciation of his talent and accomplishments, Abū Tawwāmah married him to his own daughter. Indeed Sharf al-Dīn Maneri was a worthy disciple of his renowned teacher and a brilliant product of the Sonargaon religious seminary. Bengal could rightly be proud of him. With his teacher’s blessings he returned to Maner in 1293 A. D. and devoted himself to teaching and preaching. His fame as a ṣūfī and scholar spread far and wide and he acquired an unique position in learning and esoteric knowledge in Hindustan. The large number of books he composed reveal his great knowledge and spiritualism. In appreciating his works, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ḥaq Dehlavi wrote, “Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Maneri is one of the distinguished saints of India. He is beyond praise. He has highly merited works at his credit. They contain principles of the ṣūfī faith and the secret of truth.”

Shaikh Rāja Biyāhānī.

In the reign of Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh (1342-57) two great saints graced his capital by their holy presence, one was Ākhi

1 Calcutta Review, 1939, p. 197.
2 Ibid.
Sirāj al-Dīn ʿUṯmān and the other was Shaikh Rāja Biyābānī. Sultān Ilyās Shāh had great respect for Shaikh Rāja Biyābānī so much so that, though he was closely besieged in the fort of Ekdala by Sultān Firūz Shāh Tughlaq, he attended in the garb of a faqīr the funeral of this saint, who had died at that time.¹

Makhdoom Jahāniyān -i-Jahān Gasht :

Mir Saiyid Jalāl al-Dīn, better known as Makhdoom Jahāniyān-i-Jahān Gasht, was the grandson of Saiyid Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī and son of Saiyid Ahmad Kabīr.² A mosque called Jhan Jhana is supposed to be a corruption of Jahāniyān Jahān Gasht. With his memory tradition connects two other relics, Jhanda (heraldic device mounted on a staff) and the Qadam Rasūl (footprint of the Prophet).³ It is also said that he led the funeral prayer of Shaikh ʿAlā al-Ḥaq.⁴ This is not a fact, because Jahāniyān-i-Jahān Gasht died in 785 H./1383 A. D., about 15 years before the death of ʿAlā al-Ḥaq (800 H.). He is buried in Uchh.

As he travelled widely, it may however be believed that Jahāniyān-i-Jahān Gasht visited Bengal and made a few people his disciples in Pandua and Gaur.

¹ Riyāḍ as-Salāṭin, p. 97.
² Akhbār al-Akhyār, p. 147.
³ Memoirs of Gaur, pp. 92 and 64.
Section B

The Chishtia and Later Sufis.

The Chishtia Saints:

The Bengali sufis belonged mostly to the Chistia order and of all the sufistic orders, the Chishtia was the most organised and developed one in Bengal. The Chistia order produced several renowned saints, whose religious, humanitarian and educational ideals won for it special dignity and distinction in the history of Bengali sufism. The Chishtia sufis served the cause of the Muslims in various ways and exercised a tremendous influence on the minds and morals of the people. They preached and spread Islam in the remotest corners of Bengal, and thus contributed to the development of Bengal into a Muslim majority area. They raised the moral standard of the Muslims and stimulated in them a high degree of spiritualism, which even today characterises the Bengali Muslims, who, following the example of their great preceptors and teachers, have developed a spirit of indifference to material world. The Chishtia saints also saved the Muslim State and society in the days of misfortunes and calamities. They introduced humanitarian and cultural institutions, which led to the happiness, enlightenment and progress of the Bengali peoples. Their khāṅqahs were the centres of spiritual and intellectual life and humanitarian activities of the time. It was there that the God-searching and religious people could obtain the peace of mind and also satisfy their spiritual yearning. These were the asylums and hospitals where the old and diseased people were taken care of. It was in the langars attached to their khāṅqahs that the suffering and poor people obtained free meals. The Chishtia sufis, who conveyed their messages to the common people through the local dialect, also contributed to the growth
of the Bengali literature. Indeed the Bengali Muslim society is highly indebted to these great spiritual and intellectual leaders of the time.

Shaikh 'Abd Allāh Kirmānī :

Shaikh 'Abd Allāh Kirmānī was one of the earliest of the Chishti saints in Bengal. He was a disciple of Khāwjā Mu'in-al-Dīn Chishti (1142-1235 A. D.). He was one of those who brought the Chishtia Silsilah in this province. His shrine is at the village Khustigiri in the district of Birbhum.¹

Shaikh Ākhi Siraj al-Dīn Uthmān :

The foremost of the earlier Chishti saints of Bengal was Shaikh Ākhi Siraj al-Dīn Uthmān, who left a deeper impression on the religio-social and cultural life of this country. Himself a sīfī of the highest spiritual perfection, Shaikh Ākhi Siraj left a line of distinguished Chishti saints in Bengal and legacy of humanitarian works to his worthy successors. He was a favourite disciple of the great Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya (1236-1325 A. D.), who in appreciation of his spiritual attainments and knowledge, affectionately gave him the title of Ā'īna-i-Hindustān (the Mirror of Hindustan).²

Shaikh Ākhi Siraj was a native of Bengal. On the authority of a modern writer, some scholars think that he was a native of Badaun.³ But there is contemporary evidence which proves beyond doubt that Ākhi Siraj belonged to Bengal.}

1) One of the earliest reliable sources, Siyar al-'Arifīn, mentions Shaikh Ākhi Siraj as Panduvani.⁴ This suggests that he was a native of Pandua in Bengal. The saints and 'ulema generally affixed the names of their native places to their names. Thus it is found that Khāwjā Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār was called Ushī, Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrīzī, Shaikh Ḥamid al-Dīn Nagori, Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya Badāuni, Amīr Ḥasan Sīzī, Shaikh 'Abd

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¹ E. Haq—Bange Sufi Prabhava, p. 102.
² Ṭāzkirat-i-Auliya-i-Hind, p. 11 and E Haq | Bange Sufi Prabhava, p. 102.
³ Siyar al-'Arifīn, p. 90.
⁴ Siyar al-'Arifīn, p. 90.
Allāh Kirmānī, and a long list could be added to illustrate this contention.

(2) It is definitely stated in the Akhbār al-Akhvār, a most judicious work on the lives of the saints that Shaikh Ākhī Sirāj, after obtaining the khitāfat and khirqah from his preceptor Shaikh Nizām al-Din Auliya, set out for his native place (Waṭan-i-aṣli).¹ He undoubtedly came to Lakhnawti and this proves that Bengal was his homeland.

(3) It is also known from the Akhbār al-Akhvār that at a very young age, before his beard had begun to grow, Ākhī Sirāj became one of the attendants of Shaikh Nizām al-Din Auliya. After some years he went home in Lakhnawti to see his mother.² Gauthi Manduvi, author of Gulzār-i-Abrār, also says that Ākhī Sirāj went to Bangalah to see his mother.³ If his home was not in Lakhnawti, then why should his mother live there, particularly when his father was dead and he himself was in Delhi? This confirms the belief that his parents were permanently settled in Bengal.

(4) The evidence of Khazīnāt al-Asfīyā correborates that Shaikh Ākhī Sirāj was a native of Bengal. It records, "After the conferment of khirqah, Ākhī Sirāj was permitted to go to his native-land (Waṭan-i-Khūd)."⁴ It is definitely known that Ākhī Sirāj was appointed a Khalīfa of the great Auliya in Bengal and he also came to Pandua, the capital of Bengal. So his native-land and the field of his work as the spiritual successor of Shaikh Nizām al-Din Auliya was Bengal.

The compilers of Rastiq al-'Arifin, a malfuzāt, mentions of Shaikh Ākhī Sirāj as 'Audhi'.⁵ This has been done to connect

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¹ Akhbār al-Akhvār, p. 86.
² Akhbār al-Akhvār, p. 86.
³ Gulzār-i-Abrār, I, p. 368.
⁵ Quoted in Akhbār al-Akhvār, p. 86.
this great saint of Bengal with another illustrious saint Shaikh Nāšir al-Dīn Audhī, known as Chirāgh-i-Dehlī. They were fellow disciples under Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya and both of them were descended from the same family, the family of Imām Ḥasan.\(^1\) Their ancestors came to India. Shaikh Nāšir al-Dīn’s father settled down in Audh and hence he became known as Audhī. Since Shaikh Nāšir al-Dīn was an Audhī, the compiler of the mafṣūṭāt has taken his kinsman Ākhi Siraj also to be an Audhī. This is indeed a confusion. Though he belonged to the same family as Shaikh Nāšir al-Dīn, he was, however, a native not of Audh but of Bengal and this has been definitely shown in the earlier discussion.

At a young age Shaikh Ākhi Siraj went to Delhi, wishing to be a disciple of Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya, the most outstanding saint of the age. He became one of the attendants of that great Chishti saint. After some years he went home in Lakhnawtī to see his mother. He returned to Delhi to attend the Shaikh. By devotion, he soon became worthy of the Khilafat (spiritual succession) of the Shaikh. But he did not possess sufficient education. Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya observed, “Education is the first stage in this work (spiritual mission); he has not received any education.”\(^2\) The author of Khabīrat al-Aṣfīya\(^3\) writes that the Shaikh said, “A mendicant without education is a buffoon of Satan.”

Maulānā Fakhr al-Dīn Zarradī, a learned disciple of Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya, took charge of the education of Ākhi Siraj. He compiled selected pieces of subjects, so that Ākhi Siraj could be educated within the shortest possible time. The Maulānā gave him the name of ‘Uṭmān and in six months taught him all sorts of useful knowledge.\(^4\) Ākhi Siraj also received educa-

\(^{1}\) Akhbār al-Akhīyār, p. 86. See Tazkira-ul-Auliya-as-Hind.

\(^{2}\) Siyar al-‘Arifīn, p. 90.

\(^{3}\) Khazinat al-Aṣfīya, I, p. 358.

\(^{4}\) Siyar al-‘Arifīn, p. 90 and Akhbār, p. 86 and Amīr Khurd—Siyar al-Auliya.
tion under Maulānā Rukn al-Dīn and studied Kāfiyah, Mufussul, Qudūrī and Majma‘al-Bahrūn. It is said that he continued his studies for three years after the death of Shāikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyyā (1325). He thus became proficient in all knowledge. The author of Siyār al-Ārifīn writes, “In wisdom and knowledge, no one equalled him and could argue with him.”

It seems that, although appointed khalīfa for Bengal by Shāikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyyā, Ākhi Sirāj did not actually leave for Bengal until some three or four years after the death of the great Shāikh. At the time he was appointed Khalīfa, he is said to have represented to his Shāikh that in Bengal ‘Alā al-Ḥaq was a vastly learned man of the time and he felt diffident of facing him. The Shāikh however assured Ākhi Sirāj that ‘Alā Al-Ḥaq would turn his most devoted disciple. This was exactly what happened. So great was the spiritual personality and perfection in knowledge of Shāikh Ākhi Sirāj that even that proud aristocrat and distinguished learned man became his most devoted disciple, attending him at all times and carrying an oven with a pot on it, in order to provide warm food to his Shāikh in his travels. The piety, knowledge and humanity of Shāikh Ākhi Sirāj attracted to him the mass of the people, including kings and princes of Lakhnawtī. He established a khanqah that became the centre of widespread religious, cultural and humanitarian activities. Here flocked persons devoted to religion and knowledge. The few books of the library of Shāikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyyā, which Shāikh Ākhi Sirāj carried with him to Lakhnawtī, constituted a library of Islamic mysticism in this country. His Khanqah gave shelter to the forlorn, aged and distressed and served the work of asylum and hospital to the people. He started a free kitchen where the poor, starving, beggars and mendicants could get food at all times. ‘Alā al-Ḥaq, who spent so large an amount of money for maintaining open kitchen as to arouse the jealousy of the then

1 Akhbar al-Akhyaar, p. 86.
2 Siyar al-Ārifīn, p. 90.
3 Akhbar al-Akhyaar, p. 143.
4 Ibid. p. 143.
5 Ibid, p. 90.
Bengali Sultan Sikandar Shāh, said that he did not spend even one-tenth of what his preceptor (Ākhi Sirāj) spent in feeding people. It was the piety, humanity and liberalism of Ākhi Sirāj that won him the love and respect even of the non-Muslims, and accounted for the spread of Islam in Bengal as well as the development of an atmosphere of understanding and of common cultural institutions in this province.

It is said that Shaikh Akhi Sirāj buried the robes he brought from his Shaikh, Nizām al-Din Auliyā, and asked his disciples to bury him at the foot of the grave of these robes. He died in 759 H./1357 A.D. and was buried accordingly. In his tomb there are two inscriptions, one of ʿAlā al-Dīn Ḥūsain Shāh, dated 931 H./1510 A.D., and the other of Nuṣrat Shāh, dated 931 H./1524-25 A.D., which records the erection of a gateway to the shrine of the saint. The tomb of the saint, who is locally referred to either as Purāna Pīr (the old saint) or Pīrān-i-Pīr (saint of saints), is situated at the north-west corner of the Sagar Dighi, about six miles south-west of English Bazar on the north, at Saʿaddullapur. The anniversary of his death is celebrated at the Sagar Dighi on the 'Id al-Fitr day annually, when the heraldic symbol (jhandia) of Makhdum Jahāniyān-i-Jāhān Gasht and the panja (the reproduction of the hand) of Shaikh Nūr Quṭb ʿĀlam are sent here as a mark of respect to the saint. A great fair (mela) is also held here every year on both the 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Azha days.

It is said by the local Maulavis that the articles of everyday use, such as the Qurʾān, tasbih (rosary), riḥal (book-stand), etc., of the Shaikh were also buried at the head of the grave, and that this accounts for the abnormal length of the grave.

Of the many disciples of Shaikh Ākhi Sirāj, the most illustrious

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1 Akhbār al-Akhyār, p. 143.
2 Akhbār al-Akhyār, p. 86.
3 Dr. A. H. Dani—Inscriptions in Bengal, pp. 56 and 69.
5 Ibid.
was Shaikh 'Alà al-Haq, who carried forward the religious, cultural and humanitarian mission of his great teacher and contributed greatly to the moral and intellectual advancement of his countrymen.

Shaikh 'Alà al-Haq:

Shaikh 'Alà al-Dîn 'Alà al-Haq was the most illustrious disciple and Khâlîfa of Shaikh Ākhi Sirâj. He came of an enlightened and influential wealthy family of Lakhnavti. According to Ma'ârîj al-Vilâyat, his family traces descent from the great Quraish general Khalid bin Walid. It is known from Akhbâr al-Akhâyr that his father was in charge of the treasury of the Sultân (Sikandar Shâh, 1357-92 A.D.), his relations were the wazîrs of the Bâdshâh and one of his sons, A'zâm Khân, was a wazîr at the Court of Pandua. 'Alà al-Haq was thus a man of high family connections. To this he added his great learning. The Akhbâr al-Akhâyr mentions him as one of the most learned, wisest and wealthiest men of the time. The 'ulema of the time dared not argue with him. Even Ākhi Sirâj at first felt diffident of meeting 'Alà al-Haq. It was only when he was assured by the great Auliyyâ Shaikh Nizâm al-Dîn that 'Alà al-Haq would turn his disciple that he proceeded to Bengal.

Indeed it was as the great Auliyyâ prophesied. 'Alà al-Haq was attracted by the spiritualism of Shaikh 'Akhî Sirâj and became his most devoted disciple. He discarded wealth, influence and position and devoted himself to a life of austerity and service. He successfully passed all the tests of a life of austerity and renunciation,

1 Quoted in Khazinat al-Asfiyâ, p. 368. Jahângir Simmâni in his letter refers to Nûr Quîb 'Alam as belonging to 'Alî and Khâlidîa house.

2 Akhbâr al-Akhâyr, p. p. 143 and 52:

The Sultân said of 'Alà al-Haq:

گفت خزانہ من بدلست قد در سر شچ ست

The author says:

خوشمان او بودی که وزرا پادشاه بود

وقت اعظم خان برادر بزرگ او (قلب عالمی) کہ وزارت

دشتن او را باین حالت دید

3 Ibid, p. 143.
in which his spiritual preceptor trained him. By his devotion he won the blessings of Shaikh Siraj, who conferred on him the khilafat and made him his valuable assistant in the great spiritual mission.

After the death of Shaikh Akhfi Siraj, Shaikh 'Ala al-Haq carried forward the mission of his great preceptor and promoted the cause of Islam in many ways. He kept a khangah and langar at Pandua which became the resort of the devotees, the seekers of God and knowledge and of the destitute. He liberally spent money for their maintenance. Indeed by his ideal life and humanitarian activities Shaikh 'Ala al-Haq captured the minds of the people so much that the Sultan Sikandar Shah became afraid of his influence over them. There was also difference of the Sultan with the Shaikh in matters of State. During the reigns of Ilyyas Shah (1342-57) and Sikandar Shah, Hindus were appointed to high offices in the State. The Shaikh pointed out the unwisdom of trusting the Hindus with key-positions in the government. The Sultan, who was already jealous of the great influence of the Shaikh over the people, did not like his interference in high politics and hence exiled him from the capital. Shaikh 'Ala al-Haq lived at Sonargaon and there also he maintained khangah and langar and served the cause of religion and learning. By his devotion and service, he won the hearts of the people even in that place of exile. He returned to Pandua perhaps after the death of Sikandar Shah in 1392 A.D.

Because of the profound learning and spiritual knowledge of Shaikh 'Ala al-Haq, Pandua became a significant centre of the religious and intellectual life of the time. The fame of this great saint travelled far and wide and attracted the seekers after God and knowledge from distant places. Mir Saiyid Ashraf Jahangir Sinnani came from Central Asia, Shaikh Nasir al-Din from Manikpur and many others from far off places to receive Islamic and esoteric knowledge at his feet. Nur Qutb Alam, Jahangir Sinnani and Nasir al-Din Manikpuri were some of his distinguished disciples, Shaikh Husain Dhukkarposh, who blessed Purnea with his holy presence, was also a disciple of this great

Bengali saint. According to Jahāṅgīr Simnānī the disciples of Shaikh 'Alā al-Haq constituted in the Chishtī organisation a branch order known as 'Alātī, after the name of their great preceptor.¹ These worthy disciples kept the tradition of their teacher and built the glory and greatness of their order.

Shaikh 'Alā al-Haq died at Pandua in 800 H., corresponding to 1398 A. D. He left behind him a family of ṣūfīs.²

¹ B. P. P. 1948, p. 37.
² See Memoirs of Gaur, pp. 111-12.
Haḍrat Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam

Haḍrat Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam was the worthy son and spiritual successor of the celebrated saint ‘Alā al-Ḥaq. Like his father, he was well-educated in Islamic theology and learning. He was a fellow student of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh and they received education from Shaikh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Ganj-nashīn (Kunj-nashīn) Nagōrī (of Nagor in Bīrbhum district). It is known from Rafīq al-‘Arifīn, malsūẓāt of Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpūrī, a disciple of Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam, that there was very cordial relation between his preceptor and Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh.

From his boyhood Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam was initiated by his father into spiritual knowledge and trained him into the austerity, devotion and service of an ascetic life. The boy who was born with a purple had to wash the clothes of the faqīrs and beggars, to keep water hot for their ablution, to sweep the khānqah and cleanse the privies attached to it. It is said that one day when he was helping a weak mendicant in going to privy his clothes and body were polluted. His father was pleased with his service and gave him the work of carrying fuel for the langarkhāna. One day his brother Aʿzam Khān, who was a wazīr at the court, saw him and asked him to leave those menial works and come to him, so that he might have a better life. ‘Quṭb ‘Ālam refused the offer of his brother and said that he preferred wood-carrying to the khānqah to a life of wealth and splendour at the court.²

It is through such a life of austerity and service that Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam made himself worthy of his father’s spiritual succession. He cherished his great father’s legacy of spiritual work as a precious treasure and enriched it in many ways. He excelled in the knowledge of religious sciences and in theory and practice of mysticism. He greatly developed the ṣūfī order and

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¹ Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, 1953, Pt. IV, p. 384. This Shaikh Hamīd al-Dīn Nagōrī is different from the great ṣūfī, Shaikh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nagōrī of Jodhpur, who was a disciple of Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Shurawardī.
² Akhbār al-Ākhāyīr, p. 52.
infused a fresh stimulus to the missionary, intellectual and humanitarian activities. As a result, in his time Pandua became the centre of such an animated religious and intellectual life that it had few equals in this subcontinent. Its renown attracted pupils and disciples from all parts of India. Ḥusām al-Dīn of Manikpur (died 1477), Shaikh Kākū of Lahore (died 1416), Shams al-Dīn of Ajmir (died 1476 A.D.) and many others flocked to Pandua to be initiated into the discipleship of the greatest sage of the time. Rafaq al-Dīn and Shaikh Anwār, sons of Quṭb Ḍālam, and his grandson Shaikh Zāhid were among his distinguished disciples. Through his disciples Islamic learning and mystic knowledge disseminated throughout Hindustan from the Pandua centre. Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpūrī, as the disciple and Khalīfa of Nur Quṭb Ḍālam, made Manikpur a seat of his teacher’s spiritual and intellectual mission. The letters of Nur Quṭb Ḍālam, written to different persons explaining the doctrine of Wahdat al-Wujūd (Unity of Essence) reveal the dissemination of the mystical knowledge of this celebrated saint of Pandua. He maintained a college, a hospital and a langar. It is known that Sultān Husain Shāh made land grants to this college and hospital.

The great spiritual personality of Ḥaḍrat Nur Quṭb Ḍālam and his selfless services to the people made him the greatest moral force of the age. He possessed enormous influence over the people. Indeed he wielded greater influence than even the rulers. He had however all respect for them. According to Rajīq al-Ārifīn, Ḥaḍrat Nur Quṭb Ḍālam once observed: “Whoever reverenced his chief reverenced him . . . We also respect the nobles and kings so that our sons should follow our examples in evincing respect that is due to them.” In a letter written to a fellow mystic, Shaikh Nur Quṭb Ḍālam emphasized the need of obeying the orders of the kings. He wrote, “Obeying the Tradition and sayings of the Chishti saints, you should

2 Firishtha, II, p. 302.
remove suspicion from hearts (of the people) and ask them to obey the king."

It was by his great moral force that he saved the Muslim society and State from a great danger. Qutb 'Alam, who was a recluse, generally kept aloof from politics. But the crisis that threatened the existence of Muslim society and State drew him into politics and made him devise ways and means of saving the Muslims. The letter of Qutb 'Alam expresses that the Muslims were divided at that time. He wrote, "It is clear to you that Islam has got involved in a crisis. May God protect this city from all calamities and misfortunes. At such a time differences between the Mussalmans and disobedience to the Imam will create chaos and confusion." The policy of the Ilyās Shāhī Sultan in elevating Hindus to offices of trust and responsibility in government accounted for the division among the Muslims of Pandua. A section of the Muslims did not like this policy and they became indifferent to the fortunes of the State. Taking advantage of this generous policy of the Ilyās Shāhīs and also of the division and indifference of the Muslims, Raja Kans, a Hindu official at the court of Pandua, became supreme in government and oppressed the Muslims, particularly the shaikhs and 'ulema, in an inhuman manner. In consequence, the Muslim State and society was faced with an impending ruin.

Nūr Qutb 'Alam felt the immediate necessity of restoring the solidarity of the Muslim community, if the State was to be saved from a collapse. So, he tried in every conceivable way to remove the differences among the Muslims and to unite them again in loyalty to Islam and to the Muslim ruler. The ascendency of Raja Kans and his Hindu associates in the State and their persecution on the Muslims obliged Ḥadrat Nūr Qutb 'Alam to write to Sultan Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqi of Jaunpur imploring his assistance. Mr Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnāni also wrote to the Sultan,

1 Maktūbāt-i-Qutb 'Alam, quoted by Prof. Shaikh A. Rashid, Pakistan Historical Conference, 1952, p. 212.
requesting him to punish the tyrant Raja Kans and save the Bengali Muslims.\footnote{B. P. P, 1948, p. 32.} Being frightened at the advance of Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī on the border of Bengal, Raja Kans humbly prayed for the good offices of Haḍrat Quṭb ‘Ālam to avert the danger. He also offered his son Jadu to be converted to Islam. Jadu was accordingly converted to Islam and placed on the throne with the name of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh. Then Quṭb ‘Ālam persuaded Sultān Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī to abandon his campaign. This saved the Muslim State and society as well as the independence of Bengal from a serious crisis. Quṭb ‘Ālam thus earned the reputation of a saviour of Muslim Bengal.

It is said that after the return of Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī and his forces, Raja Kans usurped the supreme power of the State and turned his son back to Hinduism by performing the purificatory ceremony (Suddhi). But the Hindus still treated Jadu as a social outcaste.\footnote{Riyāḍ al-Salātīn, p. 115 and History of Bengal (D. U., II, pp. 127-28.)} Raja Kans renewed his policy of persecuting the Muslim shaikhs and ‘ulema. He seized Shaikh Anwār and Shaikh Zāhid, son and grandson of Quṭb ‘Ālam, and banished them to Sonargaon. Shaikh Anwār was killed at the order of Raja Kans. Raja Kans died the same year. After his death Jadu re-embraced Islam and ascended the throne with the title of Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh.\footnote{Riyāḍ al-Salātīn, p. 116.} An influential Hindu family was thus acquired to Islam.

There are differences in dating the death of Haḍrat Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam. According to Mīr’āt al-Asrār, he died in 818 H./1415 A. D.\footnote{A. Raḥmān Chishti—Mīr’āt al-Asrār, quoted in Memoirs of Gaur, p. 111.} On the evidence of Taṣkīrat al-Aqṭāb, the author of Ḳhazīnāt al-Asfiyā‘ states that the Shaikh died in 851 H./1447 A. D.\footnote{Ḳhazīnāt al-Asfiyā‘, p. 392.} An inscription of the time of Sultān Maḥmūd Shāh I conveys that Quṭb ‘Ālam died in 863 H./1459 A. D.\footnote{Memoirs of Gaur, p. 115.} It is known from Mīr’āt al-Asrār that Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh (1415-32 A. D.) and
his son and successor Ahmad Shāh (1432-35 A. D.) were his disciples.¹ This shows that Qutb 'Alām lived long even after 1415 A. D. In the absence of a clear evidence the definite date of his death cannot be settled.

Hadrat Nur Qutb 'Alām was buried at Pandua near his father's tomb. The shrines of Shaikh 'Alā al-Haq and Qutb 'Alām are known as Chhoti Dargah, the shrine of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī being known as Bari Dargah. The estate attached to the Chhoti Dargah is called Shash Hazāri Estate, as it yielded an income of six thousand rupees. The spiritual personality of Qutb 'Alām and his great services to the society made him the most popular saint of Bengal. His dargah is a place of pilgrimage for kings as well as commons. Husain Shāh every year came on foot-from Ikdala to Pandua to pay his respects to the memory of this saint. He also granted 47 villages for the maintenance of the langarkhāna of the saint.² Mirzā Nathan, the author of Bahārīstān-i-Ghaybī, paid a visit to the shrine in fulfilment of a vow.³ Shāh Shujāʿ also made land-grants to Shaikh Kabir, a descendant of Qutb 'Alām in 1058 H./1648 A. D.⁴

Mir Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī:

Mir Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī, a celebrated saint and scholar, was a spiritual product of Bengal. Born in the royal family of Simnan, Ashraf Jahāngīr abandoned the throne, wealth and comforts in his youth and took to asceticism. He then came to Delhi and lived in the company of the sufišt there. Being anxious to be a disciple of Makhduum Sharīf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri, he proceeded to Bihar and learnt that the Shaikh had passed away (782 H./1380 A. D.). Then he went to Bengal and was initiated into the discipleship of Shaikh 'Alā al-Dīn 'Alā al-Haq. He stayed in Pandua for six years receiving spiritual knowledge and Islamic learning from that famous saint of Bengal. After the completion of education and spiritual training with distinction, Ashraf

¹ Mir'at al-Aṣrār MS. (Aliya Madrasah), f. 184.
³ Bahārīstān (Tr.), I, p. 42.
⁴ Memoirs of Gaur, p. 113.
Jahāngīr Simnānī was given khīrqāh and was appointed khalīfa of Jaunpur by his preceptor. He established in Jaunpur a khāṅqāh, known as the khāṅqāh of Kachaucha Sharīf.¹

The letters of Mir Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī show how deeply he felt himself indebted to his preceptor Shaikh 'Ālā al-Ḥaq for his spiritual and intellectual advancement in life. He also cherished a great attachment for the people of Bengal. In his letter to Sultan Ḥirmālim Sharqī, he wrote, “God be praised! What a good land is that of Bengal, where numerous saints and ascetics came from different direction and made it their habitation and home.” He also urged upon the Sultan to free the descendants and disciples of his beloved Shaikh and the Muslims of Bengal from the clutches of a Hindu tyrant.²

Mir Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī was renowned for his learning and spiritual knowledge, and had a great share in the development of the spiritual and intellectual life of Jaunpur. He compiled several works which reveal his great knowledge in Islamic sciences and šūfism.

Shaikh Husain Dhukkarposh:

It is known from a letter of Mir Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī as well as from the Bayāz of Mulla Tāqqya that Shaikh Ḥusain Dhukkarposh, the celebrated saint of Purnea, was a disciple and khalīfa of the Bengali saint Shaikh ‘Ālā al-Ḥaq.³ Shaikh Ḥusain Dhukkarposh’s (dust-ridden) father Bābā Kamāl and mother Kako were both yūfīs of Gaya district. His mother belonged to a family of saints, being the daughter of Haḍrat Sulaimān Langar-Zamīn and Bibi Haddā, who was a daughter of the famous Jethuli saint, Makhīdum Shīhāb al-Dīn Pir Jagjot.⁴

Shaikh Ḥusain Dhukkarposh was a fellow-disciple of Jahāngīr

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² Extracts in B.P.P. 1948, No. 30, pp. 34-36.
³ Quoted by Prof. H. Askari in B. P. P. 1948, pp. 32-36.
⁴ B. P. P. 1948, p. 37.
Simnāni at Pandua. After completing his education and spiritual training, he was appointed Khalīfa by Shaikh 'Alā al-Haq. He made Purnea the centre of religious mission and maintained a khāngah there. His son, who lived in Pandua, was killed by Raja Kans. Jahāngir Simnāni wrote him a letter consoling him in his bereavement.1

Shaikh Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpurī :

A worthy disciple of the great Bengali saint Haḍrat Nūr Qutb 'Ālam, Shaikh Ḥusām al-Dīn was a son of Maulānā Khwājah and grandson of Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn of Manikpur in the United Provinces. His family traces descent from Caliph 'Umar. After his early education at home, Ḥusām al-Dīn was seized with a strong desire to receive spiritual knowledge from the celebrated saint of Pandua. Nūr Qutb 'Ālam trained his disciple in spiritual exercises and into a life of austerity. It is stated in his malfūẓat, Raḥīq al-ʿArifīn, that one day, he along with Maulānā Farīd al-Dīn and Maulānā Sālār, who were also disciples of Qutb 'Ālam, went to a distance of five kos to carry fuel timber for the khāngah.2 It was through such tests that Ḥusām al-Dīn attained perfection in spiritualism. In 804 H./1402 A. D. he was conferred the khilafat in an assembly of the shaikhs and 'ulema.3 After this he kept fast for seven years.

On his return as Khalīfa, Shaikh Ḥusām al-Dīn made Manikpur the seat of his spiritual mission. Shaikh Nāṣir al-Dīn, a khalīfa of 'Alā al-Haq, died a few days after his arrival at Manikpur.4 Shaikh Ḥusām al-Dīn was soon renowned as a great saint and vastly learned man of the time. His malfūẓat, Raḥīq al-ʿArifīn compiled by his disciple Farīd bin Sālār, represents his great spiritual and intellectual knowledge. According to Akhbār al-Aṣfiyā' of 'Abd al-Samad, a nephew of Abūl Fāḍl,

1 B. P. P. 1948, p. 37.
4 Ibid.
Shaikh Husâm al-Din died in 853 H./1449 A. D. According to Khazinat al-Asfiya', the saint passed away in 882 H./1477 A. D.

**Zafar Khan Ghazi:**

At Tribeni in Hughli district there is a tomb of Zafar Khan Ghazi. Near it are also the graves of his sons Ugwan Khan and Bar Khan Ghazi. An inscription on the tomb, dated 713 H./1313 A. D., records the erection of a madrasah called Dar al-Khairat in the reign of Sultan Firuz Shah (of Bengal) by the great Khan, the helper of Islam, aider of kings and the patron of believers, Khan Jahân Zafar Khan. Another inscription at Tribeni, dated 698 H./1298 A. D. refers to the erection of a madrasah in the reign of Sultan Kaikaus during the governorship of Zafar Khan. This inscription speaks of Zafar Khan as 'the lion of the lions' who 'conquered the towns of India in every expedition' and 'destroyed the obdurate among infidels with his sword and spear.'

The inscriptions reflect that Zafar Khan was deeply devoted to the cause of Islam and fought for the expansion of the religion. The Kurinsâma of this saint Ghazi preserved by the khâdîms of his shrine refers to his services to the Muslims. It says that Zafar Khan Ghazi came to Bengal accompanied by his sister's son Shah Sufi to propagate Islam. He converted Raja Man Nripati to Islam. But he was killed in a battle with Raja Bhudev of Hughli. Ugwan Khan, son of Zafar Khan Ghazi however defeated Raja Bhudev and married his daughter.

At Pandua there is a mosque or monument of Shah Sufi, who was nephew of Firuz Shah of Delhi, and the a'imadârs claim the rent-free qasbah as descendants. They hold a document from which it appears that their title has existed for 500 years. This

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1 Ibid.
3 JASB, 1847, vol. XVI, p. 349 and Dani—Inscription of Bengal, No. 11.
4 Dani—Inscriptions of Bengal, No. 7. Another inscription at Devikut, dated 697 H./1297, A. D. mentions the building of a mosque in the reign of Sultan Kaikaus by Zafar Khan, a governor. Dani—Inscriptions of Bengal, No. 6.
5 Qursinama, quoted in JASB, 1847, vol. XVI, p. 394.
corresponds with the date of the inscription of Zafar Khān’s tomb and is a good evidence that Zafar Khān and Shāh Ṣūfī were contemporaries.

According to a local legend, the Hindu king Bhudev Nripati killed the son of a Muslim for celebrating aqīqa, i.e., the festival of the birth of a son. The aggrieved Muslim resorted to the court of Delhi. Fīrūz Shāh (Jalāl al-Dīn Fīrūz Khālji) sent Zafar Khān and his nephew (sister’s son) Shāh Ṣūfī. They fought against Bhudev and obtained victory.¹

Saint Raushan Ārā :

There is a shrine of saint Raushan Ārā at the Kathulia village in the Bashirhat sub-division of 24-Parganas. The local tradition says that she was born in Makkah in 1279 A. D. Her father was Saiyid Karīm Āllāh and mother was Meherunissa. Raushan Ārā’s elder brother ‘Abbās ‘Ali was noted for his saintly life. She was an educated lady. She and her brother and brother’s wife accompanied Shaikh Shāh Ḥasan to Delhi in 1321 A. D. in the reign of Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq.² Shāh Ḥasan sent 165 of his disciples to different parts to preach Islam. Raushan Ārā, her brother, brother’s wife and some others came to Bengal at the time of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq’s expedition in this province (1325-26 A. D.). They settled at Taragunia and devoted to the preaching of Islam. Raushan Ārā died in 1342 A. D. at the age of 64.³

Shaikh Badr al-Islām :

Shaikh Badr al-Islām was a contemporary of Ḥadrat Nūr Quṭb Ālam in Pandua. According to the Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn, Raja Kans executed him for not paying respect to him.⁴ In Jahāngīr Simnāni’s letter there is reference of two saints, Ḥadrat Bad

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¹ JASB, 1847, vol. XVI, p. 394.
² Dr. A. Ghafar Siddiqui says that Pir Saiyid ‘Abbās ‘Ali was called Gorachand Shāh.
⁴ Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn, pp. 110-11.
'Alam and Badr 'Alam Zähidi. Badr 'Alam Zähidi is identified with Shaikh Badr al-Din Zähidi, son of Khwâja Fakhr al-Din Zähidi, a contemporary of Makhdum Sharf al-Din Maneri. His shrine is at Bihar. Haḍrat Bad 'Alam mentioned in the letter of Jahângîr Simnâni was most probably Shaikh Badr al-Islâm, who fell a victim to the tryanny of Raja Kans.

Shaikh Anwâr:

Shaikh Anwâr was educated and trained in Šâfi’i tarîqat (path) by his father Haḍrat Nur Quṭb 'Alam. From his boyhood he devoted himself to a life of devotion, austerity and service. When Raja Kans perpetrated cruelties on the shaikhs and the ‘ulema, Shaikh Anwâr had also to suffer at his hands. He and his brother's son Shaikh Zähid were banished to Sonargaon. Even in exile they were subjected to inhuman cruelties by the order of Raja Kans, who tried to extract information from them about the hidden wealth of their forefathers. Shaikh Anwâr was thus tortured to death. It is said that the same year Raja Kan's life also came to an end.

Shaikh Zähid:

Shaikh Zähid was the son of Rifat al-Din, the eldest son of Haḍrat Qâtb Ālam. He attained distinction in learning and spiritual knowledge, as a disciple of his illustrious grandfather. He was also an embodiment of all virtues. So his appreciative preceptor, Qâtb Ālam once remarked, "The drum of the virtues of Zähid shall resound till the Day of Resurrection." Shaikh Zähid had to suffer exile and persecution along with his uncle Shaikh Anwâr, at the hands of Raja Kans. When Jalâl al-Din Muhammad Shâh ascended the throne after the death of Raja Kans, he was called back to Pandua from Sonargaon. Jalâl al-Din Muhammad Shâh had great respect for Shaikh Zähid and very often waited upon the Shaikh.

1 B. P. P. 1948, p. 36.
2 B. P. P. 1948, p. 36.
3 Khurshid-Jahân Numi, JASB, 1895, p. 208, Riyâd, pp. 115-16.
4 Riyâd, p. 115.
5 Riyâd, p. 116.
Badr al-Dīn Shāh Madār:

Badr al-Dīn was born in 715 H./1315 A. D. in a religious family of Syria, which traced descent from Ḥaḍrat Ḥārūn, brother of Ḥaḍrat Mūsa (the Prophet). His father’s name was Abū ʿIshaq Shāmī. Early in his youth he took to asceticism and visited many saints in Western Asia and India. There is no definite evidence that he ever paid any visit to Bengal. From the names of some places, such as Madarpur, Madarbari and Madarsha, and also from the existence of some customs peculiar to the followers of the Madāri order, such as lifting the bamboo of Madar in memory of Shāh Madār and the naming of Madari to fish in the ponds, some scholars think that the saint probably visited Bengal. He died in 840 H/1436 A.D. at Makanpur in Kanpur district.

Ḥaḍrat Shāh Kākū

Ḥaḍrat Shāh Kākū was a descendant of Shaikh Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-I-Shakr. He at first received his spiritual knowledge under Shaikh Pir Muḥammad Lahorī. Then he became a disciple of Shaikh Nūr Qūb ʿĀlam. After successfully completing his spiritual training Shāh Kākū was appointed Khalīfa of his great teacher in Lahore. He was possessed of extraordinary spiritual power and knowledge. He died in 882 H (1477 A.D.).

Shāh Anwār Qull Ḥalvī:

Shāh Anwār Qull was a native of Aleppo and hence he was called Halvī. According to a tradition, he came to Phurphura in Hughli at a time when a Bagdi (low class Hindu) king was ruling there. The saint fought with the king and killed him. But afterwards he and his companion Karam al-Dīn were killed by the enemy. He was buried at Mullā Simla in Phurphura where his tomb exists even now by the side of an old mosque, which was

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3. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Chishti—Mīr`ūr-ī-Maddārī, f. 81.
erected in 1395 A. D. (777 H.). It is said that Shāh Anwār Qull preferred looking-glass to any other offering. This may be that he looked upon it as a memorial of his birth-place Aleppo which was famous for glasswares.¹

**Pir Badr al-Dīn Badr-i-‘Ālam:**

There are several places in Bengal which are associated with the name of Pir Badr and where exist some memorial of this saint either in the form of a dargah or a tomb. A tradition connects him with the spread of Islam in Chittagong and the people call his shrine there by different names, such as dargah of ‘Badr ‘Ālam’, ‘Badr Muqām’, ‘Badr Pir’, ‘Badr Auliya’, ‘Badr Shāh’ and ‘Pir Badr’.² A dargah of a saint named Badr Ṣāḥib is situated at Kalna in Burdwan district. According to a local tradition Badr Ṣāḥib and his brother Majlis Ṣāḥib spread Islam in that place. Majlis Ṣāḥib has also his tomb in Kalna.³ In Hemtabad of Dinajpur district there is a dargah of a saint named Pir Badr al-‘Ālam. Tradition states that Pir Badr ‘Ālam came there to preach Islam. Because of the oppression of the Hindu king of the locality, he asked for the help of Sultān Husain Shāh and defeated the Hindu king Mahes with the help of the Sultān’s forces. He then spread Islam there.⁴

A dargah of Badr al-Dīn Badr-i-‘Ālam is situated in Bihar-sharif where he died in 844 H./1440 A.D. It is said that Makhdum Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri invited him, but he delayed at Chatgaon and arrived in Bihar forty days after the death of the saint of Maner (1386 A. D.).⁵ If this is true, then Badr al-Dīn Badr-i-‘Ālam was a younger contemporary of Sharf al-Dīn Maneri and he visited Chittagong and lived there for some time.

From the memorials of Pir Badr in different places, it seems that these were of one saint, Pir Badr al-Dīn, Badr-i-‘Ālam

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1 JASB 1870, pp. 29-92 and District Gazetteer, Hugli, p. 302.
2 District Gazetteer, Chittagong.
3 E. Haq-Bange Sufi Prabhava, p. 132.
4 District Gazetteer, Dinajpur, 1912, p. 20.
5 JASB, 1874, XLII, p. 302.
was buried in Bihar where his shrine is known as *Chhoti Dargah*. Traditions ascribe to Pir Badr al-Din Badr-i-‘Alam with supernatural powers, that he came to Chittagong, floating upon a stone slab and he drove away bad spirits, which haunted Chittagong, by lighting *chati*. In local dialect lamp is called *chati* and it is believed, of course without justification, that Chatigaon got its name from the *chati* of Badr Shâh.\(^1\)

The name of Badr Shâh or Pir Badr is very popular in East Bengal. Daulat Wazîr Bahrâm, a poet of the sixteenth century, says that Shâh Badr ‘Alam lay buried in Chittagong.\(^2\) Even now the boatmen of East Bengal invoke the blessings of Pir Badr when sailing in the rivers in rough weather.

**Shâh Šâfî al-Dîn:**

The saint Shâh Šâfî al-Dîn lies buried at Chhota Pandua in Hughli district. According to a local tradition, he was the son of Barkhûrdâr, a noble of the court of Delhi and brother-in-law of king Firûz Shâh. He came to preach Islam in Bengal. In Hughli he found the Hindu Raja Pandav, persecuting the Muslims. Pandav Raja killed a boy, as his father sacrificed a cow to celebrate his circumcision. At this Shâh Šâfî al-Dîn appealed to his uncle Firûz Shâh to send him a force. With this force and the blessings of his Pir Shaikh Sharî al-Dîn Bû ‘Ali Qalandar (died 1324 A. D.) and also joined by Zafar Khân Ghâzi and Bahrâm Saqqâ, Shâh Šâfî al-Dîn defeated Pandav Raja.\(^3\)

This tradition which connects several persons of different times to a particular event is confusing. Bahrâm Saqqâ was a saint of the time of Akbar; Zafar Khân Ghâzi was a governor of Satgaon under Sultân Rukn-al-Dîn Kaïkauz and also under Shams

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1. District Gazetteer Chittagong, p. 56 and E. Haq—*Muslim Bangla Sahitya*; Hamid-Allâh Khân—*Ahâdîth al-Khwânîn*, p. 27.
al-Dīn Firūz Shāh of Bengal (1298—1313 A.D.). It is definitely known that Satgaon was conquered by Zafar Khān Ghāzī and at that time Kaikaus and Firūz Shāh ruled as independent Sultān in Bengal. If Shāh Ṣafī al-Dīn took part in Zafar Khān’s conquest of Satgaon, then he might have been related to Sultān Firūz Shāh of Bengal.

Darvēsh Bahrām or Bahrām Saqqā:

A dargah of this saint and poet exists in Burdwan. An inscription in the dargah, dated 952 H/1574 A.D., states that the dargah was built to commemorate the memory of Bahrām Saqqā, who left this world on his way to Ceylon.1 Mullā ‘Abd al Qadir Badāuni refers to him as a gifted poet and wandering saint. Bahrām Saqqā was a follower of Shaikh Jāmi Muḥammad of Kabushan (near Nishapur) and was a Majzūb, a devotee of God. He wandered about in the streets of Agra with several of his pupils, distributed water gratis to the poor and composed at the same time verses ‘as pure as water’.2 Badāuni observes that Bahrām Saqqā composed several diwāns, but when he was in religious ecstasy he washed the ink off his papers. Still he left behind a good collection of poems. He gave away his all to the descendants of his spiritual guide. He was fond of independence; he set out for Ceylon, but died on the way.

Shāh Ṭabī Baghdādī:

Tradition connects Shāh Ṭabī Baghdādī with Shāh Jalāl and 38 other saints who came to Bengal before Muslim conquest. They went to different places in Bengal and Shāh Ṭabī Baghdādī settled down in Dacca. The tradition is even superficially inaccurate, because it places Shāh Jalāl in Sylhet before Muslim conquest. From a book in the mazār it however appears that Shāh Ṭabī settled in Bengal in 985 H/1577 A.D. The shrine of the saint

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1 J.A.S.B. 1871, p. 252.
2 Badāuni I, p. 243. majzūb (  ) means literally the absorbed, i.e., one who has merged his ego with the universal soul. He has reached a stage between funā’ and baqā’ or the secrets of the mystery of anā’ al ḥaq (  )
3 Badāuni, III, p. 243.
is situated in Mirpur about ten miles north of the Dacca town.¹

**Maulānā Shāh Daulah:**

Maulānā Shāh Mu‘āz zam Dānishmand, popularly known as Shāh Daulah, was, according to tradition, a descendant of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. He came from Baghdad to Bagha in Rajshahi sub-division, where he is now lying buried, in the reign of Sulṭān Nuṣrat Shāh (1519-32 A. D.). He settled down in Bagha and married the daughter of an influential noble ‘Alā Bakhs Bharkurdār Lashkari of Makhdumpur. It is said that Maulānā Shāh Daulah was possessed of extraordinary spiritual force and a king of Gaur offered rent-free lands to him. As the saint did not accept, the grant was made to his son Hadhrat Ḥamīd Dānishmand. The religious and educational works of the descendants of Maulānā Shāh Daulah has been discussed in the chapter on Education and Learning.²

**Maulānā ‘Aṭā:**

The shrine of Maulānā ‘Aṭā is situated at Gangarampur in the district of Dinajpur. There are four inscriptions attached to his shrine, which refer to him as a great saint and vastly learned man of the time.³ According to one inscription he died before 763 H./1365 A. D. in the reign of Sikandar Shāh. These inscriptions also reflect that Maulānā ‘Aṭā was held in high respect by Sulṭān Sikandar Shāh and Shams al-Dīn Muṣaffar Shāh. Ḥusain Shāh had also profound respect for his memory.⁴

**Shāh Jalāl Dakini (Gujrati):**

Shāh Jalāl Dakini was a native of Gujrat. According to Akhbar al-Akhya r, he was a disciple of Shaikh Piyārā,⁵ a distinguished Bengali disciple and spiritual successor of the famous

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1 Munshi Rahmān ʿAll—Tūrkh-i-Dacca, p. 172.
2 See Chapter V, p. 185.
4 Ibid.
saint, Shaikh Salim Chishti. He attained a very high degree of perfection in spiritual knowledge and then came to Bengal. It is said that Shah Jalal behaved himself as a king and the reigning Sultan, suspecting his intentions, sent an army against him and killed him with all his followers. The shrine of this saint stands near the Government House in Dacca.

Dr. N. B. Baloch has identified Shāh Jalāl Dakini with Jalāl al-Dīn, who has been referred to in Ibrāhīm Qawwām Farūqī’s Sharfnāmah. It has however to be remembered that Sharfnāmah was compiled in the reign of Sulṭān Bārbak Shāh (1459-72) of Bengal, while Shāh Jalāl Dakini was a spiritual grandson of Shaikh Salīm Chishti, who died in 1572 A. D., in the reign of Emperor Akbar. Obviously this identification is far from accurate.

Khān Jahān:

Khān Jahān, commonly known as Khān Jahān Khān and Khān Jahān ‘Ali, was one of the warrior-saints of Bengal, who rendered valuable services to the expansion of Muslim rule and the spread of Islam in Bengal. Traditions credit him with the conquest of the inaccessible territories of the modern Khulna district and of colonising that region. After the acquisition of these territories, he devoted himself to the preaching of Islam among the people. The inscriptions found in his tomb at Bagherhat corroborates the accounts of the tradition. This inscription refers to him as the great Khān Jahān, the nourisher of both these worlds, the lover of the Saiyids, devoted to the pious, the learned, the helper of Islam and Muslims and enemy of the non-believers and the infidels. It records the construction of the tomb over his grave in 863 H./1458-59 A. D. in honour of his memory. The tomb is said to have been built by his devoted follower Muḥammad Tāhir, better known as Pīr ‘Ali, who was originally a Brahmin and accepted Islam at the hands of Khān Jahān. In his life time Khān Jahān was regarded as a saint and to this day

1 Ibid.
2 Urdu, October 1952, p. 66.
3 JASB, 1867, vol. XXXVI, p. 118.
4 Dani—Inscriptions of Bengal, No. 28.
his name is remembered with profound respect by the Muslims as well as Hindus. Thousands of devotees assemble to pay their homage to the sacred memory of this saint on the full moon of Chaitrya (April), which is supposed to be the anniversary of his death.\(^1\)

\textit{Shāh Isma'īl Ghāzi:}

\textit{Shāh Isma'īl Ghāzi} was another warrior-saint whose memory is honoured by the Bengal Muslims even today. The Muslims are greatly indebted to him for the spread of their faith and the expansion and consolidation of their rule in this country. Pir Muḥammad, a \textit{Shāfi’i sūfī} of the seventeenth century has compiled a short biography of this saint under the name of \textit{Risalat al-Shuhada}. Its accounts are substantially corroborated by the local traditions.

According to \textit{Risalat al-Shuhada}, Shāh Isma'īl Ghāzi was born at Makkah in the family of the Prophet. From his early life he was devoted to religion and engaged himself in teaching and preaching. Feeling an urge to dedicate his life to the cause of the faith, Shāh Isma'īl left Makkah with a following and after a long and tedious journey arrived at Lakhnawti. Rukn-al-Din Bārbak Shāh (1459-74 A. D.), the Sultan of Bengal, was at that time anxious to devise ways and means to control flood in Gaur. His engineers failed. Shāh Isma'īl suggested a plan for building a bridge over the river (Chillīlah Pattiaḥ) and this scheme proved successful in preventing inundation of the city. For this the Sultān honoured him with the title of \textit{Ghāzi} and appointed him in a responsible office of the State.\(^2\)

Afterwards the Sultān gave Isma'īl Ghāzi the command of a force and engaged him in acquiring the frontier territories from the possession of the neighbouring Hindu kings. Shah Isma'īl fought against Gajapati, the king of Orissa, and wrested Mandaran from him. In his campaign against Raja Kamcsvara of

\(^1\) JASB, 1867, XXXVI. p. 118.
\(^2\) JASB, 1874, XLIII. p. 215.
Kamrup he won victories and made him tributary to the Sultān. Sultān Bārbak Shāh highly appreciated the achievement of his distinguished general and rewarded him with a horse, sword, belt and robe of honour.¹

Bhandarsi Ray, a Hindu commandant of Ghoraghat, appears to have been envious of Isma‘il Ghāzi’s fame and he falsely accused the warrior-saint of entering into an alliance with the king of Kamrup and designing to form an independent kingdom. By all sorts of the art of intrigue, he poisoned the mind of the Sultān against Isma‘il Ghāzi. Believing in these accusations, the Sultān sent a force with an order to behead Isma‘il Ghāzi. The order was carried out and the champion of the faith died a martyr in 878 H./1474 A. D.²

The head of the saint was buried at Kantaduar in Rangpur and his body at Mandaran. There are three other dargahs of Shāh Isma‘il Ghāzi in Rangpur district.³

Shāh Sultān Ansārī:

Shāh Sultān Ansārī belonged to an Anṣar family of Madinah. He is said to have left home in 900 H./1494 A. D. and came to India. He stayed for some time in Multan and Gujarat and then he journeyed to Bengal. He settled down at Mangalkot in Burdwan and devoted himself to preaching. Shāh Sultān Ansārī lies buried at Manglakot.⁴

Makhdum Shāh ‘Abd Allāh Gujrātī:

According to a local tradition Makhdum ‘Abd Allāh was a native of Gujarat and he came to Mangalkot in the reign of Sultān Nūrṣat Shāh (1519-32 A. D.). After serving the cause of Islam for many years, the saint died at Mangalkot and was buried there.⁵

² Ibid, and JASB, 1870, p. 117.
³ JASB, 1874, XXLIII, pp. 235-39 and JASB, 1870, p. 117.
⁵ Ibid, p. 135.
Makhdum Shāh Zahir al-Dīn:
Makhdum Shāh Zahir al-Dīn was a saint of the sixteenth century. His tomb is at Makhdunnagar in Birbhum district.¹

Khwāja Anwār Shāh:
Khwāja Anwār Shāh was a saint of Burdwan who died in 1715 A. D. His tomb was built by Farrukhsiyar.²

Shāh Langar:
The tomb of Shāh Langar lies in a village named Muazzampur about ten miles north of Dacca. The tradition is that he was a prince of Baghdad, who renounced the world and wandered through many countries. He at last came to Dacca and settled in Muazzampur where he died.³

Qalandaria saints:
Apart from the saints mentioned above, there were hundreds of others, known and unknown, who served the cause of Islam in Bengal. The shrines of these saints exist in every nook and corner of Bengal, illustrating their toil to carry the message of the faith and love between God and man even to the remotest and inaccessible parts of Bengal. It will be a big volume to give an account of these devotees of the faith and the builders of the Muslim community in this country.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the saints of Qalandaria order were numerous and they carried on missionary activities throughout Bengal. This order originated with Sharf al-Dīn, better known as Bū 'All Qalandar, who died at Panipat in 1324 A. D. Shāh Saḥī al-Dīn, whose shrine is at Chhota Pandua in Hughli district, was a disciple of Bū 'All Qalandar and is regarded as one of the earliest Qalandars in Bengal. In the time of Sultan Balban, the Qalandars grew into an important and influential mystic fraternity. Barani says that Tughral,

¹ Ibid.
² Ibid.
³ Dani—Dacca, p. 158.
Balban's governor of Bengal, made a gift of three maunds of gold to the Qalandaria fraternity for its maintenance.¹ He held the Qalandars in high esteem and took them into confidence in state affairs. Sultan Balban held them responsible for the rebellion of Tughral. So, after he defeated and killed the rebel governor, he executed the chief of the Qalandars and many persons of his fraternity.² Sultan Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shāh of Sonagroon had great respect for the Qalandars and he extended all sorts of facilities to them to carry on their mission. Ibn Battūta writes that Sultan Fakhr al-Din issued a general order that no freight should be charged from the faqīrs on the river and provisions should be supplied to them free of cost. When a faqir arrived in a village he was given half a dinār.³ This Moorish traveller informs that the affection of Sultan Fakhr al-Din for the faqīrs went so far that he placed one of them named Saiyidna as his viceroy at Chittagong. Saiyidna soon rebelled against the Sultan. He was however overcome and killed.⁴

The faqīrs of the Qalandaria order had some distinctive peculiarities. They were wandering mendicants and did not live in a place permanently. They put on rings in their fingers and armlets on their arms. They carried with them a monkey, a cat or a bear with them wherever they went.

Shaṭṭaria:

Shaṭṭaria was a significant sūfī order that found its way into Bengal in the fifteenth century. This silsilah traces its origin from the celebrated saint Shaikh Bāyazid Taifūr Bistāmi (753-845 A. D.). The Taifuriyah order of Bāyazid Bistāmi was introduced into India by Shaikh' Abd Allāh. Later on he formed a group within the Taifūrians and named it Shaṭṭaria. Shaṭṭar means 'walking or moving quickly' and in the language of the order ilm Shaṭṭaria signifies 'the working and aspirations of

¹ Barani, p. 91.
² Barani, p. 75.
³ Ibn Battūta, quoted in N. K. Bhattasali's Colas and Chronology, etc. p. 413
⁴ Ibid, p. 137.
the soul.' In his work *Laṭaif-i-Ghaybia*, Shaikh 'Abd Allāh has referred to three different methods of spiritual training, *Akhyār*, *Abrār* and *Shattār*. He has chosen the last as the quickest way of attaining spiritual perfection. 'Abd Allāh Shattār travelled widely and met eminent saints like Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpūrī and Hādhrat Mīr Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī. He lived in Jaunpur in the reign of Sūlṭān Ibrāhīm Sharqī and then settled down in Mandu where he died in 832 H./1429 A.D.

It is gathered from *Guzār-i-Abrār*, a biographical work on the saints by a *Shattārī* scholar named Muḥammad Gauṭhī Manduvi, that the work of Shaikh 'Abd Allāh was carried forward by one of his eminent disciples Shaikh Muḥammad 'Aṭā, who was popularly known as Shaikh Qazīn Bangālī. We have no information about the career and work of Qazīn Bangālī in Bengal. There is however evidence that the *Shattārī* order prospered in this province. It is known that Pīr Muḥammad, son of 'Aqlī Muḥammad, was a distinguished *Shattārī* saint and scholar of Bengal. He compiled *Risāla i-Shuhdā*, a biographical account on the life of the saint-warrior Shāh Isma'īl Ghāzī.¹

¹ J.A.S.B., 1874, XLIII, pp. 115-17; Medieval Indian Quarterly, vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 56-60.
CONTRIBUTION OF THE SAINTS

Spread of Islam:

Every part of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent had been the home of the saints and the scene of their spiritual activities. Everywhere they have left the stamp of their character and work. But Bengal was blessed by the presence of a larger number of the saints and their influence in this region is far more deep and abiding than elsewhere. The Muslim majority in Bengal and the mystical nature of the Bengali people will testify to this contention. The Bengali saints served the cause of Islam and the society in various ways and they made more substantial contribution to the development of the Muslim society than even the Muslim conquerors, generals and rulers.

Hundreds of saints and their followers came to Bengal in different times and they spread themselves in towns and villages, even in the remotest corners of the province. They promoted the faith, fostered mysticism and Divine love and contributed to the mental and moral well-being of the people. Their exemplary character, extraordinary moral force and great feeling for the suffering humanity drew to them mass of the non-Muslims wherever they went. To this was added the great liberal and cultural force of Islam, which the saints held before the seekers after ideal and also to the persecuted and degraded peoples of the society of the time. So the missionary activities of these ideal characters attracted non-Muslims, the Buddhists as well as the Hindus of every class to the fold of Islam. The acquisition of a considerable number into Islam in Malda and Dinajpur districts in North Bengal was the work of Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi and his followers. It is gathered from the contemporary accounts on the saint that people flocked to him in large number and accepted Islam at his hands after his arrival in Pandua. The great Chishtia saints, Akhī Sirāj,

1 See Ramai Pandit—Sunnī Parāna, (ed. C. C. Banerjee, Calcutta).
'Alā al-Haq and Nūr Qutb 'Ālam, acquired many converts in North Bengal. According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭā, the people of Sylhet were converted to Islam by the missionary work of Shaikh Jalāl (Shāh Jalāl). The local literature corroborates this evidence of the Moorish traveller. A folk-song records, "There were lakhs of Hindus in Sylhet, but no Muslim. It was Shāh Jalāl, who first called out Ardām (calling for prayer) in that place."

In Khulna-Jessore Islam was spread by the warrior-saint Khān Jahān 'Alī. The Chittagong-Noakhali areas were conquered by the Muslims only in the middle of the fourteenth century. Still those areas represent a large Muslim majority. How did this happen? This was indeed the work of the saints, who penetrated these non-Muslim territories and slowly and imperceptibly expanded the faith of Islam among the people. The work of these saints has been enshrined in the local traditions. Although in the absence of a definite historical evidence, it is difficult to accept the accounts of many of the traditions, they however reflect the widespread missionary activities of the saints in the various localities of Bengal.

The Bengali literature reveals that there was enormous influence of the Muslims in East Bengal in the later part of the thirteenth century. According to Poet Krittivas, the Muslim influence grew so much that, to avoid being contaminated the Brahmins of East Bengal left their homes and went to live in the territory of the Ganges. The poet informs that his ancestor, Nara Singh Ujha, who was a courtier of Dhanujmardhandeva (later quarter of thirteenth century) of Sonargaon, also migrated from East Bengal to West Bengal at that time. Sonargaon was not conquered by the Muslims before the later half of the thirteenth century. Then how did the Muslims grow in number in that region about that time? This suggests that

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1 E. Haq—Bange 'Saft Prabhava, p. 98;
2 Krittivas—Ramayana, Introduction.
3 See Chapter II, p. 43.
there were Muslims in Sonargaon region before the Muslims took possession of it. In the seventies of the thirteenth century, Shaikh Sharif al-Din Abu Tawfik Mahomed established his khānah and academy at Sonargaon. The foundation of an academy for Muslim learning confirms the view that there was already Muslim population in Sonargaon before Shaikh Abu Tawfik Mahomed’s arrival there. This Muslim population of Sonargaon, before its conquest by the Muslims, was the product of the missionary activities of the saints.

Expansion and consolidation of Muslim State:

Apart from the spread of Islam, the Muslim saints had also significant share in the expansion of Muslim power and consolidation of the Muslim rule in Bengal. Either by themselves or in co-operation with the Muslim generals, they extended the Muslim possessions to the farthest limits of their province. Local traditions refer to the religious wars of several saints, such as Babu Adam Shahid, Shah Sultan Mahisawar, Makhdum Shah Daulah Shahid and others, against the local Hindu Rajas for the sake of the faith. A few of the saints joined the Muslim rulers and generals to extend the boundary of the rule of the faith and to redress the grievances of the Muslim subjects living in the territory of the petty Hindu Rajas and zamindars in Bengal. The presence of the saints in the Muslim army infused great spiritual and moral force into the minds of the soldiers. Thus being strengthened in morale, the Muslim forces scored victories over the non-Muslim armies.

The saint-warrior Zafar Khan Ghazi and Shah Safi al-Din fought against the Hindu Raja of Satgaon and annexed that region to the Muslim dominion in Bengal. Shah Jalal and his companions co-operated with the Muslim forces of Sikandar Ghazi in fighting against the Hindu king of Sylhet and establishing Muslim supremacy there. Though based on tradition, yet it is an accepted fact that Khan Jahangir, a warrior-saint, launched systematic campaigns in the inaccessible territories of Khulna-Jessore and brought those territories under Muslim rule. The contribution of Isma’il Ghazi to the expansion of the
kingdom of Sultan Bahrak Shah is too well known. He fought successfully against the Hindu king of Orissa and wrested the territory of Mandaran from his possession. He also achieved remarkable victories over the Hindu king of Kamrup and reduced him to the position of a vassal to the Bengali Sultan. Tradition credits Shah Mahmud Ghaznavi with fighting against a Hindu zamindar and establishing Muslim rule in Mangalkot in Burdwan district. Numerous such instances are there which illustrate the services of the saints in extending Muslim rule in different parts of Bengal.

Noteworthy still is the service of the saints in the consolidation of the Muslim rule in Bengal. Indeed, to the physical conquest of the Muslim generals, the saints added the moral one by recruiting converts and followers and thus provided a source of strength and stability to the Muslim sovereignty in the land of a non-Muslim people. But for the silent works of the saints, it would have been a problem for the Muslim rulers to maintain hold over a formidable alien people, depending merely on a small body of soldiers.

The saints also saved the Muslim State and society in times of crisis. Traditions have preserved a few instances where the saints stood forth as the guardians of the Muslims in their misfortunes and calamities. By their great spiritual and moral force they stopped persecution of the Hindu chiefs on the Muslims of their territories. To save the Muslims they even took up arms where moral persuasion was of no avail. Haqrat Nur Qutb Alam saved the Muslim State and society in Bengal from a great catastrophe. On account of the liberal policy of the Ilyas Shahi sultans, the Hindus occupied the key-positions in the government and Raja Kans, a Hindu official, established his ascendancy in the State. Raja Kans persecuted the shaikhs and ulema and launched a crusade against the Muslims. In consequence the Muslims of Bengal were faced with a calamity. At this crisis, Nur Qutb Alam, who led the life of a holy man, could not remain indifferent to the fate of the Muslim community and State. He exerted himself to close the differences
of the Muslims and unite them to a common cause. He also sought the help of Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jaunpur to save the Muslims of Bengal. It was because of his championing the cause of the Muslims in those dark days that the Muslim State and society could avert a serious crisis and emerge stronger. Nur Qutb ‘Ālam was thus the saviour of Muslim Bengal. His service re-established the solidarity of the Muslims and infused a new lease of life to the Muslim society and State. His was indeed the most significant contribution to the development of the Muslim community in Bengal.

The saints stood as champions of Islamic policy in the administration of the Muslim State in Bengal. Ordinarily, they did not interfere into the affairs of the State. But they could not remain unconcerned when they thought that the interests of the Muslim State and society were at stake. The Ilyās Shāhī rulers of Bengal followed the policy of appointing the Hindus in large numbers and also entrusting them with responsible offices in the State. By this they wanted to strengthen their position and maintain their sovereignty in this province against the imperialism of Northern India. They wanted to win over the bulk of the Hindus to the cause of their Sultānate and base their power on the patriotism of the Bengali peoples. But the shāikhs and ‘ulema of the time considered it unwise to entrust the Hindus with responsible posts in the government. Shaikh ‘Alā al-Ḥaq first perceived that this policy portended a danger to the Bengali Muslims. So the Shaikh sounded a note of warning to Sultān Sikandar Shāh. But the Sultān did not listen to his advice and, fearing his great influence over the people of Pandua, exiled him to Sonargaon. The events that followed showed that Shaikh ‘Alā al-Ḥaq was perfectly right in his study of the State policy. If Sultān Sikandar Shāh accepted the advice of the Shaikh, the serious crisis that developed and threatened the Muslim State and society in the reign of the successor of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A’ẓam Shāh, on account of the establishment of Hindu influence through Raja Kans, could have been averted in its embryo.
Even Haḍrat Maulānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī, the holyman of Bihar, pointed out to Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓm Shāh, son and successor of Sultan Sikandar Shāh, the inexpediency ofappointing the Hindus in large number in responsible offices of the Muslim State in Bengal. In his letter to the Bengali Sultan, the Shaikh quoted the Qurʾān, forbidding intimacy with the non-believers. “Ye who believe take not in your intimacy those outside the ranks.” He also produced evidence from the sayings of the Muslim divines, who said that the Muslims should not make the unbelievers and aliens their confidants and ministers. The Shaikh argued that the plea of expediency was no justification to make the Hindus friends and favourites. By quoting the Qurʾān, he illustrated that such a policy would be the cause of trouble and sedition in the Muslim State. The unbelievers would never fail to corrupt the Muslim rulers and involve them in evil deeds. An unbeliever might be entrusted with some work, but he should not be made a governor or a manager, so that the did not have control over the Muslims. God says, “Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers and neglect God; if any do that, in nothing will there be help from God except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them.” The Shaikh further adds that there are severe warnings in the Qurʾān and the Hadīth and historical works against those who have given authority to the unbelievers over the believers. God grants opulence and provisions from unexpected sources, and He gives deliverance from them.” There is an authoritative promise of provisions, victory and prosperity. The vanquished unbelievers with heads hanging downward exercise their power and authority and administer the lands which belong to them. But they have also been appointed officials over the Muslims in the lands of Islam and they impose their orders on them. Such things should not happen.”

The letter of Haḍrat Maulānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī reveals the great influence of the Hindu officials in the Muslim State.

2 Ibid.
during the period of the Ilyās Shāhi Sulṭāns of Bengal. It was fraught with danger to the Muslim rule and society. So the Shaikh of Bihar thought it his duty to advise Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn against the unwisdom of trusting the Hindus with the important responsibilities in the State. But the Sulṭān did not act in accordance with the advice of the Shaikh. Because of the disregard of this sound advice, his successors had to suffer and the Muslim State faced a great crisis from which it was saved by the timely intervention of the great saint of Bengal, Haḍrat Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam.

Contributions to learning and culture:

Most of the were both ṣāfīs mystic as well as ‘alim. The lives of Maulānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah, Makhđum Sharf ul-Dīn Yahyā Maneri, Haḍrat Nizām al-Dīn Aulīyā, Shaikh ‘Alā al-Ḥaq, Haḍrat Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam and others illustrate this fact. In fact, in the earlier centuries of Muslim rule in Bengal and in this subcontinent, the ṣāfīs were required to have knowledge of the Islamic subjects. Nizām al-Dīn Aulīyā’s statement about the initiation of Ākhlī Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Uthmān into discipleship testifies to this contention. We find that some of the ṣāfīs were the vastly learned men of the time and their khānqahs were the illuminating centres of learning. They attracted pupils from far and wide. We might refer here to some of the centres of Islamic learning which developed around the khānqahs of the saints and illuminated Bengal and Northern India as well by the knowledge which diffused from them.

Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah, who was one of the distinguished scholars of the second half of the thirteenth century and excelled in the knowledge of Islamic learning and secular sciences, kept an academy in Sonargaon. He had a large number of pupils drawn from all parts of Bengal, even from Northern India. Makhđum Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri was his most accomplished disciple in the Sonargaon academy. Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah compiled a valuable work on taṣawwuf or Islamic mysticism, called Maqāmāt. The Maqāmāt had wide popularity in the learned circles throughout
this subcontinent. There is evidence to show that this book was in demand even in the distant place of Lahore. 1 Another book on *Fiqh*, written in the Persian verses, is credited to the authorship of Shaikh ‘Abū Tawwāmah. It is thought that even if it was not written by him, some one of his disciples compiled this work on the basis of his teachings. 2

Makhdum Sharf al-Dīn Maneri, one of the celebrated saints of India, was the worthy pupil of his great teacher. He won renown as a saint and scholar. His works bear eloquent testimony to his scholarship and knowledge of mysticism. We might refer to the names of a few of his works of Makhdum Sharf al-Dīn Maneri. 3

1. *Ajība*—a work on mysticism in the form of answer to his disciples,
6. *Ma'dān al-Ma'ānī*—Discourses on Sufism, collected by Zain Badr 'Arabī between 1348-1350 A. D.
7. *Lutf al-Ma'ānī*—Abridged form of Ma’dan al-Ma’ānī.

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1 There are two letters in a manuscript collection *Tarassul-i-'Aynul Mulki* which show that a letter was written to Sayyid Nāṣir al-Dīn, the Muqta of Lahore, for a copy of the *Maqūmat* and the other acknowledging receipt. Asiatic Society, Cal. MS. f., 11 and JASB, 1923, pp. 274-77.
3 Calcutta Review, 1939, p. 313.

12. *ʿAqāʾid Ashrafī*—deals with the tenets of Ṣūfīsm.

Sharf al-Dīn Maneri also wrote a large number of letters which express his knowledge of Islamic subjects and mysticism. His letters discovered so far have been classified under the following names:

1. *Maktūbāt-i-Ṣadī*—One hundred letters written to Qādī Shams al-Dīn, governor of Jusa.
2. *Maktūbāt-i-Dū Ṣadī*—150 letters to shaikhs, qādīs and Sultaṃs.

Shaikh Ākhī Sirāj, Shaikh *ʿAlā al-Ḥaq and Haḍrat Nūr Quṭb *ʿĀlam were distinguished for their learning and they were interested in the diffusion not only of spiritual knowledge but of general education as well. Nūr Quṭb *ʿĀlam established a madrasah which was later on liberally endowed by Sultaṅ Ḥusain Shāh. The fame of these renowned saints and scholars attracted disciples and peoples from all parts of Bengal and Northern India. Mīr Saiyid Jahāngīr Simnāṅī, Shaikh Nāṣir al-Dīn Manikpūrī, Shaikh Ḥusain Dhukkarposh and many others from Northern India received spiritual knowledge and Islamic learning from Shaikh *ʿAlā al-Ḥaq in his Pandua seminary, Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpūrī, Shaikh Kāū and others were educated in Islamic knowledge and sufistic mysteries by Haḍrat Nūr Quṭb *ʿĀlam. A few letters of Nūr Quṭb *ʿĀlam which have come to light reveal his great knowledge of Islamic mysticism. These were written to some shaikhs, *ulema* and disciples.¹

The khānqāh of Haḍrat Ḥamīd Dānishmand, better known as Hawadha Miān, at Bagha in Rajshahi, developed into a great

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¹ The letters are in possession of Prof. H. Askari of Patna. Extracts of one letter has been published in B. F. P. 1948, No. 130. P. 38.
college of learning. It was noticed by a Mughul traveller, 'Abd al-Latif, of the time of Emperor Jahangir.

In short, some of the khanqahs of the Bengali saints were great seats of religious and intellectual life. They produced saints and scholars not for Bengal alone, but for the whole of India as well. Sharif al-Din Manerf, Jahangir Simnani, Nasir al-Din Manikpuri, Shaikh Husain Dhukkaposh, Husam al-Din Manikpuri, Shaikh Kaku and a few others of Northern India were the distinguished pupils of the spiritual and intellectual life of Bengal. Thus the saints contributed substantially to the educational development of the Bengali Muslims.

Humanitarian work:

The khanqahs of the saints served as the great humanitarian institutions as well. It was here that the God-searching people could find the peace of their mind, and satisfy their yearning for spiritual life. The khanqah was also the hospital and asylum where the suffering people, the old, the infirm and the diseased could obtain a ready home and were nursed, treated and well looked after by the shaikh and his disciples. Every khanqah had attached to it a langar or free kitchen which provided food to the poor and starving people of the country. For the maintenance of the langar, estates were endowed. The langars established by Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi and the famous saints of Pandua had attached to them land-grants with fairly large incomes. Thus the khanqahs and langars of the saints brought a great relief to the suffering and distressed people. The free-kitchens enabled the saints to come in closer contact with the common people of the country and to understand their feelings and aspirations.

Bengal had been the scene of the widespread activities of hundreds of saints in the Muslim period. As such the Bengali Muslims came in their intimate contact and under their direct influence. The saints represented spiritualism as well as liberalism in their life and idea. They were entirely given to the spiritual and were averse to material world. They also made a
liberal interpretation of religion. The Bengali Muslims imbibed this spiritualism and liberalism of these great teachers of the faith. Their spiritualism impressed the mind of the people so profoundly that even today a spirit of mysticism and indifference to material world characterizes the Bengali Muslims. In the Bengali literature, particularly in the local folk-songs, there is good deal of expression of their mystic feeling.

The _khāngah_ was the meeting place of the peoples of all shades of opinion—Muslims and Hindus, and it served as the forum of free and frank association and discussion. It thus produced a very liberal and healthy atmosphere for an understanding between the two communities. As a result, the two peoples came nearer to each other and could appreciate each other’s institutions. This liberal atmosphere contributed to the growth of common cultural institutions, the _Satyapīr_ cult, the Bengali language, etc. The liberal force the saints introduced in the country produced a liberal movement in the Hindu society of Bengal and this found fullest expression in the _Vaishnavism_ of Sri-Chaitanya of Navadvip.

The piety and personality of the saints, their humanity and charity, love and liberalism, attracted to them the mass of the Hindus, literate and illiterate. Many of them accepted Islam at their hands, while others, though they continued to maintain their traditional faith, became the devotees of the saints and credited them with miraculous powers. They venerated the saint and invoked his blessings to obtain their heart’s desire. Even throughout the centuries the Hindus adored the memories of the saints with profound respect and visited their shrines, invoking their blessings. The Bengali literature and the writings of the Hindu poets give expression to this feeling of Hindu devotion to the Muslim saints.

Halayudha Misra, the author of the Sanskrit work _Shek Subhodaya_, speaks of the veneration of the Hindus for Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī. They would invoke his help to be relieved of their distress, and offered half of their property in his sacred
name. The poet also adds that people recited prayer, imploring his favour to obtain fortune and son and recovery from disease. Kemananda, a Hindu poet of the seventeenth century, is found adoring the Muslim saints of thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In the introduction of his work, *Manasamangala*, the poet sings the praises of Bara Khan Ghazi, Shuvi Khan and many other saints with profound respect. Another Hindu poet of the eighteenth century, Vidyapati, pays respects to the sacred memory of the great saints Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti, Zafar Khan Ghazi, Bara Khan Ghazi and Isma'il Ghazi. He informs that he composed his poem *Satyapir Panchali* at the order of the Muslim saint *Satyapir*. In his poems, poet Krishna-Haridas introduces himself as a disciple of a pir named Tahir Mahmud.

These are but a few of the many instances, illustrating the deep and abiding impression created by the Muslim saints on the Hindu mind, by their great spiritual personality and humanitarian works. The Muslim saints indeed represented, in the true sense of the term, the spiritual, cultural and moral conquest of Bengal.

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4 Ibid., p. 819.
CHAPTER IV

MUSLIM RULERS IN DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM SOCIETY

The Muslim conquerors and rulers share the credit of building the Muslim community in Bengal. Their contribution in this field, though not so significant in comparison with the outstanding achievement of the saints, was however noteworthy. In many respects, their work was complimentary to that of the great spiritual personages. If the religious activities of the saints helped in the spiritual and moral conquest of Bengal and in the consolidation of the Muslim rule in the province, the Muslim conquerors and rulers facilitated the progress of their noble mission in various ways. Indeed the cooperation and support of the temporal power assisted the spiritual leaders in developing the Muslim community, by recruiting converts and also fostering the devotion of the Muslims to the faith.

With the Muslim conquest there was an influx of the Muslim soldiers, officers and others into Bengal. In the wake of this conquest also came a large number of saints, 'ulema, teachers and preachers who spread themselves in different parts of Bengal to carry on their missionary work. The conquest thus facilitated an widespread missionary activity of the saints and preachers, who had devoted their lives to this pious duty. The Muslim rulers did not concern themselves directly in the preaching of the faith among their subjects. They however provided all facilities to the saints and encouraged and patronised the 'ulema and the preachers in their spiritual, missionary and cultural activities in every possible way. Being themselves devoted to the faith, they naturally desired to promote it in their jurisdiction. They felt that if the Muslim community in Bengal was strong it would provide a source of support and strength
to the Muslim state in this province. So they held the *shaikhs* and *ulema* in great esteem and supported them in the work of promoting the cause of Islam.

A few instances may be cited to illustrate the respect of the Bengali Muslim rulers to the *shaikhs* and *ulema* and their liberal patronage to their missionary activities in Bengal. The Muslim conqueror Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī built *khānąqahs* for the *shaikhs* and his example was followed by his amirs.¹ According to Minhāj, Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī was reputed for his devotion to the *shaikhs*. This author of the *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī* has narrated a story of the early life of 'Iwād in this connection. While 'Iwād was just an ordinary man in Ghuz, he was once going to a certain place conducting his ass which was laden with some articles. On the way two *darvēshes* asked him, if he had any victuals with him. He had only a few cakes of bread as a provision for his journey. Nevertheless, he immediately spread his garments on the ground and placed those provisions before the *darvēshes*. He also gave them water to drink and waited upon them. The *darvēshes* blessed him saying, "Ḥusām al-Dīn! go thou to Hindustan, for that place which is the extreme (point) of Muḥammadanism, we have given unto thee."² Whatever might be the truth in this incident, it however represents the profound regard of 'Iwād to the men of piety and religion. As a ruler of Bengal, he impressed the Muslims by his devotion to the *shaikhs* and *ulema*. Minhāj testifies that 'Iwād Khaljī was bounteous in granting them stipends and allowances.³

Minhāj has given another instance of Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī's attachment to men of religion and learning. When Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Ghaznavī, a learned preacher, came to Lakhnawtī, 'Iwād Khaljī invited him to deliver a discourse in the audience hall. After the discourse, he made a present of about

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1 *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī*, p.151.
2 *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī* (Raverty), p. 581. The original name of Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād was Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Iwād.
3 Ibid, p. 583.
two thousand tankas and ordered his maliks, amirs, ministers and nobles to honour the Maulana with liberal presents. He thus obtained three thousand gold and silver tankas. Minhaj writes, "At the time of his (Maulana's) return home from Lakhnawti, an additional five thousand tankas were acquired in gifts, so that a sum of ten thousand tankas was amassed by that Imam and Imam's son, through the exemplary piety of that renowned monarch ('Iwad) of benevolent disposition." In speaking of his own experience in Lakhnawti, Minhaj observes, "When the writer of this book in the year 641 H. reached the territory of Lakhnawti, the good works of that sovereign in different parts of that territory were seen by him."

Mughith al-Din Tughral, governor of Bengal at the time of Sultan Balban, was so much devoted to the shaikhs that he made a gift of three mounds of gold to the saints of the Qalandaria order. According to Ibn Battuta, Sultan Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shah had great love for the faqirs and sufis. The Moorish traveller observes, "The affections of Sultan Fakhr al-Din for the faqirs went so far that he placed one of them, named Saliydna, as his viceroy at Sadkawan. He also made provisions for their journeys and also for maintenance during those trips. Ibn Battuta writes, "Sultan Fakhr al-Din had ordered that there should be no freight charged from the faqirs on the rivers, and provisions for the journeys should also be supplied to those who had not any. When a faqir arrives in a village he is given half a dinar."

A pious man, Sultan Shams al-Din Ilyas Shah held the shaikhs in great respect. He visited the shrine of Shaikh Mus'ud Ghazi at Bahrach in Gorakhpur, after his conquest of territories up to that district. At that time he wished that if he could push his advance to the city of Delhi, he could pay his respects to Hadrat Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya by visiting his dargah.

1 Tabaqat-i-Naṣiri, pp. 161-62.
2 Barani, p. 91. Bughra Khan, governor of Bengal, advised his son Sultan Mu'izz al-Din Kaiqubad to keep the company of the shaikhs, when he came to know that the latter had departed from the right path. Barani, p. 94.
When he was besieged in Ikdala by the forces of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq, Shaikh Raja Bijabanti, to whom he was devotedly attached, died at Pandua. At this news Ilyas Shah came out of the fort in the garb of a faqir, and took part, even at the risk of his life, in the last rites of the Shaikh.¹

Sultan Ghiyath al-Din A'zam Shah was distinguished for his piety, Islamic knowledge and love for the pious and the shaikhs. He held Hazrat Nur Qutb Alam, who was his fellow student in early youth, in high esteem and occasionally sent him gifts and present of victuals. It was under the patronage of this Sultan that the scholar-poet Shah Muhammad Saghir compiled Yusuf-Zolekha in Bengali with a view to popularise Islamic subjects among the common people, who did not understand Arabic and Persian. Jalal al-Din Muhammad Shah was devoted to the shaikhs. He brought back the exiled holy man, Shaikh Zahid, from Sonargaon to Pandua, and very often attended him personally to pay his respects.

Sulaiman Karrani, the Afghan ruler of Bengal, loved the company of shaikhs and 'ulema. Badani records that Sulaiman Karrani used to spend the whole night in religious and philosophical discussions with 150 shaikhs and 'ulema. Emperor Akbar imitated the example of this Afghan ruler in his religious and philosophical discussions.²

The nobles and officers followed the rulers in their devotion to the shaikhs. It was also common with them to vow to make pilgrimage to their shrines. It is known from Baharistan that Mirza Nahan, "at the time of the illness of his father, took a vow that after his recovery he would pay a visit to the shrine of His Holiness Shaikh Nur Qutb Alam." Accordingly, from Ghoraghat Mirza Nahan journeyed to Pandua and "first of all, he paid his respects to Shaikh al-Islam al-Muslimin Miyan Shaikh Mas'ud, known as Shah Muqam, the descendant of His Holiness Qutb Alam, and his successor. After paying

¹ Riyad al-Salatin, p. 97.
² Badani, II, p. 200.
his respects to him, he visited the shrine on the first day. He stayed there for two days more and on the third day he held a great feast and distributed alms. In these days he used to pay secret visits to the shrine twice in the day and once at night and obtained eternal blessings through his sincere devotion.”

To illustrate further the devotion of the rulers, nobles and officers, numerous instances may be cited wherein they are found building mausoleums for the shaikhs and making rich endowments for the maintenance of their dargahs and langar-khānas.

The devotion of the rulers to the shaikhs and 'ulema facilitated their missionary work in this newly acquired province. This religious character of the rulers, the politico-social leaders of the Muslim community, naturally impressed the Muslims in general and fostered in them a feeling of deep attachment to religion and religious leaders.

BROADLY speaking, the early Muslim rulers tried to regulate their public life and State policy in accordance with the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. A few of them were so much particular in the observance of the Rule of the Sharī'ah that it was indeed the reminiscent of the days of the Caliphate. Because of this strict adherence to the Islamic Law, an ordinary man or woman could lodge complaint even against a powerful Sulṭān, and the qādī also could summon his royal master as an accused for trial at the court of justice. It is said that once when Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh was practising shooting an arrow accidentally fell on a boy, who, in consequence, died. The aggrieved mother, who had thus lost her only son, brought charge of murder at the court of the qādī against the Sulṭān. The qādī summoned the Sulṭān. In obedience to the summons, Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh appeared before the qādī as an ordinary litigant to submit himself to trial. The qādī tried the Sulṭān as an ordinary person and pronounced the judgment against him. The widow was satisfied and she released the

1 Bahāristān (Tr.), 1, pp. 42-43.
Sultān from the charge by accepting in return an amount of gold which is prescribed by law in such cases. The Sultān appreciated the qaḍī for his strict observance of the Rule of the Shari'ah and fitly rewarded him. This incident reminds us of the rule of the 'Abbasid Caliph Al-Manṣūr, who had to stand a trial at the court of his qaḍī and pay a fine, in obedience to the judgment, to his complainant, a camel-driver. This shows how scrupulously the Muslim rulers and their qaḍīs maintained the supremacy of the Islamic Law in their private and public life.

Like Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh, Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh (1474-81 A. D.) was reputed for his piety, learning and regard for the Shari'ah. According to Firishta, the Sultān invited the 'ulema to his court and impressed upon them fair and impartial verdict on religious questions. He warned them that they would incur his displeasure, if they failed to do their duties properly. The Sultān himself settled most of the complex cases which the qaḍīs were unable to decide. A contemporary Bengali poet, Zain al-Dīn, speaks highly of the learning and intellectual attainments of this Sultān. The poet says, "The much respected Yūsuf Khān is accomplished in all knowledge. He listens to the account of Rasul- Vijaya with great interest."

It was by their religious character and personality and their devotion to the Rule of the Shari'ah that the Muslim rulers of Bengal influenced the religious development of the Bengali Muslims. They also laid great importance on the religious character of their office. Their allegiance to the 'Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad and then of Cairo represented that the Muslim community of Bengal formed an integral part of the great Muslim community, of which the Caliph was the head. The coins of some of the Bengali Sultāns bear out this fact. Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Shāh sent presents to the Caliph at Cairo and received investiture from him.

1 Riyād, pp. 106-08.
2 Firishta, II, p. 298.
3 Quoted by E. Haq—Muslim Bengalai Sahiyya, p. 61.
4 Srijata Yūsuf Khān jannas gunabanta, Rasul viljaya bani Kautuke sunanta
5 Thomas—Initial Coinage of Bengal, pt II, JASB, 1873.
The Sultāns also took lead in the celebration of the religious rites and festivities of the Muslims and thus stimulated the growth of religious feeling. They sent regular presents to the Holy cities of Makkah and Madinah and provided facilities for the people to go to perform the Ḥajj. It is known from some letters written by Maulānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhi, a disciple of the celebrated saint of Bihar, Makhīdum Shāikh Shārīf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri, to Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh that the Sultān used to arrange for several ships which carried the pilgrims from the port of Chittagong to Arabia. Even the Muslims of other places, such as Bihar, availed themselves of this facility of the Bengali Sultān to go on a pilgrimage to Makkah. This is expressed in a letter of Maulānā Muẓaffar Shams who wrote to the Sultān, “Now the (Ḥajj) season is approaching. A farman may kindly be issued to the officials (karkun) of Chatgaon directing them to accommodate in the first ship the band of Darvesh pilgrims for Makkah who have assembled around me, the poor men.” In another letter the Maulānā confers his blessings on the officials of Chittagong to provide accommodation to the Darveshes in the first pilgrim ship.  

The religious feeling of the Muslim rulers and their interest in the promotion of devotion to the faith and the sense of unity among the Muslims is expressed in the large number of mosques they constructed in different places of Bengal. They were conscious of the great importance of the mosques in the development of the Muslim community. The example of the Sultāns was followed by the nobles and officials and even by the well-to-do Muslims. The ruins of a large number of mosques have been discovered in many towns and villages. Some of the early mosques still exist in their sublime grandeur to testify to the intense religious feeling of the Muslim rulers. The inscriptions found in the mosques show that the builders of these religious institutions intended to promote devotion to the faith and solida-

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rity among the Muslims. Every inscription contains instruction on religion, quoting verses from the Qur'ān or the sayings of the Prophet. The great mosque at Adina in Pandua, built by Sulṭān Sikandar Shāh between 1364 A. D. to 1374 A. D., deserves special mention in this connection. This large imposing mosque, 507 1/2 feet in length and 285 1/2 feet in breadth, is the second biggest religious structure in this sub-continent. This mosque is a reflex of the religious mind of Sulṭān Sikandar Shāh and is an expression of his concern for the solidarity of the Muslims through big congregational prayer.

The Muslim rulers and nobles were specially interested in the promotion of learning in Bengal. Many of them were well versed in the knowledge of religious science. Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh, Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh and Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh were reputed for their learning. An inscription records Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Fath Shāh as a vastly learned man of the age. He excelled in the interpretation of the Qur'ān and was possessed of wide knowledge in religious as well as medical sciences. The Sulṭāns and their officials attached great importance to the education of the Muslims and this is expressed from the inscriptions in the madrasahs of the time. An inscription in the madrasah established by Sulṭān 'Alā al-Dīn Ḥūsain Shāh at Firuzpur in Malda in 1502 A. D. emphasized the role of education in the life of the Muslims. It reminds the Muslims of the saying of the Prophet with regard to learning "Search after knowledge, even if it be in China." This inscription further states that the study and teaching of the sciences of religion is a means of pleasing God and obtaining rewards from Him. The same feeling has been impressed in another inscription in a madrasah built by Qāḍī Nāṣir al-Dīn, an official of Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Kaikaus, at Tribeni in 698 H./1298 A. D. This inscription records the tradition of the Prophet, "You should acquire knowledge, for its acquisition is verily submission, its search is devotion, its discussion is glorification."

1 See Inscription in JASB, 1870, p. 290.
2 JASB, 1873 pp. 282-86; Memoria, p. 87.
In the promotion of the Islamic feeling, the madrasahs and colleges played a very vital part. The Muslim rulers and nobles, spared no effort for the establishment and development of these institutions which were so essential in the life of the Muslims. Minhāj says that Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār established a madrasah in Lakhnawī.¹ In the reign of Sultan Rukn al-Dīn Kaikaus, Qāḍī al-Nāṣir Muḥammad built a madrasah at Tribeni in 698 H./1296 A. D. and spent a huge sum of money on education.² Another madrasah was established at Tribeni by Zafar Khān in 713 H./1313 A. D. The madrasah was known as Dar al-Khairat.³ Sultan ‘Ala al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh founded a madrasah at Firuzpur in Malda for the teaching of the sciences of religion.⁴

N. N. Law holds that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Iwād Khālī built a college at Lakhnawī.⁵ Many other madrasahs were built by the governors, Sultāns and nobles in different times and in different places of Bengal. A detailed discussion of the madrasahs and colleges will be made in the chapter on education. Suffice here to say that the enlightened Bengali Sultāns established numerous madrasahs and colleges in Bengal for the progress of the Muslim community in this province. In their zeal for religion and Islamic learning some of the Sultāns built madrasah even in Makkah. It is known that Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh established a madrasah in Makkah at an enormous cost and richly endowed it for the support of the teachers and students. He also founded another madrasah in Madinah and provided for its maintenance.⁶ It is also known that Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh founded a madrasah in Makkah.⁷ These activities of the Muslim rulers of Bengal express their keen interest in the development of the Muslim society.

¹ Minhāj, p.151
² Inscription in Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica 1917, p., 13, plate II.
³ Inscription, JASB, 1870, p. 285.
⁴ Inscription, JASB, 1874, p. 303.
⁵ N. N. Law—Promotion of Learning in India during Muhammadan Rule, p. 106.
CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING AND EDUCATION

Islam is essentially a religion of advancement of human life. It introduced new ideas and values in the religio-social field; it produced a great intellectual and cultural force as well in the history of man. Perhaps no other religion has laid so much emphasis on learning and education as Islam has done. Islam has attached great importance to enlightenment and culture as well as to decent living and refined manners. It has stressed the need for the development of both mind and body, the progress of the spiritual as well as material life, and the promotion of the intellectual faculties of man.

The teachings of the Qur'ān and the Prophet have inculcated the spirit of knowledge on the Muslims. The Prophet impressed upon his followers and even persuaded them to acquire knowledge which has been repeatedly praised in the Qur'ān, as for instance, in passages like the following:

"Certainly Allāh conferred a benefit upon the believers by raising among them a messenger, who recites to them His communication and purifies and teaches wisdom. Are those, who have knowledge, on an equality with those who have no knowledge?"

The sayings of the Prophet show that he considered education as a duty incumbent on every Muslim, and even as a devotion to God. "To seek knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, man and woman." "Search for knowledge even if it be in China." "Acquire learning from the cradle to the grave." The Muslims have followed the precept of their Great Teacher and the brilliant intellectual awakening and the unprecedented progress of learning and culture in the early period
of the history of Islam is an eloquent testimony to this fact.

The Muslims inherited a precious cultural legacy and the system of education from their illustrious predecessors of the period of Caliphate. Wherever they went, the Muslims carried with them their traditions in learning and education. With the political institutions, they also brought their educational and cultural ideas into this subcontinent. "The Muhammadan invasions of India," observes N. N. Law, "marked the beginnings of momentous changes not only in the social and political spheres but also in the domain of education and learning." Indeed the Muslims introduced the spirit of universalism and liberalism in the education of this subcontinent. In India, even the Muslim ṣūfis, who were concerned with the elevation of the spiritual and moral faculty of man, emphasized on the education of their disciples and they did not admit any person into their discipleship unless he was properly educated. The remark of Ḥaḍrat Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya at the time of initiating Shaikh Ṭāḥiṣ Sirāj al-Dīn Īṭihām into his silsila, illustrates this contention. This proves that the significant role of education and knowledge was recognised both for the worldly and spiritual needs of the Muslims in all ages and in all countries.

The Muslims of Bengal followed the ideal of education of the early Muslims. Though their achievement in the field of learning was not so remarkable as that of their great predecessors, there is however evidence to show that they valued their cultural traditions, and were conscious of the great importance of education in their life. The Muslim rulers, nobles, officers and well-to-do persons were devoted to learning and exerted themselves for the spread and progress of education in every possible way. The 'ulema and ṣūfis promoted the cause of learning among the Bengali peoples. As a result, a large number of madrasahs, academies and schools developed in towns and important localities. The sayings of the Prophet were inscribed on the mad-

2 See Chapter III, Akhlī Sirāj; Siyar al-Ārifīn, p. 90; Akhbār al-Akhyār, p. 86.
rasahs and educational institutions to impress upon the Muslims the significance of education in their mental and moral advancement. An inscription, dated 698 H. (A. D. 1298) of the time of Sultan Rukn al-Din Kaikaus, on a madrasah at Tribeni, records a Haddith, saying, “you should acquire knowledge, for its acquisition is verily submission, its search is devotion, its discussion is glorification.” Education has also been compared to “a shield that can avert such evils as cannot be avoided with the help of a shield-bearer.”

The preachings of the shaykhs and ulama and the Haddith inscriptions on the madrasahs and mosques created a feeling among the Muslims in general that education was a religious duty and was essential for moral as well as material progress. So it is found that even the ordinary Muslims of Bengal recognised the necessity of education for their children. The Bengali literature reflects the high position given to education and the educated in the society of the time. An educated person was regarded as an ornament of the society. A man was not considered perfect without learning. This fact is illustrated from the writings of a sixteenth century Muslim poet, who, in his Bengali epic entitled Laila-Majnun, says, “A father considered himself a respectable person if his son was accomplished in all branches of knowledge. Learning was regarded as an ornament of man, his necklace and headdress. A beautiful person without learning was treated as of no worth.” It was this spirit of education that governed the Muslim society of Bengal during the period of Muslim rule in this province. Living in an age when education was held so dear in the social life, every parent was naturally anxious to educate his children.


تعلمو العلم فإن تعلمه طاعة وطليبه عبادة ومذاكرته تسبح

Sadai anek sraddha janak manal,
Sarvasatra baisrad halte tanaya;
Bhagyabanta purusher vidya alankar,
Vidya se geler har vidya se sringar,
Purush sundar at i rupe anupam,
Gun na chakile tar rupe kiva kam,
Alaol, a seventeenth century Muslim poet and scholar, also refers to the prevalence of the same spirit of education in the Muslim society of Bengal. In his work *Tuḥfah*, he writes, "If the teacher teaches Bismillāh to the child, the door of heaven is opened to the teacher, parents and the child."¹ The poet adds further, "A learned man is superior to a thousand devotees. The Satan is so much afraid of a learned man that he dares not approach him; while one Satan leads astray many illiterate persons. It is stated in the Ḥadīth of the Prophet that a man, who serves a learned man for seven days, gets the benefit of a thousand years’ devotion to the Master (God) and of a thousand martyrs. A devotee will emancipate only himself; but hundreds of people will obtain deliverance on account of their association with a learned. So, you should respectfully serve the learned. Then you escape the hell and will go to the paradise."²

From the facts discussed above, it appears that the Bengali Muslims attached great value to education, because they regarded it as a part of their religious duty, an act of devotion and a way to please God and obtain salvation. Secondly, they looked upon education as a great social distinction. An educated person enhanced the prestige of the family in the society. There was yet another consideration for which the acquisition of learning was given such special importance by the Muslim society. It was a means of progress in this world. During the period of

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¹ Alaol—*Tuḥfah*, p. 139.
² Alaol—*Tuḥfah*, p. 139.

Gurui sisme jadi Bismillah parai
Guru maza pita situ Behesta Jai.

Ek ‘alim’ jata guner beakhan,
Hazar ‘abid nahe ‘alim saman,
Iblis ‘alim kachhe dare nahi jai,
Bahul jahid ek Satane bhulai.

Kahichhe Palghambare Hadith khabar,
Sapta din alimere sebe zei nar,
Karile Prabhir seba hazar bazzar,
Hazar shahid punya pal sej nar.
Jahide saribe mazra apānir anga,
Sata jin mukta haiba ‘alimar sanga.
Al theke ‘alim seba kara bhakti bhaba
Jahannamte taria Behest pal ba tabe.
Muslim rule in Bengal, the Muslims had greater avenues for employment in the government. It was the aspiration of every Muslim youth to have a job in the State and this could be acquired only by educational attainments.

It is also to be noted in this connection that the Muslims of the time were comparatively wealthy and prosperous, and hence they had better facilities for the education of their children. All these factors contributed to the progress of learning among the Muslims in Bengal.

*Muslim scholars and their works:*

There was urge for the acquisition of learning in the Bengali Muslim society of the period. The rulers and well-to-do persons built educational institutions and richly endowed them. They extended patronage to the learned people. The *ulema* also maintained madrasahs and academies of their own. A few religious seminaries grew up under several ṣūfī-scholars with the nucleus of their khāngahs. As a result of all these, there was a remarkable advancement of learning and knowledge in Muslim Bengal. The age produced a galaxy of distinguished divines and scholars and men of eminence in various branches of knowledge. The period was particularly significant in the development of the knowledge of religion, mysticism and Arabic and Persian learning. It is gathered from different sources that a large number of works on various subjects were compiled by the celebrated Muslim scholars of Bengal. Only a few of their works have so far come to light. These however illustrate the distinctive contribution of the Bengali scholars to the progress of learning.

Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandi was one of the distinguished scholars of the early years of the Muslim rule in Bengal. He was the qāḍī of Lakhnawti in the reign of 'Ali Mardan Khanji (A.D. 1210-13). It is known from an Arabic version of a Sanskrit mystic work called *Amritkand* that a Brahmin yogi (ascetic) named Bhojar Brahmin came from Kamrup to Lakhnawti and had religious and philosophical discussions with him. Being convinced of the superior ideals of Islam, the yogi became a
Muslim and learnt Islamic science. He acquired so great proficiency in Islamic knowledge that the Muslim divines gave him the right to pronounce legal decisions. He presented Amritkand, a book on Hindu mysticism, to Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandi. With the help of the Yogi, the Qāḍī translated this book from Sanskrit into Arabic as well as Persian. He also learnt and practised yoga system. Later on Amritkand was again rendered into Arabic by an unnamed author, with the help of another Brahmin yogi named Ambhavanath, who was also, like Bhojar Brahmin, a native of Kamrup and had accepted Islam. Brocklemann has identified this unnamed author with the celebrated philosopher Ibn al-'Arabi of Damascus.

Besides the Persian translation of Qāḍī Rukn-al-Dīn, there was a second Persian recension of Amritkand. This Persian version named Bahr al-Ḥayāt is ascribed to the great Shāṭarī saint Shaikh Muḥammad Ghauthi of Gwalior who died in 1562 A. D. At his request his disciple Muḥammad Ḥafīr al-Dīn made this recension.

Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandi has been identified with the distinguished Hanafi jurist and ṣūfī, Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Abū Ḥamīd Muḥammad bin Muḥammad 'Ali of Samarqand. In his notices of ‘al-Samarqandi’, Brocklemann writes that he was a qādi of Lakhnawti or Gaur, the capital of Bengal. He was the author of Kitāb al-Irshād and the founder of the science of al-Khilafīwal jadil (dialectics). He died in Bukhara in 615 H./1219 A. D. It is supposed that Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandi served the government of ‘Ali Mardan Khalji as a qādi of Lakhnawti for a period of time and then he returned to his original home in Bukhara and died there in 1218 A. D.

No copy of the original Amritkand in Sanskrit has come to light. A study of its Arabic version however reveals it as a significant work on Hindu mysticism and philosophy. Indeed it was

3 The Arabic version of Amritkand was named

كتاب مراة المعاني في ادراك العلم الإنساني
(The mirror of the esoteric meanings for the perfection of the human world.)

3 Ibid.
an authentic work on the asceticism and yogism of the Hindus and was wellknown among the scholars and philosophers of the Muslim world. So, the famous philosopher Ibn al-'Arabi of Damascus became interested in it and he translated it within twenty years of Rukn al-Din’s original translation. Muḥammad al-Miṣrī, an Egyptian saint of the fourteenth century, was acquainted with the mystical knowledge of Amritkand. He referred it as forming an integral part of Indian ṣūfīsm. The popularity of his work among the philosophers and mystics is attested by the fact that a good number of its Arabic manuscripts exist in different libraries of India as well as in Paris, London, Gotha, Berlin, Cairo, Manchester and other places.

The contents of the Arabic version of Amritkand gives an idea about its substance. It studies such problems as the secrets of microcosm and of mind. It deals with the knowledge of the yogic exercises and the subjugation of passions. It also discusses the various phases of life and death and different aspects of the physical and metaphysical worlds.

The translation of this Sanskrit mystic work into Arabic and Persian is of great significance in the literary and intellectual life of Muslim Bengal. It was indeed an important contribution of the Bengali Muslims to the Arabic and Persian literatures. It shows their knowledge of Arabic and Persian languages. It also illustrates their admiration and appreciation of the knowledge of others. The translation of Amritkand represents the coming of the ideas of Hindu mysticism into Muslim ṣūfīsm. The incident connected with the translation of this Sanskrit work reveals that the Hindu sages and philosophers appreciated the higher ideals of Islam and, out of conviction, they voluntarily accepted this faith. The acceptance of Islam by two Brahmin yogis and scholars proves this fact.

Maulānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah was an eminent saint and scholar of the early years of Muslim Bengal. His

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1 Dr. A. B. M. Habibullah—Book Review, Pakistan Asiatic Society Jour.
nal 1960, p. 213.
academy at Sonargaon was an illuminating centre of learning of that time. He excelled in the knowledge of both religious and secular sciences. He compiled a valuable work on Islamic mysticism which was named Maqamat, as has been narrated in earlier pages. This work was regarded as a unique one of its kind and it acquired great reputation in the scholarly circles throughout the subcontinent. This is proved by two letters of a manuscript collection called Tarassul-il'Ayn al-Mulki. These letters record that Saiyid Nāṣir al-Dīn, the muqta of Lahore, supplied a copy of the Maqamat to the order of a certain person.¹ No copy of this important work has yet been found.

Nām-i-Haq, a significant work on fiqh, is considered a contribution of Muslim Bengal to the Islamic learning. It was compiled by a person who has not mentioned his name. The author however calls his compilation as a reminiscence of Sharf (Sharf al-Dīn) for him. He states that Sharf, whose renown is spread all over the world, was born in Bukhara and educated in Khurasan.² Dr. Saghir Hasan Masumi has identified this renowned ‘Sharf’ with the great saint-scholar Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah, a native of Bukhara. The book was probably written by one of his disciples on the basis of his teachings. The author says that the book was written 693 years after the death of the Prophet.³ If it was so, then it was compiled in 1305 A.D. The author’s dating of his compilation on the basis of the death of the Prophet is rather extraordinary. The Muslim writers

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¹ Asiatic Society, Calcutta, MS., f. 11 and JASB, 1923, pp. 274 and 277. Letter No. 34 reads:

این مکتوب بجانب ملک الامراء السادات ناصر الحق والدین
مقطع لاهور از براي طلب نسخه مقامات (مولاانا استاد العلم
شرف الدين تواسان عليه رحمه) در قلم اسد

Letter No. 35 reads:

این مکتوب نیز بجانب سید السادات ناصر الحق والدین بعد
رسید نسخه مقامات در قلم اسد

² Nām-i-Haq (Cawnpore edition, 1332 H.) pp. 5-6; Islamic Culture, Calcutta 1953, No. 11.

³ Ibid.
followed the Hijra era. It might be that the author of Nâm-i-Haq actually referred to the Hijra year in his date 693. In this case, 1293 A. D. was the date of the publication of this work.

Written in elegant Persian, Nâm-i-Haq has ten chapters and one hundred and eighty-three verses. The three introductory chapters are devoted to Hamd (praise of Allah) and Na'îr (praise of the Prophet and the Caliphs). The remaining ten chapters deal with the fundamentals and rules relating to wadâ' (ablation), ghusl (bath), namâz (prayer) and fasting in the month of Ramaḍān. It discusses in detail the fard (essential), sunnat, wâjîb (obligatory), mustâhab (optional) and makrûh (undesirables) and suggests methods to rectify omissions and commissions in the performance of these essentials. The book was intended to be a guide to the Muslims to regulate their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet.

A large number of works on Islamic theology and mysticism were compiled by Makhâdim Sharîf al-Dîn Yahyâ Maneri, a distinguished pupil of Maulâna Sharîf al-Dîn Abû Tawwâmah. Mention has been made of these compilations in a previous chapter.1 These works represent the valuable knowledge he received from his illustrious teacher in the academy of Sonargaon. Haḍrat Mîr Saiyîd Ashraf Jahângîr Simnâî was another brilliant product of Bengal. He had his knowledge from the great Bengali teacher Shaîkh 'Alâ al-Haq. Lataif-i-Ashrafi, an encyclopaedic work on sufism, was compiled in Persian by Hájî Gharîb Yamani, a disciple of Jahângîr Simnâî, on the basis of his teachings. It reflects his profound knowledge of Islamic mysticism and theology. His Maktûbât (letters), collected by 'Abd al-Razzaqî in 1465 A. D., speak of his great literary and mystical attainments.2

Another work on fîqîh was compiled in Arabic in the early part of the fourteenth century. The author of this work, en-

1 See Chapter III, p. 146.
titled Majmū‘-‘i-Khānī fī ‘Ayn al-Ma‘ānī, mentions himself as Kamāl-al-Karīm, perhaps Kamāl al-Dīn, son of Karīm al-Dīn. He dedicated his work to Ulugh Qutluğ Izzud al-Dīn Bahram Khān, governor of Bengal. This Bahram Khān is identified with Bahram Khān alias Tātār Khān, a distinguished general and adopted son of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq whom the Sultan left as governor of Bengal after his expedition in this province in 1325 A. D. Bahram Khān died at Sonargaon in 1337 A. D.

Muḥammad bin Yazdan Bakhsh was a famous muḥaddith (a person conversant with the Hadīth) of the time of Sultan ‘Alā al-Dīn Husain Shāh and was well known as Khwājī Shirwānī. He transcribed in Ikdalah three volumes of the Hadīth collection of the celebrated Traditionalist Bukhari. This reflects the great interest of the Muslim community of the time in Islamic learning.

Shaikh ‘Alī Sher, a descendant of Shaikh Nur al-Huda, who was a companion-disciple of Shaikh Jalāl Mujarrad of Sylhet, was a distinguished scholar in Persian and Islamic mysticism. He compiled a work on ṣūfīsm named Sharḥ Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ (Commentary on the pleasures of the spirits). No copy of this book has yet been found. A Shāfī‘ī scholar named Muḥammad Gauṭhī Manduvi has highly appreciated the merit of this work and utilised its materials in the compilation of his own book Gulzār-i-Abrār. Gauṭhī refers to Shaikh ‘Alī Sher as a Bengali and says that he died a little after 1562 A.D. Gauṭhī wrote his biographical work on the lives of the saints in 1613 A. D. It is a comprehensive and valuable work in Persian.

Hadrat Nur Quṭb ‘Ālam was one of the celebrated ṣūfīs and scholars of the early part of the fourteenth century. Shaikh

1 Asiatic Society Catalogue, Calcutta, Curzon collection MSS.
2 History of Bengal (D. U.), II, pp. 86 and 89.
Husain al-Din Manikpuri, Shaikh Kaku Lahori, Shams al-Din Tahir Ajmiri, Shaikh Zahir Panduwani and many other distinguished saints and scholars received their religious and spiritual knowledge from this illustrious Bengali teacher. His Maktubat (letters) which have come to light reflects his great knowledge of Tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism). His work Anis al-Ghuraba', a translation and commentary of the Hadith gives an idea of his profound scholarship in the knowledge of the Qur'an and Islamic learning as well as his command of Persian. Nur Qutb 'Alam was also a good poet in Persian. Some of his poems have been published in Subh-i-Gulshan.

Several religious and Sufistic works were compiled by the Muslims in Bengali poetry during this period. These works illustrate the proficiency of their authors in the Arabic and Persian languages as well as their wide knowledge in the Islamic subjects. These authors based their compilations on the Qur'an, the Hadith and other religious and mystic works. They wrote the religious matters in Bengali, so that these might be understood by the common people, who did not know Arabic and Persian. Their writings express that they felt that the popularising of Islamic ideas was essential to check the coming of heterodox ideas in the Muslim society. They were actuated by the object of presenting Islam in its true form and thus helping their countrymen in regulating their lives on sound lines. It is also reflected in their compositions that the contemporary Muslim society conservatively adhered to the notion that the religious subjects could be written only in the Arabic and Persian languages. A few scholar-poets, however, thought of departing from this type of conservatism of the society and writing religious topics in Bengali for the benefit of the common people. Shah Muhammad Saghir, scholar-poet who flourished in the reign of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din A'zam Shah (1389-1409 A.D.) has given expression to this feeling. In his work Yusuf-Zolekha,

1 There are eight letters which are in the possession of Prof. Hasan Askari of Patna College. Extract from a letter has been published in B. P. P., 1948, No. 130, pp. 38-39.
2 M. Husain—East Bengal Culture, p. 12.
he says that after much thought he came to the conclusion that the fear of committing sin by writing religious subjects in Bengali had no foundation. He rather considered it an act of religious merit to write of religion in Bengali, because it would reveal to the people their great heritage of the past. It is this spirit of service to the Muslims, which guided Shāh Muḥammad Saghīr to compile his memorable work in Bengali, the language of the common Muslims.

Poet Afḍal ‘Alli, a learned and saintly person wrote his religious work ‘Naṣīḥatnāma in Bengali in the reign of Sultān Nuṣrat Shāh (1519-32) and his son Firūz Shāh (1532-34). As the name signifies, this book was written by the poet as a manual of instruction to the Muslims in religious affairs. In its compilation, Afḍal ‘Alli has derived his inspiration from the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth.

Muẓammil, a talented Bengali poet of the middle of the fifteenth century, was well versed in Islamic subjects. He belonged to the şafistīc school and was a disciple of the great saint Badr-i-Ālam, who came to Chittagong for some time and died in Bihar in 1440 A. D. Like Shāh Muḥammad Saghīr, Muẓammil felt the necessity of composing religious books in Bengali in order to educate the people to regulate their lives in accordance with the principles of Islam. In his Nītisāstra, this feeling of the poet has been represented. Nītisāstra is a book on morals and good living. His another compilation is Sā'atnāma. It is a book chiefly on şūfiṣm, though it deals also with

1 Shāh Muḥammad Saghīr—Yusuf—Zolekha, quoted by E. Haq—Muslim Bengaḷa Sāḥīya, p. 59:
Na lekhe kithab katha mane bhai pal,
Doshiba sakal tak eha na jau,
Guni thekhinu ammi eha bhai michha,
Na hai bhushai kichhu hai kacha sacha.
2 E. Haq—Muslim Bengaḷa Sāḥīya, p. 113.
3 Ibid., p. 68.
4 Ibid.

অন্যান্য (bhasai) লোকে না বুঝে কারণ।
নাপে বুঝিতে কেন্দ্র (payar) রচন।
some local ideas. Muṣammil has derived his materials from the Arabic and Persian sources.

Faiḍ Allāh was another Muslim poet and scholar who compiled religious work in the Bengali language. His Ghāzi-Vijaya has been based on the life of the warrior-saint Shāh Isma‘īl Ghāzi, a general of Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh. He wrote another work Zainaler Chautisha, based on the tragedy of Karbala and the sorrows of Imām Zain al-’Abedīn, son of the martyred Imām Ḥusain.¹ Though these works do not have much historical importance, they however popularised the Muslim saints, heroes and leaders and checked the ideas connected with the Hindu gods and goddesses prevailing in the Muslim community of Bengal. Faiḍ Allāh flourished in the middle of the sixteenth century. Another Bengali work on religious topics is Rasūl-vijaya compiled by Zain-al-Dīn, a poet of the later fifteenth century. It has been written in a fanciful way and has little historical basis. It is gathered from his writings that he was a court poet of Sultān Yūsuf Shāh (1474-81 A. D.).²

Daulat Wazīr Bahrām was an eminent poet and learned man of the second half of the sixteenth century. He has immortalised himself by his Bengali versification of the Persian love epic Laila-Majnūn. This is regarded as a fine piece of the Bengali literature. It was composed between 1560 and 1575 A. D.³ His work popularised the Muslim legends and Islamic ideas among the Muslims of Bengal.

These religious works in Bengali played a significant role in the religious and cultural life of the Muslims of the province. They were the earliest books on Islamic learning in the local language, a language which is accessible to and understood even by the common people. Now-a-days everybody admits the importance of the religious books being written and religious instruction being imparted in the local language. The educated

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¹ E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 90.
² E. Haq—Muslim Bangula Sahitya, p. 61.
³ Ibid, pp. 92-96.
Muslims of Bengal realised this importance even from the beginning of the fifteenth century and produced valuable works on Islamic learning several centuries before the Muslims of other provinces of this subcontinent could think on this line. Their works represented Islam in the true light and popularised Islamic subjects among the Muslims in general. This checked the coming of un-Islamic ideas in the Muslim society and influenced the minds and morals of the Muslims. These also stimulated Islamic studies on the one hand and the enrichment of the Bengali language and literature on the other. These religious works of the Bengali authors are a proof of the knowledge of the scholars of Bengal in Islamic as well as Arabic and Persian learning and also their notable contribution to the promotion of Islamic learning and spirit.

Muslim Bengal is credited with the production of one of the earliest Persian lexicons in this subcontinent. Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī compiled a Persian lexicon called Farhang-i-Ibrāhīmī. It is better known as Sharfnāma after the name of Makhdum Sharif al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri, to whose sacred memory the author dedicated his work. It is gathered from this book that it was written in the reign of Abūl Muẓaffar Bārbak Shāh. The author mentions Jaunpur as his native town. On the basis of this evidence, it is thought that the book was compiled in the time of Bārbak Shāh, son of Sultān Bahīnī Lodi and the governor of Jaunpur. But it may be pointed out that Bārbak Lodi did not assume sovereign power in the reign of his father. Nor is it known that he assumed the regal title of Abūl Muẓaffar. Bārbak Shāh, the Ilyās Shāhi Sultān of Bengal, bore the title of Abūl Muẓaffar. So it is reasonable to suggest that Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī, a native of Jaunpur, wrote his book in Bengal in the reign of Bārbak Shāh (1459-74) of the Ilyās Shāhi dynasty.

Sharfnāma is a remarkable work in the Persian language and is entitled to a great share in the progress of the Persian

1 Urdu October 1952, pp. 61-66 and Sharfnāma, Aliya Madrasah MS., ff. 2-3.
2 Ibid.
literature and knowledge not only in Bengal but in the whole of this subcontinent. This work is significant also because it supplies the names of a few scholars and poets of Bengal of the time of the author. It refers to one Amir Shahab al-Din Hakim Kirmani as a gifted poet, talented writer and a pride of the physicians. He is also credited with the compilation of a Persian lexicon named Farhang-i-Amir Shahab al-Din Kirmani. Ibrahim Qawwam Farooqi has quoted extensively from this lexicon. This indicates that another Persian lexicon was compiled in Bengal a few years before the compilation of Sharfnama. No copy Amir Shahab's lexicon is known to exist anywhere.

The interest of the Muslim scholars of Bengal was not confined to the cultivation of Islamic learning and literatures. They also made contributions to other branches of knowledge. Specially notable was their contribution to the knowledge of the art of warfare. In the reign of 'Ala al-Din Husain Shah (1493-1519 A. D.), Muhammad Buda'i, better known as Saiyid Mir 'Alawi, compiled a book on archery called Hidayat-i-Rami and dedicated it to his patron the Bengali Sultan, who was interested in the knowledge of the Hindu art of warfare. The author has discussed the Hindu system of warfare with the bows and arrows and has illustrated his description with pictures of bow-shooting in different methods that obtained among the Hindus.

Muslim Bengal was particularly rich in the production of many gifted poets in the Persian literature. They flourished under the liberal patronage of the Bengali Sultans. The names of a few may be mentioned to illustrate their contribution. An educated and cultured prince, Nasir al-Din Bughra Khan, son of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Balban and governor of Bengal, was fond of the company of the poets and men of letters. Of the host of poets and men of letters at his Court at Lakhnawti, the most celebrated were Shams al-Din Dahir and Qadi

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1 Ibid.
2 Asiatic Society, Calcutta, MS., Curzon collection, No. 626, f. 1.
Athîr. These two as well as the famous poet and scholar Amîr Khusrau accompanied Sultân Balban in his expedition to Bengal in 1282 A. D.1 Badâuni speaks in glowing terms of the literary and poetical attainments of Shams al-Dîn Dabîr. He says that Shams al-Dîn Dabîr acquired great reputation for his excellent poetical compositions and attained the rank of a Malik al-Kalâm (Lord of Eloquence) in the reign of Sultân Nasîr al-Dîn Mahmûd of Delhi (1246-56 A. D.) Amîr Khusrau used to show his compositions to Shams al-Dîn Dabîr and accept his views. In the preface to the Ghurrat al-Kamâl and at the end of Hasht Bihist, Amîr Khusrau has mentioned the accomplishment of his friend and guide Shams al-Dîn Dabîr.2 Sultân Balban appointed him secretary to his son Nasîr al-Dîn Bughra Khân, the governor of Bengal, in consideration of his literary attainments and accomplishments.3

Badâuni has quoted a few couplets of Shams al-Dîn Dabîr. One verse, addressed to Amîr Khusrau, reads:

"Oh Khusrau! Shams al-Dîn is thy secretary, strong and well-proved in speech; he is not, like the worthless scribes, an inexperienced scribbler.

"He himself is experienced and his verse is like purified gold; his swords are not like the bes saying of Khâqânî still in the rough."

In his Ghurrat al-Kamâl, Amîr Khusrau says that Malik Shams al-Dîn Dabîr and Qâdî Athîr wanted to retain him in Lakhnawti by seizing his garment. He observes, "But the separation from my friends (in Delhi) seized me by the collar I was obliged like Joseph to leave that prison-pl (Bengal) and turn my steps to the metropolis."5 This shows that Amîr Khusrau

1 Badâuni, I, pp. 154-55.
2 Badâuni, I, pp. 94-96.
3 Barani, p. 95.
4 Badâuni, p. 96.
5 Badâuni, I, p. 154.
lived for a short time at the court of Nāṣir al-Dīn Bughra Khān, while Shams al-Dīn Dābir and Qāḍī Aṭḥīr lived permanently at the court of that prince in Lakhnawi.

Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī's *Sharfnāma* written in the reign of Sultān Bārbak Shāh (1459-84 A. D.) has referred to a few distinguished scholars, poets and men of letters of his time. Mention has already been made of Amīr Shahāb al-Dīn Ḥakīm Kirmānī. Amīr Zāin al-Dīn Harwī was a poet laureate. Manaṣīr Shirāzī, Malik Yūsuf bin Ḥamīd, Saiyid Jalāl, Saiyid Muhammad Rukn and Saiyid Ḥasan were good poets. Shaikh Wāhidī was a scholar, who compiled a work named *Ḥabl Mātin*. *Sharfnāma* has given a few specimen of their compositions. But no copy of their works have been found. Mirzā Nathan has mentioned of a poet named Agāhī, who in a *majlis* of the Mughul officers at Jessore, composed a *qaṣīda* extempore praising the climate of Jessore in imitation of Maulānā Urffī's verse which appreciated the climate of Kashmir. Mirzā Nathan informs that the *qaṣīda* (panegyric) was highly admired by all.

Besides the scholars and poets mentioned above, there were many other men of letters in the period under review. We shall have an occasion to refer to some of them in proper places. The above discussion however proves that Bengali Muslim scholars and poets made significant contribution to Islamic learning as well as to Arabic and Persian literatures. Indeed they had a large share in the promotion of Islamic feeling and the progress of knowledge and culture in this province.

*Centres of Learning*:

The Muslim love for the acquisition of knowledge, the enthusiasm of the *shāikhs* and the *ʻulema* to promote Islamic learning,

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2 *Bahārīstān* (Tr.), I, p. 138. Mirzā Nathan writes that he included the *qaṣīda* in his work. But the translator of *Bahārīstān* has omitted its rendering into English.
the liberal patronage of the educated and enlightened rulers to scholars, poets and men of letters as well as to the educated institutions resulted in a great intellectual awakening in Bengal. Seats of higher education developed in many towns and important localities. Madrasahs sprang up around the mosques. The Sultân and nobles took special interests in the establishment of madrasahs and making rich endowments for their maintenance. Even the eminent 'ulema set up and maintained madrasahs and academies. Several khâṅqahs of the celebrated şâfi‘i-scholars also formed the nucleus of illustrious seats of learning.

It is to be noted that several khâṅqahs were great centres of learning and that, in the earlier centuries of Muslim rule in Bengal or even in this subcontinent, there was practically no difference between the 'ulema as theologians and the şâfi‘is as mystics, in so far as education was concerned. Both these classes of the religious and spiritual divines attached equally great importance to learning, as it is found in the cases of Hadîrât Nizâm al-Dîn Aulîyâ and Shaikh Ākhî Siraj-al-Dîn 'Uthmân. It also cannot be said that the şâfi‘is of this period abandoned Sharî‘ah and gave themselves exclusively to Ma‘rifat. The most of the well-known şâfi‘is, such as Khwâja Mu‘in al-Dîn Chishti, Shaikh Bahâ‘ al-Dîn Zakariya, Maulâna Sharf al-Dîn Abû Tawwâmah, Makhdum Sharf al-Dîn Yahyâ Maneri, Shaikh 'Alâ al-Ḥaq and Hadîrât Nûr Quṭb 'Ālam, observed family life and were very much concerned for the strict adherence to the injunctions of the Qur’ân and the Hadîth in the society and the State. So, it is found that 'Alâ al-Ḥaq protested against Sikandar Shâh's appointing the Hindus in high and responsible offices in the government. Hadîrât Muẓaffar Shams Bâlkhi also advised Sultân Ghiyâth al-Dîn A’zam to follow the policy laid down by the Qur’ân and the Hadîth in State affairs and not to trust the non-Muslims with responsible offices of the State.

1 A well-educated person and a poet. Sultan Ghiyâth al-Dîn A’zam had great respect for the learned and extended liberal patronage to men of letters. He invited the well-known poet Ḥâfîz of Shiraz to his Court. The great Persian poet appreciated the Bengali Sultan’s generous invitation, but he expressed his inability to leave his native place.
It is also to be noted that most of the celebrated ṣūfīs were also
great 'ulema of the time and were renowned for their learning.
What is more, while devoting themselves to the advancement of
the spiritual life of their pupils, they also took substantial steps
to promote the cause of learning and education among the people.
The discussion in the following pages will bear out this fact. In
fact, the sharp distinction between the 'ulema and the ṣūfī in
Bengal as in other parts of India was a later growth. It began
in the sixteenth century when ṣūfism succumbed to the influence
of Hindu asceticism and many illiterate persons, subscribing
heterodox ideas emanating from different sources, passed for
ṣūfīs. The Bauls of Bengal furnish the best example of the de-
generrated ṣūfīs. Indeed the ṣūfīs of the earlier period, most of
whom were also 'ulema, made remarkable contribution to the
progress of learning in Bengal.

In consequence of the interests of the rulers, 'ulema, shaikhs,
nobles and well-to-do Muslims in learning, a large number of
madrasahs and academies flourished in different places of this
province. A few of them developed into illuminating centres
of learning in the subcontinent. They deserve special notice.

Lakhnawti (Gaur):

Ever since the Muslim conquest of Bengal, Lakhnawati, which
was better known as Gaur, rose to a significant seat of learning
and culture in Bengal. It is known from Minhāj that Muḥam-
mad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī built a madrasah, and made liberal
grants to the shaikhs and the 'ulema.1 His example was followed
by the succeeding Muslim governors of the province. The ruins
of several madrasah buildings have been discovered in the early
capital city of Muslim Bengal. From these it is known that
Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī (1212-27) built a superb mosque,
a college and a caravan-sarai at Lakhnawti. He encouraged

1 Tābaqāt-i-Nāṣirī (Tr. Raverty, pp. 559-60) says that through the
praiseworthy endeavours of Muhammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī and those of
his umīrs, madrasahs and khānqāhs were founded in those parts.
learning and bestowed ample pensions upon the learned.\footnote{Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣiri (Tr. Raverty), p. 583; Stewart—History of Bengal, pp. 56-57.} Archaeological survey has brought to light the traces of a madrasah on a spot called Darashbari near the village of Umarpur in Gaur. The name Darashbari, meaning the reading house, as well as the plan of the building suggest that it was a madrasah of the Muslim time. In the same site there is a mosque called Darashbari masjid. An inscription, big and heavy (11'-3\(\frac{3}{4}\)\(\times\)2\(\frac{3}{4}\)-1\(\frac{3}{4}\)), found in the place, records the erection of a Jam'-i-Masjid by Sulṭān Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh in 884 H./1479 A.D.\footnote{Archaeological Survey Report, XV, p. 76; Memoirs of Gaur, pp. 76-77; N. N. Law—Promotion of Learning, p. 108; Dani—Inscriptions, No. 49.} This mosque known popularly as Darasbari Masjid, i.e., the madrasah mosque, supports the view that there was a madrasah there and the mosque was constructed for the congregational prayers of its large number of students and teachers.

From the ruins of a large building by the side of the Chhota Sagar Dighi in Gaur, the existence of another madrasah is traced in that capital city of the Muslim rulers. According to a local tradition, the building was the site of an institution called Belbari madrasah.\footnote{Memoirs of Gaur, pp. 86-87.} The madrasahs flourished not merely in the capital proper; there are references of the development of madrasahs in the satellite towns and important localities near it. According to an inscription on a mosque in Malda, modern English Bazar, in 907 H./1502 A. D., Sulṭān 'Alā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh built an excellent madrasah with the object of "teaching the sciences of religion and instructing in those orders which alone are true."\footnote{Dani—Inscriptions of Bengal, p. 49.}

The establishment of several madrasahs from the beginning of the Muslim conquest, the presence of an educated and enlightened aristocracy and the coming of many 'ulema, shaikhs, preachers and teachers naturally stimulated learning in Lakhuawti and this capital city rose to a worthy centre of the intellectual life of the Muslims. Even in the early years of the Muslim rule, its reputation as a seat of learning and culture reached as far as the
Hindu kingdom of Kamrup, and attracted seekers after knowledge, even from among the Hindus. So came the Hindu ascetic and Vedantic philosophers, such as Bhojar Brahmin and Ambhahanath. The former, who came in the reign of 'Alī Mardān Khaljī, had religious and philosophical discussion with the Muslim scholar Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandi, and in recognition of the superior ideas of Islam, he turned a Muslim. This was also the case afterwards with the other Vedantist Brahmin Ambhahanath. With the help of Bhojar Brahmin, the Muslim scholars translated Amritkand, a work on Hindu philosophy and mysticism, from Sanskrit into Arabic and Persian. This religious and philosophical discussion, and the translation of a Hindu mystic work are of momentous significance in the intellectual life of the Muslim capital in Bengal. It represented the high degree of learning and culture of the Muslims in Lakhnawtī. It also reflected the inquisitiveness of the Muslim scholars of Bengal in the knowledge of other peoples.

Besides Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandi, a number of other scholars shed their lustre in Lakhnawtī. The well-known historian Minhāj lived in this Bengal capital two years (1242-44 A. D.). A reputed theologian Jalāl al-Dīn Ghaznavi resided several years in this city and delivered discourse in the audience-ball of Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī.1 The distinguished poets and men of letters Shams al-Dīn Dabīr and Qāḍī Athīr flourished at the Court of Nāṣir al-Dīn Bughra Khān.

Mahism: Mahism, now known as Mahisantosh in the Rajshahi district, was one of the earliest centres of learning of the Muslims. An eminent scholar, Maulānā Taqī al-Dīn 'Arabī kept a seminary there. The renown of his scholarship and the reputation of his seminary drew scholars and students from other parts of India. Shaikh Yahyā, father of the celebrated saint-scholar Makhdum Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri, received his education from the Mahism seminary under Maulānā Taqī al-Dīn 'Arabī. This information is derived from the Manāqib at Ayfiyā',

1 Minhāj, pp. 161-62.
compiled by Shāh Shu‘ayb, a cousin of Makhḍum Sharf-al-Dīn Maneri.¹ This undoubtedly proves that继续learning was a great seat of learning in the middle of the thirteenth century.

Sonargaon: It has been previously mentioned how Sonargaon developed into a brilliant seat of Islamic learning and knowledge under the versatile scholar Maulānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawkhamah. Born in Bukhara and educated in Khursasan, Maulānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawkhamah was reputed for his piety and learning in the whole of Western Asia and India. A Hanafi jurist and traditionalist, he was accomplished in Islamic knowledge as well as secular sciences, such as chemistry, natural science and magic. With his great reputation for knowledge and scholarship, when he came to Delhi he acquired great popularity and influence over all sections of people. The jealousy of the reigning Sultan (Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban) however, obliged the Maulānā to proceed to Bengal, accompanied by his family and brother Maulānā Ḥafiz Zain-al-Dīn. On his way, he halted a few days at Maner. The great scholarship of Maulānā Abū Tawkhamah strongly impressed young Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri and, desiring to acquire knowledge under him, he followed the Maulānā to Sonargaon. Maulānā Abū Tawkhamah settled down at Sonargaon and built a Ḧanāqah and academy in the city.² His renown as a ṣūfī and scholar drew to him large number of disciples and pupils from all over India. Religious as well as secular sciences were taught and studied under this distinguished learned man of the age. This made Sonargaon an animated centre of learning not only in Bengal, but in the subcontinent. It produced illustrious sages and scholars. The celebrated ṣūfī-scholar Makhḍum Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri was the product of the Sonargaon academy of Maulānā Abū Tawkhamah. This is indeed a great testimony to the glory of Sonargaon as the seat of learning in the later part of the thirteenth century. The works Maqāmāt and the Nām-i-Haq and

¹ Shāh Shu‘ayb—Manāqīb al-Asfiyā; extracts in Maktūbāt-i-Sādi of Makhḍum Sharf al-Dīn Maneri, compiled by his disciple, p. 339.
a distinguished pupil like Sharf al-Din Yahyā Maneri are the most substantial proof of the great learning and scholarship of Maulānā Abū Tawwāmah. Maulānā Abū Tawwāmah and Sharf al-Din Maneri were similarly the pride and glory of the intellectual and cultural life of the Muslims of Bengal. Maulānā Abū Tawwāmah, the builder of the intellectual greatness of Bengal, died in 700 H./1300 A. D., and was buried in Sonargaon.¹

Sonargaon continued its intellectual life as a great seat of learning in Bengal. In his exile, the renowned saint and scholar of Pandua, Shaikh ʿAlā al-Haqq, lived here for two years.² So also his grandson Shaikh Badr-i-Islām and great-grandson Shaikh Zāhedi lived for sometime at Sonargaon during the period of their exile.³ The presence of these illustrious sages and learned men naturally stimulated the Islamic learning and knowledge of the Sonargaon educational centre. An inscription which records the construction of a mosque at Sonargaon in 929 H./1523 A. D. during the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh, mentions the builder Taqī al-Dīn, son of ʿAin al-Dīn as a great jurist and muḥaddith, the chief of the lawyers and of the teachers of the Ḥāḍīṭh.⁴ This shows that Sonargaon continued its intellectual tradition in the sixteenth century.

Satgaon: From the time of the Muslim conquest Satgaon developed into a seat of learning and intellectual life. These are references of the establishment of two madrasahs at Tribeni in Satgaon.⁵ One was built in 698 H./1293 A. D. in the reign of Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kaikaus by Qāḍī al-Nāṣir Moḥammad, who spent a large sum of money for the erection of a madrasah and munificently provided for the maintenance of the students and the teachers of this seat of Islamic learning. The inscription in the madrasah, which reminded the Muslims of the saying of the Prophet regarding the great importance of knowledge in

¹ Letter of Ḥāḍrat Jahāṅgīr Simnānī, B. P. P. 1948, No. 130, p. 35.
² Akhbār al-Akhūyār, p. 143.
³ Riyād, p. 116.
⁴ Dani—Inscription, etc., p. 124.
the life of his followers, illustrates the high ideal which inspired the builder to establish this educational institution. Another madrasah was built in the same locality in 713 H./1313 A. D. by Zafar Khān in the reign of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh. This madrasah was called Dūr al-Khairat. These two madrasahs diffused Islamic learning and knowledge in the Satgaon region and contributed to the promotion of intellectual life of the Muslims of that area.

**Nagor**: Nagor in the Birbhum district was another intellectual centre in West Bengal. According to Riyāḍ al-Salātīn, Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh and the renowned saint Ḥaḍrat Nūr Qubṭ Ālam, in their youth, had their education from Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kunjnasīhīn (sitter of the corner) of Nagor.

**Mandaran**: Mandaran (Bankura-Vishnupur) developed into a centre of Islamic learning from the time of Sultān Ḥusain Shāh, if not earlier. An inscription, dated 907 Ḥ./1502 A. D., records the establishment of a madrasah at Mandaran at the order of Sultān Ḥusain Shāh. The inscription commemorating the foundation of the madrasah has been referred earlier.

**Pandua**: Many factors contributed to the development of Pandua as one of the most illuminating centres of learning in this subcontinent. It was the seat of an unprecedented spiritual life. It was the centre of the spiritual and cultural activities of Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī, Shaikh Ākīhī Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Uthmānī, Shaikh Alā al-Ḥaq, Shaikh Nūr Qubṭ Ālam, Shaikh Zāhid and many other great ṣūfīs, scholars, ‘ulama and teachers. Pandua was also the capital of the educated and enlightened Muslim rulers, such as Ilyās Shāh, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh, Rukan al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh, Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh and Jalāl al-Dīn Fāṭḥ Shāh who were also patrons of learning and the learned. The khānqahs of the celebrated shaikhs, who were also noted for their knowledge in Islamic subjects and regarded education essential for spiritual advancement, naturally supplied

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1 Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, 1917-18; JASB, 1870, p. 284.
2 Riyāḍ al-Salātīn, p. 108.
the earliest forum of religious discussion and the centre of Islamic knowledge in Pandua. The rulers and well-to-do persons made liberal grants to the khāngahs. The seekers of religion and God were attracted to these resting places of the shaikhs and listened to their religious discourses. Ḥaḍrat Nūr Quṭb Ālam built a great madrasah and hospital at Pandua. Sultaṅ 'Alā al-Dīn Husain Shāh made land-grant for their support. This land-grant continued even up to the recent times.'

Pandua built a great tradition of learning. Shaikh 'Alā al-Ḥaq was a vastly learned man of the time and was renowned for his learning throughout Northern India. His son Aʿẓam Khān, Ḥaḍrat Nūr Quṭb Ālam and his grandsons were also celebrated for their spiritualism and learning. Shaikh Zāhid, a grandson of Nūr Quṭb Ālam, was famed for his piety and knowledge of the religious sciences. Besides this illustrious family, there were many other saints and 'ulema in Pandua who were distinguished for their learning. Shaikh Baḍr al-Islam and Ḥaḍrat Baḍr Ālam Zāhidī were eminent scholars of the age. This great spiritual educational centre of Pandua attracted seekers after God and knowledge from far off countries. It also produced great saints and scholars who won for themselves an eminent position in the spiritual and intellectual life of this subcontinent. Mīr Saiyid Ashraf Jāhāngīr Simnānī, who occupied a very significant position in the life of the Muslims, particularly of Jaunpur, was a disciple of Shaikh 'Alā al-Ḥaq and a product of the Pandua spiritual and intellectual centre. So also were Shaikh Husain Dhukkārpūsh, a great saint of Purnea, and Shaikh Nāṣir al-Dīn Manikpūrī, a great of great spiritual and educational attainments. The saint-scholars Shaikh Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpūrī, Shaikh Kākū of Lahore and Shaikh Shams al-Dīn Tāhir had likewise their knowledge from the distinguished Bengali sage, Ḥaḍrat Nūr Quṭb Ālam of Pandua. The compiler of Raftiq al-'Arifīn mentions Maulānā Farīd al-Dīn and Maulānā Sālār also as his disciples.1

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1 C. Stewart—History of Bengal.
2 Khazīnat al-ʾAsfūyā, I, p. 369.
Bagha: Bagha, now a village in Bilmariya P. S. of the Rajshahi district was an animated seat of learning during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal. Bagha rose to importance when the saint Shāh Daulah settled down in the village and established his khānqah there.

According to an inscription dated 930 H./1524 A. D., Sultān Nuṣrat Shāh (1519-34 A. D.) built a Jam‘-i-masjid at Bagha.¹ When ‘Abd al-Laṭif, an attendant-companion of Abūl Ḥasan, a divān of Bengal, visited the place in 1609 he met there an old sage, whom he mentioned as Hawadha Miān. He wrote that Hawadha Miān, aged one hundred years, maintained a big madrasah where his descendants and pupils were given to the peaceful pursuits of knowledge. The college was built of thatched and mud-plastered walls. The lands around the village were granted to him for subsistence.² This shows that the madrasah of Bagha was continuing from before the year 1609, presumably from the time of Nuṣrat Shāh when the village developed so much as to need the construction of a big mosque. This importance of the place, which was just a village, was due to the khānqah and the madrasah that began with Maulānā Shāh Daulah.

Hawadha Miān mentioned by ‘Abd al-Laṭif was most probably Maulānā Ḥamīd Dānishmand, son of Maulānā Shāh Daulah and father of Maulānā ‘Abd al-Waḥhab. This sage was aged 100 years in 1609. So, he was born about the year 1509 and was a younger contemporary of Nuṣrat Shāh. This also agrees with the tradition that Maulānā Shāh Daulah did not accept Nuṣrat Shāh’s offer of land-grant, which was, however, accepted by his son Haḍrat Ḥamīd Dānishmand.³

According to a local tradition, Prince Khurram (Shāh Jahān) made a big land-grant to Maulānā ‘Abd al-Waḥhab, a son of

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¹ A. H. Dani—Inscriptions of Bengal, No. 127.
³ JASB, 1904, No. 2, p. 112.
Hadrat Ḥamid Dānishmand. In his Education Report in 1835, Adam has referred to Bagha as a centre of Persian education. He says, “The Madrasah at Kusbah Bagha is an endowed institution of long-standing. The property appears to have originally consisted of two portions, which are stated to have been bestowed by two separate royal grants. A sanad of the 19th year of Shāhjahān confirms the grant of land to the madrasah made previously as madad-i-ma’sh and Shaikh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, to whom the sanad of Shāhjahān was granted, was given the title of Maulānā, a title bestowed on men of great learning.”

Appreciating the deep devotion of the seekers of knowledge of the madrasah and the peaceful life there, ‘Abd al-Latîf observed, “How happy are the inhabitants of this retreat, and how lucky are the elders among the residents of this woodland, as they have no concern with other people, nor have other people anything to do with them.”

**Rangpur:** According to Firishta, Rangpur was a centre of Muslim learning from the time of Muslim conquest. Speaking of the first Muslim conqueror of Bengal, Firishta writes, “He built a city in place of Nadia, with the name of Rangpur and made it his capital. He decorated the city and region, as is usual in the history of Islam, with mosques, khângahs and madrasahs.” There is no contemporary evidence to support Firishta that Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār established his capital in Rangpur. All the contemporary historians refer to Lakhnawtī as his capital. From the writings of Minhāj, Devkot might be

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1 JASB, 1904, No. 2, p. 112.
3 B. P. P., 1928, pt. II, Sl. 70, p. 143:

در سرحد بنگال در عوض شهر نودیا شهر موسوم برخگ پور بیا کرده و دارالملک خود ساخت و مساجد و خواصت و مدارس دران شهر و ولایت پرای معاشر کفاح برسم شعار الاسلام بود...
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considered to have been the capital of the Khalji chief, particularly after his return from the disastrous Tibet expedition.

Although Firishta's evidence of Rangpur being the capital cannot be accepted, it is however possible that a madrasah was established there by Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār. The name Lakhnawti was applied not to the capital only, but to the whole North Bengal as well. Rangpur is thus in the territory of Lakhnawti. Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣiri mentions of the building of madrasahs, obviously more than one, in Lakhnawti (territory) by Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār and his nobles. This suggests that a madrasah might have been founded at Rangpur at that time. In the Muslim period, Rangpur was an important region under the name of Ghoraghaut and was the seat of a divisional commander or faujdar. Ghoraghaut became particularly memorable on account of its connection with the warrior-saint Shāh Isma'il Ghāzi, who was a commandant of the place in the reign of Sulṭān Bārbak Shāh. After he became a martyr, he was buried in the territory of Ghoraghaut. His mausoleum was the place of pilgrimage for the people. It is likely that such a place of political importance and of religious significance had a madrasah to cater the needs of the Muslim families of that region.

Chittagong: No evidence of the construction of a madrasah in Chittagong has been discovered. Its importance as the biggest sea-port of Bengal suggests that it was a cultural centre from the time of Muslim settlement there. Chittagong was also a seat of great military and administrative significance. A commander of high rank was appointed its governor. A great commercial city with a prosperous Muslim population and high official class of the Muslims, Chittagong could not certainly go without a madrasah. It is known from the evidence of the contemporary Bengali literature that the governors and officials were highly enlightened and cultured people. Parāgal Khān and Chhuti Khān were interested even in the knowledge of the Hindus. They held literary meetings at their court and had a great part of the Mahabharata translated into Bengali from Sanskrit.
Moreover, Chittagong produced a large number of scholars-poets. The names of Daulat Wazir Bahram, Saribid Khan, Saiyid Sultan, Muqammi, Afzal 'Ali, Mukim, Shaikh Muttalib, Muhammad Khan, Daulat Qadi and Alaol may be mentioned in this connection. Their poetical works, written in Bengali, reflect their knowledge of the Arabic and Persian literatures as well as of Islamic subjects. This gives the impression that Chittagong was a seat of learning and culture in the Muslim time.

**Primary Education:**

Primary education was common among the Muslims during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal. Education was regarded as a religious obligation and as a matter of social distinction. There was general urge for education among them and they had also the ability to provide for the same. At that time, the small population of Bengal with a plenty of fertile lands lived under prosperous conditions. The Muslims were particularly prosperous as rulers, officers, jagirdars, aimadars, ijaraadars, rent-free holders and soldiers. Hence, it was not a problem for them to provide for the primary education of their children. Even the Muslims with small means could send their children to maktabs, attached to mosques, which were in most cases supported by land-grants either from the State or from the well-to-do persons of the locality.

The education of the Muslim children began in the maktab, which was attached to every mosque and also to the house of a rich man, so that every town and even village had many primary schools. It is known from the evidence of a Hindu poet Mukundaram that even a small Muslim locality in a Hindu area had maktabs for the education of the Muslim children. In his Chandikarya, the poet says, "Maktabs were set up where all Muslim children were taught by the pious maulavis."1 Maktab, a primary school, was also known as path sala in Bengali. Both

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1 Mukundaram—Chandikarya, p. 344; 
Zata isu Mussalman tulila maktab sthan, 
Makhdum parai pathna.
boys and girls attended the same primary school. The writings of the Muslim poets give an idea that there was co-education in the primary schools. Daulat Wazir Bahram writes that Laila and Majnun in their early age read in the same primary school and many other boys and girls attended that school.\(^1\)

Generally the education of the Muslim boys and girls began at the age of five. There were also instances of early start as well as late beginning of education by children. It is known from Bahram that Majnun was sent to the pathsala at the age of seven.\(^2\) But the usual practice of the Muslims, particularly of the upper and middle class, was to initiate their children to education formally at the age of 4 years, 4 months and 4 days. This formal initiation of the child to education, known as the ceremony of Bismillah Khani, was observed all over Muslim India, including Bengal. At an hour fixed in consultation with an astrologer, the child took his first lesson from the teacher. The teacher read out a selected verse of the Qur’an and the child repeated the same.\(^3\) This Bismillah Khani ceremony represents the great importance paid by the Muslim parents to educate their children.

In the diffusion of the primary education the mosques played a vital role. There were many mosques in every town and even a small village, where a few Muslims lived, had at least a mosque. The mosque, a prayer-house, was traditionally a place of education, particularly in religious matters. Every mosque had an Imam to lead the Muslims in prayer; it also enjoyed a land grant for the maintenance of its establishment, including the Imam. The Imam was also a teacher to impart primary education, particularly instructing the children in the reading of the Qur’an and learning the funda-

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1 Bahram—Laila-Majnun, p. 19.
Sundar balakgan ati surachita,
Ek sehane sabhane parai anandita.
Sei pathsalai parai kaça bala,
Sucharita sulaiche nirmala aujjala.


3 K. M. Ashraf—Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan, p. 145.
mental principles of the religion. This tradition of a mosque being also an institution of religious education continued even after the fall of the Muslim rule in this country. While discussing the state of education in 1882, the Bengal Provincial Committee of the Education Commission reported, "There was not a mosque or emambarah in which Professors of Arabic and Persian were not maintained. . . . Maktabs again sprang up in imitation of pathshalas, wherever the Mussalmans predominated in numbers."¹

An idea about the general prevalence of primary education in Muslim Bengal can be obtained from the Education Report of William Adam. Giving his report, after an inquiry into the state of education in Bengal in 1835 A. D., Adam stated that there were about 100,000 primary schools in Bengal and Bihar the population of which was estimated at 40,000,000, so that there would be a village school for more than three hundred school-going boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 12. He observed that though his calculations were based on uncertain premises, still it would appear from these that the system of village schools was extremely prevalent and the desire to give education to their children must have been deep-seated in the minds of parents even of the humblest classes.²

Adam has given the state of primary education in the days of the political and economic ruin of the Muslims. Its condition was certainly better in the period of their political and economic prosperity. The number of such primary schools, maktabs and pathshalas, must have been greater during the period of Muslim rule, when every Muslim was better able to pay for the education of his children and every educated Muslim could hope to obtain a job in the government or in any other institution. That the Muslims during the period of the Muslim rule had a better system of education is but an admitted fact. Writing of education under the Muslims, H. G. Rawlinson observes, "The high

¹ Quoted by A. R. Mallick—*British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal*, p. 149.
degree of culture in Mughul India was largely the result of the excellent system of education. Education is considered to be a religious duty; at the age of four, the boy, if he were the son of rich parents, was given silver-mounted slate inscribed with a chapter of the Koran and was handed over to a tutor; if poor, he was sent to a maktab or primary school kept by the mullah, which was attached to every mosque."

Religious teaching formed the basis of the primary education. Every Muslim child, boy or girl, was taught the fundamentals of religion and the precepts of the faith. Poet Vipradas says that the Muslim children were taught prayer and ablation in the maktabs. Mukundaram writes that a learned maulavi (makhdum) taught the Muslim children in the maktab. Since a maulavi (educated in religious learning) was the teacher of the maktab, it can definitely be said that Islamic education was given due importance in the primary stage.

Besides religious knowledge, other subjects were also taught in the maktab. Rawlinson observes, "Here (in the maktab) he (a child) learnt by heart the Kalima or creed and certain verses from the Qur'ân which were necessary for his daily devotions. It was also common practice to learn the Qur'ân by heart. To this was added the Hadith of the Prophet, the three Rs and Persian. Elegant penmanship was cultivated, and if the boy wished to learn the arts and crafts, he was apprentices to an ustâd or master."4

The students in the primary schools had to learn three languages—Arabic, Persian and Bengali. For the reading of the

2 Vipradas—Manasamangala, p. 67:
3 Mukundaram—Chandikarya, p. 344:
4 H. G. Rawlinson—India, etc., p. 372.
Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth the learning of the Arabic language was essential. Persian was the language of the court and culture throughout the Muslim period. Hence the study of the Persian language and literature was indispensable for employment in the government or any other institution. Bengali was the mother-tongue of many Muslims as well as of the non-Muslims. Hence the Bengali Muslims could not have neglected the learning of the Bengali language. Indeed Bengali played a significant part in the literary and cultural life of the Muslims of Bengal. The Chinese envoys, who came to Bengal in the early years of the fifteenth century, referred to the prevalence of two languages in Bengal, Persian and Bengali. Mahuan says, "The language of the people is Bengali; Persian is also spoken here." Persian was the Court language and Bengali was the language of the people in general. The Chinese records show that Bengali occupied an important position in the society of the time. Indeed the Muslim rulers raised it to a place of importance. Many of the immigrant Muslims, who were long settled in Bengal, adopted this land as their home and Bengali as their tongue. The Muslim rulers patronised and encouraged the development of the Bengali literature. Many Muslim poets composed their works in Bengali. They even composed works on religious matters in this language. Their writings express that Arabic and Persian were not understood by majority of the Muslims and they wrote in Bengali, so that the common people could read and understand them. This illustrates that the people in general could read and understand books on religious and other subjects written in Bengali. So Bengali was taught and it formed the medium of instruction in the primary schools.

It is known from a Bengali work named Shamscher Ghāzir Puthi that Shamscher Ghāzi, who founded a tulbaikhāna (school), brought a munshi (Persian teacher) from Dacca, a maulavi (Arabic teacher) from Hindustan and a pandit (Sanskrit and Bengali teacher) from Jugdeo respectively to teach Persian.

1 Mahuan's Accounts, extract translation, N. K. Bhattasali—Coins and Chronology, etc., p. 170.
Arabic and Bengali to the students of his school.¹ This proves that Persian, Arabic and Bengali were in the courses of study in the schools of Bengal. This is confirmed by another evidence from a work named Saradamangala, which records that king Govinda said to Pandit Gauridas, while placing his little son Lakhmadar to his charge that he should teach the boy Persian, Bangali, Nagri (Hindi) and Utkul (Oriya).²

Akbar’s Educational Regulations throw light on the curriculum of the primary education in India, including Bengal, before the time of this Emperor. A boy in the maktab learnt reading and writing, prose and poetry, and committed to memory verses in praise of God and moral sentences. He had to read many books. Akbar perceived that many years of the boy were wasted in this system of unintelligent reading of many books and cramming of many things. He introduced a system through which a boy would master the alphabets in two days, the words in a week, and in a short time be able to read and understand verses. The Emperor hoped, “If this method of teaching is adopted, a boy will learn in a month, or even in a day, what it took others years to understand, so much so that people will get quite astonished.”³

Primary course in Bengal thus consisted of an elementary knowledge in Arabic, Persian and Bengali and subjects, such as religion, morals, prose and poetry. The knowledge of arithmetic was an essential part of the primary education. The elements of arithmetic, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as well as kadakia, gondakia, kathakia and bighakia were taught in the primary schools.

One important fact that deserves mention in connection with the primary education is that the Hindu boys, particularly of the

² Saradamangala—Bangala Sahitya Parishaya, Pt. II, p. 1385:  
चारी शायले समुद्र गड़के सकल।  
नागी कारसी किरा बाणला उतकल।  
Kayastha families, often received their education in the maktabs under the maulavis. Persian was the language of the court and the enlightened section of the Hindus aspired for employment in the government. Necessarily such Hindus learnt Persian and gave Persian education to their sons. Quite a large number of the Hindus of the upper classes are found in the service of the Muslim State from the early period of the Muslim rule in Bengal. The revenue department was manned by the Hindu Kayasthas. These Hindus must have learnt the Persian language, otherwise they would not have been employed in the government service. Even in the eighteenth century the educated and enlightened Hindu families regarded education incomplete and ineffectual without a knowledge of Persian. Ramaprasada Sen, author of Vidyasundara, was sent by his father to a maulavi where he mastered the Persian language. The great poet Bharatchandra was rebuked by his elder brother for learning only Sanskrit and Bengali, ignoring Persian which was so essential in the practical and cultural life.

In the Tulbaikhana of Shamsher Ghazi which has been referred earlier, there was provision for teaching Persian, Arabic, Bengali and Sanskrit. The teaching of Sanskrit by a Brahmin Pandit in that school is an evidence that Hindu boys studied there and they learnt Persian as well from a maulavi. Buchanon also refers to a number of cases where "Muslim teachers taught Hindu and Muslim boys gratis."¹ The Kayastha Hindus also followed the Bismillah Khani ceremony like the Muslims at the time of initiating their boys to education. This ceremony was performed by the family maulavi and the letters of invitation were written in Persian. This practice is known to have obtained in Northern India even up to the time of the partition of this subcontinent.²

² I am grateful to Dr. A. Halim, Professor of History at the University of Dacca, for this information. He was for many years in the Muslim University of Aligarh and had personal knowledge of the practice of the Bismillah Khani in the enlightened Kayastha families.
Secondary Education and Higher Courses:

Secondary education was imparted in the madrasahs. There are references of the establishment of a few madrasahs in inscriptions and records. The contemporary historians speak of the patronage of the rulers and nobles to the 'ulema and shaikhs, and of the establishment of madrasahs by them in Bengal. This gives the impression that many madrasahs were set up in the province, and most of the towns and important Muslim localities had a secondary school to cater the educational needs of the Muslim people. Many mosques and imāmbaras were also the seats of the secondary education. According to the Education Commission Report of 1882, some of these mosques and imāmbaras continued to be the institution of secondary learning even down to the nineteenth century. Abūl Faḍl's writings give an idea of the progress of secondary and higher education in India of the Muslim time. He observes, "All civilized nations have schools for the education of the youth; but Hindustan is particularly famous for its seminaries."

The madrasahs as well as mosques were richly endowed with land-grants for maintenance by the State and the well-to-do Muslims. Qādī Nāṣir al-Dīn provided for the maintenance of the teachers as well as of the students of the madrasah he established at Tribeni. The madrasah at Bagha enjoyed a state endowment of 42 villages. The pupils received, besides instruction, free lodging, clothing, food, oil, and stationery including what was necessary for copying manuscripts to be used as text books. Refering to the schools in Birbhum, Adam reports that these were maintained from religious endowments and the students had free instruction, free board and lodging, and in some cases even stipends. A study of the Resumption Proceedings

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1 A. R. Mallick—British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, p. 149.
3 See p.
5 W. Adam—Third Report, p. 66.
of the British Government in India reveals that there were innumerable land-grants in the period of Muslim rule in Bengal to the educational and religious institutions as well as to men of learning and piety.¹

In his Report, Adam states that the wealthy Muslims maintained tutors in their houses for the education of their children and the poor children of the locality were often allowed to receive instruction from them free of charge. He writes, "At Pandua, a place of some celebrity . . . . it is said to have been the practice of the Musalman land proprietors to entertain teachers at their own private cost for the benefit of the children of the poor in the neighbourhood, and it was a rare thing to find an opulent farmer or head of a village who had not a teacher in his employ for that purpose."² Adam has recorded the state of Muslim education in the days of their political and economic decline. The condition of education was certainly better in the time of their political supremacy and economic prosperity.

Courses: The secondary course included the Qur’ān, the Ḥadīth, theology, jurisprudence and other Islamic subjects. Secular sciences, such as logic, arithmetic, medicine, chemistry, geometry, astronomy and others were also taught in the madrasahs. Speaking about the course of study, Abūl Faḍl states, "Every boy ought to read books on morals, arithmetic, agriculture, mensuration, geometry, astronomy, physiognomy, household matters, rules of government, medicine, logic, higher mathematics, sciences and history, all of which may be gradually acquired."³ Abūl Faḍl’s statement implies that these subjects were taught in the educational institutions of the time and the students were given choice in the selection of the subjects. A student did not study all these subjects, but a selected few. In fact, he expresses Emperor Akbar’s view that every student receiving higher education ought to be taught all these subjects.⁴

¹ Hunter—Indian Musalmans, p. 177.
³ ʿIltīs-Akbāri (Tr., Blochmann), i, p. 288.
⁴ Ibid, 279.
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It appears from Abūl Fadl’s writings that the course at the secondary stage was comprehensive and heavy as well. Emperor Akbar intended to introduce a more advanced and ambitious programme of curriculum. The European travellers, Bernier and Manucci, have recorded an interesting talk of Emperor Aurangzeb with his former tutor Mullā Šālih in which the Emperor emphasized the study of history, politics and the art of government.¹ Though this meeting between the Emperor and Mullā Šālih is doubted, because there is no reliable evidence that he was ever a tutor to Prince Aurangzeb, the statement of these two contemporaries however reflects the great importance attached to the study of history and politics by the ruling Muslims of the time.

The Muslims of this subcontinent brought with them the system of education and courses of studies that obtained in the ‘Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad. They consistently followed this in the madrasah education everywhere with little or no modification. The Bengali Muslim rulers and ‘ulema, who were educated under the same education system, naturally introduced it in Bengal. Maulānā Shārīf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah, who came from Bukhara, taught both religious and secular sciences to his pupils in the Sonargaon academy. It is also significant to note that most of the shaikhs, ‘ulema and teachers in the period of Muslim rule in this province were from Arabia and Persia.

In discussing the higher education, it is noteworthy that chemistry, medicine and natural sciences were taught in the madrasahs of Bengal as in other parts of this subcontinent. The Unani and Irani medicine was studied and practised in this province. Sharfnāma mentions of a fourteenth century distinguished Bengali physician, named Amīr Shahāb al-Dīn Ḥakīm Kirmānī. For his great reputation in the practice of medicine, he was called the ‘pride of physicians’ (امیرالحكماا ),² Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Faṭḥ Shāh was well versed in the science of

¹ Manucci, II, p. 30; Bernier.
² See p. 176.
medicine.¹ In the time of Mirzá Nathan, a large number of physicians, apart from the kaviraj class, are found practising in this province. The author of Baháristán says that his father Ihtimam Khan fell dangerously ill in Ghoraghat and many physicians were brought for his treatment.² It is known from Šubh-i-Šádiq of Muḥammad Šádiq that Mir ‘Alá al-Mulk, a profound scholar who excelled in medicine as well as in other sciences, lived in Jahangirnagar in the time of the author.³

Ghulám Husain Tabatabai has given the names of a large number of physicians flourishing during the period of the Bengal Nawábs. Hakím Táj al-Díín was a reputed physician of the time. The most celebrated physician of the time was however Hakím Hádí ‘Alí Khán, the court physician of Nawáb ‘Alivardí Khán. He was a Hashimité and a refugee from Išfahán. In the words of Ghulám Husain, Hakím Hádí ‘Alí Khán was “the seal and complement of the physicians, the reservoir of the physical and philosophical learning, the Galen of his time.” He further says, “It must be acknowledged that this Plato of his time (Hákím Hádí Ál) was endowed with a breath as healing as that of the Messiah and had not his equal in the art of administering remedies and restoring health.”⁴

An idea of the skill of the Muslim physicians in the treatment of medicine and healing may be obtained from the writings of the European travellers. Bernier, who was himself a physician of the seventeenth century European system, speaks highly of the Muslim physicians of this subcontinent and also refers to the ignorance of the Hindus in anatomy. His remark in this connection is worth quoting. He says that the Muslim physicians followed the rules of Avicenna and Averroes and were given to the practice of bleeding, taking the blood in large quantities from the place of inflammation, thus frequently subduing the

¹ Inscription, JASB, 1873, pp. 282-86.
² Baháristán (Tr.), p. 39. Islám Khán, governor of Bengal, was treated by a physician named Hákím Qudái. Baháristán, I, p. 256.
⁴ Siyár a-l-Mutasarrín (Tr.), II, p. 107.
disease at the commencement according to the advice of Galen. The Hindu physicians emphasized on abstinence from meat both in sickness and did bleeding only on extraordinary occasions. Bernier adds that the Hindu physicians "never open the body either of man or beast, and those in our household always ran away with horror whenever I opened a living goat or sheep to explain to my Agah the circulation of the blood, and showing him the vessels discovered by Pesquet, through which the chyle is conveyed to the right ventricle of the heart." According to Bernier, the Muslim physicians, although unacquainted with the European new discoveries in the knowledge of medicine, were nevertheless successful in the treatment of medicine and healing on the system of Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, the great philosopher physicians of the early Muslim period.

Bernier has made his observation about the Muslim physicians of India in general. So, it applies equally to the Muslim physicians of Bengal. They followed the system of Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd in the study of medicine and treatment of diseases. Adam noticed the study of medicine in the madrasahs of Bengal even in the early nineteenth century. He also observed that, apart from the Islamic subjects, the works of Euclid on geometry and of Ptolemy on astronomy, in translation, together with natural philosophy and treatises on metaphysics were used in some schools. Comparing the course with those of the tols, Adam remarked that the instruction in the former had a more comprehensive character and more liberal tendency than that pursued in the Bengali schools (tols) and the persons educated in the former possessed an intellectual superiority.

**Female Education:**

The Muslims favoured the education of their girls. The father regarded it as a religious duty to educate his daughters,

1. Avicenna is Ibn Sina and Averroes is Ibn Rushd.
so that they knew the fundamentals of religion, the reading of the *Qur'an* and the observance of the rites in a proper manner. The female children were initiated to letters, like the boys, with the *Bismillah Khāni* ceremony and they read in the same *maktabs*. Adam's Report also testifies to the education of the boys and girls in the same primary schools. It may be presumed from this that the female education was common at least up to a certain stage of the primary standard.

Secondary and higher education for girls was restricted by the *purdah* system in the society. Co-education was unknown in the secondary stage. There was also no regular system of secondary and higher education for girls. After primary standard, education of girls was practically confined to the higher class and upper middle class people, who could make special arrangement for the same. Emperor Akbar established a school in his palace at Fathpur-Sikri for the girls of the royal family and of the nobles. This suggests that the kings, nobles and well-to-do Muslims set up secondary schools to educate their daughters. It is found that during the Muslim rule the ladies of the upper class families were well educated and enlightened. In the Mughul society there were ladies who were distinguished for their literary attainments. Such are Gulbadan Begam, daughter of Bābur, Salima Sultāna, niece of Humāyun, Maham Anaga, a foster mother of Akbar, Nūr Jahān, wife of Jahāngīr, Muntāz Maḥjul, wife of Shāh Jahān, Jahān Ārā, daughter of Shāh Jahān, and Zebun Nisā, daughter of Aurangzeb.

The Mughul ladies received higher education at the palace schools or through tutoresses engaged for the purpose. Jahān Ārā and Raushan Ārā were taught by a highly educated and talented lady named Satiun Nisa, and Zebun Nisā by Ḥafizah Mariam, mother of Aurangzeb's favourite secretary, 'Ināyat Allāh Kashmūrī. Such female tutoresses are found in other Muslim kingdoms of this subcontinent. According to Firishta, in the harem of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Din, king of Malwa (1469-1500), there were fifteen thousand women and ** among

\[1\] N. N. Law—Promotion of Learning, etc., p. 202.
them were school mistresses, musicians, women to read prayers and persons of all professions and trades." Obviously the school mistresses were teachers to teach the females in the palace.

The educated and enlightened Bengali Sultāns, nobles and wealthy people also arranged for the palace schools and tutoresses to educate their daughters. Even in the early part of the nineteenth century, Adam noticed this practice of maintaining house-tutors in Pandua by the wealthy Muslims. This was indeed the continuance of the practice of the Muslim time. These maulavis, who were generally teachers of madrasahs, taught the daughters of the wealthy persons in their houses in their leisure time. In this way the Muslim girls received secondary and higher education. As this was a special arrangement, the number of girls receiving secondary and higher education was, therefore, very limited.

Because of the absence of regular facilities to higher education, the talent of the Muslim girls did not find proper scope for expression. In spite of this, we hear of girls excelling in learning and competing with men in literary attainments. The contemporary Bengali literature reflects this. According to Vijayagupta, the wife of a qādī of Hasanhati was well versed in the Hindu sastras. It is known from a Bengali work entitled Godai Malliker Puthi, also called Malliker Hazar Sawal (Thousand Questions of Mallika), that a Muslim girl named Mallika was vastly learned in the various branches of knowledge. She threw an open challenge that she would marry the person who could beat her in the literary debate. Many princes and learned men came to argue with her, but they were defeated. At last a saint-scholar, Abd al-Ḥallim Gadda answered her thousand questions and defeated her in the debate. Mallika married

1 Firishta, quoted by N. N. Law, p. 201.
2 In his Tāzuk (Elliott-Susil publ., p. 114), Emperor Jahāngīr also says that Sultan Ghīyāth al-Dīn of Malwa had 15,000 women in his harem. "He built a city which was inhabited only by women, and all arts and sciences were taught there."
her victor. Although it is just a story, it however represents the state of the society that such accomplished women were not rare among the Muslims of Bengal. The impression is confirmed from another contemporary Bengali work, *Saif al-Mulk Puthi*, of poet ‘Abd al-Hakim. The heroine of this love epic, Lalmati (Lal Banu), was accomplished in all learning.

**Education of Hindus**

The general education of the Muslims effected a revolutionary change in the attitude of the Hindus towards education. In the pre-Muslim Bengal education was confined mostly among the Brahmins and the lower class Hindus were denied the right to any kind of knowledge whatsoever. The Brahmins maintained the exclusive monopoly of the *sastras* (religious scriptures). So, when Chaitanya introduced equality of all castes and equal opportunities for knowledge to all, the Brahmins were mightily enraged against the Vaishnava teacher and complained to the Muslim rulers. They represented this as an irreligious act and said, “Chaitanya is destroying the Hindu religion by agitating the heretical people. The low class people are repeatedly chanting the name of Krishna (God). This sin (of irreligious work) will ruin Navadvip. It is true that in the Hindu *sastras*, God’s name is a great incantation, but its efficacy is lost, if everybody hear it.” The establishment of the Muslim rule liberated these unprivileged Hindus from the domination of the privileged class and also emancipated their intellect from the perpetual bondage. They had no longer to fear from the displeasure of the Brahmins by taking themselves to education under the Muslim rule which had opened equal opportunities to all classes of people, Muslims

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3 *Chaitanya, Charitamrita*, p. 125:

हिन्दुस्थान नाथ रैल गाथी पाण्डुलिपि
क्षेत्र नोत्तर नरुष गीता राज

ए पापे नवद्विप हाले उजर,
हिन्दू सास्त्र त्यहर नाम माचामान्त्री जानि;
शर्मालके सुनिले मान्त्रर बिर्ज्या हाँ हाँ।
and non-Muslims, high or low, for advancement, spiritual, material and intellectual. Thus education in the Muslim period permeated even the lower strata of the Hindu society and these once depressed and denied people found scope for acquiring learning and improving their life.

The lower class Hindus took to education and learning from the beginning of the Muslim rule in Bengal. It is gathered from a work, Manik Chandra Rajar Gan, of a Hindu poet that the Hadis and Sauds of the lower class Hindu society were educated enough to read and write documents in the Muslim period. Even the barbers and sweepers distinguished themselves in learning and literary attainments. Poet Govindadas, author of Karachi, was a blacksmith. Madhusudhan Napit, the poet of Nala-Damayanti, was a barber. A milkman, Ramnarain Gopa, composed Devayani Upakhyana and a washerman, poet Bhagyananta Dhupi, attained distinction by writing Harivansa. Srimadh Kait, Gangadas Sen, Kalicharan Gopa, Ram Prasad Deo, Ram Datt and many other persons of lower classes are found well educated and also compiling works in Bengali.

Even the lower class Hindu women became fairly educated. It is known from the Chandikavyas that the hunter women, Fullara, Khullana, Bipula and Rajdevi were well acquainted with the Hindu sastras. The wife of a gardener could write down the accounts.

The Hindu boys and girls were given primary education in the Pathsalas which were generally attached to rich men's houses or under some trees in the dwellings of the gurus (teachers). The guru would sit on a footstool and the boys and girls on their own mats. Sometimes a maktab and pathala were combined under one roof. The munshi (Muslim teacher) took classes in

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1 Manik Chandra Rājar Gūn, Banga Sahitya Parishaya, I, p. 72.
4 Dvij Hariram—Chandikavya, T. C. Dasgupta, p. 192.
5 Bharat Chandra—Vidyasundara Kavya, p. 13; J. Gupta—Rama-psasud, p. 68.
the morning and the guru taught the students in the afternoon. Wealthy Hindus provided for the maintenance of the pathsalas. Poet Vijayagupta, author of the work, Manasamangala, says that Chand Sadagar (Saudagar) bore the expenses of a big pathsala in which his six sons received education from a guru named Somai Pandit.2

The Hindu girls also read in the pathsalas. Mainamati, a princess, received education from a guru in the pathsala attached to her father's house.3 In Saradamangala, a seventeenth century Bengali poetical work, there is reference of five princesses reading in a pathsala, where many boys including a prince received education.4 This leaves the impression that there was female education and co-education in the primary stage. There are instances which show that the women in general could read and write. It is mentioned in Mukundoram’s Chandikavya that Lilavati wrote a clever letter to Lahana, wife of a merchant named Dhanapati, as if it was written by her merchant husband.5

There are references of highly educated women in the Hindu society. The washer-woman Rami, the beloved of poet Chandidas, composed verses in Bengali.6 Madhavi, a follower of Chaitanya, was well educated. She composed many beautiful verses. Chandravati, a daughter of poet Bansidas, was a gifted poetess of the sixteenth century Bengali literature.7 Khana was an accomplished woman; her wise sayings on astronomical observations have become household proverbs in Bengal.8 She lived in the early period of Muslim rule in this province. The Vidyasundara Kavya of Bharat Chandra reflects that there were women in the society who were accomplished in learning. Princess Vidyu, the heroine of this work, was so vastly learned

1 Vikrampurit Itihasha, pp. 330-33.
2 Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, p. 95.
5 Chandikavya, p. 138.
6 E. Haq—Muslim Banga Sahitya, p. 34.
7 Ibid, 37; D. C. Sen—Banga Bhasa, etc., p. 310.
that she defeated many princes and scholars in literary debates and her fame spread far and wide.¹

Primary education was spread over six years. It is known from the Ramayana of Kritivvas that the poet finished primary education at 11 and at 12 he went for higher education.²

**Education in tuls**: After the completion of the primary education, the Hindu boys, who desired to acquire higher education, generally entered the tuls, which were institutions of Sanskrit learning. The tuls were exclusively meant for the education of the Brahmin students. Because of wealth and influence, the rich merchants also could occasionally have their sons educated there. Bengali and Persian were also taught in some of the tuls.³ Six sastras, Kavya (poetry) Vyakaran (grammar), Jyotis (astronomy), Chhanda (rhetoric), Nirukta (Lexicon), and Darsan (philosophy) were studied there. Theology and philosophy formed an important course in the education of tuls.⁴ The study of Itihasha (history) was also introduced in the course of the tuls.⁵ The works of Kalidas, the commentaries on the medical work of Vijaya Raksita (Madhukosh), Amarkosh (the encyclopaedia of Amar Singh) and the commentaries of Panini’s grammar as well as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were the main subjects of study in these Sanskrit institutions.⁶

**Navadvip Centre**: There were several centres of Sanskrit learning in Bengal in the Muslim period. The most celebrated of these was Navadvip. It was a great seat of learning in the Hindu times. In the Muslim period it developed into a brilliant centre of the New School of Philosophy (Navya Nyaya) and attracted students from all parts of India. Some scholars have called it the Oxford of Bengal of that age. The renown of Navadvip as an illustrious seat of Sanskrit learning has been

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1 Bharat Chandra—Vidyasundara Kavya, p. 5.
2 Kritivvas—Ramayana, Introduction, p. 2:
   एकार नविष्टो द्वम सातन कार्तेव गन्न
    चेन काले पृवऽते गेलां उन्नात देश
5 Bansidas—Manasarangala, T. C. Dasgupta, p. 174.
6 Sarasadamangala, Banga Sahitya Parichaya, pt. II, p. 1392; T. C. Dasgupta, pp. 177-78.
best expressed in the *Chitanya Bhagavata* of the Vaishnava poet Vrindavandas. There were many *tols* and thousands of distinguished *pandits*, scholars and professors in Navadvip, who enriched it in the knowledge of the time.¹

Fullasri, the home village of poet Vijayagupta, in Barisal was a notable centre of Hindu learning in the sixteenth century. In his *Padmapurana*, Vijayagupta says, "There were Brahmmins, well versed in four Vedas, and vadyas, skilled in their medical profession, in Fullasri. The Kayasthas of the place are expert writers and other peoples are clever in their own callings."²

It appears from the contemporary Bengali literature that Satgaon was another centre of Sanskrit learning. According to Vipradas, there were many Hindu ascetics and monasteries in Saptagram and many Brahmin *pandits*, well-versed in *sastras*, lived in that place in the fifteenth century.³

There were other centres of Hindu learning, such as in Sylhet, Chittagong and Vishnupur (Bankura district). A large number of Sanskrit works were compiled in this period, an account of which will be given in a subsequent chapter.⁴ Some Muslim rulers patronised Sanskrit learning and a few Muslims are known to have learnt Sanskrit and written in this language. Thus Sanskrit learning made progress under the enlightened and liberal policy of the Muslim State. It appears that Brahmins, who lost their political monopoly, diverted their devotion to the cultivation of Sanskrit and hence great centres of learning developed in Navadvip and other places of Bengal.

The *guru* of the *tol* maintained himself with the income of the land which was ordinarily granted to him by the State. He did not charge any fee from his students. But they helped him

¹ Vrindavandas—*Chattano Bhagavato*, p. 11.
² Vijayagupta—*Padmapurana*, p. 4.
⁴ Chapter VI.
in his works and made presents after the completion of their
role career.\footnote{Ramayana (Krittivas)—Introduction, p. 2:}

There were various kinds of vocational education among the
Hindus. The medicine was the most important of them. A
class of Brahmans were given to the study of medicine and the
art of healing. They were called \textit{Vaidya} (the \textit{Vaid} of Northern
India) or \textit{Kaviraj} (physician). An idea of their life can be obtain-
ed from the sixteenth century Hindu poet Dvij Hariram, who
says, \textquote{Some read \textit{Chikitsadarp} (science of healing, medicine); some
read \textit{Nadan} (pathology), while some study the medical
commentaries of Vijaya Raksit. Some read Chakradatta (the
medical work of Chakradatta of eleventh century) and some read
applied chemistry.}\footnote{Dvij Hariram—\textit{Chandikavya, Banga Sahitya
Parichaya}, Pl.-I, p. 317.} The \textit{Vaidya} or \textit{Kaviraj} of this period was a
skilled physician. Mirzā Nathan writes that his father fell
dangerously ill and no Muslim physician could cure him. At
last a \textit{Kaviraj} cured him by treating with some herbs.\footnote{Bahāristān, I, p. 39.}

The study of astronomy and astrology was common among
a class of Brahmans who were called \textit{Daivagya}. Dvij Hariram's
writings reflect the life of these \textit{Daivagyas}. The poet says, \textquote{Some
read annotations of astrology known as \textit{Bhaswati-dipika} and some
study Zodiac. Some again draw figures of planets after consult-
ing the work of \textit{Surya-Sidhanta}. Others again discuss the
forecast of the almanac (\textit{panjika}) of the new year, while some
carefully calculate the true position of a planetary body in the
Zodiac. Some of them draw the horoscope of a boy they examine palms of the barren women or women bereft of
children and advise them to come with presents of money and
rice.}\footnote{Banga Sahitya Parichaya, vol. I, p. 316.}

\textbf{Position of teacher:} The teacher occupied a respectable
position in the society. The teacher of the primary school held
a place of special importance in the social and cultural life of
the village. The parents entrusted their children to the \textit{maulavi}
or the guru and felt themselves relieved of their anxiety for the education of their children. Daulat Wazir Bahram's epic work Laila-Majnun gives expression to this feeling.1 The students also had great respect and attachment for their teacher and served him with great devotion.2

The teacher was paid quite handsomely by the State and the society. The teachers of the madrasahs and other educational institutions were provided for their subsistence from the rent-free endowments which were granted to every institution either by the State or by some well-to-do Muslims. Most of the tols also enjoyed land-grants from some source or the other. The teachers of the maktabas and pathsalas were better off than their counterparts of these days. The well-to-do Muslims could afford to pay the maulaw or the munshi liberally for the education of their children. He was generally paid in crops, vegetables and other necessaries of life. The devoted students helped him in his domestic work. The teacher was also the imam or the guide of the Muslims of the village in their rituals, ceremonies and festivities. He conducted such ceremonies as marriage, etc. For this he used to get gifts from the people.3 The students also would make presents to him after the successful completion of the primary education.4

The teacher of a primary school took all pains to educate his students. Irregularity in attendance, negligence in studies, failure to master the lesson, impertinence and wickedness on the part of the students, were visited with various sorts of corporal punishment. A seventeenth century Bengali poet Dayamaya says, “If the student failed to learn his lesson, then the guru would tie him with a rope and sit on his chest. There were also caning and various other kinds of punishment for

1 Daulat Wazir Bahram—Laila-Majnun, p.18.
irregular and naughty students.” Indeed the punishment in the maktabs and pathsalas was severe and the teacher followed the maxim, “to spare the rod is to spoil the child.” Adam, in his Education Report in 1835-38 A. D., recorded the various methods of punishment that obtained in the primary schools of Bengal.

**Writing materials:** The beginners in the primary school would practise writing on sand or dust. Then they would try writing with a chalk on the floor. In the next stage, the students wrote on the palmyra leaf, banana leaf and bark of a bhurjya tree. Pieces of straw or reed, the twigs of bamboo, quills of birds, peacocks and geese were used as pens. Slate, pencil and blackboard were unknown. The students sat on the floor or on mats of their own.

Paper was first introduced in Bengal in the early Muslim period. It was tulat kaghaz or a stained paper dressed with sulphate of arsenic. The Chinese envoy and writer Mahuan refers

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1 Dayamaya—Saradamangala, quoted in Banga Sahitya Purichaya, pp. 1384-85:

2 Adam’s Report, quoted by T. C. Dasgupta, p. 167. Varieties of punishment:

   (a) Making a triangle of the body of the victim; it was called tribhangi.

   (b) Body of the victim was reduced to crawling with one hand raised up high way; it was termed narugopal.

   (c) Facing the sun; it was known as Surjyamukh.

   (d) Scratching forehead with the sharp point of a pady; it was called kapala chitra.

There were other methods of punishment such as ant-bite, touching of bichulti (the leaves that cause itching in the body when touched).

to the use of paper by the Bengalis. He writes, "They manufacture a white paper from the bark of a tree which is smooth and glossy like a deer's skin."¹ In Govinda Chandra Rajar Gan, there is reference of paper as writing material.² Ordinarily paper was used for writing books, documents, letters and for such other important purposes.

The students made their own ink. It was made of haritaki (yellow myrabolan) badaha (balaric myrabolan) and the soot of the country-made lamp. This ink would serve an incredibly long period, even a few centuries. A seventeenth century poet Janardhan has verified the preparation of the best type of ink.³ Indeed the ink prepared in this method looks fresh, as it appears from writings, even after a lapse of several centuries.

It is evident from the above discussion that the Muslims of Bengal made a remarkable contribution to learning and education. The Muslim shalikhs and scholars are entitled to a high place in the diffusion and development of Islamic learning and Muslim feeling in this subcontinent. They produced valuable works in Arabic, Persian and Islamic knowledge which were highly prized all over India. The knowledge that radiated from the intellectual centres of Bengal attracted scholars and pupils from far and wide. As has been referred earlier, many scholars and divines of other parts of India received their knowledge from the distinguished sages of Bengal.

¹ Mahuan's Accounts ; extracts of translation in N. K. Bhattasali's Coins, etc., p. 171.
³ Bengali Poetik Punar Vivahana, vol. I, Pt. III, 1320 B.S., p. 105:

Tin trifala simul chhara,
Chhag dugdhe dia tela;
Loha dia lahai ghashi,
Mashi bale akat basi.

"Myrabolan's tree, and the skin of the silk-cotton tree, mixing tela fruit in goat's milk, rub lac with iron and the ink (thus made) claims indelibility."²

Tela (telakha) is a kind of wild fruit, which when ripens, becomes very red. It is also called bimba. In the Bengali literature, the lips of beautiful maidens are compared with bimba (as red and pleasing as the ripe bimba fruit).
It is also noteworthy that the Muslim scholars of Bengal had a distinguished share in the intellectual life of Northern India. The great Mahdavi teacher Shaikh 'Alâî, a vastly learned man of the first half of the sixteenth century, was a Bengali settled in Bayana. He was so well-versed in the knowledge of the Qur'ân, the Ḥadîth, jurisprudence and in other branches of Islamic learning that he defeated in religious and philosophical debate the renowned 'ulema of Northern India, including Maulânâ 'Abd Allâh Sulțânpurî, who was regarded as the most distinguished scholar of the time and was the Sadr-i-Sudûr and Shaikh al-Islâm of the Sâr empire. The father of Shaikh 'Alâî Shaikh Hasan and uncle Shaikh Naṣr Allâh, who first migrated from Bengal to Bayana, were celebrated for their learning. Shaikh 'Alâî received his education from his father. These three Bengali scholars devoted their life to teaching and preaching in Bayana, where they had settled down permanently.¹

The learning and education of the period of Muslim rule developed the religious and cultural life of Bengal in various ways. As a result, there was an unprecedented spiritual and intellectual awakening in the country. Education permeated all the strata of the Bengali society. There was also emancipation of the intellect of the lower class Hindus from the age-long social bondage, because of the enlightened Muslim rule and their liberal educational system. Apart from these, the Muslims introduced many institutions and agencies which prepared the way for the rapid promotion and diffusion of education in Bengal. They first introduced the study of history as a science and brought paper as writing material. Bengal is indebted to the Muslims for the system of circulation of books through copying. In appreciating the services of the Muslims to knowledge and culture, Sir Jadunath Sarkar observes, "We owe to the Mohammedan influence the practice of diffusing knowledge by the copying and circulation of books, while the early Hindu writers as a general rule loved to make a secret of their production."²

¹ Badâuni, I, p. 395.
² J. N. Sarkar—India through the Ages, p. 52.
CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENT OF BANGALA (BENGALI)

Impact of Muslim conquest: The Muslim contribution to the development of the Bengali language and literature was more significant and substantial than that of the Hindus. As has been pointed out earlier, the Muslim rule for the first time supplied the basis for the growth of Bangala by integrating the Bengali-speaking territories and peoples into one politico-linguistic union. Because of this remarkable integration, the Bengali peoples came to the limelight of history and attained distinction in political, cultural as well as literary life. Had there been no Muslim rule in this province, the names Bangala, and Bangali would not have appeared in history and the Bangala language would have languished for ages and been deprived of the great position it now occupies, on account of the contemptuous indifference of the Brahmin and Sanskrit dominated Hindu State and society of Gaur (North and West Bengal) towards it. Indeed, the Muslims are rightly entitled to the distinguished position of the founder not only of the Bengali political union but of the Bengali linguistic and cultural platform as well.

The Muslim conquest of Bengal brought about revolutionary changes in the social and cultural life of the province. The democratic force of Islam produced momentous effects in the domain of education and knowledge as well. The effect was particularly profound in the field of the Bengali language and literature. In the Hindu period, the Brahmin had the monopoly of education as well as of religion and Sanskrit, which was the language of religion, education and culture, enjoyed the exclusive privilege of the court language. The vast mass of the people were denied the right to education and their dialect, Bangala,

1 See Chapter I, p. 2.
was neglected and despised.\footnote{The Brahmans cursed the Bengali literature saying, "The man, who hears the eighteen Punnas and the Ramayana in the Vernacular, shall go to the Raurava Hell."} The Muslim rule broke the monopoly of the Brahmans and Sanskrit and opened facilities for education to all and also offered Bangala a place of respectability at the court and society. It was because of this new facility that the Kayasthas could distinguish themselves in literary and intellectual field and occupy a position of importance and influence in the State and society of the time.

Under the Muslim rule, the non-Brahmins were no longer under the domination of the Brahmans. Hence these Hindus, who had hitherto no access to the religious scriptures in Sanskrit, could now, without fear of the damnation of the Brahmans, read them and understand their religious duties themselves. This enabled them to compile books even in religious subjects. It was because of the liberalising spirit of the Muslims that the Hindu religious works, such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, were translated into the Bengali language. This allowed the Hindus in general including the lower classes to read their sacred works and to be acquainted with their religion and mythology.

Specially noteworthy is that the Muslim rule opened the door of education and knowledge to the lower class Hindus. Being thus given the right to education, these hitherto denied Hindus could now acquire knowledge of all kinds and show their talent in various walks of life. So the barber, sweeper, blacksmith and other Hindus of lower classes showed their talent as poets and contributed to the progress of Bangala.

It is to be noted that the new spirit which the Muslims introduced in Bengal produced great religio-social upheavals, such as the Vaishnavism of Sri-Chaitanya, the Dharma Cult and the Satyapir Cult, in the Hindu society. These liberal movements, of which an account will be given in a subsequent chapter, liberated the human intellect from the age-long bondage of the priestly class and stimulated an unprecedented

\footnote{See Dr. M. Shahidulla—The Influence of Urdu-Hindi on Bengali Language and Literature, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, vol VII, pt. 1, p. 1.}
literary activity. The large volumes of the Vaishnava works, the Dharma Cult poems, the Mangala kavyas and Satyapir Panchalis, which breathe the liberal force of the Muslim rule, have remarkably enriched the Bengali literature. The Muslim rule thus shares the credit of stimulating the progress of Bangala in this sphere, for having set in motion the religio-intellectual force in the social life of Bengal.

Patronage of Muslim rulers.—The Muslim rulers first accorded a dignified status in the State and society to the Bengali language and literature. They invited the despised Bengali language to their court and extended liberal patronage to the Bengali poets and men of letters. Their patronage as well the interest of the Muslim poets in Bengali and their contribution saved this neglected language from being destroyed under the pressure of the Brahmanical Sanskrit. The Muslims thus placed Bangala well on the road to progress and prosperity. Dr. D. C. Sen has highly appreciated the services of the Muslim rulers to the cause of the Bengali literature and remarks that Bengali would scarcely have got an opportunity to find its way to the courts of the kings, if the Hindu kings had continued to enjoy independence. The patronage and encouragement thus given by the Muslim rulers and nobles inspired the Hindu chiefs and zamindârs to extend their patronage to the Bengali poets.¹

On the eve of the Muslim conquest, Bengali was in its primitive stage and, to be more precise, it was in the embryo, without any definite form or shape of the future birth. It was cultivated only by a few Buddhists whose compositions are named Caryapadas (mystic songs), written in a dialect known as the Gauria Prakrit. Gauria Prakrit is considered to be the product of the colloquial language of the Aryans with the local people.² Composed in a peculiar style and conveying mysterious meaning, which were intelligible only to the Buddhist mystics, the Caryapadas are however the precursor of the Bengali language and

¹ D. C. Sen—Banga Bhâsa O Sahitya, pp. 73-75.
² E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 7.
literature. Under the liberal atmosphere, sympathetic attitude and fostering care of the Muslim rule, this embryo of the language, which would otherwise have perished, grew and was in time born with the definite form and shape of Bangala.

It is striking that the ruling and aristocratic Muslims, who had their own rich languages, encouraged and patronised Bengali, the language of the subject peoples. The answer to this is to be sought in the liberalism and democratic spirit of Islam and the enlightenment and culture of the Muslim rulers. Islam has accorded equal opportunities to all peoples and the Muslim rulers lived up to this ideal of their religion.

The Muslims have appreciated the knowledge and learning of other people and have preserved the literary and cultural institutions of the subject peoples everywhere. So the liberal and enlightened Muslim rule has provided for the growth of the institution of the Bengali language undisturbed from any quarter. Moreover, the Muslim rulers and the thousands of immigrant Muslims settled down in Bengal. They adopted Bengal as their home and identified themselves with the people of the soil. Bengali became as much their language as that of the original people of the land. As has been explained earlier, there was also the political consideration which actuated the Muslim rulers to identify themselves with the local people and to adopt Bengali as their language. The ruling Muslims also perceived the necessity of being acquainted with the language and culture of the vast mass of the people in their scheme of establishing an efficient and stable government. Bengali was the language through which they could know the mind of the local people and exchange their ideas with them.

The teaching and preaching of Islam to the common people gave impetus to the Bengali language. The Sufis and mystics preached the religion in the local language, the dialect of the people, because it was through this medium that they could
come in direct contact with them. Many literate Muslims felt that the converted Muslims in general did not understand Arabic and Persian and hence they were not properly acquainted with the teachings of Islam. They thought it their duty to write books appertaining to Islamic sociology and religion in Bengali, so that the common Muslims might understand them and regulate their life in accordance with the teachings of their religion. This feeling induced a few poets and learned men to compose works in the language of the people. Moreover, the Muslims whose mother-tongue was Bengali was naturally interested in its promotion. Thus the liberal and enlightened spirit of Islam and of Muslim rule as well as political, religious and cultural considerations accounted for the interest of the Muslim rulers, nobles and the Muslims in general in the progress of the Bengali language and literature.

The patronage of the Muslim rulers to the poets stimulated the rapid development of the Bengali language and literature. Sultan Ghiyāth al-Din A'zam Shāh (1389-1409 A.D.), who was famed for his learning and enlightenment and also for appreciating the literary and intellectual attainments of others, encouraged the growth of Bengali. Under his patronage, a talented Muslim poet Shāh Muhammad Saghir composed his remarkable epic work Yusuf-Zolekha. This religious as well as romantic epic effected a revolution in the Bengali literature, which was now greatly enriched with the addition of the religious stories of Islam and the introduction of the romantic tales as the new theme for the Bengali poets.

In the Muslim period poet Krittivas composed the Bengali version of the Ramayana under the patronage of a ruler of Gaur. The name of the ruler has not been mentioned. From the description of the court of the king of Gaur and the existence of Muslim influence there, a Hindu courtier bearing the title of Khan, it appears that Krittivas wrote his work at the order of

1 In other parts of India also the sufi and mystics preached religion in local dialect, the language of the people.

See Dr. A. Haq—Urdu ki nashr wa numa men Sūfīn-il-Kiram ka kam.
Raja Kans.\(^1\) Sultan Shams al-Din Yusuf Shah (1474-1481 A.D.) was a great patron of the Bengali poets. He engaged Maladhar Basu in rendering the Bhagavada into Bengali and conferred the title of Gunaraj Khān on the poet. The Srikrishnavijaya Kavya of Maladhar Basu bears out this fact.\(^2\)

Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Husain Shah (1493-1517) was the most benevolent patron of the Bengali poets and was keenly interested in the promotion of the Bengali literature. His amirs and governors followed the noble example of their royal master in encouraging the literary talent of Bengal. As a result of this, Bengali intellectual and literary genius reached its high watermark and there was an unprecedented progress of the Bengali literature. The enlightened and liberal atmosphere of the reign of Husain Shāh was conducive to the intellectual activities and literary competition. Being thus favoured in all respects, the Bengali poets produced the masterpieces of their composition and made the reign of their patron the ‘Golden Age’ of the Bengali literature. In their works, the poets sang the praise of their great benefactor and recognised with gratitude their indebtedness to the large-hearted patronage of this illustrious Muslim Sultan of Bengal. Joshoraj Khān, who composed Srikrishnavijaya, was an officer in his Court.\(^3\) Vijayagupta and Vipradas wrote their Manasamangala and Manasavijaya epics in the reign of Husain Shāh. Vijayagupta in particular has spoken eloquently of the great power and benevolence of the Sultan, as a result of which the people lived in perfect peace and happiness in his kingdom.\(^4\)

Husain Shāh’s commander and governor of Chittagong, Parāgal Khān, took lively interest in the discussion of the Hindu

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   Bāmte Kedar Khān dāhine Narayan,
   Patramitra saha Raja paribhāse mana.
2. E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 35, Maladhar Basu’s son received the title of Sattraj Khān from the Sultan.
   Shāh Husan jagat bhusan sei ahi ras jane
   Pancha Gaurēsva, bhuge purandar, bhane Joshoraj Khāne.
religion and philosophy at his court. This inspired him to get the *Mahabharata* translated into Bengali, so that the common people might understand it. He entrusted the work to his court poet Kavindra Paramesvards, who thus translated a substantial portion of this great religious work of the Hundus. The poet has highly appreciated the benevolence and liberal patronage of Parāgal Khān.1 Parāgal Khān’s son and successor in the governorship of Chittagong, Chhuti Khān, was an enlightened and generous patron of the poets and men of letters, like his father. At his order his court-poet Srikar Nandi translated a large part of the remaining portion of the *Mahabharata* into Bengali. The writings of the poet reveal this fact.2

The successors Husain Shāh maintained the policy of generous patronage to the poets of the Bengali literature. While yet a prince, Nuṣrat Shāh had the *Mahabharata* translated into Bengali by Kavindra Paramesvards, a poet other than the one at the court of Parāgal Khān, governor of Chittagong. The introduction of the translated *Mahabharata* supplies this evidence.3 A poet named Kavishekhar, also known as Vidyapati, was in the service of Husain Shāh and Nuṣrat Shāh (1519-32 A.D.). Kavishekhar has paid glowing tribute to Sultan Nuṣrat Shāh in his composition.4 Nuṣrat Shāh’s son Fīrūz Shāh (1532-33) encouraged the Bengali poets. Sridhar, a talented Hindu poet, received his favour and composed *Vidyasundara*, a romantic epic under his patronage.5

By their enlightened patronage, the Muslim rulers made significant contribution to the development of the Bengali litera-

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1 S. K. Sen—*Bangala Sahityer Itihasha*, I, p. 225:
Laskar Parāgal Khān guner nidhān
Astadash Bhārathe zāhār abadhān
Dāne kalpaturu se ze mahagunashāli
Kutuhale karailā Bhārat-Pāncāhāli.

2 Ibid, p. 226:
Tāhān ādesh mānya mathe aropiā
Srikar Nandie Kahe Panchali rachiā.

3 D. C. Sen—*Banga Bhasa O Sahitya*, p. 82:
Shrijukta nāik se ze Nuṣrat Khān
Rachaila Pāncāhāli guner nidān.

4 S. K. Sen—*Bangala Sahityer Itihasha*, p. 73.

5 Ibid, p. 73.
ture. It is interesting to note that the Muslim rulers were keenly interested in the religious knowledge of the Hindus and they were the first to popularise the teachings of their scriptures among the Hindus in general by providing for the translation of the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Bhagavada into Bengali. The Hindu sastras were discussed in the courts of the Muslim rulers and governors. This really helped in bringing about a better social and cultural understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims and in building a common cultural platform of the two communities of Bengal.

**Contribution of Muslim Poets:**

*Muslim Traditions*: Significant was also the contribution of the Muslim poets to the development of the Bengali literature. Their contribution was both quantitative and qualitative. It enriched Bengali substantially and greatly widened its horizon by the introduction of new ideas and elements in theme, form and language. The Muslim poets added the Islamic tradition with its ideal of universalism and humanism to the Bengali literature. They wrote on purely religious, religio-historical, religio-romantic and such other subjects relating to Islam and the Muslim heroes. This naturally created a new and illuminating Muslim tradition in the Bengali literature which, apart from the distinct contribution of its own, stimulated the progress of the Hindu tradition in Bengal. In the chapter on the 'Development of Learning' references have been made of the Bengali works of the Muslim poets on the Islamic topics. These formed the nucleus with which was built the great structure of the Islamic tradition in Bengali. It has been rightly observed that the Bengali literature in the Muslim period had three different traditions: the Buddhist, the Hindu and the Muslim.¹

The Buddhist tradition, which was just a relic of the old Bengali, was a spent force under the pressure of the Brahmanical

¹ See S. A. Ashraf—*Muslim Traditions in Bengali Literature*, p. 2.
Hinduism on the eve of the Muslim rule in Bengal. Because of this Brahmanical tyranny, the Buddhists welcomed the Muslim rule as a deliverance and this feeling is reflected in such poems as Niranjaner Rukhsa. While the Muslim tradition was being created, the Hindu tradition was in its formative stage. The Hindu tradition was essentially mythological, concerned only with deities and supernatural beings. It was as such unrealistic and narrow in its scope and jurisdiction.

Besides the religious or Islamic tradition, the Muslim poets brought in the humanistic as well as romantic elements in the Bengali literature. They were concerned with human beings, their romance, exploits and adventures, their feeling, passions and prejudices. Though sometimes imaginery, the heroes and heroines of the Muslim poets were men and women of this visible world and their feelings and performances were those of men of this earth. Thus, they gave a touch of reality to the literature. This realistic element and the romantic love stories are the most outstanding contribution of the Muslim poets to the Bengali literature. These themes and ideas influenced the Hindu poets, who in course of time appreciated and adopted them in their compilations. With the addition of these expansive subject matters, there was also a great expansion of the jurisdiction of the Bengali literature. It is to be noted that Shāh Muḥammad Saghir's Yūsuf-Zolekhā is the first romantic epic and humanistic literature in Bengali.1 Hence it occupies a position of momentous importance in the history of the Bengali literature. Indeed, it set in motion a gigantic revolution in the thematic tradition. Many other Muslim poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries composed love epics. The most distinguished of them are Saribid Khān, the author of Hanifa O Kairā-Pari, Dona Ghāzi, the composer of Saif al-Mulk, and Daulat Wazīr Bahram Khān, the talented poet of Laila-Majnūn.2

The Muslim poets drew their inspiration from the romantic tales of the prosperous Arabic and Persian literatures and thus

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1 See E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, pp. 108 and 116.
immensely enriched the infant Bengali literature with their wealth of themes and ideas. They also highly elevated the moral tone of the Bengali literature and raised it to a status of dignity and respectability. They scrupulously maintained the morality and chastity of their heroes and heroines in their love episodes and emphasised love as a human virtue, a glorification of life and purification of mind. In his love epic, the poet Daulat Wazir Bahram promoted the love of his hero for the heroine to suffistic love, a love for his ego personified in the beloved. This was indeed a new phenomenon in the Bengali literature, which under the Hindu tradition lacked the ethical values of life, glorifying the unholy love of the holy gods and goddesses.

It is noteworthy that the Muslim poets were the forerunner of the historical literature in Bengali. They composed Vijaya Kavyas (victory epics) based on partly historical but largely imaginative, romantic and miraculous exploits of the Holy Prophet, his companions and the early heroes of Islam. These were primarily intended to popularise Islam and create a Muslim feeling illustrating the superiority of the Muslims over the non-Muslims. These were also to act as a safe-guard against the prevalence of irreligious and undesirable ideas of the Hindus in the Muslim society. Whatever might have been the historical values of the Vijaya Kavyas, they were however believed as true by the people in general of the Muslims and the Hindus. Zain al-Din, a court-poet of Sultan Yusuf Shah (1474-81 A.D.), first composed Vijaya Karya on the extraordinary and miraculous achievements of the Prophet and he named it Rasul Vijaya. He claims to have drawn materials for his composition from a Kitab (book), most probably a Persian work. Following Zain al-Din, other Muslim poets wrote Rasul Vijaya epic and popularised compositions in historical subjects.

A remarkable work of this type of historical composition was the Ghazi-Vijaya epic of Shaikh Faid Allah. He wrote his work on the career of the great warrior-saint Shaikh Isma'il Ghazi,

1 See S. A. Ashraf—Muslim traditions in Bengali, p. 16.
2 See E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 106.
the distinguished general of Sūltān Bārbak Shāh. Though not strictly historical, Ghazī-Vijaya has its basis principally on a historical person and fact. The Muslim poets did not confine their historical compositions to writing only on Muslim heroes or worthies. Shaikh Faid Allāh wrote Goraksha-Vijaya on the teachings and miraculous activities of the great Siddhyaacharya (Buddhist ascetic) Gorakshanath. Goraksha-Vijaya is considered as a valuable piece of the Bengali literature. It is noteworthy that the Muslim poets preserved the teachings and traditions of the Nath Cult and Nath gurus, to which the Hindus were indifferent. They thus produced a rich literature in this field. These Vijaya-Kavyas of the Muslim poets gave a new turn to the Bengali literature and stimulated it to progress.

The Muslim poets are entitled to the credit of introducing mystic literature in Bengali. In imitation of the Ghazaliyāt of the Persian sufi poets, such as Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and others, they produced mystic verses known as Padavallis. The Padavallis of the Bengali Muslim poets are in essence and form the masnavīs of the poets of the Persian literature. Chand Qāḍī, a qāḍī of Navadviप में सुल्तान ‘Alā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh, was the first illustrious poet of this new mystic composition in the Bengali literature. The Padavallis of the Muslim and Hindu poets occupied a very important position in the growth of Bengali.

The Muslim poets also added another great theme in the Bengali literature and this was the story and tradition of the Satyapīr. The myth of Satyapīr originated as a result of the influence of the Muslim pirs on the Hindu society. Fascinated

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1 E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 112.
2 Gorakshanath was born in Jalandhar in the Punjab in the eleventh century and was a disciple of Minanath, a founder of the Nath religious order. Minanath was born in Backerganj in the tenth century. See D. C. Sen—Bangla Bhāsa O Saḥitya, p. 38.
4 Siddhyaacharya is a great master who has gone through all the eight stages of yoga practices and contemplations and attained siddhi and perfection.
See Samkhshipta Hindi Sahda, Sagar sar, Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Kasi.
4 E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, pp. 70 and 113.
by the extraordinary spiritualism and humanitarianism of the Muslim saints, the Hindus regarded them as superhuman personalities and offered prayers to them invoking their blessings. This devotion of the Hindus to Muslim pirs or saints produced Satyapîr cult. Shaikh Faid Allâh was the first Bengali poet to compose verses on the Satyapîr. These were written between 1545 to 1575 A. D.¹ Substantial contribution was made afterwards both by the Muslim and Hindu poets on the subject of Satyapîr, so that it became one of most popular literatures in the Bengali society from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

Noteworthy also is the Muslim contribution to the music literature of Bengali. The Râgmaîa of poet Faid Allâh is the first work on music in the Bengali literature. So, this Muslim poet gets the credit of introducing a new theme and opening a virgin field to the poets to enrich Bengali. The Muslims also set in motion the theme of astronomy and astrology in the Bengali literature. The Sâ'atnâma and Nitisâstra-varta of poet Mu'izzâmîl illustrate this fact.²

No less important than the thematic tradition is the linguistic tradition introduced by the Muslims in the Bengali literature. The Muslim poets enriched the Bengali language and infused an extraordinary vitality to it by bringing in many words, phrases and idioms from the prosperous Arabic and Persian languages. In describing Muslim subjects, the use of the Arabic and Persian words and idioms in their appropriate context was but natural for the Muslim poets, in order to maintain the decorum of their language and convey the comprehensive significance of their themes. The Muslims used such names and words as Allâh, Khodâ, Nabi, Paigambar, the Qur'ân, Kitâb (book), 'îllîm (learned), fâdîl (accomplished) Rasul-e-Khoda, Noor-e-Mu'âammadi, sawâl (question), jawâb (answer), tâj (cap), sawâr (rider), sawâb (meritorious act), gunâ (sin), mut'af (pardon), nek (good), bâdi (bad), etc.

¹ Ibid, p. 113.
² E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, pp. 66 and 115.
A few verses of a Muslim poet named Afdal 'Ali, who enjoyed the patronage of Prince Firuz Shah, son of Nasrat Shah (1519-32 A. D. will illustrate the linguistic tradition of the Muslims in Bengali. In his Nasihatnama, Afdal 'Ali says:

\[ Ghayebi martabā prabhu tahane ze dilā. \\
\[ Ghayebir bhed zata kahite lagilā. \\
\[ Ghayebi faqir bali desh deshantar. \\
\[ Tajbīz karila fādīler pashe niyā. \\
\[ Upahasya kare buli munāfiqan. \\
\[ Ayāt Ḥadīth lekhīāi tekāran. \\
\[ Khoāb balia Shāha Rustame kahila. \\
\[ Walīgan pade pranāmīe punipuni. \\
\[ Bhave dubi zebā pare chhare Kusārāni. \\
\[ Khoāb ze Nasihatnāma tar nam.\]

In Saribid Khan's Rasūl-vijaya also is found the application of the forceful linguistic tradition of the Muslims. The poet writes:

\[ Rājputra amātya wazir mantri adi, \\
\[ Prati, ghare ghare save karilenta sādi.\]

This linguistic tradition has been followed and developed by all the Muslim poets and it rose to the zenith of its prosperity in the time of the celebrated poet Alaol.

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1 Extract from E. Haq's Muslim Bangala Sahitya, pp. 73-75.  
"God has given him the honours of access to the secret knowledge. He began to interpret the secrets. His fame as a mystic spread far and wide. He sought the help of the accomplished persons to inquire into the dreams. The hypocrites laughed at this. So, I have written verses (as proof) from the Ḥadīth. Shāhā Rustam spoke of dream, etc."

2 Quoted from E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 71:  
"The Prince, courtier, wazir, ministers and others married in every house."
Because of its wealth of resources, vigour and vitality, the linguistic tradition of the Muslims greatly influenced the Hindus in their literary compositions. Indeed, in course of time, the Arabic and Persian words and idioms have become so essential a part of the Bengali literature that even the orthodox Hindu poets could not avoid using them, as they did not find suitable substitute to these appropriate and forceful vocabularies.

A few typical illustrations may be produced to prove this contention. In his Manasamangala,\(^1\) Vijayagupta says:

“Pāte pāte likhe wasil (wuṣūl) bāqi.”

“In page after page, they write of collections and arrears.”

“Chānder nafar Dhanā jāne nānā fandi,
Apane diāchhe as, irām amader divā khāṣā.”

“Dhana, an attendant of Chand, is quite at home in devising tricks: ‘You have held before us hope, you will give us special rewards’.”

Malime (Mu‘allim) dākīā bale gun saudāgar
Sei din sei khāne rahila lashkar.

“The pilot spoke to the talented merchant, they should cast anchor there on that day.”

Taqāi nāme mulā kitāb bhala jāne
Qādír mezbān (mihmān) haile age tāre āne
Kachhā khulia mulā farmāi anek.

“A mulā (learned man) named Taqi, knew well the religious books, If the qādī arranged for a feast, the mulā is called before anyone else. The mulā tells many things of religion, by loosening the skirt of his cloth.”

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\(^1\) Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, pp. 112 and 124-31.
Qādi bale āre betā bhuter ghulām.
Pīr thakite ken bhutera salām.
Qādi bale akhīnaq (akhīnaq) jawāb deo kene.

"The Qādi said: 'you slave of the demon, why do you have regard for (are afraid of) demon when there is religious preceptor?' The Qādi called the man a fool and forbade him to argue."

Sattar chalilā Qādi mahaler bhitar
Ai sab katha giā kahila Bibir gučhar.¹

"The Qādi immediately went to the inner apartment and told these to his wife."

The Vaishnava poet Krishnasas Kaviraj writes:
Hiranyadas mulk nila muqta' kariā."²

Hiranyadas received estate by way of muqta' (on a contract to pay a stipulated amount of money as revenue to the State)."

In his Chandikavya, Mukundaram writes:
"Bāri bāri guni diā karze farāq haiā
Khāris kariva bārighar."³

Bharu Datt requests the hunter-king Kalaketu to appoint him as his agent, assuring that he would prove a very competent collector of revenues for him. He says, "I shall make house to house collection, taking stock of the properties of the subjects. Thus they will be in deep debt. Then I shall oust them from their houses and everything." After this new ryots would be settled. This method would increase the wealth of Kalaketu.

A quotation from Bansibadan's Manasamangala illustrates the Muslim linguistic influence.

1 Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, pp. 58-61.
2 Krishnasas Kaviraj—Chattanya Charitamrita, p. 498.
Paijāmā, nimā, topī pari kutibandha
Hasan Saider (Saïyd) saje sat farzand.
Akhwānd Hasan Qādī haila agūnān,
Talip (qālib) murshide tar dharise zogān.
Kātā tāqīa mathe kātā ze ijār.
Lakhirajī Qādī chale agāra hazār.¹

"The seven sons of Hasan got ready with trousers, short shirt, cap and belt on. The preacher and Hasan Qādī proceeded ahead. The followers of the preceptor accompanied them. . . . With a special kind of cap on head and long breaches on the person the Qādī, the holder of rent-free land, advanced with a following of eleven thousands."

Vipradas has made an extensive use of the Arabic and Persian words in his Manasavijaya.²

"Hāsan hukm pāi Sadia ghulām dhāi
Zethai majlis kare Qādī.
Tathā rujā sarvajane naskar (laskar) paidal sane,
Save pāhlwānī mard ghāzi.
Qādī, mulla, Khwājagan majlise sarvajana
shunīā atek haqiqata;"

"At the order of Hasan, the slave named Sadia hurried to the place where the Qādī held the meeting. All were in discussion there with soldiers and retinues. All of them were brave warriors. The Qādī, mulla, eunuchs and others present in the meeting heard this state of affairs."

Apart from the new traditions in themes and languages, the Muslim poets also introduced Islamic tradition in form, which was different from that of the Hindu poets. The Hindus began their compositions with an invocation to Saraswati, the Muse of poetry and fine arts, and to other gods and goddesses. The Muslims, on the other hand, followed the practice of beginning

¹ Bansibadan—Manasamangala, pp. 216-18 and 258.
their epics of all kinds with Hamd and Na't, the praise of God and of the Prophet respectively. This is evident from their compositions. Even when they wrote on Hindu themes and the hero or heroine of their epics were Hindus, they maintained this tradition. Alaoš's Padmavati and Daulat Qādi's Sati-Moīna illustrate this contention.  

The Muslims thus introduced a very influential tradition in themes, language and forms which was of momentous importance in the development of the Bengali literature. This Muslim tradition enriched the Bengali language in all respects and it held sway throughout the period of the Muslim rule in Bengal. Even for some generations after the loss of the political sovereignty to the East India Company, this tradition dominated the Bengali literature and the composition of the great Hindu poets, such as Bharat Chandra, illustrates this fact. In Bharat Chandra's epic Vidyasundara, there is great influence of the linguistic tradition of the Muslims.

It is also to be noted that the contribution of the Muslim poets was not confined to the thematic, linguistic and formal traditions. They are entitled to the credit of being the pioneers in composing romantic epics on the local setting and with the heroes and heroines of their own land. Muḥammad Kabīr, the author of the epic Manohar-Madhhumalati, is regarded as the earliest poet in this field of the Bengali literature.  

The Vidyasundara of Sa'ībid Kān, a Muslim poet of the early sixteenth century, is also treated as one of the earliest romantic epics composed on the basis of the local environment.

Apart from the distinctive and qualitative contribution in many special fields, the large number of Muslim poets, who flourished in the Muslim period, promoted the cause of the Bengali literature by their large volume of compositions in different branches of knowledge. By way of illustration, the names

1 Introduction of Padmavati and Sati-Moīna.
2 E. Haq—Muslim Bagala Sahitya, p. 108.
3 Ibid, pp. 77 and 109.
of a few of them and their works in the period from 1200 A. D. to 1576 A. D. may be mentioned.

1. Poet Shāh Muḥammad Saghīr—(1) Yūsuf-Zolekha.

The poet flourished in the reign of Sultān Yūsuf Shāh (1474-81 A. D.).

5. Poet Muẓammil—(1) Nītisastravarta, (2) Sā’atnāma, (3) Khanjan Charttra.

6. Chand Qāḍī—(1) Padas (Sufistic poems).
7. Daulat Wazir Bahrām—(1) Lalla-Majnūn, composed between 1560 and 1575 A.D.
8. Shaikh Kabīr—(1) Padas.

The poet lived in the middle of the sixteenth century.

10. Muḥammad Kabīr—(1) Manohar Madhumalati.
11. Saribid Khān—(1) Vidyasundara, (2) Rasūl-vijaya, (3) Hanifa-Kairapari.¹

Hindu poets

Encouraged by the liberal atmosphere of the Muslim rule and the enlightened patronage of the Muslim rulers and influenced by the new tradition of the Muslim poets in their composition, the Hindus of all classes devoted themselves to the promotion of Bengali and made remarkable contribution to the Bengali literature of the time. Indeed, the Muslim contact brought a renaissance in the Bengali literature, as it had set in motion a reformation in the the Hindu society. Vaishnavism and Vaishnava literature and the Mangala Kavyas are the best specimen of this upheaval. Reference may be made of a few

¹ See E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, pp. 56-104.
of the Hindu poets who distinguished themselves in the period by their valuable compositions in Bengali:

   The poet flourished in the thirteenth century.

2. Ramai Pandit—Shunya Purana.
   It is a significant work giving a picture of the oppression of the Brahmanical Hinduism on the Buddhists and the latter's welcome of the Muslim rule in Bengal as a great deliverance. It is supposed to have been composed in the fourteenth century.

   He is a celebrated poet of the Bengali literature and flourished in the first half of the fifteenth century. It is known from the poems of his beloved Rami that Chandidas was invited to sing his poems at the Court of Gaur. Sultan Shams al-Din Ahmad Shâh (1431-42 A.D.) was at that time the ruler of Bengal.¹

   A contemporary of Chandidas, Vidyapati was a distinguished poet of Mithila and author of many works. Though essentially a Hindi poet writing in Maithali dialect, Vidyapati is also regarded as a Bengali poet because of the linguistic Bengal on his composition.²

   Besides the Bengali rendering of the Sanskrit Ramayana, Krittivas wrote also a number of other poetical works. He flourished in the early years of the fifteenth century, in the influence of time of Raja Kans and Jalâl-al Din Muhammad Shâh.

6. Maladhar Basu (Gunaraj Khan.—(1) Sri-Krishna-vijaya and (2) Lakhshmi Charitra.

¹ E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 34.
² S. K. Sen—Bangala Sahityer Itihasha, p. 80.
Maladhar Basu received the patronage of the ʻIlyās Shāhī Sultān Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh (1474-81 A. D.), who honoured the poet with the title of Gunaraj Khān.


This was compiled in the reign of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh. It reflects the Hindu society of the fifteenth century.²

8. Vijayagupta—Padmapurana or Manasamangala.

Vijayagupta was one of the talented poets of the time of Sultān ʻAlā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh. He composed his work in 1494 A. D.³


The writings of Vipradas express that he flourished under the patronage of Sultān ʻAlā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh (1493-1519 A.D.).³


He also lived in the time of Ḥusain Shāh.


The poet Joshoraj Khān has high appreciation for the liberal patronage of Ḥusain Shāh and his keen interests for the development of the Bengali literature. He was employed in a government office in the reign of his royal patron.⁴


It was composed in the reign of Ḥusain Shāh.


It was composed in the reign of Sultān Nuṣrat Shāh (1519-32 A. D.) at the order of Chhutti Khān, governor of Chittagong.

1 E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 35.
2 Ibid., p. 36.
3 Ibid, p. 36.
4 Ibid, p. 36.
Kanka, an outcaste Brahmin youth of Mymensingh, composed the epic Vidyasundara in 1502 A.D., during the reign of Husain Shāh. His writings indicate that he wrote this epic to preach the glories of Satyapīr at the order of a Muslim Fīr, whom he accepted as his spiritual preceptor.¹

He was an officer of Husain Shāh and Nuṣrat Shāh, and he praised both these Sultāns in his composition. Kavishekhar was also known as Vidyapati.²

In the reign of Sultān Nuṣrat Shāh, Poet Sridhar composed Vidyasundara Kavya at the order of Prince Fīrūz Shāh. This is known from the introduction of the poet’s work.³

17. Dvij Ananta—The Ramayana.
The poet wrote his work in the later half of the fifteenth century.

18. Sasthidhar Kavi also composed several works. As an honour for his excellent compositions, the poet was given the title of Gumaraj.⁴

The famous Vaishnava poet Vrindavandas (1506-89 A.D.) compiled his well-known work on the life of Sri-Chaitanya in 1536 A.D.

20. Luchandas—Chaitanyakamagala.
The work was composed in 1538 A.D.

The poet Krishnadas Kaviraj composed his voluminous

¹ E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 37.
² D. C. Sen—Banga Bhusa O Sahitya, p. 82. Dr. E. Haq considers Kavishekhar as Kavirananjan Vidyapati. See Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 37.
³ E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 38.
and valuable work on the great Vaishnava teacher sometime between 1527 and 1537 A. D. He was a contemporary of Sri Chaitanya.¹

Born in 1513 A. D., Jayananda composed his significant work on the life and teachings of Sri-Chaitanya in 1570 A. D.²

He lived in the later half of the sixteenth century. His writings reflect the society of the time.³

24. Dvij Bansibadan—Manasamangala.
Bansibadan Chakravarti, also called Bansidas, was a good poet. He composed his work in 1575 A. D.⁴

A daughter of poet Bansidas Chakravarti, Chandravati was a gifted poetess of the later part of the sixteenth century. She wrote Manasamangala in 1580 A. D.⁵

It was composed in 1547 A. D.

27. Ramchandra K̃han—The Mohabharata.
The poet versified into Bengali a portion of the Sanskrit Mahabharata in 1550 A. D.

The date of the composition of this work is 1570 A. D.

29. Madhavacharya—(1) Sri-Krishnamangala.
(2) Gangamangala and
(3) Chandimangala.

¹ Chaitanya Bhagavata, edited by Harakrishna Mukherjee, Calcutta.
⁴ E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 39.
These works were composed between 1570 A.D. and 1579 A.D.\(^1\)

30. Mukundaram Chakravarti—Chandikavya.
Mukundaram Chakravarti, who is entitled as Kavikankan, was one of the greatest poets of Bengal. His Chandikavya, written in the later years of the sixteenth century was a masterpiece of the Bengali literature.

31. Dvij Hariram—Chandikavya.
Hariram was a distinguished poet who flourished in the later part of the sixteenth century.

32. Narahari Chakravarti—Bhakti Ratnarak and Naruttamvillas.

33. Nityanandadas—Premvillas.
34. Loknathdas—Sitaacharittra.
35. Gyanadas—Vaishnava Padavali.
36. Govindadas—Karacha.

The above-mentioned poets flourished in the later part of the sixteenth century.\(^2\) Apart from them, there were many other poets who composed epics, verses and poems in Bengali. The fact that so many poets flourished and distinguished themselves by their contribution is a glowing testimony to the significant progress of the Bengali literature during the period of the Muslim rule in Bengal.

One fact, though small in itself, however illustrates how the Muslim rulers raised the status of Bengali. They used Bengali in inscriptions. A cannon inscription, bearing the name of Sher Shah in Bengali, proves this fact. The inscription of Masnad-i-‘Ali ‘Isa Khan, the chief of the Bara Bhuyans, confirms this contention.\(^3\)

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3 E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 39.
While patronising and promoting the Bengali language and literature, the Muslims did not neglect the knowledge of Sanskrit. It was indeed alien to the ideals and traditions of the Muslim rulers to be prejudiced against any language and knowledge of the subject peoples. It was rather the practice of the Muslim conquerors to acquire the language and learning of the people from whom they could learn anything. The Arab Muslims studied the knowledge of the Hellenic, the Iranian and Indian peoples. They promoted Persian, a language of the conquered people and enriched it. Beginning from the time of the early 'Abbasid Caliphs, the Muslims were interested in the study of Sanskrit, so that they might have access into the astronomy, mathematics and other knowledge of the Hindus. The celebrated scholar Al-Biruni learnt Sanskrit to study the Hindu sciences, their religious, social and political systems.

The Muslim rulers of India lived up to this tradition of the early Muslims. Even an orthodox ruler like Sulṭān Fīrūz Tughlaq had the translation into Persian of several Sanskrit works, of which one, a book on philosophy, was named Dīlail-i-Fīrūz Shāhī after the name of the Sulṭān. Sulṭān Islām Shāh had great respect for the Sanskrit scholar Chandrakritti, who was an author of the commentary of a grammar named Svarasvata Prakriya. The interest of Emperor Akbar in Sanskrit work is too well known. Besides translating the valuable Sanskrit works into Persian, he patronised some Hindu scholars to compile work in Sanskrit. At his order, a pandit, named Vitthal, compiled in Sanskrit Nartan Nirmaya, a work on dancing. Another scholar named Gangadhar wrote Nitisar, a book on morals, in the Sanskrit language. Many Sanskrit scholars, in recognition of their attainments and works, received titles from Emperor Akbar. Narayanbhatta was given the title of Jagatguru.\footnote{1 Sahitya Parishad Patrika, 1344 B. S. Pt. I, p. 41. 2 & 3 Sahitya Parishad Patrika, 1344 B. S., P. I, pp. 41-42.}
The other Mughul emperors and princes, such as Jahangir, Shâh Jahân and Dârâ Shikoh followed the footstep of their illustrious ancestor in their interest in and patronage to Sanskrit. Zain al-Abidin, the ruler of Kashmir, was also a great patron of the Sanskrit learning, as he was of Indian music.¹

The Muslim rulers of Bengal maintained the spirit of knowledge which characterised the Muslims throughout their history. Their interest in Sanskrit and patronage to Sanskrit scholars was of great significance in the field of culture. They not only studied Sanskrit, but wrote books in this language as well.

It is known that Zafar Khân, the conqueror and governor of Satgaon in the reign of Shams al-Din Firûz Shâh, composed verses in Sanskrit in praise of the Ganges.² Another Muslim named Allâh Bakhsh wrote a Sanskrit book based on the famous Sanskrit work, Bâmansutra-vrîti.³ The date of the composition of this work is not known. It is, however, thought that the Muslim author composed his work during the period of the Muslim rule in Bengal.

The Muslim rulers also issued inscriptions in Sanskrit. One such inscription of the reign of Sultan Mahmûd Shâh (1533—38 A. D.), the last king of the Ḥusain Shâhî dynasty, has been found in Dinajpur and the same is now preserved in the Rajshahi Museum. The inscription, dated 1455 Saka Era corresponding 1533 A. D., records on a stone pillar the construction of a bridge by Darâs Khân, son of Nurbaj, a great noble of the court of Sultan Mahmûd Shâh.⁴ The Muslim rulers continued their interests in Sanskrit down to the end of the Muslim rule in Bengal. Nawâb Sirâj al-Daulah invited the Brahmins by letters written in Sanskrit at the last ceremony of his grandfather Nawâb 'Allvârdâ Khân.⁵

¹ Ibid, p. 43.
³ Ibid.
⁵ Sahitya Parishad Patrika, 1344 B. S., Pt. I, p. 45.
The Muslim rulers extended liberal patronage to the Sanskrit scholars of their times. Sultân Jalâl al-Din Muḥammad Shâh highly honoured the great Sanskrit scholar and poet Vrihaspati Misra.

The Sultân gave him six titles, and very ceremoniously conferred on him the title of Ray Mukut. The poet was adorned with necklace, ear-rings and other ornaments of diamonds, precious stones and gold and he was taken in procession on the back of an elephant. Large presents were also made to him, in recognition of his poetical and scholarly attainments. It is also said that the Sultân appointed Vrihaspati Misra as a commander of his army. This celebrated poet composed many valuable Sanskrit works in the reign of Sultân Jalâl al-Din Muḥammad Shâh and other Muslim rulers of Bengal.¹ Some of his works are:

1. Smritisratnahara.
2. Gitagovindatikâ. It is a commentary on Gitagovinda of the well-known poet Jayadeva.
3. Kumarsadvavatikâ; a commentary of the work of the celebrated poet Kalidas,
4. Raghuvansatikâ. It is also a commentary of Kalidas's work Raghuvansa.
5. Meghadutatikâ, a commentary of Meghaduta of Kalidas.
7. Padachandrika, a commentary of Amarkosh.

The reign of Sultân Jalâl al-Din Muḥammad Shâh introduced a renaissance in the Sanskrit learning. The pace of progress continued all throughout the Muslim rule and the Sanskrit literature rose to the zenith of its progress in the reign of Sultân ʿAlâl-Dîn Ḥusain Shâh. Ḥusain Shâh patronised two talented Brahmin brothers, Rup and Sanatan, who were distin-

guished Sanskrit scholars. Sanatan was the wazīr and Rup was the private secretary (Dābir-i-Khās) of that enlightened Sultān. These two brothers are credited with the composition of many Sanskrit works. The works of Rup are:


Sanatan compiled the following works:

(1) Sri-Vaishnavavatushini, (2) Vrihadbhagavatamrita, (3) Sriharibhaktivilas and its commentary Digdarshani, (4) Laghu Harinamamrita Vyakaran and (5) Sri-Krishna-lilastava or Dashamacharita.

Smrīti-sastras were a remarkable contribution of the Muslim period to the Sanskrit literature and knowledge. The famous scholar Sulapani compiled his Smrīti-sastra towards the close of the fourteenth or early part of the fifteenth century. The significant work of Smrīti-sastra of Raghunandan was written early in the sixteenth century. Druvananda and other scholars composed Mahavansavali and such other Sanskrit works relating to the Hindu Kulinism during the Muslim period.

The Muslim zamīndārs and governors also took special interest in the Sanskrit literature. Mīrā khān, son of ‘Isa khān Masnadi-i-‘Ali, one of the great zamīndārs of Bengal, patronised Pandit Nathuresh in compiling a Sanskrit dictionary called Shibdharatnakari. It is known that a Sanskrit scholar named Chaturbhuj wrote Rasakalpadrum, a Sanskrit work, under the

1 Vrindavandas, p. 524.
2 Vrindavandas, p. 531.
3 Sahitya Parishad, Patrika, 1344 B. S., pt. I, p. 44.
patronage of Nawāb Shayesta Khān, governor of Bengal in the reign of Emperor 'Alamgir.¹

Because of the liberal atmosphere of the Muslim rule and the interest of the Muslim rulers, the study and learning of Sanskrit revived its momentum within a few years after its setback at the fall of the Hindu sovereignty in Bengal. The revival of Sanskrit learning however took place in a re-oriented form, as a result of the influence of the liberal force introduced by the Muslims in the province. The tols flourished and great centres of Sanskrit learning grew up in Bengal. Navadvip developed into the most brilliant seat of this new Sanskrit learning of Bengal during the period of Muslim rule.

¹ Ibid.
CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL LIFE OF THE BENGALI MUSLIMS

Section A—Classes and Characteristics of Society

The Ruler:

The State is a necessity to regulate the society on sound and progressive lines. In a monarchical form of government in the past, the king represented the State and discharged its responsibility to the society. During the Muslim rule in Bengal, the governor or the Sultan, as the head of the State, assumed the responsibility of the guardianship of the society. As a deputy (naib) of the ruler, he was thus at the head of the social life of the people of his dominion. It was his duty to give peace and protection to his people and provide for their happiness and progress. The people, both Hindus and Muslims, looked to him for protection and they implored his help to remedy injustice and redress grievances. Even the Hindu subjects recognised this social position and function of a Muslim ruler. So a Hindu poet, Vijayagupta, pays glowing tribute to Sultan Husain Shāh that under his benign rule, people lived in perfect peace and happiness.1 Poet Srikar Nandi has high praise for Sultan Nusrat Shāh, Sultan Husain Shāh and Chuttī Khān, governor of Chittagong. He says, “Nusrat Shāh is a great king. He always looks after the subjects like Rama (the hero and king of the Ramayana). King Husain Shāh is the lord of the world which he rules with impartiality.” The poet speaks of Chutti

1 Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, quoted in S. K. Sen’s Bangala Sahityer Itihasha, p. 150:
Khān in the same language.¹

There are other references in the Bengali literature to show that the Hindus regarded the Muslim rulers as the head and guardian of the social life of the people in general. It is known from the evidence of poet Krisnadas Kaviraj that the Vaishnavism of Sri-Chaitanya, which advocated the elimination of social distinctions between the Brahmans and the lower class Hindus, greatly offended the Brahmans. They were also irri-
tated at the sankirtan of Chaitanya and his disciples in the streets of Navadvip throughout the night. So, they complained against Chaitanya to the Qādī, whom they regarded as the re-
presentative of the rule and the guardian (justice) in the city, and requested him to stop the offensive activities of the Vaishnava teacher. They said, "You are the chief man and guardian (thakur) of the society of the village. You summon Nimai (Chaitanya) and dissuade him from his activities." Accordingly, the Qādī asked Chaitanya to stop sankirtan in the streets at night, as it disturbed the people in their sleep.² Similar com-
plaint was lodged to Sultān Husain Shāh against Chaitanya when he visited Ramkeli, a village near Gaur. The Sultān sent men to know about him and he got information of his teachings from various sources. He thus formed a good opinion of the teachings of Chaitanya and then issued an order that none, Hindu or Muslim, should interfere with the religious ideas and preachings of the Vaishnava teacher.³

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¹ Quoted by D. C. Sen—Banga Bhasa O Sahitya, p. 97:

मसवं शह तात अति महाराजम्।
राजवं निधा पाले सह ग्रजा॥

बुध ति हसेन शाह है फितिपति।
शामदान होविले पाले बहुमुख॥

² Krishnadas Kaviraj-Chaitanya Charitamrita, p. 125:

गुढेर ठाकुर जयदी सबे तोमार जन।
सिमाइ रोलाइया तारे करह वर्णन॥

³ Ibid, p. 31:

काजि दरान केही तिहार न। कर हिंगन।
आपन इमार बुल न याह। इहार दन॥

"Let not the qādī or the Muslims disturb him;
Let him carry on his preachings, as he likes."
This illustrates that the Sultān was the guardian of the Hindu society and was a patron of the Hindus in their progress and enlightenment. He extended protection to the society against evils and patronised its healthy development.

To the Muslim society in particular, the Muslim ruler had some special duties. He was in theory as well as in practice the leader of the social life of the Muslims. It was his duty to safeguard the honour and observances of Islam, to maintain the solidarity of the Muslims and promote their progress, spiritual, intellectual and material. He presided over the social functions of the Muslims and provided for the development of the Muslim society in every possible way. There is mention of the religio-social functions of a Muslim Sultān in Tārikh-i-Mubārak Shāhi. According to the author, the functions of the Muslim ruler are (1) the reading of the khutba in the Friday and 'Id prayers, (2) the fixing of the extent of the religious prohibitions, (3) the collecting of taxes for charitable purposes, (4) the waging of war in defence of the faith, (5) the adjudication of disputes and redress of grievances and complaints, (6) the enforcement of measures for the defence of the kingdom and elimination of rebels and disturbers of peace and (7) the suppression of innovation in religion and religious practices, which militated against the spirit of Islam.¹

Tārikh-i-Firūz Shāhi of Zia al-Din Baranī records the views of Sultān Iltutmish about the duties of a Muslim ruler to the Muslim society. These are, (1) the maintenance of the purity of the faith, (2) punishing of open lapse from the approved orthodox conduct, (3) appointment of God-fearing religious persons to religious offices and (4) administering of impartial justice to all.²

That the Muslim ruler of Bengal was conscious of his responsibilities to the Muslim society and he discharged them is

¹ Tārikh-i-Mubārak Shāhi, quoted by K. M. Ashraf—Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan, p. 16.
² Baranī, pp. 41-42.
evidenced by his keen interest in the affairs of the Muslims. He recognised the legal sovereignty of the 'Abbasid Caliph, the head of the Islamic society of the world. To promote religious feeling and Muslim solidarity, he established and patronised the religious and cultural institutions, such as mosques, khānegahs and madrasahs. He extended patronage to the 'ulema, shaikhs, preachers and teachers in the work of the development of the Muslim society. He regularly attended the religious and social functions of the Muslims and thus gave lead to the Muslim society.

It should however be noted that the Muslim ruler never gave his guardianship and patronage to the Muslim society to injure in any way the interests of the Hindu community. The Hindus were granted perfect freedom in their religio-social affairs. The tolerant and liberal policy of the Muslim rule left them undisturbed in the observance of their religious rites and social functions. They also patronised the Hindu intellect and the development of the social and cultural institutions of the Hindu subjects.

The Court Life:

The Muslims rulers of Bengal lived in great majesty and splendour. Bengal was immensely rich and prosperous in the Muslim period and the vast wealth of the country was at their disposal. When Sher Shāh captured Gaur, the capital of Bengal, in 1538 he used several hundred horses and camels to transfer its wealth to Rohtasgarh, on the eve of Humāyun's invasion of this province. This enormous wealth enabled the Bengali rulers to live in great pomp and grandeur. Moreover, they always wanted to impress the people with their might and majesty. Like other eastern peoples, the Bengalis were very much impressed by the pageantry of their rulers. They did not care much who occupied the throne; but they had great respect for the throne and the royalty. Bābur noticed this feeling of the Bengali people. His observation, in this connection, is worth quoting.
Bābur says, "It is a singular custom in Bengal, that there is little of hereditary descent in succession to the sovereignty. There is a throne allotted for the king; there is in like manner, a seat or station assigned for each of the amīrs, wazīrs and maṃsab-dārs. It is that throne and these stations which engage the reverence of the people of Bengal. A set of dependents, servants and attendants are annexed to each of these stations. When the king wishes to dismiss or appoint any person, whosoever is placed in the seat of the one dismissed is immediately attended and obeyed by the whole establishment of dependents, servants and retainers annexed to the seat which he occupies. Nay, this rule obtains even as to the royal throne itself. Whosoever kills the king and succeeds in placing himself on that throne is immediately acknowledged as king; all the amīrs, soldiers and peasants instantly obey and submit to him, and consider him as being as much their sovereign as they did their former prince, and obey his orders implicitly. The people of Bengal say, "We are faithful to the throne; whoever fills the throne we are obedient and true to it."1

Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad Bakhshi also corroborates Bābur's statement. He writes, "They say that during some years there was a custom in Bangalalah that whoever slew a ruler and sat on the throne, was obeyed and respected by everyone."2

A spirit of competition also marked the majesty and splendour of the Bengali rulers. They wanted to outshine the Sultāns of Delhi and other neighbouring rulers in the grandeur, refinement and culture of their courts. It was also a political necessity, because most of the Bengali rulers were either rebels of the Delhi Sultān or defied his authority and, to win support and confidence of the people, they adopted the expedient of surrounding themselves with great pomp and ceremonials to demonstrate their majesty and might. Thus Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh and Sikandar Shāh made their capital and court the

1 Bāburnāma—Elliot (Suart publ.), p. 48.
2 Tabaqāt-i-Akbari, III, p. 268.
most splendid and resplendent. Dāud Karranī vied with Emperor Akbar in pomp and ceremonial. He assumed the title of Bādshāh and conferred titles and honours on his nobles to maintain as majestic and lustrous a court as that great Mughul Emperor.

The Muslim rulers of Bengal lived in magnificent palaces and their capital was adorned with imposing buildings richly attired. The ruins of Gaur and Pandua even now tell of the great magnificence and majesty of their mighty builders. The writings of Rizq Allāh, the author of Wāqiʿāt-i-Mushtāqī, reflect the gorgeous and gay life of the Muslim rulers of Gaur. He says that when Emperor Humāyūn entered Gaur, the capital of Bengal, he found in every nook and corner of that country a paradise inhabited by hourīs¹ and full of incomparably luxurious palaces; costly carpets were spread on the floors. Its niches and cupboards were full of scent goblets worked in gold. The pillars of the buildings were constructed out of sandal wood. The flooring was done with Chinese tiles. Similar tiles were also used in the walls of the rooms. Costly furniture and luxurious curtains adorned the rooms of the palaces. The garden was laid with beds of flowers and stone channels of water. When Humāyūn went to live in one of these buildings, he was so fascinated with the whole environment that he refused to pause in his pleasure for two months and no public levee was held during this period.² Humāyūn was so much charmed with the beauty and life of splendour and resplendent at Gaur that he named it Jamnabad or the Paradise.

More than a century before Humāyūn, the Chinese envoys, who visited Pandua and the court of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh and his successors, left exactly similar account of the splendour of the Bengali Sulṭāns. Sing Ch’a Sheng Ian Houheiu says: "The dwelling of the King is all of bricks set in mortar, the flight of steps leading up to it is high and broad. The halls

¹ Hourīes (the Hurs) are the beautiful virgins of the Paradise.
² Wāqiʿāt-i-Mushtāqī, p. 45 and Ashraf—Life and Condition of People of Hindustan, p. 245.
are flat roofed and whitewashed inside. The inner doors are of triple thickness and of nine panels. In the audience hall the pillars are plated with brass, ornamented with figures of flowers and animals, carved and polished. To the right and left are long verandahs on which were drawn up (on the occasion of our audience) over a thousand men in shining armour, and on horseback outside, filling the courtyard were long ranks of (our) Chinese (soldiers) in shining helmets and coats of mail, with spears, swords, bows and arrows, looking martial and lusty."

The Chinese envoy gives an idea of the majesty of the King and splendour of his court by referring to the ceremonials and dignitaries attached to the royal person. "To the right and left of the King were hundreds of peacock feather umbrellas and before the hall were some hundreds of soldiers mounted on elephants. The King sat cross-legged in the principal hall on a high throne inlaid with precious stones and a two-edged sword lay across his lap. Two men bearing silver staffs and with turbaned heads came to usher (us) in. When we had taken five steps forward they made salutation.

On reaching the middle of the hall they halted and two other men with gold staffs led us with some ceremony as previously. The King, having returned our salutations, bowed before the Imperial Mandate (of Chinese Emperor), raised it to his head and then opened and read it. The Imperial gifts were all spread out on carpets in the audience hall."

A glimpse into the prosperity, magnificence and refinement of the Bengali rulers may be obtained from the entertainments and presents of the Sultan to the Chinese envoys. A Chinese envoy named Si Yang Ch’ao Kung Tien Ju, who visited the court

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1. These Chinese Accounts have been published in Visva Bharati Annals by Dr. P. C. Bagchi, 1945, vol. I, pp. 96-134.
2. The two ushers were Ḥāliḥa.
3. These two ushers were known as Bārbiks.
of Pandua four years after, writes, "Carpets are spread on the floor and the King entertains the Chinese mission with a feast of both smoked and roasted beef and mutton, rose water and sweetened water of different kinds of perfumes." Sheng Ian Hou-hien, continuing his narrative, says, "The King entertained the Imperial envoys at a banquet and our soldiers were given many presents. When the banquet was over, the King bestowed on the envoys gold basins, gold girdles, gold flatons and gold bowls; all assistant envoys receiving the same articles in silver and each of the lower officials a golden bell and long gown of white hemp and silk. All soldiers of the escort got silver money.

"After this the King had made a case in gold in which he placed a memorial to the Emperor (of China), written on a leaf of gold and the envoys received it from him with due respect in the audience hall, together with various gifts to the Emperor." The Chinese envoys highly appreciated the refinement and culture of the ruler and the people of Bengal. The Chinese writer says, "Of truth, the country is rich and courteous."

The Chinese writings reflect the picture of a spectacular royalty and resplendent court of the Bengali Sultan, Ceremonials and forms followed and preceded the royal person. High dignitaries and functionaries were attached to the throne. The Sultan was surrounded by splendidly attired bodyguards and train of attendants. The wazīrs, amīrs and manṣabdārs stood on two sides of the royal throne in places allotted to them. Besides the wazīrs, there was a staff of court functionaries to discharge duties connected with the ceremonial and forms of the court. There were naqībs who announced the coming of the Sultan at the court from the palace. They also announced the names of the visitors at the court. The Hajibs were inseparable officers of the court functions. They looked

3 Ibid.
4 Baburnama—Elliot (Susil), p. 48.
into the court formalities. It was their duty to usher in the
visitors at the court. They bore the silver staff as the symbol
of their office. They introduced the visitors up to the middle
of the audience hall. The higher court dignitaries, connected
with the court ceremonials, were the Bārbiks or Amīr-i-Hājibs.
They were responsible for the maintenance of the forms and
ceremonials of the court. Gold staffs were the symbol of their
great office. They introduced the distinguished visitors from
the middle of the audience hall to the presence of the Sultan.
If the visitor was an ambassador from some great monarch,
the Sultan personally received the letter from his hand. Ordinarily,
the petition of the visitor was presented to him by the
Bārbik.

The Dabīr-i-Khāṣ was the most important functionary
attached to the royal person. He was the private secretary
of the Sultan and held the rank of a minister. He discharged
the function of royal correspondence and wrote farmāns, legis-
lations and orders of his royal master. The Dabīr-i-khāṣ was
necessarily to be a well-read men, expert in the art of writing
and composition.

It is known from Zia al-Dīn Barani that Shams al-Dīn
Dabir, a skilful writer and composer, who worked as the
secretary of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban, was the Dabīr-i-khāṣ
of his son Naṣīr al-Dīn Bughra Khān, the governor of Bengal.
The Muslim Sultāns appointed talented Hindus also in the office
of Dabīr-i-Khāṣ. A Brahmin named Rup, who excelled in
writing and composition, was the Dabīr-i-Khāṣ of Sultan 'Alī
al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh.

There was a chief of the bodyguards called in Bengali as
Chhatri (holder of umbrella). Kesava Chhatri occupied this

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1 See Chinese Accounts, Visva Bharati Annals, 1945, vol. I, pp. 96-
134.
2 Ibid.
3 Barani, p. 95 and Badauni, I, p. 154.
4 Vrindayandas—Sri—Chattunya Bhagavata (ed. M.K. Ghosh Cal-
cutta), p. 82 and 350.
office in the reign of Sultān Ḥusain Shāh. The family of Kesava, his ancestors and descendants, held this important office of trust and confidence for some generations. His grandfather Ishan Khān, father Gopinath Basu known as Purandar Khān and son Chakrapani Khān were Chhatra-nāzīrs of Bengali Sultāns.  

Silāḥdār was another military official attached to the person of the ruler. Fakhr al-Din Mubārak Shāh, the first independent ruler of East Bengal, was in his earlier career, a silāḥdār of Bahrām Khān, governor of Sonargaon. As the name signifies, he was the bearer of the arms and weapons. In fact, he bore the arms and weapons of the ruler. With a body of armed soldiers, he waited upon the ruler when he gave public audience or went out.

The Sultān had also a private physician. Mukunda Das was the royal physician of Sultān Ḥusain Shāh. There was a court astrologer whom the ruler consulted to find out an auspicious moment for important undertakings, such as setting out on a campaign, etc. An executioner, called jallād, was an indispensable office of the court. His duty was to carry out the deadly orders of the ruler on the rebels and persons guilty of heinous crimes.

A kotwal was another essential officer attached to the court. His duty was to keep watch and maintain peace and order in the city. Whatever happened in the capital which concerned the ruler and his administration were to be immediately brought to his notice. So it is found that the kotwal brought to Sultān Ḥusain Shāh the news of the appearance of the Vaishnava teacher Chaitanya at Ramkeli near Gaur.

Apart from these exclusively court officials, there were ministers, army commanders, and civil, revenue and judicial

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2 Mubārak Shāhī, p. 104
3 I. H. Qureshi—Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p. 63.
5 Vrindavandas, p. 369.
functionaries in the government of the Bengali rulers.

The presence of the men of talent, wit and accomplishments lent special charm to the court of the Bengali rulers. Most of the Bengali rulers were noted for their learning and enlightenment and they extended liberal patronage to men of letters, arts and crafts. Their court was the resort of poets, musicians, and men of wit and learning.¹

They had great interest in art and architecture. The palaces and mosques they built in Gaur, Pandua and other places testify to their contribution to the development of art and architecture. The great Mosque of Adina is a noble specimen of their remarkable achievement in this field of culture. Many arts and crafts flourished under their patronage and encouragement. The most noteworthy of these was the textile industry which produced muslin, the finest quality of cotton fabric in the world. There were also excellent glazed tiles industries in Bengal at that time.

The court of the Bengali rulers thus represented not merely the splendour and luxury, but a high degree of refinement and culture as well. Their magnificent life contributed to the progress of learning and culture, art and crafts in Bengal. So the Bengali people could earn the appreciation of the foreigners that they were a cultured and civilized people.²

It was the practice of the Hindu and Muslim monarchs to maintain a big harem as a mark of distinction. The Muslim rulers of Bengal continued this tradition of this country. The harem was composed of the wives and the slave girls. The songstresses and dancing-girls were also accommodated there. There were hundreds of maid-slaves and eunuchs to attend the king, queens, princes and princesses in the palace. The female establishment was so big that women superintendents and

¹ See Chapters IV and V.
² See the Accounts of the Chinese Envoys, Visva Bharati Annals, 1945, vol. I, pp. 96-134.
officers were appointed to manage its affairs efficiently.¹

According to Ghulam Ḥusain Salīm, the author of Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn, Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh was affectionately inclined towards three slave-girls, Sarw, Gul and Lalah.² Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh imported several thousand Abyssinian slaves and employed them in doing the works of the court and palace establishments.

Nobility and upper class:

Next to the Sulṭān and the members of the royal family, were the nobility in the social ladder of the country. They were an important section of the aristocracy of the society. They occupied a position of great influence in the State and society. The throne and royalty of the ruler largely depended on their support and loyal service. There are several significant characteristics of the nobility in the period of Muslim rule in Bengal. The nobility was not strictly hereditary. It was based more on merit than on blood. Most of the Muslim nobles of Bengal began their career from the lowest rank and it was by sheer talent that they made their way to the position of amīrs and a few of them rose to the royal dignity. There are also instances of slaves rising to the rank of an amīr and acquiring the throne. The rule of the Abyssinians, who entered the service of the Ilyās Shāhī Sulṭāns as slaves,³ illustrates this fact.

Bakhtiyār Khaljī and his nobles, some of whom were afterwards elevated to the governorship or throne, began their life

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¹ The keeping of a big harem was common among the rulers of the time. Jahāṅgīr writes that Sulṭān Ghiyāṭ al-Dīn (1469–1500) of Malwa had 15,000 women. He built a city for them where they were taught all arts and sciences. Tūzuk (Elliot—Susil publ.), p. 114.) The writings of Firīṣṭa confirm this.

³ Firīṣṭa, II, p. 298.
as ordinary soldiers. From the post of an ordinary officer in the revenue department Husain Shâh rose to the important office of wazîr in the government of the Habshî Sultâns of Bengal, and, in the course of a few years, distinguished himself by the establishment of a powerful dynasty in this province. It is also to be noted that once a person had risen from the rank to the status of a noble, the prospect for his sons was naturally bright. On the basis of the power and influence of their father, they could secure a permanent place in the class of the nobility. The Sultân distinguished his nobles with lofty titles, such as Khân-i-A'zam, Khân-i-Jahân, Majlis-i-'Alâ, Majlis al-Majâlîs, Masnad-i-'Alâ, Khân-i-Majlis, Majlis-i-Nûr, Malik al-Mu'azzam and Majlis al-M'û'azzam.¹

The nobility was primarily military and official in character. Distinction in arms and talent in the affairs of administration were the qualities needed for promotion in the class of the nobility. The nobility was not restricted to the Muslims. By merit and talent, the Hindus also could rise to high official dignity and thus acquire the status of the official nobility. Shah-deo was a commander of Ilyâs Shâh. Raja Kans, who began his career as a petty officer in the revenue department, was promoted to the office of wazîr. Later on he became the dictator of the Ilyâs Shâhi state in the days of the decline of the Sultanate of this family. The names of Rup, Sanatan and other Hindu ministers and great officials are too well known.² A Hindu named Shrihari occupied the office of wazîr in the reign of Dâud Karranî and was honoured with the illustrious title of Vikrama-maditya. Many Hindus were conferred the distinguished title of Khân. Even now Hindu families of Bengal use the family title traceable from the Muslim times when big posts were conferred on their ancestors. These are the Musta'fî (Auditor General of Finances), Hazra (from hazar, i.e., the commander of 1,000 troops), Haldâr (from Hawladder) Khastîgir (from probably Darkhastîgir, i.e., presenter of petitions before the king), and Shamaddar (from

¹ See Dr. Dânì—Inscriptions of Bengal, p. 92.
² See Chapter VIII: Hindu-Muslim Relations.
Sham'adār or holder of the lamp (torches). The Hindus monopolised the Diwānī or the Finance Department. This illustrates that the official aristocracy was thrown open to talent irrespective of caste or creed by the Muslim rulers of Bengal.

Piety and learning had due recognition in the society during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal. The shaikhs, saiyids and ulama, by virtue of their piety, exemplary character and learning, held a position of great reverence and influence in the society. They wielded a great moral force on the people. So, although they possessed no wealth or official status, the shaikhs, saiyids and ulama were accorded an important position by the rulers, partly because of their natural love for piety and learning and largely because of their enormous influence on the Bengali society of the time. They were a leading and influential section of the upper strata of the society. Hence in his proclamation to the people of Lakhnawti on the eve of his expedition against the rebel governor Ḥāji Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh in 1353 A.D., Sultān Firuz Tughlaq first addressed (i) the saiyids (sādat), ulama and mashaikhs to abandon the cause of the rebel governor and return to the allegiance of the Sultān of Delhi.¹ The proclamation then mentioned the other groups of the influential persons, who were also similarly invited to return to the loyalty of the Sultān. These groups were (ii) the Khāns, Malikṣ, Ṣadrṣ, Akābir and maʿarīf and their suite, (iii) the zamīndārs, muqaddams, mafruzman (mafruzian) madkūn (malkan) and such like and (iv) hermits, sains and gabrs. These groups of influential persons were assured of the security in the possession of the rent-free lands and stipends, the enjoyment of fiefs and estates and the continuance of their offices and salaries, if they refrained from supporting Ilyās in his defiance of the Sultān.² In fact their consent was taken to confirm a new ruler on the throne.

The mention of the saiyids, ‘ulama and the mashaikhs (saints.) in the first group and the Khāns, Malikṣ, ‘Umara, Ṣadrṣ, Ākābir

² Inshā-i-Mahrū, JASB, 1923, XIX, p. 280.
and ma‘ārif in the second and the zamīndārs and others in the third group is significant. It shows the great social importance of the saiyids, ‘ulema and mashaikhs and their place of leadership and influence in the society. The religious and learned class were given a place of special distinction by the people in general and the Muslim rulers took cognizance of this fact. They enjoyed grant of lands and stipends from the State for the maintenance of their religious and educational institutions.

The Saiyids, the descendants of the Prophet, were always held in special reverence and consideration by the Muslims. The Muslim rulers gave them high positions and granted them lands and allowance (madad-i-ma‘ash) as a mark of honour. The illustrious saint Shaikh Ākhī Sirāj belonged to the family of Imām Ḥasan. A large number of ṣūfīs who were settled in Bengal are regarded as Saiyids. Sultān ‘Alā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh claimed to be a Saiyid and he established the glorious reign of a Saiyid dynasty in Bengal.

The ‘ulema were the people well versed in Islamic knowledge. Their duty was to teach religious sciences and promote religious feeling among the people and to watch that the king, the head of the social order, did not transgress the Sharī‘, the Islamic Law, as laid down by the Qur’an, the Ḥadīth particularly. It is from this class that the ṣādirs, qādis and other religious officers were appointed by the Muslim rulers. The Shaikhs were ṣūfīs devoted to the religious and spiritual knowledge. Their khānqahs were the centres of intellectual and spiritual life. They made significant contribution to the development of the Muslim society in Bengal. As has been discussed earlier, the Shaikhs, by their character and achievements, captured the minds of the people and had profound influence on them. The careers of Shaikh ‘Alā al-Ḥaq and Ḥaḍrat Nūr Ḥuṭb ‘Ālam illustrate this. Because of the great influence of ‘Alā al-Ḥaq at Pandua, Sultān Sikandar Shāh exiled him to Sonargaon. Ḥuṭb ‘Ālam’s role in the affairs of Raja Kans and Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh shows the great influence

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\text{See Chapter III: The Ṣūfīs and the Development of the Society.}
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he exercised on the society by his great spiritual personality.

The second group of the upper class as given in the 'Proclamation' of Firuz Tughlaq, belonged to the official aristocracy. They were the *Khan, Malik, Amir, sadr, kabir* and *ma‘arif.* The *Khan* was a title conferred by the ruler on an officer for some distinguished service or in recognition of some meritorious work. Thus it is found that many petty Hindu officers, *zamindars* and also poets were honoured with the title of *Khan.* The title of *Malik* was generally bestowed on the *iqta‘dars* (governors) and higher officials. It was also used by the princes. The higher officials and army commanders were distinguished with the title of *Amir.* The *sadr* was the head of the ecclesiastical and judicial department. The *kabir* and *ma‘arif* do not signify any particular office or title. They simply denote the influential persons of the upper class.

The *zamindars, muqaddams* and others of the third grade of the upper class were the landlords, farmers and revenue-collectors. The *muqaddam* is a well-known figure from the beginning of the Muslim rule. As the headman of the village and collector of government revenue from the villagers he had great influence in the locality. The *zamindars* were quite understandably influential in their respective estates. The Muslims had also acquired *zamindaries* in this period. It is known from Firishta that Naṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd before his accession to the throne, was a landholder.¹ Naṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd was the first king of the restored Ilyās Shāhī dynasty. It appears that he had taken to land in the time of the decline of his ancestors.

The fourth group consisting of the hermits, *sains,* and gabrs belonged mostly to the class of the Hindu ascetics, scholars as well as teachers. They had influence on the Hindus. They enjoyed a grant of land and allowances from the state. So, the 'Proclamation' assured them security in the enjoyment of their grants, if they gave up the cause of the rebel governor Ḥājb Ilyās

¹ Firishta, II, p. 298.
and returned to their loyalty to the Sultān of Delhi.

The life of the nobility represented luxury and refinement. The upper section of the aristocracy, with the exception of the religious class, such as the shaikhs and the ulema, rolled in wealth and imitated the example of their rulers in pomp and splendour. They lived in palatial buildings, tastefully decorated both inside and outside. Attached to every palace and house, there was a nice garden with varieties of flower plants, so that when Emperor Humāyun entered Gaur he found Paradise in every nook and corner of Bengal.1 The rooms were beautifully furnished with precious carpets, sofas, diwans and tapestries. Every noble maintained a big establishment of glittering retinues and attendants, who accompanied their lord when he visited the court.2 They were luxurious in their dress, meals and amusements and spent money lavishly to satisfy their tastes for art and culture.

Following the prevailing practice, the aristocratic class of people, the nobles, the higher officials and the zamindars, kept big harem.3 The contemporary Bengali literature throws some light on the life of upper classes of the time.

According to Vipradas, a poet of the sixteenth century, a Muslim zamindar named Hasan had one hundred women in his harem. In giving the life of this landlord, the poet says, "Hasan is always enjoying himself in the company of one hundred wives. He eats sweet-scented pams (betel-leaf) and uses scents of musks and sandals. The slave supplies these very frequently. Some rub hands and feet and some indulge in flatteries. Several of them fan with white feathers and a number of them join their hands together in fear of life. Some of them

1. Quoted by K. M. Ashraf—Life and Condition of People of Hindustan, p. 245.
3. Compare A'in (Blochmann, I). Man Singh had 1,500 wives, who after his death, burned themselves in his funeral pile.
recite the name of Allah and of the Prophet.”¹

There is no historicity of Hasan referred to by Vipradas. The poet's statement that Hasan had one hundred wives is an exaggerated number, because a Muslim cannot lawfully marry more than four. Although this reference is incredible, it however reflects that it was customary for the aristocracy to maintain a big female establishment, which included, besides the wives, many slave-girls and maid servants. Vipradas has also mentioned of many slaves (ghum), eunuchs (khwaja) and slave-girls (bandhi) in the house of Hasan. He says, “At that time seven slave girls (of Hasan) with pitcher on their hips passed by that way to bring water (from the river).² According to Ibn Battuta, slaves, both male and female, were in plenty in Bengal and young and fair slave girls were sold at a price between one and two dinars. The Moorish traveller himself bought a beautiful slave girl at one dinar.³ So the nobles and the wealthy men could easily maintain a large number of them for household work. Abyssinian slaves were bought and sold in Bengal. Firishta says that Sultan Rukan al-Din Barbak Shah imported several thousand Abyssinian slaves.⁴

The nobles and the zamindars had their own miniature

¹ Vipradas—Manasamangala, ed. S. K. Sen, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 66-67:

शेतक बिवर संभाले
हसान अनस्थते
रवणे निभाले संग्रंगण

कपुरी तांधुर वाय
कपुरी चन्दन गाय
गोलामे बोलाम घने घन।

के ह मले अश्चर
के ह करे बोलाम
के ह बेंत चामर चूळार
के ह प्रेने भो, अङ के जोड़ करि राग
के ह मले मनो मोदार।

² Vipradas—Manasamangala, p. 67:

हेन काले शत बाध्य श्रावे कुश तैरा
जल अनिवारे याय से इ पद गिरा।

³ Ibn Battuta; Extracts in N. K. Bhattasali—Coins and Chronology, etc., p. 136.

⁴ Firishta, II, p. 298.
courts which were the resort of poets, musicians, and men of wit and talent. They frequently held convivial parties, and musicians, songstresses and dancing girls entertained them with their art and performances. Music was very popular in Bengal. It was so much cultivated by the Bengalis that Barbosa remarked that they were great musicians both in singing and playing on instruments. Mirzā Nathan, the author of Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, also refers to the Bengali musicians and singers of lovely face and sweet voice entertaining the Mughul officers and soldiers in Jessore. Music and dancing were very common in Bengal in the Muslim period. These were an indispensable element of every social festivity. It is known from the Chinese sources that when a noble invited guests to a formal feast there were dancing girls for the amusement of the guests. The actresses wore lined cloth in light red colour with decorations of flowers. They wrapped the lower part of their body with coloured silken sash. The Chinese envoys highly appreciated the Bengali music and dancing and observed, "The Bengalis are good singers and dancers to enliven drinking and feasting."

The Chinese accounts have referred to a class of professional musicians, who used to entertain the nobles and the wealthy every morning and mid-day. Mahuan says, "There is another class of men Kan-siao-su-lu-nal, that is to say, the musicians. These men every morning at about four o'clock go to the houses of the high officials and the rich; one man plays a kind of trumpet, another beats a small drum, another a large one. When they commence, their tune is slow, and it gradually increases in the end, when the music suddenly stops. In this way they pass on from house to house. At meal times they again go to all the houses when they receive presents of food or money."

In speaking of the upper class people of the city of Bengalah,

2 Baharistan (Tr.), p. 138.
4 Mahuan—Extracts in N. K. Bhattasali’s Coin, etc., p. 171.
the Portuguese merchant traveller Barbosa has referred to their luxurious life. He observes, "They are luxurious people who eat and drink a good deal and have other bad habits." They were indeed magnificent in their living and habits, lavish in their dress and meals. Sebastian Manrique's account of a midday meal of a captain of an army at Gaur gives an idea of the sumptuousness of the food of the upper classes during the period of Muslim rule. Sebastian Manrique was the guest of the captain in this meal. He writes, "The dinner then commenced with great propriety and abundance. After numerous dishes of various kinds of flesh both of domesticated and wild animals and birds, with stimulants of sundry achars (pickle or relish) made of cucumber, radish, limes, and green chillies soaked in fragrant vinegars that served to spur the appetite, and re-open the road to a meal, which in its excess already tedious to me. When we have eaten these dishes they brought different kinds of sweets, made after their own fashion. . . . On these followed every kind of dried fruit produced by these countries. After a weary three hours we arose from the table." 2. *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn* and *Tarīkh-i-Firishta* record that the nobles of Bengal used to take food in golden plates and it was a custom with them that whoever could present more golden plates on festive occasions was considered to be higher in status. 3

As for Barbosa's reference of drinking, it was not a common practice of all the people of the upper classes. It was confined to a few and was never done in the public. Even in the banquet given in honour of the Chinese envoys, no wine was served. The Chinese accounts explicitly mention that they (Muslim ruler and the nobles) viewed it as a breach of decorum to drink wine in public banquets. 4 If they drank, they did so privately. Barbosa has also incidentally mentioned this fact about the drinking of the aristocrats. He writes, "They go out at night to visit one another and to drink wine, and hold festivals and marriage

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4 *Chinese Accounts*—Visva Bharati Annals, 1945, I, pp. 96-134.
feasts." According to Barbosa, even the upper class women were used to drink wine. He said, "They (Bengalis) make various kinds of wine in this country, chiefly of sugar and palm trees, and also of many other things. The women are very fond of these wines, and are much accustomed to them." Even now in Bengal, wine from date-palm and tād or tal is very common.

It appears from the accounts of the Chinese that the ladies of the upper class families were beautiful and fashionable. Sing Ch’ā Sheng-lan writes, "The women wear a short shirt, wrap around them a piece of cotton, silk or brocade. They do not use cosmetics, for they have naturally a white complexion; in their ears they wore ear-rings of precious stones set in gold. Around their necks they hang pendants, and they do up their hair in knot behind. On their wrists and ankles are gold bracelets and on their fingers and toes rings."

Barbosa also says of the women, "They are very richly dressed and adorned with silke and jewels set in gold." The accounts of the Chinese envoys and of Barbosa express that the ladies were not altogether confined in the inner apartments, otherwise how could these foreigners speak of their beauty and fashion. Barbosa writes that the upper class people kept their women very much shut up. His statement conveys the idea of a comparative study of the Bengali ladies with their counterparts in Europe. The ladies of the country of Barbosa moved freely in public and in that sense the women of Bengal were almost confined in the harem. It is known from the Bengali literature that women often held literary competition with men. Mallika had such a debate with many learned men of the time. This suggests that the Muslim females were not completely secluded within the walls.

1 Barbosa, Hakluyt Society, II, p. 148.
5 Even now Bengali women wear more gold ornaments than elsewhere in India and Pakistan.
6 See Chapter V: Female Education, p. 201.
of the zenana (inner apartment).

The contemporary Bengali literatures also reflect that the women of the upper class were celebrated for their beauty, charm, fashion and wit. So Emperor Humayun could see houris (Hūrs, the virgins of Paradise) everywhere in Bengal.¹

The aristocracy of Muslim Bengal represented a prosperous, cultured and progressive society. The 'ulema and the shaikhs were highly educated and refined people, who had deep feelings for the spiritual, moral and intellectual well-being of the society. The nobles, officials and landlords were also learned and enlightened. They cultivated learning, encouraged wit and letters, loved etiquette and polished manners, developed new tastes, invented new designs and patronised arts and crafts. Their courts, palaces and dwellings were the centres of refinement, culture and learning. Their magnificence and refinement and the intellectual life that they set in motion in the country were the index of the great prosperity and progress of the society in the period of Muslim rule in Bengal.

The Middle Class:

In the present times, the middle class in the society is distinguished by two striking characteristics, intellect and political consciousness. The people forming this class are educated and enlightened and they earn their livelihood with the labour of their brain. Because of their education and intelligence, they are a political force in the country, and have directly or indirectly a substantial share in the State under the present system of government.

In the time when there was autocratic system of government in the country, such a politically conscious middle class was unknown in the society. During the period under review, in Bengal also there was no middle class of this definition. The

¹ Wāqī'āt-i-Mushštāqi, quoted by K. M. Ashraf—Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan, p. 245.
ruler was more or less an autocrat and his authority was based on the support of the upper class and the strength of his army. Other people counted very little in the politics of the time.

Although an effective middle class was absent from the Bengali society there was however a class of people who worked with their brain for their livelihood, as many people are now doing. They were educated and intelligent and used their brain either in the pen or in some arts and crafts. By their enlightenment and professions, these people were distinct from the commons who earned their bread by means of manual labour. These people also enjoyed a position of some influence in the society. It has been referred earlier, how the teacher even of primary school was held in respect by the people. It will be discussed in the following pages that a village mulla also held a position of prestige and importance in the social life of Muslim Bengal.

These people working with their brain formed the middle class of that time. Broadly speaking, the smaller government officers, the clerks, the physicians, the teachers, preachers, poets and musicians belonged to this class. The artists, skilled artisans, architects and manufacturers were also included in the middle class. It was a time when arts were appreciated; the rulers and the aristocracy were interested in building activities and there was good demand for the articles of fashion and luxury. These stimulated high class and costly productions and promoted the skill of the artisans of all professions. They were naturally handsomely paid for their skilled labour, and thus were in a position to lead a decent life. A reference to the muslin, silk and other manufactures will illustrate this contention. Amir Khusrau had high praise for the fine quality of textile cloth manufactured in Bengal. Mirzā Nathan bought a piece of muslin at a price of rupees four thousand. These

1 See Chapter V: Education and Learning, p. 207.
2 See p. 269.
3 Amir Khusrau—Qir‘ān al-Sā’dain (Lucknow, 1845), pp. 100-101. See also Chapter XII: Economic Life.
show the high degree of skill needed in the manufacture of the textile. These fine qualities of manufacture were highly prized even by the foreigners and were exported to many countries of Asia and Europe.¹ This qualitative as well as quantitative production of textiles is an index of the prosperity of the manufacturers and skilled artisans of Bengal in the Muslim time.

It is known from Insha-i-Mahru that in the days of plenty and cheapness during the reign of Sultan Firuz Shāh Tughlaq, a weaver received 30 jitalis for weaving a sheet.² The Bengali literature of the time also refers to the economic affluence even of the ordinary weavers.³ It may be rightly concluded from this that the skilled artisans and manufacturers were well remunerated for their works and, by their talent and living, they were entitled to be reckoned in the middle class of the society.

The prosperity of Bengal in agricultural and industrial products and a large demand for its commodities by other countries promoted the rise of many traders and merchants in ports and cities to prosperity. According to the accounts of the foreign travellers, the merchants of Bengal were very wealthy and they lived luxuriously. A Chinese envoy says that everyone of the Bengali merchants was engaged in business, the value of which amounted to 10,000 pieces of gold.⁴ Both Varthema and Barbosa speak of the richest merchants they saw in the port of Bengal. These merchants maintained big families and large staff of servants.⁵ On the basis of their wealth and luxurious living, the big merchants would deserve to be enrolled in the upper class of the society. But because of their lack of political influence, they cannot be said to have formed a part of the aristocracy of that time.

¹ See Chapter XI, from the Accounts of Foreigners.
³ See p. 223.
⁵ Hakluyt Society, II, pp. 144-48; Purchas—His Pilgrims, vol. IX.
In the Bengali literature there are references of *haldar* (hawladārs) or small landlords and farmers among the Muslims. On account of their position as farmers and well-to-do persons, they were an influential section of the middle class. The Bengali poet Vijayagupta mentions of a *hawladār Dula* by name, who had great influence in his locality.¹

It appears from the accounts of the dress and habits of the people given by the Chinese envoys and the European merchants that the middle class people had a very decent and comfortable living. They were well dressed. Writing of the Bengali people, Mahuan says, "The men shave their heads and wear white cloth turbans and a long loose robe with a round collar, which they put on over their heads and which is fastened in at the waist by a broad coloured handkerchief. They wear pointed leather shoes."² This was the dress of the upper middle class, particularly of the officers and the educated Muslims. In describing the dress of the people of *Bengal*ah, Barbosa says, "The men of the common people wear short white shirts half way down the thigh and drawers, and very small head wraps of three or four turns; all of them are shod with leather, some with shoes, others with sandals, very well worked, sewn with silk and gold thread."³ This dress of the common people referred to by the Portuguese merchant was really the dress of the lower section of the middle class. He has given an account of a splendid dress of the upper class people.

¹ Vijayagupta— *Manasamangala*, p. 58:
The poet says, "Dula, a haldar and a brother-in-law of Husain, is a very proud man. He keeps constant company with Husain and all the Hindus are frightened away from him."

² Mahuan's *Accounts*—N. K. Bhattasali's *Coins and Chronology, etc.*, p. 170.

The Common People:

The cultivators, smaller artisans, petty manufacturers and various classes of labourers belonged to the commonalty of the society. The common people of the Muslims generally preferred to enter the army or to take up some clerical job in the government. The Hindus formed the bulk of the agricultural class. The Muslims, during the period of the Muslim rule, had many avenues of employment. The Muslim rulers maintained big regular and irregular army. The nobles kept a large establishment of retinues. The government officers in districts were provided with a large force of horsemen and paiks (footmen) and also many piyadas in the discharge of their responsibilities of preserving peace and order in their jurisdictions. Even the Muslim merchants and landlords had big establishment of paiks and piyadas. From the writings of poet Sasthivar, an idea of the large establishment of a local officer may be obtained. The poet writes that the qadi of Hasanhati, in an expedition, was followed by a party of eighteen thousand paiks. There were also bowmen on horse-back.¹ Though there is an obvious exaggeration in the writings of the poet, this however represents the prevailing practice. This is confirmed from the writings of other poets. In describing of a minor campaign of the qadi to chastise some offending cowboys, poet Dvij Bansibadan (Bansidas) says that the qadi was accompanied by three lakhs of Khwajas (eunuchs), one thousand Pathans and innumerable persons with sticks.²

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¹ Sasthivar—Manasamangala, ed. D. C. Sen—Banga Sahitya Parichaya, pt. 1, p. 254:

² Dvij Bansibadan—Manasamangala, ed. D. C. Sen—Banga Sahitya Parichaya, pt. 1, pp. 316-17:

(Continued on next page)
The *piyadas* were indispensable to the government officers. Their duty was to carry out the summons and arrest the accused persons. The poet Vijayagupta says that the *qadi* sent hundreds of *piyadas* to arrest the accused cowboys.¹ There is an amusing story about a *piyada*. Qādi Sirāj al-Dīn sent a *piyada* to Sultān Ghiyāth-al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh summoning him to court to answer a charge brought against him by a widow. The *piyada*'s courage failed to approach the Sultān, when he neared the palace. So he started to recite the *adhān* (calling to prayer) and thus drew the attention of the Sultān and delivered the summons to him.²

That the Muslims had wide scope for employment as *paik*, *piyada* and in other capacities under the rulers and government officers during the period of Muslim rule is proved from the instances cited above.

The Muslims took to trade and sailing in the merchant ships. They were expert sailors of the time, and as such were appointed even by the Hindu merchants. It may be inferred from a reference of Vijayagupta that in the ships of the Hindu merchant Chand Sawdagar, there were Muslim captains and sailors, who were noted for their sea-faring activities.³

The Muslims adopted the occupation of tailoring. It seems

¹ Vijayagupta—*Manasamangala*, pp. 58-61.
³ Vijayagupta—*Manasamangala*, p. 144:

> (In one ship Qutb was captain and Kedar was chief sailor; in another, captain was Husain and chief sailor Taqai. They visited innumerable cities.)
that the Muslims practically monopolised it, because the Hindus made their cloths with Muslim tailors. Krishnadas Kaviraj says, "The Yavana (Muslim) tailor sews the cloth of Srivas (a disciple of Sri-Chaitanya)." In the Chandikavya of Mukundaram there is also mention of Muslim tailors. The poet says that the tailors cut and join the pieces of cloth with great show.

Mukundaram refers to a few minor occupations which the Muslims of the time adopted. He says that in the city of Bir founded by a hunter of the Hindu low caste, people of all classes were settled including Muslims, as were jolaha (i.e., weaver), mukeri, pithori, kabari, samakar, tirkar, kagachau, qalandar, hajjam, darji and others. The textile manufacture was the most flourishing industry in Muslim Bengal and the Muslim weavers were very skilful in this profession. In Vijayagupta's Manasa-mangala there is reference of a village called Jolarnagar (city of Jolahas or weavers), where only the weavers were settled. It is known from the poet that these Muslim weavers were skilled craftsmen, producing very fine clothes and they prospered in their occupation. Even now in Bengal, Muslim weavers produce very fine stuff. The women are also skilled in weaving.

According to Mukundaram, the Muslims who used to deal in cattle were called mukeri. Dr. J. N. Dasgupta has identified the mukeris with the cattle-drivers like the cowboys and the shepherds. In fact, the mukeris were different from the ordinary cattle-drivers or the cowboys, otherwise the word rakhali(Rakhwal,)

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1 Krishnadas Kaviraj, p. 126.
Srivaser bastra siye darji yavana.

2 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 345:
कटिंगं कापड़ जोड़े दरजीर घटा।

3 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 345:

4 Vijayagupta—Manasa-mangala, pp. 58-61:
"The weaver was very rich. He made reddish dhoti for me which I wore and went from house to house."

जोला हिल बड़ बड़ी बुनाइया दित लाल धृति
पड़िंगं बेड़ाईताम बाड़ी बाड़ी।

See also Manasa-mangala (p. 60) of Vijayagupta, who says, "Fine woven cloth is in great demand for sale (in the market):

चिकं कापड़ टांते बिकेकर बड़ टांद।
which is very common in use in Bengal for the cattle-drivers, would have been applied. They were cattle-rearers and cattle-dealers, who often went from village to village with their herd of cows and sold them to the cultivators. Even now in Bengal this type of cattle-dealers are found. In view of Bengal's being a predominantly and prosperous agricultural country, cattle-rearing and cattle-dealing was a very profitable trade.

There was a class of Muslims who followed the calling of making and selling cakes and were known by the name of *pithari*. They were really the bread manufacturers. The poet says that there was a class of Muslims called *kabari* who dealt in fish.¹ At present the name *kabari* for Muslim fish-dealers is unknown. In Persian usage *kabar* means a dealer in woods. In Hindi usage, *kabari* is a dealer in broken furniture or a person who picks up broken pieces of glass or chinawares. Nowadays the Muslim fish-dealers in Bengal are known as *māḥifarush*. Many Muslims took up the profession of manufacturing looms for the weavers. They were called *sanakar*. As Bengal had a prosperous industry and a flourishing trade in textile, the looms were in great demand. So the Muslims took to this lucrative occupation. A few Muslims lived on making bows and arrows and were known by the name of *tirakar* or bow-makers. The bows and arrows were important weapons in the warfare in Bengal. The Bengali literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reflects that the bowmen still held a very significant position in the army.² The Muslims who followed the profession of circumcision were called *Hajjam*. Mukundaram says that the *Hajjams* were so busy in their works that they did not get time for rest.³ It indicates that the birth-rate was very high among the Bengali Muslims and this accounts for the large growth of the Muslim population in this province. There

¹ Mukundaram—*Chandikavya*, p. 345.
² See Vipradas—*Manasamangala*, p. 69;
³ Mukundaram—*Chandikavya*, p. 345.
was a class of craftsmen among the Muslims who were known as *kagacha* (or *kagazia*). They manufactured papers. It is to be noted in this connection that the Muslims introduced paper in Bengal and the practice of copying books for wider circulation. Because of the great literary and intellectual awakening and the practice of copying books, the craftsmanship of manufacturing paper was a very important and respectable occupation from the beginning of the Muslim rule in this province.

In Mukundaram's *Chandikaryya* references of various other peoples of the Muslim society are found. According to this poet, the Muslim converts from Hinduism were known as *garsal* (mixed). There existed a class of *faqirs* termed *Qalandars* who wandered day and night. Another class of *faqirs* begged alms in the night time, and hence were named as *Kal*. There were also *Patkars* (painters) in the Muslim society.¹

The Bengali literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reflects that the *mullahs* occupied highly respectable position in the society, by virtue of their possession of religious knowledge. Particularly on the village societies they had enormous influence. They were devoted to the study of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* and divest the Muslim life of un-Islamic practices. It is known from Vijayagupta that even the *qadi* held the *mullah* in great esteem. The poet says, "A certain *mulla* named Taqai (*Taqi*) is well conversant with the religious books. If the *qadi* arranges a feast, he is invited before anybody else. The *mulla* tells many things (of religious instruction) by unfastening the edge of his cloth and after finishing his *japa* (reciting names of God) he kills the fowl."² Vijayagupta also writes that the *qadi* always consulted the *mullah* in social and religious matters. The *mullah* always decided matters with reference to

¹ Mukundaram—*Chandikaryya*, p. 345.
the Qur'an and the Hadith. The poet says that in order to save the life of the Muslims of the village Hasanhati from the infestation of the snakes which they thought as bhuti (evil spirit), the mullā prescribed the writing of the verses of the Qur'an and tying them as tabīz (talisman) in their necks.¹ This expresses the simple faith of the Bengali Muslim society in their scriptures which they regarded as the solution of their problems. In the time of calamities, they referred to the Qur'an. This also represents the primitiveness and credulity of the common Muslims of that time. The mullā was indeed a dignified person in the Muslim period. He was a religious scholar, teacher, preceptor and imām to the Muslims of his locality. He solemnised the religio-social ceremonies of the Muslims. An idea of the mullā's functions in village life is available from the Chandikavya of Mukundaram, who says, "The mullā conducts the ceremony of the nikah (marriage),² and gets a reward of four annas. He blesses the couple by reading the Kalima (a fundamental of Islam). He takes a sharp knife, kills the fowl and gets a gift of ten gundas of cowries."³ For butchering a she-goat, the mullā gets six buries of cowries,⁴ as also the head of the slaughtered animal.⁵

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¹ Ibid:

काजिर ओझार एक नामेदेत बालास।
केताब कोराने तार बड़ई अस्तास॥
ढोका मुळा बले आमारे बिजास। यथि कर।
केताब खाकिते केन खूंटेर डबर घर॥
केताब लिखिता दांग गंगे देन थाके॥
तबे खूंटे लुके से दोष मोरे लागे॥
ढोका मल्तार बचन तबन काजिर मने लय।
ताकिज लिखिता तबण सुकलेइ लय॥

² In Bengal nikah, in popular usage, means second marriage, although strictly in Arabic use it means first marriage. Biya, derived from the Sanskrit word bhikha, is used in the sense of first marriage among the Bengali people.

³ Ten gundas of cowries are equivalent to one-third of a pice. See J. N. Dasgupta—Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, p. 91.

⁴ Six buries are equal to a copper pice. Dasgupta, p. 91.

⁵ Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 344.
Religious character of the society:

It appears from the writings of the contemporary Bengali poets that the Muslim society was noted for its religious character and the Muslims regulated their life in accordance with the Qur'ân and the Hadîth. They were punctilious in the performance of their religious rites and ceremonies. Even in their dress and manners, they followed the tradition of the early Muslims. A glimpse of the religious character of the Muslim society may be obtained from the writings of Mukundaram, who says, “They (Muslims) rise early in the morning and, spreading a red patî (mat), say their prayers five times a day. Counting on the Sulaimānî beads, they meditate on the pîr and Paighambar (Prophet) and illuminate the seat of the pîr. Ten or twenty of them sit together to decide cases. They always recite the Qur'ân and the Kitâb (religious book).” The poet also adds, “They are very wise, they care for none (except God) and they never give up fasting (roza) even to the last breath.”1 The evidence of this Hindu poet to the strong religious feeling of the Muslims is corroborated by others.

Poet Vipradas in his Manasamangala writes, “The salîd, mullah and qâdi always consult the Qur'ân and the religious book (kitâb) and show their respects to them twice (a day). The poet also says that all the salîds, mullahs and others recited the name of God and always made references to the Qur'ân and religious books. They gave the Kalima to the Hindus and taught them Islam. They always taught ablution and prayer

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1 Mukundaram—Chumdikavya, p. 344:

कन्दर समर उठि, बिहारा। लोहित पक्ति,
पाच बेरि करबे नमाज।

गोलमनि गाला धरे, जपे पाँच (Paighambar) पीरे के मौके मे देह साज।

दश दिन बेराजेरे, बसिया बिचाय करे,
अहिंदु किताप कोरान।

बुड़े सबलब्रह्म, काहाके na करे जुड़े,
प्राण गेले गोझा नाहि हाड़ि।
Religious Character of the Society

and were devoted to the maktaba. In speaking of the qādī, poet Sasthivar says, "The qādī prays in his lips and has the Qur'ān in his hand."

The Muslims of Bengal were also very particular about their dress and habits. This is reflected in the writings of Mukundaram who observes, "They (Muslims) keep no hair on their head but allow their beard to grow down to their chest. They always adhere to their own ways. They wear on their head a topi (cap) which has ten sides and they put on ijār (trouser) which is tied tight to their waist. If they meet anybody (Muslim) who is bareheaded, they pass him by without uttering a word; but going aside they throw clods of earth at him." The picture drawn by the poet shows that the Muslims, following the example of the Prophet and the early Muslims, shaved off their head, kept flowing beard and put on trousers and cap (as well as long shirt). This account of dress is corroborated by others. Poet Dvij Bansibadan says, "The seven sons of Ḥasan were dressed in paijama (trouser), nima (shirt), topi (cap) and waist-belt." Sasthivar says that the qādī put on ijār, long shirt and cap. The description of the Bengali poet agrees with the accounts given by the Chinese envoys in the beginning of the fifteenth century. Mahuan writes, "The men (Muslims) shave off their heads and wear white cotton turbans and a long loose

2 Sasthivar—Manasamangala, p. 254:
3 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 344.
5 Sasthivar—Manasamangala, p. 254.
robe with a round collar, which they put on over their heads."

It is significant to note that the Muslims of Bengal had so much religious scruples that they considered it sinful to write about the religious subjects in Bengali. This is revealed in the writings of Shah Muhammad Saghir and other Muslim poets. It is only when they realized that the religion could be better understood and preached in mother tongue that they overcame that scruple and wrote in Bengali.

**Integrity of character:**

Apart from their deep religious feeling, the Muslims of the time possessed some admirable qualities. The Chinese envoys highly praised their honesty and sincerity. In writing of the Muslims of Bengal, Muhuan says, "In their dealings they are open and straightforward." Another Chinese envoy, Si Yang Ch'ao Kung tien lu, writes that the people of Bengal were good tempered, rich and honest. Sing Ch'a Seng lan observes that the Bengali merchants were so honest that they always respected their bargain and would never express regret when the bargain had been struck, even though it involved a big transaction of 10,000 pieces of gold.

The contemporary Bengali literature also reflects that the Muslims of Bengal were distinguished for several excellent qualities. The observation of the Hindu poet Mukundaram Chakravarti is worth mentioning in this connection. While speaking of the Muslim people of Birnagar, he says, "They are wise and enlightened; hypocrisy or trickery is unknown to them." This shows that sincerity was a very prominent trait in the character of the Muslims all throughout the period of Muslim rule in Bengal. Speaking of the Bengali people Abul Faći says, "They are submissive and duly pay their rents."

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4. Ibid.
5. Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 344.
Section B—Festivities, Ceremonial and Customs

Festivities:

Islam is a simple religion and its ceremonials are few as well as unostentatious. The Muslims of Bengal however made those festivities as occasions of great rejoicings. It is known from Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī that the Sultāns provided for the daily religious discourses during the month of Ramaḍān and preachers were appointed for this purpose. They also appointed imāms for conducting prayers of ‘Id al-Fiṭr and ‘Id al-Aḍḥa. The ‘Id prayers were held in a large open space outside the city or the village, and it was called ‘Idgāh.”

The writings of Mirzā Nathan, the author of Bahāristān-i-Ghaybī, give a glimpse of the Ramaḍān and ‘Id festivities of the Muslims. He says, “From the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān till its last day everybody, small or great, used to visit the camp of his friend everyday. It became the usual practice that everyday all the people would spend their time in the camp of one of these noble friends by turn. Accordingly on the night of the last day it was the turn of Mubāriz Khān’s banquet. All people spent their time in his place.” It indicates that the Ramaḍān was a period not merely of abstinence and prayer, but of meeting and eating as well among the well-to-do Muslims, in the night.

Mirzā Nathan also gives an idea of the rejoicings of the Muslims at the sight of the new moon of the ‘Id al-Fiṭr. He says, “At the end of the day when the new moon was seen at candle-light the imperial trumpet was blown and all the firearms in the artillery were continually fired. In its later part of the night, the firing of guns was stopped and its place was taken by the big cannon. It was simply an earthquake.” This proclamation of the ‘Id was made by the Mughul army from its camp in Bengal. It reveals how the Muslims welcomed the ‘Id and announced the coming of the festival of rejoicings.
and thanks giving.

On the day of the 'Id, the Muslims, male, female and children, put on new and fine clothes. Ghulām Husain refers to the 'Id al-Adha as the day of rejoicings and fresh clothes for all mankind. He says that because of a bereavement, Nawāzish Muḥammad Khān, a nephew and son-in-law of Nawāb 'Ali-vardī Khān, continued inconsolate even on so great a solemnity. The old Nawāb visited the afflicted prince and tried in vain to persuade him to put on a fresh apparel. He then directed his Begam and all the ladies of the harem to appear in the presence of the prince with clothes suitable to so great a day, so as to cheer him up.1

Dressed in fine apparel, the Muslims went in procession to the 'Idgāh. The well-to-do persons scattered largesses and gifts as they walked on and the common Muslims gave alms to the poor. According to Azād Ḥusainī Bilgrāmi, the author of Naubohār-i-Murshid Quli Khānī, Murshid Quli Khān, the deputy Nawāb of Dacca under Nawāb Shujā' al-Dīn, scattered coins profusely on the 'Id day and during the procession to the 'Idgāh, one kos from the fort of Dacca.”2 The Muslims said their 'Id prayer in a big congregation at the 'Idgāh and embraced each other. Feasting and rejoicings went in every house and there were greetings everywhere. They visited the houses of friends and relations to exchange compliments and to rejoice together on this great festive day.

The 'Id al-Adha was celebrated with great solemnities and festivities. It is the festival of sacrifice which originated from Prophet Ibrāhīm. The Muslims followed his noble example of sacrificing his dear son Isma‘il in the way of God. In this festival day, the Muslims put on new dres and went to the 'Idgāh in procession, repeating takbīr (the creed). They said their prayer in congregation and greeted each other, expressing joy and brotherly feeling. Then they sacrificed some animal, cow, goat, sheep or camel according to their means, and feasted themselves. Meat was distributed among the poor who could not afford to sacrifice animal. It was also an occasion of meeting

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1 Sīyar al-Mutakherīn, 11, p. 119.
2 Translated by Sarkar, J. N.—Bengal Nawabs, p. 8.
friends and relations and feasting and rejoicing together. In reference to the 'Id al-Åžha, Mirzâ Nathan says, "On the day of the festival, friends, relations and officers went to the place of each other and offered their greetings for the 'Id. The commander Shujâ'at Khân held a social gathering to receive friends on this day of rejoicings." On the occasion of the 'Id presents and gifts were made among friends and relations. Describing the Id al-Åžha celebration, Mirza Nathan writes in another place that all went to the 'Idgâh. The preacher read the sermon in the name of Emperor Jahângîr. After it was finished, pieces of silver coins were showered on him. "Many of the needy people removed their difficulties of livelihood by means of this and they became happy. Voices of greetings reached sky. After returning home, I performed the Qurbâni (sacrifice of animals). A banquet was held throughout the whole day and night with pleasant entertainments of beautiful singers and dancers of lovely grace and story-tellers of pleasant disposition. Many of the workers of the factories were favoured with gifts.1 The festivities continued for two or three days. These were also accompanied by music and dance.2 This shows that the 'Id festivities during the period of Muslim rule were marked by a spirit of great rejoicings and brotherly feelings among the Muslims.

The Bengali Muslims also celebrated the birthday of the Prophet in a magnificent manner. It is known that Nawâb Murshid Qull Khân made it the occasion of great festivities. He entertained the people the first twelve days of the month of Rabi' al-Awwal. He also illuminated the whole city of Murshidabad including the banks of the Bhagirathi. Cannons were fired at an appropriate time proclaiming this most momentous and happiest occasion of the Muslims.3 The nativity of the Prophet was celebrated all throughout Muslim India by the rulers and the people in general. According to Mir'ât-i-Sikandari, Sultan Muzaffar II (1515-25 A.D.) of Gujarât used to invite the 'ulema, the saiyids and shaikhs to dinners and presented them with

2 Manusci, IV, p. 235.
3 See K. P. Sen—Banglar Itihasha (Nawabi 'Amal), p. 70.
cash and clothes sufficient for a year.¹ Th. Gujrati Sultan Mahmud II (1537) arranged for the meeting of the 'ulema and shaikhs every day from the first of the Rabî' al-Awwal to the twelfth at his palace. They discussed the Hādīth from morning till quarter of the day and then they were treated to dinner. The Sultan and his ministers and amirs waited on the 'ulema and shaikhs at the table. He made present of gold and clothes to these learned and pious guests in such quantity that it enabled them to maintain themselves for a year.²

This suggests that it was customary for the rulers and well-to-do Muslims to hold meetings and discuss the life and teachings of the great Prophet to commemorate the birthday of the founder of Islam. It was also the occasion of making presents to the pious and learned and also of feasting and thanksgiving among the Muslims.

The Shab-i-Barat was another great festival of the Muslims performed on 14 of Sha'bān. It is known from the contemporary histories that the Nawabs of Bengal celebrated this festival with great éclat. The houses were illuminated and prayers were offered the whole night in every mosque and house by men and women. Feasts were held and alms were distributed among the poor. There was also the exhibitions of fireworks.³ The Nawabs indeed continued the long standing custom of the Muslims of this country. It is gathered from the evidence of Shams Siraj Afif that Sultan Firuz Tughlaq celebrated the festival for four days and used such fireworks that gave the nights the look of broad day-light.⁴ The reference of Shab-i-Barat is also found in Tārikh-i-Dāudi, whose author 'Abd Allah wrote that Khwās Khān, the great noble of Sher Shāh and supporter of his son 'Ādil Khān, offered prayers the whole night of the Shab-i-Barat in the company of Shaikh Salīm Chishti at Fatehpur-Sikri.⁵ This suggests that the Shab-i-Barat was a

¹ Mir'at-i-Sikandari (Tr. Faḍl Allāh), p. 121.
² Ibid, pp. 243-44.
³ Sarkar's MS., B. P. P., 1948, p. 11.
⁴ Afif—Tārikh-i-Firuz Shāhī, pp. 35-67.
⁵ Dāudi, pp. 104-05.
common festival of the Muslims and it was an occasion of prayers, feastings and rejoicings.

The common belief is that the *Shah-i-Barât* is the night of record and that Allâh allots the subsistence of men in this night. It is believed that the Prophet enjoined on the Muslims to keep vigil in the night by offering prayers, reciting the *Qur'ân* and doing pious work. Some scholars hold that it is copied from the Hindu festival of *Sivaratri*. Whatever might be its origin the Muslims however performed it as a significant religio-social festival. Men offered prayers the whole night. They also made it the occasion of feasting and merry-making by means of illuminations and fireworks.

The Muslims of India, particularly the Shi'as, celebrated the *Muharram* as the anniversary of the martyrdom of Ḥusain at Karbala. Father Monserrate has left an account of the *Muharram* celebration of the time of Emperor Akbar. He writes that during the *Muharram* the Muslims kept fast for the first nine days of the month, eating only pulse, and publicly recited the story of the sufferings of Hasan and Husain from a raised platform. This stirred the whole assembly to lamentation and tears. On the last day (10th of *Muharram*) they erected funeral pyres and burnt these one after another. The people jumped over the flaming fires and then scattered the glowing ashes with their feet. They also shrieked with the cries of Hasan and Husain. Mandelslo gives a picture of the *Muharram* procession of the time of Emperor Shâhjahân at Agra. He says, "There were carried about the city, coffins covered with bows and arrows, turbans, scimitars, and garments of silk, which the people accompany with sobbings and lamentations. Some among them dance at the ceremony, others strike their sword one against another; nay, there are those who cut and slash themselves, so as that the blood comes out in several places, wherewith they rub their clothes, and by that means represent a very strange procession. Towards night they set up several
figures of men, made of straw, to personate the murderers of those saints (Hasan and Husain); and having shot a great many arrows at them, they set them on fire, and reduce them to ashes."

The *Sunni* Muslims observed the *Muharram* as an occasion of silent mourning and generally kept aloof from the passion plays and procession of the *Shi'as*. Only the common people of the *Sunnis* took part in these. The Muslims also observed the first of *Muharram* as the new year’s day. It is known from *Baharistan* that the *Muharram* moon was hailed with rejoicings and mutual greetings by the Muslims.

There were *Shi'as* in Bengal during the period of Muslim rule. In the Bengali literature of the sixteenth century, there are references of the *imambara* of the *Shi'as*. Poet Mukundaram Chakravarti says that the Muslims in the extreme western end of their settlement (in the newly founded city of Gujrat) made their *Husainbati* (*imambara*, the place of the *Muharram Tazia*) and they all congregated in the place. Each of them contributed to the decoration of the Mokam (*Imambara*). They had their green flags and beat their drums. *Imambara* is the centre of the *Muharram* festival. It is from this sanctuary of the *Shi'as* that the *tazia* and procession start. The existence of the *imambara* and other symbols connected with the *Muharram* festival in the sixteenth century suggest that it was celebrated by Muslims of the time.

The introduction of the *Muharram Tazia* is ascribed to Amir Timur. In fact it was first introduced in Baghdad by the Buwayhid Amirs, who were *Shi'as*.

The Bengali Muslims are known to celebrate a ceremony known as *Bera* festival. It was performed in honour of the

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1 Mandelslo, p. 42.
2 *Baharistan*, I, p. 190.
3 Mukundaram—*Chandikavya*, p. 344:

पुरारे पश्चिम पट, बलार हासन (हॉलेन) हाटी
एक त्र सवार घर बाड़ी।
पुरारे घोरदारे देखे बाज।
शाखे बाज़े बड़ी निशान।

4 Hollister—*The Shi'as*. 
Prophet Khwaja Khidr (Prophet Ilyas) who is traditionally regarded as the patron of all waters. Nawab Murshid Quli Khan celebrated this festival in a grand style. Illumination of boats made of banana trees and bamboos and of houses and mosques of paper constructed on them were the peculiar features of the Bera festival. Murshid Quli Khan made a vessel 300 cubits in length and built house and mosque on it. The vessel was illuminated gorgeously and then floated in the river. The light of the vessel was seen from a distance of many miles. There was also display of fireworks on this occasion. The Bera festival was celebrated on the last Thursday of the Bengali month of Bhadra. Many Muslims took part in this festival. It was introduced in Dacca by Nawab Mukarram Khan.  

Social Ceremonies:

The birth of a child, particularly of a son, was an occasion of great rejoicings in the society. At the news of the birth of a son to Mirza Nathan, the Mughul army in Bengal spent a day and night in festivities. The friends congratulated the blessed father. Grand feast was held and the guests were given presents. Elephant fight was arranged to celebrate the happy occasion. The contemporary Bengali literature reflects the rejoicings of the family at the birth of the child. After the birth of Majnun, his parents provided for all kinds of festivities in the house. Music and dancing were also arranged and everybody enjoyed the happy event. It was also an occasion of making presents and gifts and giving alms by the happy parents. When Saif al-Mulk was born, his father gave away money and clothes to the poor. He then called in the astrologer and held the horo-

2 Baharistan, i, pp. 168 and 170.
3 Bahram—Laila-Majnun, p. 18:

পুত্রকে হেরিয়া তন্ক (janak) হৃদয়ে।
jaban সাফল্যা হেন (jānila) লিখিত।

বৃত্তান্তের নানাবিধ বঙ্গ কৌশল
উৎসব করিল। অতি আনন্দ মহল॥
scope of the child.¹ The evidence from other sources corroborates that the Muslims prepared the horoscope of the newly-born child. Ghulām Ḥusain says that Nawāb Mfr Qāsim had a fair knowledge of astrology and he prepared his child’s horoscope by the astrologers.² The Italian traveller Manucci writes, “From the birth till the sixth or seventh day there is as much a festivity as a family can afford. This feast is called chhatti (the sixth day rite).³

John Marshall, who visited Bengal in 1668 A.D., has left an account of the various ceremonies connected with the birth of a child. He says, “The Moors or Mussalmans have one name which they receive the second day after they are born, as follows, viz: the father or the nearest relation to the new born sends for the Mulva (maulavi) or priest, who shutting a Book, the father pricks between the leaves to the Book, where when opened, the Mulva takes the first letter in that leaf and the meaning thereof, called the child.”⁴ The writings of John Marshall express that the Bengali Muslims consulted the Holy Book in naming a child. Even now this practice obtains among the Muslims. This also accounts for the prevalence of Arabic names of the Muslims in Bengal.

The next ceremony associated with the birth of the child was the aqīqa. Aqīqa properly means the hair of the new born infant; but it commonly applies to shaving ceremony and the confirmation of the child’s name in a formal manner. In this ceremony, sheep or goat, two in case of a male child and one, if the child is a female one, was sacrificed to commemorate the naming of the child and the meat was distributed among the relations and poor. Feast was held and people were entertained by the well-to-do parents.

When the child attains the age of 4 years, 4 months and 4

2 Ghulām Ḥusain—Sīyar al-Mutaḥiriṭin.
3 Manucci, III, p. 50.
4 John Marshall in India—Observations; edited by Shafat Aḥma Khan, p. 405.
days, a rite known as the *Bism Allah Khānī* was performed. With a solemn ceremony of prayers, blessings and rejoicings the child was presented to the teacher to begin reading with the name of Allah. He was thus initiated to education.¹

Circumcision called *Khatna*, cutting of fore-skin of the penis or *sunniat*, was another rite that was ceremoniously performed by the Muslims. Usually in the seventh year the male child was circumcised and it was made an occasion of festivities and rejoicings as well as of distribution of presents.

*Marriage*:

The marriage was the momentous phase in the life of every person, male or female. It was attended with great festivities and was celebrated amidst extraordinary rejoicings, pomp and pageantry.

It was the custom of the society to have the boys and girls married at an early age. This is reflected in the Bengali literature of the Muslim period. The father of Majnūn, the hero of the epic *Laila-Majnūn*, proposed the marriage of his son even when the boy was in the *pathsala* or primary school. At that time Majnūn must have been aged less than twelve. The heroine of this epic, Laila, was married before she had completed the primary education.² As she was still reading in the primary school, she was not aged more than eleven years.

The early marriage was very common among the Hindus. They considered it a religious duty to marry their sons and daughters in early age, particularly the girls before the age of puberty. It is known from the Vaishnava literatures that Chaitanya, the great teacher of *Vaishnavism*, married at the age of 12. Kalaketu, the hero of Mukundaram’s *Chandikavya*, was married with Phullara when he was aged only eleven years.³

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¹ See Chapter V: Learning and Education, p. 189.
² Bahram—*Laila-Majnūn*, pp. 567-68 and 87.
³ *Chandikavya*, p. 174.
The writings of the European travellers express the prevalence of early marriage throughout this subcontinent even in the sixteenth century. Ralph Fitch, who visited India in the eighties of the sixteenth century, observes, "We found marriages great store both in towns and villages in many places where we passed, of boys of eight or ten years, or girls of five or six years old. They both do ride upon one horse very trimly decked, and are carried through the town with great piping and playing, and so return home and eat of a banquet made of rice and there they dance the most part of the night and so make an end of the marriage. They lie not together until they be ten years old. They say, they marry their children so young because it is an order that when the man dieth, the woman must be burned with him: so that if the father die, yet they may have a father-in-law to help to bring up the children which be married: and also that they will not leave their sonses without husbands." 1

The accounts of Ralph Fitch reveal that the early marriage was of universal practice, particularly among the lower class Hindus. Abūl Faḍl’s ʻĀ‘īn-i-Akbarī also testifies to the prevalence of early marriage in the society of the time. According to Abūl Faḍl, the enlightened Emperor Akbar disfavoured this bad custom and he forbade the marriage of boys below 16 and girls under 14. He made the consent of the bridegroom and the bride essential in the marriage contracts. The Emperor also disapproved dowry system, polygamy and the marriage between a young man and an aged woman. 2 The regulations of Emperor Akbar seem to have remained a dead letter, because early marriage, dowry system, etc., continued even after these legislations both among the Muslims and the Hindus.

There is plenty of evidence to show that early marriage prevailed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Scrafton writes that the Muslim boys and girls were married in their infancy. They consummated their marriages at 13 or

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1 R. Fitch—England's Pioneers in India, ed. by J. Horton Lyley, pp. 95-96.
14 and a separate household was formed of them. The upper class families were not an exception to this general practice. It is gathered from the contemporary histories that Nawab Siraj al-Daulah and his brother Akram al-Daulah married at young age. The daughter of the deceased Nawab Siraj al-Daulah was married so young that when she died in 1774 A.D., at the age of 20, she left behind her four daughters, Sharif al-Nisah, Asmat al-Nisah, Sakina and Amat al-Mahdi, all of whom were also married quite early.¹

Sкраfton's remark about early marriage in the eighteenth century is worth quoting. Referring to the marriage in the lower provinces of Hindustan, he says, "They are married in their infancy, and consummate at 14 on the male side and 10 or 11 on the female, and it is common to see a woman of 12 with a child in her arms. Though a barren woman is rare among them, yet they bear but few children. At 18 their beauty is on the decline and at 25 they are strongly marked with age. The men indeed were something better, though they are on the decline after 30. Thus the spring of life was but of short duration."²

The marriage of a girl at an advanced age was disfavoured in the society and the parents of such a girl incurred universal odium. Crawford observes, "The Hindus are so scrupulous with respect to the virginity of their brides that they marry extremely young, although consummation is deferred till the first menstruation, when they perform the ceremony of punarviva (second marriage) with various rites and customs similar to those of the first marriage."³

The girls had no choice in the selection of their husbands, and the boys in that of their wives. This was the practice in the society, particularly among the Hindus. The parents and guardians did not consider their opinion to be at all necessary

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¹ See Dutt—Begums of Bengal, p. 36.
³ Quoted in Datta's Bengal Subah, pp. 70-71.
in their marriage. Sometimes a young beautiful and accomplished girl was married to a deaf or a blind or to an old man. Occasionally however the educated girls could make a choice of their husbands. It is known from a poetical work entitled Malliker Hazar Sawal that an accomplished Muslim girl, Mallika, had literary debate with her suitors and in the end married one who excelled her in learning and wit. Similarly it is found that Vidya, the heroines of Bharat Chandra’s Annadamangala, selected her husband after a literary competition. But such cases were very few in the society of the time.

There was also the evils of Kulinism and dowry system among the Hindus. It was common for a Kulin Brahmin to marry many wives just to obtain a substantial dowry in every marriage. Polygamy obtained among the Muslims as well as upper class Hindus, particularly the Brahmins. The Bengali literature of the time reflects this. Bhavananda Majumdar of Bharat Chandra’s Annadamangala had two wives. So also Atmabodha Kavya’s hero, Mana, married two wives who were named Sumati and Kumati. Nityananda, the companion disciple of Chaitanya had two wives, who were sisters. It is known from Mukundaram’s Chandikavya that well-to-do Hindus had even seven wives. The poet gives the feeling of a Hindu woman among co-wives, saying, “It is full of troubles to live in the house with seven co-wives.”

Among the Muslims, the bridegroom gave dowries to the bride. The bride’s father occasionally made presents to the bridegroom and his party. But it was not binding on him. Among the Hindus however it was customary to give rich dowries to the bridegroom. Even among the lower classes of them the bride’s father was bound to give dowries to the bridegroom and also to handsomely reward the go-between. The

1 See Bharat Chandra—Annadamangala, pp. 87-90.
3 See Bharrat Chandra—Annadamangala, p. 5.
4 See S. K. Sen—Bangala Sahityer Itihasha, p. 685.
5 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 175.
father of Phullara, the bride, agreed to give the bridegroom Kalaketu, son of a hunter, twelve kahan cowries and to the go-between four pan cowries, twenty betel-nuts and five seers of gur (molasses). For a poor huntsman the amount of dowries to the bridegroom and reward to the go-between was indeed quite heavy.

The marriage was more a family question rather than a personal concern of the marrying couple. With it was connected the prestige of the family in the society. Hence the parents and guardians were zealous of the maintenance of the family tradition in the selection of the bride, in the marriage contract as well as in the celebration of the marriage. The father or anyone of the bridegroom would go to the bride's father with the marriage proposal. If he agreed to the proposal, then the dowries, etc., were settled. Majnūn's father proposed to give for his son rich dowries which comprised valuable gold and diamond ornaments, large number of slaves and many domestic animals.

If the two parties came to an agreement with regard to the marriage, then the betrothal ceremony, known as tilak or magni, was celebrated. At that time a date was fixed for the marriage which is technically called lagan. From this time the preparation for the marriage began. Two or three days before the marriage day (lagan), another formal function called sachaq was performed. Sachaq is a henna plant which yields red dye when squeezed and this is used in colouring the fingers and toes of the bride. In Bengali it is known as the halud (haldi) turmeric ceremony, when turmeric is pasted on the body.

1 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 175:
Paner nirnaya kaila dadas kahan,
Ghatikali pabe ojha tumi char pan,
Panch ganda gua diba gur punch ser,
Eba dile ar kichhu na kahibe fer.
"The dowry was settled at twelve kahens (of cowries); the go-between would get 4 pans (cowries), 5 gandas betel-nuts and five seers of molasses. After this there would be no more demand."

2 See Bahrām—Laila-Majnūn, p. 68.

3 Ibid.
of the bride. This ceremony, which was accompanied also with various wedding gifts from the bridegroom's side, was performed amidst great rejoicings and splendour.

From a marriage at the Nawab family of Murshidabad, a glimpse of the splendorous sachq ceremony can be obtained. After the sunset, from the bridegroom's house were sent rich presents of dress, ornaments, sweets, scents, etc., to the bride's house. These were carried in procession by hundreds of slaves accompanied by an arrays of thousands of glittering lamps. The relations of the bridegroom as well as the ladies of their houses joined the procession in decorated conveyance.

The marriage in the upper class families was associated with great festivities which continued several months. There was enormous extravagance and show on this occasion. The contemporary account of the marriages of Siraj al-Daulah and his younger brother Akram al-Daulah will give an idea of the gorgeousness and extravagance of the upper class wedding. "In the marriage of Akram al-Daulah, the expenditure on scents, illumination and fireworks was twelve lakh rupees, besides the cost of robes presented to the people, high and low. For full three months, day and night, one lakh of troopers, one lakh of infantry and one crore of ryots enjoyed the festivity and the music." The contemporaries also observed that the second marriage of Siraj al-Daulah was grander even than the marriage of his brother. Nawab 'Allvardo made this an occasion of splendid festivities. "Throughout the entire rainy season, in every house every night was like the Night of Barat and everyday like th: New Year's Day."

In describing these marriage festivities, Yusuf 'Ali, the author of Aiwal-i-Mahabat Jang, writes, "These marriages were celebrated with greatest splendour and decoration; it is no exaggera-

1 See Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 176.
3 Sarkar's MS., 25b-26a; B. P. P., 1948, p. 11.
4 Sarkar's MS., f. 27a; B. P. P., 1948, p. 11.
tion to say that Bengal had never before seen such grand celebrations. Alivardi gave away about one thousand robes and Shahabat Jang, at the marriage of Akram al-Daulah, nearly thousand resplendent, each priced from a hundred to a thousand rupees, and some of them even higher, to all their kinsfolk, fellow tribesmen, followers, companions and dancing-girls and musicians. For one month, nay longer, feasting continued in the houses of both these chiefs. There remained no man, high or middle class, among the inhabitants of the city who did not get a share of this bounty (food) repeatedly; and every man's portion, which is popularly known as torah, was made up at a cost of 20 to 25 rupees; and thousands of these were distributed.”

On the occasion of the marriage the houses of the bride and bridegroom were tastefully decorated and brilliantly illuminated. Even the houses of the neighbours assumed festive look. The marriage ceremony was performed in the bride's house. An open space was prepared for the celebration of the ceremony. A platform was made there and a canopy was raised over it. Gates were constructed by the planting of banana plants. Wedding wreaths of flowers and festoons of leaves adorned the gates and the platform as well as the route between the two. Wedding songs were sung and reed pipes and flutes and varieties of musical instruments were played to mark the rejoicings of this great festival in the houses of the bride and bridegroom. The women and girls of the houses of the neighbours and relations would assemble in the bride's house and enlivened the occasion with their wit and humour. Many humorous rites and superstitious formalities were associated with the marriage festivity.

The bridegroom's party in bright costume came in procession. The musicians played various types of musical instruments.

2 See Bahrām's Laīla-Majnūn, p. 87 and Vijayagupta's Munasaṃgala, p. 171.
all the way. Hundreds of torches were lit in the night. The bridegroom's party were received by the bride's father and relations and were conducted to the platform. Betel-leaf and sweet drinks were offered to the guests.¹

John Marshall has given an interesting and accurate account of the celebration of the marriage ceremony among the Bengali Muslims. He writes, "The Moores when they marry, the cadgie (gâîfî) or padry (mulla) ask the man if he will have the woman which is there covered, and making him promises to give her such a sum of money as is agreeable to his condition, which afterwards he performs in her maintenance. The woman by her vokeele (vakîl) or friend (deputy) agrees to the marriage, and the cadgie takes two witnesses of the woman's consenting by her vokeele to her marriage. And when they are married, then the man sees his wife."² In the villages, the mulla (religious teacher) solemnised the marriage ceremony and prayed for the married couple. He was paid a little for this work.³ After the marriage ceremony, the guests were treated to a sumptuous feast.

The wealthy Hindus also celebrated the marriage with remarkable pomp and pageantry. The marriage of Lakshmindar with Behula reflects the splendour of the Hindu marriages.⁴ In fact, in the principal ceremonies and festivities connected with marriage, the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal did not have much difference except in forms. The Hindu ceremonies were characterized by more details and many superstitious practices. The turmeric ceremony of the Hindu bride was a long process and was attended with many rites and rituals. There was also difference in the celebration of the marriage ceremony. The Muslim bride was not brought in the wedding meeting, but her consent to the marriage was taken through the vakîl or

¹ See K. M. Ashraf—Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan, p. 147.
³ See Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 345.
⁴ See Vijayagupta's Manasamangala, p. 187.
Food

deputy. But the Hindu bride was taken to the wedding mandap, or the wedding meeting. She was placed on a wooden seat (pidi) and was taken round the bridegroom seven times. The Brahmin priest would then solemnise the marriage and the bride would put a garland of flowers on the neck of the bridegroom.¹

It was a custom in Bengal that the bride and bridegroom played dice after the marriage was celebrated. This game was generally played in the apartment, known as Basar Ghar. In Bengal the Basar is that tastefully decorated room with sweet and beautiful flowers where the newly wed couple is made to stay during the first night of their marriage. Lakshmindar and Behula played dice in the Basar Ghar.² In Chandravati’s Katha Ramayana also there is reference of the game of dice between the bride and bridegroom.³ This practice prevailed among the Muslims also. In the Basar Ghar the women relations of the bride used to cut jokes with the bridegroom and make various funs with the young married couple.⁴

Food:

While discussing the upper class of the Muslim society, reference has been made of their luxury in food and dress. The writings of the Chinese envoys and of Sebastian Manrique give some ideas about the food of the Muslims. They used to have at their table varieties of dishes of fowl, mutton and meat, both roasted and soaked. Different kinds of sweets and fruits formed part of the menu. Varieties of pickles (achar) made of cucumber, radish, limes, green chilies, etc., were the distinguishing feature of the Muslim food. As Sebastian Manrique says, these (achars) served to spur the appetite and re-open the road to a meal. The Hindus did not know the preparation and use of this type of relish in their meals. Nowhere in the description

¹ See the Ramayana of Krittivas and Vijagagupta’s Manasamangala, p. 187.
² Kashemananda—Manasamangala MS., A. B. f. 23.
⁴ Narayandeva—Padmapurana, p. 31 and Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 176.
of the feasts and meals of the Hindus is found any reference of pickle.

In the Bengali literature there are many references about food. It is known that the Muslims of Bengal favoured fowl, mutton and meat curries.\(^1\) There is mention of the bread as a food of the Bengali Muslims.\(^2\) Besides rice, fish and vegetables were the common food of the people. Varieties of fishes were available in plenty in the rivers and waters of Bengal. Vegetables of different kinds were grown in its soil.\(^3\) So even the common people among the Muslims could prepare sundry fish and vegetable curries for their meals. *Khichri* (a preparation of rice and pulse usually with *ghee* or oil) was a favourite dish of the people. Even the upper class people had special liking for it. According to Bernier, Emperor Shāh Jahān was very fond of this dish. It is known from Yūsuf ‘Alī that Nawāb ‘Alivārdī Khān and his *amīrs* also relished *khichri*.

Speaking broadly, Muslim food, particularly on festive occasions, was distinguished by varieties of meat, fowl and mutton preparations and also by varieties of pickles. In festivities, such as marriage, the Hindus generally prepared many fish, vegetable and sweet dishes. Sweets and curds were essential items of food in the feasts of the Hindus. From the *Manasamangala Kavyas*, which record the feast given in the marriage of Lakshmīndar, an idea of the Hindu dishes on festive occasions may be obtained. This may be compared with the food menu of the Muslims, as given in the accounts of the Chinese and of Sebastian Manrique.

*Dress*:

The contemporary accounts reflect that the Muslims of Bengal had their distinctive dress. According to the Chinese accounts, the upper class Muslims put on *ijar* or trousers and a

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1 Mukundaram—*Chandikavya*, p. 345.
2 See Vijayagupta—*Manasamangala*, p. 56.
3 See Vijayagupta *Manasamangala*, pp. 60-61.
long loose robe (gown or long shirt) with a round collar. This shirt was fastened in at the waist by a broad coloured handkerchief. They wore white cotton turban which was 40 feet long and 6 inches wide. They used low sheep-skin shoes with gold thread or painted leather shoes. The Portuguese traveller Barbosa noticed the same kind of dress among the respectable Muslims of the city of Bengal. He also observed that they wore many jewelled rings on their fingers and fine cotton caps on their heads.

Referring to the dress of the Muslims in general Barbosa says, "The men of the common people wear short white shirts halfway down the thigh and drawers, and very small head wraps of three turns; all of them are shod with leather, others with sandals very well-worked, sewn with silk or gold thread." The trouser, short shirt and a small turban referred to by Barbosa as the dress of the common Muslims was in fact worn by the middle class people.

The Bengali literature also gives an idea of his type of dress of the Muslims. Paijama (trouser), shirt, long or short, and topi (cap) formed the dress of the well-to-do Muslims and the religious teachers, such as the mullas and maulvis. They disfavoured a Muslim who did not put on a cap.

The common people, particularly the cultivators and labouring class, put on lungi (a cloth like skirt) nima or a small half shirt and a cap. There is reference of this dress in the Purva Banga Gitika, or the local folk-songs of East Bengal.

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1 See Visva Bharati Annals, 1945, vol. I pp. 96-134.
4 See Bansidas—Manasamangala, pp. 216-17 and Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 345.
5 D. C. Sen—Purva Banga Gitika, p. 14:
   Parandapi tahman kalā kurta gāi,
   Mathar uar (upar) tubi (topi),
   Anā (āinā) dhari chāi.
The ladies of the aristocratic class were splendidly attired. They were dressed in kamiz (shirt) and shalwâr (trouser) or skirt. Referring to the dress of the women the Chinese envoys wrote, "The women wore a short shirt, wrap around them a piece of cotton, silk or brocade." Reference has previously been made of the observation of the foreigners about the naturally beautiful complexion of the Muslim ladies. They needed no cosmetics. "Around their neck they hang pendants, and they do up their hair in knot behind. On their wrists and ankles are gold bracelets and on their fingers and toes rings." Barbosa also noticed that the women were very richly dressed and adorned with silk and jewels set in gold.

Ornaments:

The Bengali literature represents that the women were very fond of fine dress and precious ornaments. They wore various types of saries or skirts and shirts of silk or cotton. The women of the wealthy families adorned themselves with necklace and ear-rings of pearls and diamonds, and armlet, bracelet, bangles and rings of gold set with precious stones. They also put on an ornament, called kinkhîn, around their waist and nupur or anklets in their feet.¹

Various kinds of toilet were in use among the women of the time. Their hair was tied in knot behind, and eyes were tinted with collyrium (anjân). The front of forehead was tinted with vermillion (sindhur) and lips were tinted rosy with saffron (kumkum). They coloured their nails with henna. They also put on sandal mark on their forehead, and garland of flowers on the neck.²

The common women put on an ordinary sari or a skirt


and a bodice (choll). Ear-ring and nose-ring (nath) were their ornaments. The reference of this dress and ornament is available in the local folksongs. They also adorned themselves with various kinds of silver ornaments. Ralph Fitch wrote that the women wore a great store of silver hoops about their necks and arms. Their legs were ringed with silver and copper and rings made of elephant teeth.

Recreation and social customs:

The upper class people held social gatherings and convivial parties for recreation. The social gatherings were enlivened with the competitions of the poets, wits and musicians. Literary discussions were arranged in such gatherings. Thus it is found that the Hindu scripture, the *Mahabharata*, was discussed in the court of Paragal Khān, a Muslim governor of Chittagong. The convivial parties were the occasion for amusements and the songstressers and dancing-girls in splendid attire used to entertain the assembly with their melodies and performances. The puritanical Sultān Balban advised his son Bughra Khān, governor of Bengal, to keep aloof from such parties. The Chinese envoys, who came to the Court of Pandua in the beginning of the fifteenth century, were entertained with music and dancing which they highly admired.

It has been referred earlier that there was also a class of professional musicians who would go to the houses of the nobles and rich people everyday early in the morning and also at noon and played musical instruments. They were rewarded with food and money or other things.

The Chinese envoys have referred to a common amusement

1 D. C. Sen—*Purva Banga Gitika*:

Rāginā chhāttiner chuli ār nāgar natha,
Aminā rākhia geochhe duna kāner bāli,

2 Purchas—*His Pilgrims*, X, p. 184.
3 Barani, p. 92.
5 See p. 260.
in Bengal. According to them, there was a class of tiger-tamers in Bengal who went about the market places and villages with a tiger held by an iron chain, and amused the people by playing with it.

The tiger-player would untie the tiger which would lie down in the courtyard. He then poked it and the enraged animal jumped at him, so that he fell with it and grappled with it. This he did several times and after that he thrust his fist in the tiger's throat, but received no injury. When the game was over, he chained the tiger again. As a reward for his manly performance the people gave him money and also fed the tiger with meat.¹

*Chaugan* was the favourite game of the upper class people. The name as well as the game of Chaugan is Persian and it was played with a crooked stick (*chau*) in the field (*gān*). It was played on horse-back with a stick and ball like the game of polo. There were goal-posts and goal-keepers and ten riders in each side. Each party would try to drive the ball through the goal-posts of the other with the help of the stick. In the *Padmavati* of the Bengali poet Alaol there is reference of this interesting game, Vipradas has also mentioned of the game of *Chaugan*.²

The game of dice was very common in the society of the Muslim period. It was an essential part of the marriage ceremony. There are plenty of references in the Bengali literature that the bride and bridegroom used to play the game of dice (*chausar*) in the wedding parlour.³

A kind of game known as *geru* was very favourite of the children. It was played by two parties of boys with a ball. One party threw the ball against the opponent and if they could catch the ball they scored a point. The reference of this game

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is available in the Padavali of poet Chandidas. Swimming, boat-racing were popular amusements. There is mention of wrestling in the Manasamangala poems of Ganaram. Gambling and betting were the popular amusements of the time. The merchants bet in their dealings with the foreigners. Even the husbands and wives are represented as amusing themselves with dice-playing. Pigeon-flying was an interesting popular amusement. It is through pigeon-flying that lovers arranged meeting with their sweet-hearts. It was also used in playing. Each player had a pair of pigeons, one male and the other female. The male pigeon was let loose, while the female was held in the hand. He whose pigeon soaring high came down and perched on the hand of the owner out of fondness for its mate was considered to be the victor. Pigeon playing was favourite game of Emperor Akbar.

Pan-eating:

The pan (betel-leaf and betel-nut) occupied a very significant position in the Bengali society. The pan-eating was very common among all sections of the people. There could not be marriage or any other festival without the pan. It used to precede every festival. The marriage contract was considered finally settled when the parties exchanged pan. In the marriage of the poor people, if the parties could not afford to entertain the guests with food, they must at least serve them with pan. The marriages of Chaitanya and Kalaketu illustrate this. Pan had a symbolic value. It was an instrument of invitation. Daulat Khan Lodi sent pan to Babur in Kabul by way of inviting him to India. In social functions the distribution of pan meant the end of the hospitality.

The Chinese envoys noticed the custom of pan-eating in

1 Chandidas—Padavali, quoted by T. C. Dasgupta, 200: Paulei geru laula dharai saghane dekhai pah.
2 Ganaram—Manasamangala, pp. 79-82.
3 J. N. Dasgupta—Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, p. 185.
4 J. N. Dasgupta—Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 185-86.
Bengal and they wrote that Bengal did not have tea and they offered betel to the guests. It was considered as an honour and respect to the guest to offer him *pan*. Referring to the place of the *pan* in the society in India the author of *Masālik al-Abṣār* writes, “The people of this country do not consider an honour greater than this. When a man becomes a guest and the host honours him with all sorts of meals, roasts, sweets, drinks, perfumes, aromatics but he does not present along with them betel, it would be considered that he has not honoured him. Likewise when a highly placed person wants to show regard to another, he offers him betel.” The author further represents the prevailing idea about the qualities of the *pan*. He says, “It is agreeable without doubt, and possesses qualities some of which are not found in wine. It perfumes the breath, promotes the digestion, cheers up the soul immensely and imparts extra-ordinary joy along with strengthening the intellect and clarifying the memory and is delightful in taste.”

*Smoking:*

The habit of the smoking of tobacco is found in vogue in the Bengali society of the later half of the sixteenth century. Originally an American custom, the smoking of tobacco was introduced in Europe by the Spanish people whence their neighbours the Portuguese traders brought it into India. In the opening year of the seventeenth century, a Mughul noble named Asāf Khan brought some tobacco pipes to the court of Emperor Akbar from the kingdom of Bijapur where it had become common because of the contact with the Portuguese traders. So the smoking of tobacco was for the first time known to the Mughul Court and Northern India towards the close of Emperor Akbar’s reign. The Portuguese contact with Bengal began in the thirties of the sixteenth century and as such from that time the Bengali people became acquainted with the smoking of tobacco. By the middle of the century, smoking became widespread in the province and it formed an indispensable part of the social life in Bengal. The smoking of tobacco with *huqqa* (indigenous water-pipe) became a common feature in every family.

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1 *Masālik al-Abṣār* (Tr. by Prof. A. Rashid), p. 52.
is reflected in the writings of the poet Vipradas. Another poet of the sixteenth century Sasthibar also refers to smoking with the indigenous pipe by the people.

Coffee and tea:

It is gathered from the Chinese accounts and the contemporary records that people generally used sharbat as cold drink. The Chinese envoys specifically mention that tea was unknown in Bengal when they visited the province in the early part of the fifteenth century. Indeed there is no reference of tea in the Bengali literature up to the end of the Muslim rule in this province. The mention of coffee is available at the time of Nawāb 'Alivardī Khān, who used to drink it in the morning. The practice of taking tea is known to have existed in Gujrat and other parts of India towards the close of the seventeenth century. J. Ovington, who was Chaplain of the English factory at Surat in 1692-93 A. D., says that tea drinking was common in India in his time as a healthful beverage. He writes, "Tea with some hot spice intermixed and boiled in the water, has the repute of prevailing against the headache, gravel and griping in the guts and it is generally drunk in India either with sugar-candy or by the more curious, with small conserved lemon." While coming to Surat from Bandar Abbas in an English ship Mandelslo took tea (the) twice or thrice a day and this benefitted his health which suffered in his journey through Persia.

These evidence show that tea-drinking was practised in Gujrat in the last part of the seventeenth century and it was most probably imported to this land by the English traders.

1 Vipradas—Manasa-vijaya, p. 63.
   Keha anandita haiâ subarner huqâ laiâ,
   Tamâku bharia del age.
2 See D. C. Sen—Banga Sahitya Parichaya, pt. I, p. 254:
   Chaudda sata darvesh chaâe arbelâ háte.
   Arbela is albola or huqqa.
There is however no evidence to say that it was introduced in Northern India and Bengal about that time.

Slavery:

Slavery and slave trade was very common in Bengal during the Muslim period. When Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited Bengal in the forties of the fourteenth century he found plenty of slaves being sold in the markets. He writes, "A beautiful young girl, fit to serve as a concubine, was sold in my presence for one gold dinār which is equivalent to 2-1/2 dinārs of gold of Maghrib (Morocco). I bought at nearly the same price, a young slave woman named Ashurah who was endowed with exquisite beauty. One of my comrades bought a pretty little slave, called Lulu, for a gold dinār." The merchants imported slaves from foreign countries, mostly from Abyssinia. It is known that Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh imported several thousand Habshi slaves for his service. The slaves and eunuchs were engaged by every well-to-do person. The Portuguese merchant Barbosa has referred to the custom of castrating and slave trade in Bengal. He says, "The Moorish merchants of this city (Bengalal) go into the interior of the country and buy many Gentile (Hindu) children of their fathers and mothers, or of others who steal them, and castrate them. Some of them die of it, and those who recover they bring them up very well, and sell them as merchandise for 20 or 30 ducats each to the Persians, who value them much as guards to their wives and houses." Abūl Fadl has also referred that Sylhet and Ghoraghat regions supplied numerous eunuchs.

The Memoirs of Emperor Jahāngīr corroborates the existence of the custom of castrating and slave trade in Bengal. The Emperor tried to remove this cruel social practice. In his Memoirs, he writes, "In Hindustan, especially in the province of Sylhet, which is a dependency of Bengal, it was the custom

1 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa; Tr. N. K. Bhattasali—Coins, etc. p. 136.
2 Barbosa; publ. in Hakluyt Society, II, pp. 145-47.
3 Aḥḥ-i-Akbārī (Blochmann), I, p. 136.
for the people of those parts to make eunuchs of some of their sons and give them to the governor in place of revenue. This custom by degrees has been adopted in other provinces, and every year some children are thus ruined and cut off from procreation. This practice has become common. At this time, I issued an order that hereafter no one should follow this abominable custom and that the traffic in young eunuchs should be capitaly punished."

Jahāngīr’s account clears the Muslim merchants of the accusation made by Barbosa that they castrated the Hindu boys whom they bought from their parents. In fact, the fathers of the boys themselves castrated one or two of their many sons and sold them on account of poverty or paid the revenue through them.

1 Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīr (Tr. Rogers), 1, pp. 150-51.
CHAPTER VIII

INTERACTION OF ISLAM AND HINDUISM

Section A—Muslim influence on Hindus

The Muslim rule in Bengal produced far-reaching effects on the Hindu society. The liberalism of the Muslims with their ideas of social equality and brotherhood in every field, the simplicity of their religion and life and their enlightenment and culture reacted the Hindus in many ways. The Hindus came in contact with the Muslims either as courtiers and officers of the Muslim rulers or as neighbours of the Muslim population. Naturally they were influenced by the superior ideas and culture as well as the etiquette and ways of life of the Muslims. Moreover, it is seen that the ruling people generally influence the ruled with their manners and habits. In the days of the British rule, many educated Indians imitated the dress, food and ways of life of the English people. Similarly, in the days of the Muslim power in Bengal many educated Hindus, Hindu officials and zamindârs followed the example of their rulers in their decent and refined living.

An idea of the Muslim influence on the life of the Hindus may be obtained from the writings of Jayananda. In his Chaitanyamangala, the poet expresses sorrow at the influx of the Muslim ideas in the Hindu society and observes: "The Brahmin will live with a Sudra (lower class) woman. The daughter will be sold to one who is conversant with all the sastras (knowledge). The Brahmin will keep beard and read Persian. He will wear
socks in the feet and take cannon in hand. The Brahmin priest will adopt the profession of reciting the Persian verses (masnavi). The Mlechcha (Muslim) "would be king and the Sudra will become the preceptor of the world (jagatguru)." The poet further says: "The young widow has become fond of fish and meat and all the Brahmins are now greedy of fish and meat." Jayananda also mentions of two Brahmins of Navadip named Jagai and Madhai who recited verses and ate beef.

The observation of the Hindu poet reflects how the Muslim idea of equality and equal opportunities for all in culture, food and dress had found their way into the conservative Hindu society of the sixteenth century Bengal.

Influence on upper class:

The Hindus of the upper and educated class adopted the Muslim dress. To put on Muslim dress was considered by them as a mark of great distinction. In Manik Chandra Rajar Gan, a Hindu prince is found dressed with a pagree or turban. Bharu Datt, a Kayastha, put on a turban while he was going to the court of Kalaketu in the new city of Kalinga. On festive occasions the Hindu aristocrats dressed themselves like the Muslims. At the time of the coronation, Prince Manohar, the hero of Madhumalati Kavya of Muhammad Kabir, wore turban and loose robe (Qaba or aba) which were the distinctive dress of the Muslims. The writings of the Hindu poets, Krittivas, Vijayagupta and Vrindavandas, show the Hindu women in Muslim dress. They put on ghag'ra (petti coat or skirt), orna (scarf) and kachuli or choli (tight breast). Dr. S. C. Sen observes that in the Muslim time the Hindu rajas and zamindars dressed like the Muslim aristocracy and they were distinguished

1 According to S. W. Fallon (New Hindustan-English Dictionary London), Mlechcha means a barbarian and unclean race, incapable of distinguishing between clean and unclean food.
2 Jayananda—Chaitanyamangala, pp. 6 and 139. See Appendix B.
3 Ibid, p. 56
4 Manik Chandra Rajar Gan, verse 352.
5 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 368.
6 Muhammad Kabir—Manohar—Madhumalati, p. 4.
as Hindus only by the marks of sandal-paste and sacrificial ashes on their forehead.\footnote{1}

The Hindu aristocracy particularly the rajas and zamīndārs adopted the forms and etiquette of the Muslim rulers, so that their court was a miniature reflection of the Muslim court. The only thing which distinguished a Hindu court from the Muslim court was the preponderance of the Brahmanical element in the former. A study of the contemporary Bengali literature illustrates this fact. In describing the court of a Hindu zamīndār of the Muslim time, an eighteenth century Bengali poet Jaynarain says, "The king (zamīndar) sat in the middle of the court on a golden throne; the royal umbrella was unfurled over his head. He wore a turban of rich silk which sprinkled like diamonds. Over the turban a bright feather of the bird (kanka) waved gaily in the sunshine. He wore a rich chapkan with gold fringes and a coat of mail; over the garments hang a string of large pearls. He wore round his waist a large belt decorated with sparkling golden pendants."\footnote{2}

The poet's description of the zamīndār shows that he was in the Muslim dress of the turban and chapkan (a tight long coat). In Bengal people did not wear coats in olden days as a tight dress was not congenial on account of the climatic conditions.

The functionaries and ceremonials of the court of the Hindu zamīndārs were modelled on the pattern of the Muslim court. Bharat Chandra's description of the court of Raja Krishna Chanadhra of Navadvip, a zamīndār of the eighteenth century, bears out this fact. The poet writes, "The sepoys stood in rows in the audience hall with clasped hands, with shields on their breasts, and swords hanging from their belts. The gharials (officers in charge of royal clocks) stood on either side. Chapdars (chodbars, chob being stick) or the office peons stood in a line with golden staff in hands. In a prominent place stood 'ard begi, on officer who received petitions and submitted

\footnote{1 See D. C. Sen—Banga Bhasa O Sahitya, p. 156.} \footnote{2 D. C. Sen—Glimpse of Bengal Life, pp. 39-40.}
to the Raja. The bhais (court minstrels) sang his praises; the muṣāhibs (companions, aide camp) were all there, watching the mood of the royal person. There were the munshis (secretaries), bakhshis (paymasters of the army), the vaidyas (physicians), the qādis (judges), the qamungoes (assessment officers) and others. The musicians with the rabab, the tambura, the vina, the mridanga and other instruments were in the places fixed for them. The naqib (court herald), whose duty was to announce the new arrivals and loudly proclaim to them the ways of the darbār courtesy, the ujjak (Uzbek), the Kajjalbash (Qizilbash, the red-capped Persian troops), the Hafshis (Habshis) and the jahlds (executioners) stood in their respective places. This description illustrates that the Hindu zamindārs not only followed the Muslim court tradition, but their court officials as well bore the Muslim designations. They imitated the formalities and etiquette of the Muslim court. The visitors made three taslim (saluting with bowed heads thrice) to the rāja. They maintained big harems and eunuchs for the inner apartments of the palace.

The Hindu rājas and zamindārs engaged Muslim horsemen as they were reputed for skill in cavalry fighting and manoeuvring. It is found in Mukundaram's Chandikavya that Kalaketu, a rāja of the new city of Gujrat, appointed several Muslim generals in command of the cavalry force and entrusted them with the defence of the city against the attack of his enemies.

The Muslims also effected the management of the Hindu merchant ships. The Muslims were noted for their sea-faring and commercial activities and they were well acquainted with the various sea-routes and trading ports of the different countries of the then known world. So the Hindu merchants of Bengal engaged them as captains and sailors of their ships and utilised their experience and knowledge in foreign trade. The captains and sailors of these Hindu ships bore Muslim designa-

1 Bharat Chandra—Anandamangala, See D.C Sen's Glimpse of Bengal Life, p. 45.
2 Vijayagupta—Manusumangala, pp. 129-33.
3 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 388.
tions, such as *malim* (correct form is *mu'allim*, meaning pilot of a ship). Even the Hindu pilots were designated *malim*.

**Liberalising Hindu society:** The Muslim rule and their contact with the Hindus shook the exclusiveness of the Brahmans and contributed greatly to the liberation of other classes of the Hindus from their domination. The Brahmans had held the monopoly of religion and education, while others were denied these rights. During the period of Muslim rule the lower caste Hindus felt bold to read and write and study their scriptures. From this time they could know their own religion and by their intellectual attainments could acquire a good status in various fields of life. Naturally enough, the privileged Brahmans were not happy at the loss of their monopoly. They feared that the lower class Hindus would surpass them in education and accomplishments and would rise to the position of ministers of the Muslim rulers. In despair, the Brahmans tried by all means to discourage the non-Brahmin Hindus from learning the scriptures. They gave the ruling that the *mantra* (reciting of the scripture in religious ceremonies) loses its effectiveness, if it is known to all. This feeling of the Brahmans has been expressed in Jayananda’s *Chaitanyakamangala*. The lower class Hindus under Muslim rule however got equal facilities to education and to improve their lot. Hence it is found that they distinguished themselves in literary field and several of them occupied the position of religious teachers and leaders.

The Muslim contact had also the effect of liberalising the mental outlook of a section of the Brahmans. So in the Bengali literature there are references of the Brahmans, such as Jagai and Madhai, who were much interested in the study of the Persian literature. Like the Muslims, they came to appreciate the literature and knowledge of the other peoples.

**Promotion of Kayasthas:** The Kayasthas availed themselves

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1 See Vijayagupta—*Manasamangala*, p. 144.
2 See Chapter V: Learning and Education.
3 Jayananda—*Chaitanyakamangala*, p. 139; *Chattanya Charitamrita* p. 125.
4 Ibid, pp. 56 and 139.
of the equal opportunities opened by the Muslims for all of people and, being a clever and intelligent people, they soon distinguished themselves in learning, position and wealth. The Muslim rule was indeed a period of the rise of the Kayasthas to a position of great importance in the society. The Muslim rulers appreciated their merit and attainments and favoured them in every way. By virtue of their talent as well as the patronage of the court, the Kayasthas of Bengal made rapid progress in literary, political and economic life and soon surpassed even the Brahmins in social influence. So they could claim to the founder of the new city of Gujrat, "The goddess Saraswati (of learning) is bountiful to us all. We can all read and write, We are the ornaments of a town. Decide to give us the best lands and houses and make them rent-free."

Stimulated by the liberal and fostering atmosphere of the Muslim rule, the Kayasthas took to learning in right earnest and made their mark in the literary and intellectual field. They displayed their poetical genius and made remarkable contribution to the development of the Bengali language and literature. Most of the well-known poets, such as Maladhar Basu (Gunaraj Khan), Kavindra Paramesvar, Srikar Nandi, Yoshoraj Khan, Kasiram Dev, Vijayagupta, Lochandas, Krishnadas Kaviraj and Govinda Das (Ghose), were either Kayasthas or Vaidyas.2

In recognition of the intellectual attainments of the Kayasthas, the Muslim rulers appointed them in responsible government offices and these intelligent Hindus, by their talent and devotion, rose high in the service of the State and flourished in influence and wealth. Thus we find that Maladhar Basu of the Kayastha family of Kulingrama in Burdwan and his son Lakshminath Basu distinguished themselves in the service of the later Iyãs Shãhi, the Habshi and the Saiyid Sultãns of Bengal. In appreciation, the Muslim rulers honoured the father and the son with the titles of Gunaraj Khan and adyarak

1 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 354.
Prasanna Sabha bani lehpapara sabhe jani Bhabayan nagarer shova, Bichar Karia tumi dive bhala bari bhumi.

2 See S. K. Sen—Bangala Sahitya Itihasha, p. 223, etc.
Khān respectively and also granted them lands.¹

A talented Kayastha family of Mahinagar in the present district of the 24-Paraganas prospered under the patronage of the Muslim rulers of Bengal. The prosperity of the family began with Ishān Khān who rose to high position in the revenue department. The family rose to fame and wealth in the time of his son Gopinath Basu, who was better known as Purandar Khān. By his merit Gopinath Basu attained the highest office of the revenue department (wāzir, i.e., Finance Minister). At the time of Ḥusain Shāh, he was quite old. Still he served the Sulṭān with devotion and his counsel was very much valued in state affairs. Purandar Khān’s elder brother Govinda Basu was an officer in charge of the treasury and was given the title of Gandharva Khān. His younger brother, known as Sundarbar Khān, was also in the service of the Muslim government. The three brothers acquired landed properties near their village home. They thus became very influential in the society of the time.²

Purandar Khān’s five sons Keshava Khān, Nilambar Khān, Srinivas Khān, Narahari Khān and Harihar Khān were also in responsible posts in the government. Keshava Khān held the office of chhatraṇāzir and was referred to in the Vaishnava literature as Kesava Chhatri, Chhattrāṇāzir, as the nature of his office implies (chhatra means parasole and chhatraṇāzir means the superintendent of the royal parasole or the parasole-holders), was the chief of the royal bodyguard. When he became old, he retired from the service and Sulṭān Ḥusain Shāh appointed his son Chakrpani Khān in his father’s post. Another son of Kesava Khān, named Sri-krishna Basu served the State as Biswas Khāy (an office of con-

idence either in the department of correspondence or of finance.  

Many other Kayastha families prospered in the Muslim period. There are references of a large number of Hindus in the service of Sulṭān Ḫusain Shāh. Some of them, such as Anup, the master of the mint, Gaur Mallik, a general of the army, and Mukunda, royal physician (Raj-Vaidya), were most probably Kayasthas. According to the Kulagranṭhas, three Kayastha brothers Rambhadra, Ramanath and Banikanta Ray served in the qanungo department in the reign of Sulṭān Ḫusain Shāh. Rambhadra and Ramanath were known by the title of Majumdar (from majum’dār or keeper of accounts of revenue). Ḫusain Shāh afterwards elevated Banikanta to the position of Ray Rayan. This enabled the Kayastha chief to acquire wealth and zamindāri in Meherpur in the district of Nadia.  

To illustrate further the rise of the Kayasthas to influence and wealth under the Muslim rule, reference may be made of the ancestors of Pratapaditya of Jessore. It is gathered from the Pratapaditya Charitra that Ramananda Guha and his sons Bhavananda, Gunananda and Sivananda held responsible offices in the government of Sulaimān Karrani. Bhavananda and Gunananda rose to the position of ministers and Sivananda attained the office of the chief of the revenue department. Srihari, son of Bhavananda, was elevated to the position of wazīr and was distinguished with the title of Vikramaditya by Dāud Karrani. His brother Janakiballav was promoted to the headship of the revenue department and was conferred the title of Basanta Ray. In the days of the misfortunes of Dāud Karrani, the two brothers relieved their royal master and patron of

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1 Ibid.  
  Ramram Basu—Pratapaditya Charitra, pp. 32-38.  
his treasures and built a big zamīndāri in Jessore.

As the Kayasthas progressed in learning and official position, they became influential and prosperous in the society. They used their position and influence in improving further their life in every way. They acquired zamīndāris either by contract with the Muslim rulers to pay stipulated sum of money as revenue or by purchase from the old and decaying zamīndārs. In particular, the Kayastha officials of the revenue department entered into an agreement with the government regarding the collection of the state revenue as ījardārs or revenue farmers. There was a large number of these revenue farmers who bore the titles of Choudhury, Majumdar, Adhikari, Neogi and others. Even now among the Bengali Kayasthas, one finds many families with these titles. They remind the service of their ancestors under the Muslim State and their acquisition of the revenue farming by contract with the government. These revenue contractors made their office hereditary and extended the areas of their estates. Thus they became hereditary zamīndārs. The rise of the class of revenue farmers and zamīndārs from among the Kayasthas was a striking feature of the Hindu society during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal.

It has been seen that the rising Kayastha families of Maladhar Basu, Purandar Khān, Bani Ray and Srihari Vikramaditya acquired landed properties either by grant from the State or by purchase from other Hindu zamīndārs. According to the Kula-grantha, two Rajput Kshatriya chiefs, Sura Singh and Rudra Singh, were granted estates in West Bengal by the Muslim Sultan. At their desire, Purandar Khān, who was the leader of the Kayasthas by virtue of his influential position, included them into the Kayastha caste.\(^1\)


Chaitanya Charitamarita refers to the one Hiranyakas, who was originally a choudhury and was afterwards granted by a
sanad the zamindari of Satgaon, on his agreeing to pay twelve lakhs of rupees as state revenue. This proves that the Muslim rulers followed the practice of revenue farming and generally appointed revenue farmers from among the Hindu officers of the revenue department. The revenue service of the Muslim rulers was manned mostly by the Kayasthas, because of their education. The Brahmins did not like to serve the Muslim government as clerks. Hence the Kayasthas availed the opportunity to get the full benefit of this revenue arrangement of the Muslim State. While giving an account of the revenue organisation of the Šubah of Bengal, Abūl Faḍl mentions that the zamindars of the province were mostly Kayasthas.

There are also other reasons for the appointment of the Kayasthas as revenue farmers and zamindars. The Kayasthas understood the agricultural and revenue matters better than other people, in view of their long experience in the revenue service of the government. In those days the job of zamindar or revenue farmer was a very difficult one. The revenue collection and the keeping of accounts were complicated and had to be done strictly in accordance with the government regulations. Moreover, any delinquency on the part of the revenue farmer was visited with severe punishment, imprisonment, fine and bodily tortures. They had also the responsibility to maintain local peace and had to answer for robbery, dacoity, murder and other serious offences in their jurisdiction. Because of the onerous nature of the office, none except the Kayasthas accept-


2 See N. N. Basu—B.nger Jatiya Itihasha, Kayastha kand, Pt-I, P. 101. Karika reflects this. It records:

Lekhaparar karta han Ishan tanai,
Ar zata Kayastha achhaj muhuri,

"The son of Ishan is the head of the writers (i.e., the clerks of revenue department); other Kayasthas are writers or accounts clerks (under him).

3 A′in (Jarrett), II, p. 141.
ed the revenue farming. Hence the zamīndārī and revenue collection remained almost restricted to the Kayastha caste during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal. In his Fifth Report John Grant also noticed that the zamīndārī and revenue farming were enjoyed mostly by the Kayasthas of the Hindu society.

Ram Chandra Khān, a Kayastha of the Ghose family and son-in-law of Purandar Khān, was appointed adhikari (zamīndār) of the village Chhatravog by the ruler of Gaur. There was another Ram Chandra Khān, who has been mentioned in the Vaishnava literature as the zamīndār of Benapol in Jessore. In the contemporary Bengali literature there are references of many other Hindu zamīndārs belonging to the Kayastha families, such as Bandsi Ray (of the time of a Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh), Buddhimant Khān of Navadvip, Dibya Singh of Laur (Sylhet), Bir Hamir of Bana Vishnupur (Bankura) and Gopinath Patyanaik. Poet Mukundaram Chakravarti speaks satirically of the Hindu landlords who had the titles of Neogi and Choudhury.

Thus the Muslim rule was a great blessing to the Kayasthas. The Brahmanical domination being removed and the equal facilities being opened, the Kayasthas excelled even the Brahmins in learning and intellectual attainments. This enabled them to rise high in position, wealth and influence in the State as well as in the society.

1 Chaitanya Charitamrita throw lurid light on the methods in vogue in those days for the realisation of government revenue from the defaulting zamīndārs and revenue farmers. Gopinath Putyanaik had proved a defaulter. He was placed on a chang, with a sword hanging over him and a sword beneath. This was the usual fate of the defaulters and this was how government dues were realised.

Yak din luke asi prabhure nibedila,
Gooinathke barajana change charaila,
Tale kharga pati car upare dari dila.

2 Vindavandas—Chaitanya Bhagavata, pp. 333 and 508.
3 Krishandas Kaviraj—Chaitanya Charitamrita, p. 476.
4 Chaitanya Charitamrita, P. 279 and 293-94; Vindavandas, p. 70;
JASB. 1874, p. 215.
5 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 29.
Dissolution of Kulinism:

The Muslim contact had also the effect of dividing the Hindu society, particularly the orthodox Brahmin caste. Because of the exclusiveness and conservatism of the Brahmins and their illiberalism and intolerance, their social order was inherently weak and structureless and as such it began to disintegrate with the coming of the liberal social force of the Muslims. The enlightened Muslim rulers liked the company of the learned persons. So they would invite the Brahmin Pandits and Hindu men of letters to their courts. These Brahmins naturally came in contact with the Muslims. The kulinism (orthodox aristocracy) of the Brahmins could not tolerate such type of contact on the part of their brethren with the Muslims whom they hated calling them as yavanas and mlechchas, meaning untouchables. The Kulin Brahmins made their co-religionists who had contact with Muslims as outcastes from their society. In this way, there arose several groups of the outcaste Brahmins in the Hindu society. Of these, Sher Khānī Brahmins, Pir‘ali Brahmins and Srimant Khānī Brahmins were well-known in the Bengali society. The writings of the Kula-Karya-Karika reflect this distintegration of the Kulin Brahmin caste. It occurs in a passage of a Karika work, “The Kulinism was burnt on account of the Sher Khānī and the Pir‘ali in Radh (West Bengal) and Srimant Khānī in Banga (East Bengal).”

It is known from the Kula-Karya-Karika that Emperor Sher Shāh invited the learned Brahmins to his Court and they sometimes ate with him. For this, these Brahmins were made outcaste from the kulin society. The families which had any marriage or social intercourse with these outcaste Brahmins suffered the same fate. These outcaste Brahmin families formed a caste of their own, different from the kulins. Thus was formed the Sher Khānī group of the Brahmins. They could not have social intercourse with any other Brahmin except

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1 See N. N. Basu’s Bāṇjer Jatiya Itihasa, III, p. 152.
among themselves.¹

The *Pir‘ali* Brahmin group was also formed of such social outcastes from the Kulin Brahmin caste. Th’s group traces its origin from the contact of the Brahmins with Pir ‘Ali Khān, a *dīwān* of the saint-warrior Khān Jahan ‘Ali Khān of Jessore. Pir ‘Ali Khān was a Brahmin, and after his acceptance of Islam was named Tāhir Maḥmūd; but he was better known as Pir ‘Ali Khān. According to Jayananda, there was a village called Pirālyā near Navadvīp which was his birth-place.² The village was named Pirālyā after the name of Pir ‘Ali. It is said that one day in the month of *Ramadān* Pir ‘Ali was smelling a lemon when his two Brahmin courtiers, Kamdev and Jaydev spoke in jest that smelling was half-eating. Pir ‘Ali resolved to pay them in their own coin. One day he invited some Brahmins including Kamdev and Jaydev to his court. When they had come, according to a pre-arranged plan, the cooks began to prepare mutton, beef, etc., for a feast, and their smell spread in the court. At this the Brahmins started fleeing on one excuse or the other. Then Pir ‘Ali said to Kamdev and Jaydev that, since by the smell of the food, they had done half-eating, it was better that they finished eating. Accordingly, these Brahmins had their meal with Pir ‘Ali Khān. Being outcaste in the Brahmin society, they accepted Islam and were named Kamāl al-Dīn and Jamāl al-Dīn. They were given *jāgīr* in Singhīr (Singhutia) near Maghura.³

The other Brahmins, who had only had the smell of the

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¹ N. N. Basu—Banger Jatiya Itihasha, Pt. III, p. 152. *Karika* records that Bhavani was one of the Brahmins who took meal with Sher Shāh.

² A Ganguli Brahmin married Bhavani’s daughter and another Chatterjee Brahmin married in that Ganguli family. As a result, these families became outcaste from *Kulhism*:

Sher Khan Badshah chua dosh Sher Khani,  
Thekilen sei doshe shaurir Bhavani.

³ Jayananda, Chaitanyamangala, p. 11.  
Muslim food at the court of Pir 'Ali were subjected to social ostracism by the Kulin Brahmins. So these ostracised Brahmins formed a group of their own and were known as Pir'ali Brahmins. The other Brahmin families which had relations and social intercourse with them were also declared outcaste and hence they were included in the Pir'ali Brahmin group. The celebrated Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore's family traces descent from one of these Pir'ali Brahmins. Maulānā Akram Khān, long since representing the Azād, a Bengali daily, claims to have descended from one of the Brahmins, who came in contact with Pir 'Ali Khān and later on accepted Islam.

Another group of Brahmins, who were outcaste on account of connections with the Muslims, originated in Bengal and they were known as Srimant Khānī Brahmins. A Brahmin of the Kusari family of East Bengal was in high office at the Muslim court and was given the title of Srimant Khān. Because of the Muslim contact and influence, Srimant Khān was looked down upon by the kulin Brahmins. His relations had also to bear the hatred of the orthodox aristocracy. So these families and others, who had social intercourse with them, formed a social group different from the other Brahmins.

Reform Movements:

It is noteworthy that the Muslim contact produced two types of reform movement in the Hindu society—one was strictly conservative in spirit and the other, though fundamentally conservative, adopted a somewhat liberal outlook to the solution of the social problems. The object of both these reform movements was however the same. These were directed towards maintaining the integrity of the Brahminical society. These were essentially defensive in character, aimed at protecting the social life against the tide of the liberal force of Islam. The Bengali literature reflects the feeling of horror of the orthodox Hindus on account of the Muslim influence on their social

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1 Ibid.
2 N. N. Basu—Bānge Jatiya Ithaha, III.
life. A conservative reformer, Nulo Panchanon, has voiced this feeling, of the orthodox Brahmans of the time. In his *Gushthikatha*, he says, “In this age there is a great agitation in *Radh* and *Banga*; many big families have become degenerated.”¹ The writings of *Premvilas* express the same feeling. It records, “In the *Kalikal* (degenerated age), all people have become vicious; its main cause is the *Yavana* (Muslim) conquest.”²

The conservative school of reformers wanted to defend the Hindu society and maintain its orthodox integrity by prescribing some rules and regulations and providing for their strict observance. They revived the study of the *Smriti sastra* for this purpose and remodelled it, eliminating some rules which were outdated, and incorporating some new ones to strengthen the orthodox social system. Thus they compiled the new *Smriti sastra* intended as a bulwark against the Muslim influence. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Brahmin *Pandits*, *Sulapani* and *Virhaspati*, represented this spirit of conservative reform in their *Smriti sastras*. Pandit Raghunandan, who also compiled a *Smriti sastra* in the sixteenth century belonged to this school of conservative reformers.³ Another prominent reformer of this group was Nulo Panchanon, who launched a crusade to purge the society of all external influence and to restore the orthodox basis of the Hindu life.⁴ This group of reformers were uncompromising in their ideas of the preservation of orthodoxy. They stood for the expulsion from the society of any person, who had even slightly deviated from the prescribed rules or had been influenced in any way by the Muslims in their way of life.

The other school of reformers no doubt aimed at defending the orthodox footing of the social system; but they made compromises where necessary. They did not favour the expulsion of the Brahmans and making them outcaste on account of

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¹ Nulo Panchanon—*Gushthi Katha*, quoted by E. Haq in *Muslim Bangala Sahitya*, p. 50.
² Ibid, p. 50.
³ See *Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, 1331 B.S. Pt. III, p. 108.
⁴ See E. Haq—*Muslim Bangala Sahitya*, P. 50.
Muslim influence upon them or for their slight deviations from the orthodox life. They thought that the imposition of such a social odium would lead to the complete dissolution and even the liquidation of the Brahmanical society. This reform movement originated with an influential Brahmin, Datt Khān, who was a personal assistant (Karmakarak) of Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmūd Shāh (1442-59 A.D.) of the later Ilyās Shāhī dynasty. Datt Khān led the Jātimāla Kachārī, a religio-social association of the Brahmins of Radh. It is said that some Brahmins referred to him the cases of two Brahmin brothers who were awarded titles by the Muslim rulers. Datt Khān called the Brahmins of Radh to a conference, which was the 57th conference of the Jātimāla Kachārī, to discuss the social problems. The conference resolved to maintain the integrity of the Brahmin caste, and set forth 25 causes on which there would be the loss of kulīnism. It did not prescribe that a Brahmin would fall from orthodoxy on account of Muslim contact or for receiving titles from the Muslim rulers.

Udayanacharya Bhaduri tried a similar thing among the Varendra Kulins of North Bengal. On the scale of orthodoxy, he divided the Brahmins into eight categories.

As the Hindu contact with Muslims increased, there was more agitation in the circle of the Kulīn Brahmins. Because of this contact with the Muslims, the mother, uncle and several relations of a Brahmin, known as Ghatak Devibar, were socially boycotted by the Kulins. To save his family from social ostracism and also to defend the Brahmanical society from being dissolved, Ghatak Devibar, with the help of the Brahmins of his profession, evolved a formula which divided the Brahmins of Radh into 36 groups (mēlas) in point of orthodoxy and partial departure from it. Muslim contact and influence would constitute for a Brahmin a deviation from kulīnism; but it would not lead to his social ostracism. He could still remain in the Brah-

1 Karmakarak was most probably the chief kārkun (writer).
min society. In the affairs of social intercourse, such as marriage, etc., he was however confined to the Brahmins who had the same drawback.¹

Thus Devibar (Ghatak) represented to a certain extent a liberal and realistic approach to the social problems of the orthodox society and tried for the preservation of its integrity with a spirit of some compromise to the new forces of the time.

About this time a movement was set afoot to reform the Kayastha society also. A Kayastha chief of Southern Bengal, Paramanand Basu, who was a contemporary of Ghatak Devibar, prescribed rules for marriages on the basis of the kulinity of the Kayasthas. Parmanand Ray, a raja of Chandradyip, introduced some rules for the maintenance of the integrity of the Kayastha caste.²

The Muslim ideal of social equality and brotherhood awakened a new spirit of inquiry into the minds of the educated Hindus and produced a revolution in their conservative society, which had denied human rights to the bulk of the people for centuries. The writings of the great poet Chandidas represent the dawn of this new spirit of social justice in the Hindu society. He preaches the ideal of the equality of man, saying, “Listen, brother man, man is truth above all; there is no truth above man.”³ Chandidas thus voiced the elimination of all inequalities and distinctions which governed the caste-ridden social life of the Hindus and advocated the remodelling of their social system on the principle of the brotherhood of all men. In another place, this great Bengali poet appreciates the Muslim equality, saying, “Seven Muslims take their food in one place and from one vessel.”

¹ Ibid.
³ Chandidas, quoted by D. C. Sen—Glimpse of Bengal Life, pp. 133-147, and p. 129.

Chandidas kahe shunya manush bhal
Sabar upare manush satya tahar supar nai.
This illustrates that Chandidas was much impressed by the ideal of simplicity, equality and brotherhood of all men in the Muslim society.

There is definite trace of the Muslim influence in the preachings of some of the Hindu religious teachers. The lower class Hindus were in particular impressed by the simple faith and the ideal of social justice of the Muslims. This contributed to the rise of several religious and social reformers who devoted themselves to remodelling the religion and society of the Hindus on the principles of simplicity and equality.

_Dharma Cult:_

A popular religious belief, known as the Dharma cult, bears an unmistakable proof of the Muslim influence on the Hindu society. The significant fact of this religious order was that it was based on the principle of monotheism, the worship of one God called Dharma-thakura. It subscribed to the idea of the equality of all men and was opposed to the caste distinctions of the Hindu social life.

The origin of the Dharma cult is traced from some elements of Tantrik Buddhism, known as Mantrayana or commonly Bajrayana, and also from some practices of Tantrik Hinduism (Saiva creed). In the later years of the Hindu period in Bengal, the Mahayana Buddhism was influenced by a few rites and practices of the Hindu Tantriks and by heterogenous popular beliefs. The Caryopasas of the Buddhist Siddhacharyas represent this influence. The Nath cult expresses how later Buddhism assimilated some of the essentials of the Tantrik Hinduism.¹

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¹ Matsyendranath, 84th Buddhist Siddhacharya, is regarded as the founder of the Nath cult. D. C. Sen thinks that Matsyendranath and Minanath were one person and was so called because of his fondness for fish. He was born in Backerganj in the tenth century. Nihar Ray maintains that Matsyendranath is identical with Luipad.

Minanath had a distinguished disciple named Gorakshanath, born pro-

(Continued in next page)
According to *Sunnyapurana*, also called *Dharmapuja-vidhana*, the *Dharma cult* originated in a Brahmin family which was much harassed by the priestly Brahmins of the time. Its founder Ramai Pandit, a Brahmin, lost his father when he was still a boy. As he could not arrange timely for the funeral rites of his father, the orthodox Brahmin society declared him an outcaste. No Brahmin priest came to conduct his paita (thread-binding) ceremony. At his prayer, *Dharma-thakura* appeared in the guise of an old Brahmin and gave him a copper paita. He instructed Ramai Pandit in the principles of the *Dharma cult*.¹ The Dharma cult spread mostly among the cultivators, weavers and small traders, the people who suffered much under the domination of the priestly class of the Hindus.

*Niranjaner Ruksma* (Anger of God), a poem in Ramai Pandit’s *Sunnyapurana* expresses undoubted evidence of the Muslim influence in the development of the *Dharma cult*. It records how the Brahmins cruelly persecuted the Buddhists and how then *Dharma* came in the persons of the Muslim Prophets, shaikhs, ulema, and others and saved this suffering humanity.² Dr. S. B. Dasgupta admits that *Dharma*, as has been stated in the *Dharmapujavidhna*, reflects the palpable influence of the Muslims.³ Dharma has been described as the image of the

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1 S. K. Sen—*Bangla Sahityer Katha*, p. 81.
3 “Dharma has assumed the form of yavana (Muslim) having black cap on the head.” “Dharma haita Yavana rupi mathaeta kala topi.”
4 S. B. Dasgupta—*Obscures Regeious Cults*, p. 265.
Muslim ruler of Gaur in the work of Ramai Pandit.¹

In the fundamental of the Dharma cult, the belief in one God, there is definite stamp of the Islamic monotheism. According to this cult, Dharmathakura has no form, no figure, and he is the eternal soul.² In giving an idea of God, Dharmapujavidhana writes, “He is the Niranjana, who is neither space (sthana) nor fame; who has neither lotus-like feet nor any form nor any primary colour; who is neither the seer nor sight; neither the hearer nor hearing; neither white nor yellow nor red nor golden; neither like the sun nor the moon nor fire; he neither rises nor sets; he is stainless of the form of the syllable “Om”, the supreme abode, unqualified, supportless, unchanging and all-void (sarva-sunyamayam). He is neither the full-grown tree nor the root nor the seed nor the shoot nor the branch nor leaves nor the trunk nor the foliage neither the flower nor the scent nor the fruit nor shade. He is neither the up nor down — neither the Siva or Sakti neither male nor female.... He is the ultimate substance of the universe. He is in the Netherlands, in the invisible regions (antarikshy) in the four quarters, in the sky, in all the mountains and seas, in earth, water and air, — in the static and dynamic, he is all pervading and one.”³ The Dharma of this description agrees with the Divine Monotheism.

Apart from the ideas of monotheism and casteless society, the Dharma cult embodies some customs which are essentially Muslim. As for instance, the custom of sacrificing goats, ducks and pigeons before Dharma by cutting their throat in a particular manner (jawa — Arabic javeh) is essentially a Muslim practice. Moreover, like the Muslims the Dharmites have great respect for the western direction. They sacrifice the animals or birds with their face westward. They begin the description of the gates with the western gate. Of special notice is the importance of the moon which the Dharmites depict as the Kotala (Kotwal, i.e., gate-keeper and superintendent) of the western

¹ Ramai Pandit—Dharmapujavidhana, S. K. Sen—Bengala Sahityer Ksheta, p. 81:

² Hasa ghorha khasta jora paye dia muja,
Abashehe bulaiha Gaurer raja,
Hi Hdukule bulaihe Dharma-avatara,
Momin kula bulaiha Khodal khonkar (khwandkar).

³ N. Ray—Bangalir Ithisha, p. 585.

direction. One noteworthy incident of the Dharmamangala is that Dharma made the sun rise in the west in response to the prayers of Lausen, a follower of this cult. Leaving aside the supernatural aspect, this incident expresses the importance of the western direction in the Dharma cult. Following the Muslim practice, the Dharmites hold Friday as an auspicious day. These and many other ideas and institutions express definite proof of the Muslim influence in the development of the Dharma cult.

One remarkable fact of the Dharma Cult is that, as a result of the Muslim influence, it represented not merely a religio-social revolution, it effected as well a change in outlook to the education of the lower class peoples in the Hindu society. It produced a rich literature known as the Dharmamangala Kavyas to popularise this cult and these were indeed a substantial contribution to the Bengali language and literature.

Dharma cult flourished most in West Bengal. Even now it prevails in some districts where the stone images of Dharma-thakura are worshipped in the temples built for his adoration. Vaishnavism:

The Vaishnavism of Sri-Chaitanya represents the revolutionary effects of the Muslim ideas on the Hindu society. It reflects the Hindu anxiety to defend their society by reorienting it on the model of the Muslim social life. The conservative Brahmanical community was daily losing to Islam, whose democratic ideas and equal facilities to all attracted the down-trodden Hindus to the liberal society of the Muslim conquerors. The wiser section of the Hindus felt the necessity of preserving their society against further loss to Islam. They understood that this could be done only by liberating the common people from their degraded life and reforming the society on the ideas of

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The Dharma Gajan has a song, which among other references to Islam proclaims that "caste distinctions will slowly disappear, because there is a Muslim in every Hindu family". This reflects the influence of Islam in the Hindu society of the time. The Dharma Gajan expresses the sentiment of respect and admiration for Islam. In one place, it records:

Thou art, O Khuda! I know superior to all others;
How I yearn to hear the Qur'an from thy lips;
Niranjan transformed to Allah will confer blessing.

Dr. I. H. Qureshi—The Muslim Community of Indo-Pakistan, Subcontinent, p. 71.
simplicity, equality and brotherhood of all men. This type of democratically re-organised Hindu society would be capable of meeting the Muslim society on an equal footing and this would provide a check to further desertion of Hindus to swell the ranks of the Muslims.

Chaitanya's *Vaishnavism* was thus primarily a defensive movement, born out of the necessity to check the progress of Islam in the Hindu society, by reforming it in accordance with the principles of Muslim religion and life.¹

There is strong evidence which prove that in his ideas of reforming the Hindu religious and social life Chaitanya was principally influenced by the Muslim ideas. The birth-place of Chaitanya, Navadvip was not merely the centre of Hindu learning, it also developed into an important place of Muslim colony from the time of its conquest by Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji. As it was once a capital city, Navadvip was naturally a seat of Muslim power where many Muslim officials were posted. It is known from the Vaishnava literature that in Navadvip, particularly in a suburban village named Piralya (from PirʾAli), many Muslims lived. Jayananda records that a number of the Brahmans, such as Jagai and Madhai, were influenced by the Muslim ideas and way of life.² He also states that the Brahmans of Navadvip were degenerated by the Muslims.³ This statement of Jayananda implies that these Navadvip Brahmans followed the way of life of the Muslims. This leaves an unmistakable proof of the influence of the ideas and principles of the Muslim society on the Hindus, particularly the Brahmans of Navadvip. Since Chaitanya was born and brought up in the atmosphere of the Muslim influence on the Brahmín society of Navadvip, he was naturally acquainted with the current ideas of his boyhood and youth.

Chaitanya was not satisfied with the social system that obtained among the Hindus. His dissatisfaction was born at

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¹ Dr. I. H. Qureshi observes that the followers of the Bhakti cult accepted a good deal of Islamic values in order to safeguard the Hindu community. See *Muslim Community of Indo Pakistan Subcontinent* p. 121.
² Jayananda—Chaitanyakamāta, p. 56.
³ Ibid.: Piralya gramete baiše zatek yavana, Utechhanna karila Navadviper Brahman.
the sight of the degeneration of the Brahmanical society and its loss to the Muslim ideas. To save the society against the on-rush of Islam, he felt the necessity of purging it of all the evils and remodelling it on liberal lines. He thought over the problem and frequented the abodes of ascetics to find a solution. There is evidence to prove that he came in contact with the Muslim sufis and Pir. The khanaqahs of the sufis, which were in existence in every nook and corner of Bengal in the Muslim period, were the resort of all sections and creeds of people, and they were the forum of free and frank discussion of spiritual and intellectual problems. It is known from Chaitanya Chaitamrita of Krishnadas Kaviraj that, while returning from Vrindavan, Chaitanya met a Muslim Pir and he had religious discussions with him. Krishnadas Kaviraj writes, "He (the Pir) propounded monotheism and one common God, on the basis of his Holy Book (the Qur'an). But the Master (Chaitanya) refuted all his propositions by arguments based on the scripture, till the man was silenced. The Master continued, "Your scripture establishes one common God (in the beginning) and refuting that theory sets up in the end a particular God, who is full of all powers, dark of hue, the embodiment of sat-chid and ananda (being intelligence and Bliss), the perfect spirit, the soul of all, all-pervading, eternal, the self of everything, the source of creation, life and destruction, the refuge of all universes, whether gross or fine, the most excellent, adorablo by all, the first cause of everything. Men are saved by faith in Him and freed from bondage of the world only serving Him. Delight in Him is the supreme human attainment, while salvation can give only a particle of that bliss. The highest beatitude comes only from serving his feet. After first insisting on work, knowledge and mutual abstraction, these are then set aside and the service of God is laid down as the final duty. Your theologians have no knowledge of their own scriptures, they forget where there are two injunctions, the latter is stronger. Decide after studying your own Holy Books and see what is laid down as the final conclusion."

1 Krishnadas Kaviraj--Chaitanya Chaitamrita, pp. 226-27. See Appendix C.
This religious discussion of Chaitanya with the Muslim Pir proves beyond doubt that he was well-acquainted with Islamic theology and sufism from before he met this Muslim spiritual preceptor. It confirms the view that he had derived his knowledge of Islam from some Muslim sufis. This very meeting with the pir suggests that Chaitanya had also previously similar occasions of meeting and discussing religion and mysticism with the Muslim spiritual leaders. His discourse reveals his good knowledge of Islam and his appreciation of sufism.

Haridas, one of the chief companion-disciples of Chaitanya, was born a Brahmin, but was brought in a Muslim family. His association also supplied Chaitanya with the knowledge of Islamic theology and sufism.

Chaitanya abolished the caste system and removed all distinctions between the Brahmin and other classes of the Hindu society. He initiated peoples of all castes and creeds into his Vaishnavism and accorded them equal status and the same title 'Das', meaning servant. This was indeed his adoption of the Muslim ideal of equality and brotherhood. Chaitanya taught, "Chandal (a low class Hindu) is not a Chandal, if he utter the name of Krishna; a Brahmin is not a Brahmin, if he follow the the path of dishonesty."1

Following the ideal of Islam, Chaitanya believed in one God. According to his teaching, Sri-Krishna is God and the supreme Reality. The world is in Him and He is in the world (creation). He is one, though He is represented in all created things. Krishnadas Kaviraj writes, "The world has been created at the desire of Krishna; he is one and has no two bodies."2

1 Vrindavanadas—Chaitanya Bhagavata, p. 126:
Chandal Chandal nahe zadi Krishna bale,
Vipra nahe Vipra zadi atatpathe chale.

2 Chaitanya Charitamrita, Adlila, chapter 5:
Brahmnda prakash tar Krishner echchhai
Akai svarup tar nahi dui kal.
Chaitanya's Krishna cult has similarity with the Tawhid-i Wajudi and Tawhid-i-Shuhudi of the sufis. This expresses the influence of Islamic mysticism on the Vaishnava teacher of Bengal.

There is similarity of the Radha cult of Chaitanya with the concept of love (ishq) of the sufis. He considered Radha as one with Krishna, as his sakti (power or love), through which Krishna could be attained. Chaitanya Charitamrita records, "Radha and Krishna are eternally one. It is for manifestation that they assume two forms."¹ No Hindu mystic before Chaitanya laid so much emphasis on love as a means to spiritual attainment. Emotional love of Chaitanya was a new feature of his Vaishnavism. As this spiritual love represented sufistic idea, the Muslim poets composed poems on this subject. The only difference is that the love of the Vaishnavas has been expressed through the symbol of Radha, while the love of the sufis was direct communion with the Beloved God through the feeling of the heart.

The life of Chaitanya as a mystic shows the influence of sufism on him. He adopted the practice of sankirtan or namkirtan (chanting of God's name) in congregation, possibly in imitation of the dhikr of the Muslims. It is a new feature in Hindu religion and mysticism. In this practice there is definite influence of the sama¹ (mystic song indicative of Divine love in which the mystic realizes communion with the Beloved God) of the Chishtia and Suhrawardia sufis. In the sama¹ the sufis sang the name of God and danced in spiritual ecstasy. Chaitanya and his followers chanted the name of Krishna with the accompaniment of musical instrument and danced at the height of emotion. Like the sufis, they attained the same physical and mental state called dasha or hal, meaning spiritual ecstasy.²

There is another instance which indicates the sufis influence

¹ Krishnadas Kaviraj—Chaitanya Charitamrita, Adililia, chapter 4.
² E. Haq—Muslim Bangali Sahitya, p. 51.
on Chaitanya. Jayananda says that while Chaitanya was a boy reading in the Pathshala he said to his teacher Sudharsana Pandit, "The letter Ka (the first consonant letter of the Bengali alphabet) is in the pore of my every hair; and ka is the source of all knowledge." These are the mystic ideas of the sufis.

Scholars are of opinion that there was some trace of Vaishnavism in Bengal before Chaitanya. Some sort of Vishnu or Krishna cult, vague and undefined, existed from the time of the Gupta kings in the fifth century. The Gita Govinda of the Sanskrit poet Jayadeva and the songs of the Bengali poet Chandidas and Vidyapati Thakur of Milhila are said to have popularised Radha-Krishna cult. Bengali Vaishnavism gave a systematic shape to the idea of Avatarism (incarnation). Jayadeva, the court-poet of Lakshmansena, named ten Avatars, Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Varmana, Parasuram, Rama, Balarama, Buddha and Kalkin.

Vaishnavism consisted in the adoration of one principal god, Vishnu, Narayan, Vasudev or any one of their incarnations, like Krishna or Ram, both of whom were their popular Avatara. They had also reverence for other gods, such as Brahma, Siva and the numerous others.

The early Vaishnavism in Bengal immediately before Chaitanya is connected with Sridharaswami (twelfth century), an ascetic of the school of the great philosopher Sankaracharya of the ninth century, who introduced Advaitarism or non-Duality. In his commentary of the Bhagavata, known as Srimad-Bhagavata, Sridharaswami aimed at reconciling Bhakti (love) to a personal god with the jyana (knowledge) of the Advaitarism of Sankara. Srimad-Bhagavata is regarded as the source of inspiration of the Bengali Vaishnavas as of other Vaishnava sects of India.

1 Jayananda—Chaitanyamangala, p. 18. Ka is evidently Krishna:
Ka amar prati tumkuper bhitare,
Ka hate sabha vidya aksar nikare.

3 Ibid.
Madhavendra Puri and his disciples Iswarpuri and Advaita, who were precursor of Chaitanya in Bengal, were an emotional Sankarite ascetics like Sridhar Goswami. These ascetics did not have any influence from the Vaishnavism of Madhava of Northern India. Madhavendra Puri and Iswarpuri influenced the early religious inclination of Chaitanya. Iswarpuri was a Bengali. Avaita was also a Bengali and, though he was a precursor of Chaitanya, he afterwards became a disciple of that great Vaishnava teacher.1

Bengali Vaishnavism is fundamentally different from Madhavism. Madhavism is more speculative and in it there is no much place for Radha or Vrindavan-Lila of Krishna. The Bengal Vaishnavism, on the other hand, is emotional and Radha and Vrindavan-Lila occupy a very significant place in their devotion.2

Chaitanya’s Vaishnavism was a development of this great teacher himself, though he might have received the idea of the Bhakti cult of Sridharaswami and the ascetics of his type. In his idea of monotheism and equality of all men, he was influenced by Islam. There was also the great influence of the Muslim Sufis on him in developing his mystic creed and Bhakti order.

Chaitanya’s Vaishnavism is based on Bhakti to Krishna. Adoration of Krishna is considered as the way to the attainment of eternal bliss. It recognises the necessity of a guru or spiritual guide. The followers are to be attached to a guru as his disciple. The guru instructs them in the practices of the cult and guide them in the right path. If the guru is satisfied with their qualities of devotion, he would initiate them to the mantra of Vishnu, the highest god and the only saviour.

Peoples of mixed or low caste, including even the Chandalas, are given the privilege of being initiated into the discipleship in the Vaishnavism of Chaitanya.

1 See Dr. S. K. Sen—Early History of Vaishnavism, pp. 10-16.
2 Ibid, p. 16. Dr. A. Halim is of opinion that Chaitanya was an admirer of poet Vidyapati Thakur whose composition the Vaishnava teacher was fond of reciting. The cult of Radha was introduced on a large scale in Northern India by Vidyapati, who however aimed at mystic love and treated the episode in a symbolic and allegorical sense.
Section B—Hindu-Muslim Relations

Social understanding:

One remarkable aspect of the social life of the Bengali peoples during the period of Muslim rule was the promotion of the feeling of understanding and cooperation between the Muslims and the Hindus. Several factors contributed to the development of harmonious relations between the two major communities of this province. First, toleration was, by tradition, a cardinal principle in the State policy of the Muslim rulers. Secondly, political expediency required of the Muslim governors to foster a cooperative spirit with the Hindus. Thirdly, the interests of the Hindus and the Musḷims of Bengal were bound together in the political as well as cultural fields. Fourthly, the Muslims maintained good neighbourly relations with the Hindus and lived on friendly terms with them. Lastly, through centuries of contact in political and social life the two peoples could understand each other’s culture and institutions and thus form a correct estimate of them. As a result, an atmosphere of harmony and amity prevailed in the Hindu-Muslim relations and this accounted for the peace and prosperity in Bengal and also for the development of several common cultural institutions of these two peoples of the province.

Although a ruling people, the Muslims did not keep aloof from the Hindus nor did they keep them away, but associated them in the affairs of the State. Without any religious prejudice, they extended liberal patronage to scholars, poets and men of letters and distinguished the talented Hindus with offices,
titles and lands. Reference has previously been made of the rise of the Kayastha families to positions of importance under the Muslim rule. Besides the Kayasthas, many Brahmins and others also received the patronage of the Muslim rulers and attained offices of responsibility and confidence at the Court. A few instances may be cited to illustrate this fact.

Sultān Ilyās Shāh enlisted the support and services of many Hindu chiefs, generals and soldiers in his struggle for independence against the Sultānate of Delhi. One of his Hindu generals, Shahdeo by name, commanded a large force in the battle against Firūz Shāh Tughlaq. It is known from Druvananda’s Mahavansavali that Ilyās Shāh rewarded many Hindu zamīndārs, chiefs and officers for their military service to him. Duryodhan, a Brahmin officer, received the title of Bangabhusan (Ornament of Bengal). Another kulīn Brahmin named Chakrapani was distinguished with the title of Raj-jayl (victor of kings).1 Several Brahmin zamīndārs are known to have obtained titles from Firūz Shāh Tughlaq. Vikartan Chatta (Chattapadhaya) was honoured with the title of Raja. Some other Brahmins were similarly rewarded by that Tughlaq Sultān about this time.2

On the basis of the family accounts of the Sannyals and Bduduris of Rajshahi district, Durgadas Sannyal says that these two Brahmin families had their origin from the time of Ilyās Shāh. Ilyās Shāh specially favoured four Brahmin brothers; Jayananda Bhaduri was appointed diwān and Subuddhi Khān, Kesava and Sikhai Sannyal were given ranks in the army. As a reward for devoted services, Sikhai Sannyal was granted a jāgīr in the territory between the Chalanbil and the Padma river. He established the headquarter of his jāgīr at Satauri, which was named Sannyalgarh. Subuddhi Khān was similarly given a jāgīr in the territory north of the Chalanbil and it was called Chakla Bhduduria (Bhatura). His family bore the title of Khān and became

2 Ibid.
well known as the Ektakia and Bahduria zamindars.¹

The rise of Raja Kans, a Brahmin, from the post of a petty officer in the revenue department to the office of wazir and then to the position of a dictator of the State during the reign of the successors of Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh illustrates the liberal policy of the Muslims towards the Brahmans. Under the Ilyās Shāhīs there was another Brahmin official named Narasingh Narial. It is said that Narasingh Narial was the man who was really responsible for inciting Raja Kans to oust the Muslim rule and restore the Hindu supremacy in Bengal.² Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh highly honoured the great Sanskrit scholar and poet Vrishapati Misra with the titles of Ray Mukut and others and also offered him a high rank in the army.³ There was still further rise of the Hindus to the offices of the State during the period of the Saiyid Sultanate of Bengal. In the reign of ‘Alā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh, two Brahmin brothers, Rup and Sanatan, enjoyed position of great confidence at the Court. Rup held the important office of dabīr-i-khās (personal secretary) of Sultān Husain Shāh. His elder brother Sanatan occupied the post of sakar-malik (sarkar-i-mulk or a minister of State). The contemporary Bengali literature reflects the great prestige and influence of these two Brahmin brothers in the Muslim State. In speaking of them, Krishnadās Kaviraj says, “The two brothers are the prince of devotees and worthy of the favour of Krishna. Because of their attainments and refinement, they are king’s ministers and courtiers.”⁴ Jayananda refers to their great prosperity under Ḥusain Shāh. He writes, “Thousands of horsemen run before and after them. They kept hidden under the ground gold worth twenty lakhs (of rupees).”⁵

¹ Durgadās Sannyāl—Banger Samajik Itihasa, pp. 52- 4.
² Banger Jatiya Itihasa (N. N. Basu), pt. 1, p. 64.
³ See chapter VI: Development of Sanskrit, p. 237.
⁴ Krishnadās Kaviraj—Chaitanya Charitamrita, pp. 138 and 308:
    Dui bhai bhaktaraj Krishna kripapatra,
    Byabahare rajmantri hai rajpatra.
⁵ Jayananda—Chaitanyamangala, p. 136.
The broad-based policy of the Muslim rulers in appointing the Hindus as generals, wazirs, diwans, personal secretaries and to other offices of responsibility and confidence show that they aimed at creating an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation between the two communities of Bengal. This association of the Hindus in the higher level at the Court naturally produced a friendly feeling in the social life of the time. Indeed, in many other ways the ruling Muslims promoted a spirit of cordiality between the Hindus and Muslims.

The Muslim rulers accorded an honourable place to the Hindu scholars and poets at their Court and discussed Hindu sastras with them. Their interest in the knowledge of the Hindus led to the translation of the Sanskrit works, such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata and others into Bengali. It is also to be noted that, quite early in the Muslim rule, the Sanskrit mystic work Amritkand was translated into Arabic and Persian.\(^1\) The object behind such Muslim interest in the Hindu scriptures was certainly to foster better social understanding between the two communities.

The Muslim rulers followed a policy of non-interference in the religious affairs of the Hindus, who enjoyed perfect freedom in the religious practices, teachings and preachings. It is known from the contemporary Vaishnava literatures that the Brahmins were hostile to the revolutionary ideas of the Vaishnava teacher Sri-Chaitanya. Intending to obtain the help of the State in stopping him from his preaching, the Brahmins complained against the Vaishnava teacher to Sultan Husain Sháh. The enlightened Sultan made proper investigation into the activities of Sri-Chaitanya and realised that his Vaishnava ideas conveyed no injury to the Hindus, on the other hand these aimed at improving the Hindu society. Convinced of the salutary effects of Sri-Chaitanya’s preachings on the Hindu social life, Husain Sháh left him undisturbed in carrying on his mission. What is more, he issued an order forbidding the government officials and others from interfering in the work of the Vaishnava teacher. He even sharply

\(^1\) See Chapter V, p. 164.
warned them against any injury to Sri-Chaitanya. In reproducing the order, Vrindavandas writes that the Sultan said, "If the qādī, or the kopwāl, or any person in any way interferes in his preachings, his life will be cut short." It was because of this tolerant and enlightened attitude of the Muslim State that the Brahmins could not harm Chaitanya and his faith prospered in Bengal. The Muslim rulers interfered only when they found that the activities of one community caused definite injury to the other.

The Muslims were always anxious to preserve good neighbourly relation with the Hindus even at some loss to themselves. An instance may be cited to illustrate this contention. Seeing that Chaitanya's teachings were destroying their privileged position in the society, the Brahmins of Navadvip represented to the qādī of that city that the Vaishnava teacher and his followers, by their sankirtana at night in the streets, disturbed people sleeping. Rightly the qādī asked Chaitanya to stop this kind of sankirtana which disturbed the sleeping people. According to Vaishnava writers Chaitanya and his followers were enraged and they one day burnt the house of the qādī with all his belongings. A high administrative officer, the qādī had the power to retaliate; but he restrained himself from such an action. On the other hand, he went to the house of Chaitanya with a view to make an amicable settlement of the affair. He addressed him as his 'sister's son' and said, "Nilambar Chakravarti is your maternal grandfather. In that relation you are my Bhaginai (Bhanja), i.e., sister's son. It behoves a maternal uncle to bear with the anger of his nephew. A nephew also does not take seriously his maternal uncle's offence." This incident shows how the Muslims treated their Hindu neighbours as their brothers, sisters and sister's sons. Although at times they were provoked by the Hindus, the Muslims however avoided hostility against

1 Vrindavandas—Chaitanya Bhagavata, p. 369:
Qadi ba kotal ba tahake kono jane,
Kichitul balli tar laimu jibane.
3 Ibid, p. 123.
them and kept on sweet relations with them.

Barring an occasional act of such animosity, the Hindus on the whole responded to the friendly feeling of the Muslims. The Hindu zamīndārs, chiefs and others cooperated with the Muslims in the common cause of the province. The support they gave to the Muslim rulers to maintain their authority against the Delhi Sultanate is a proof to this fact. The Hindu zamīndārs also appointed Muslim officers in their service and appreciated so much the etiquette and formalities of the Muslim Court that they modelled their own courts on that line. Ananta Manikya, a Hindu zamīndār of Bhalwa (Noakhali) appointed Mirzā Yūsuf Barlās as his chief minister.1 Chand Ray and Kedar Ray of Sripur appointed Sulaimān Lohānī as the commander of their army.2 Pratapaditya of Jessore had Khwaja Kamāl, an Afghān chief, as one of his generals in the army.3 The Muslims were also employed in the merchant ships of the Hindus. The record of the Hindu poet Vijayagupta that Chand Saudagar had Muslim pilot and sailor in his ship reflects the prevailing practice of the time.4

There were social contacts between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus invited the Muslims to their social festivities and the Muslims also participated in their rejoicings. According to poet Vijayagupta, nine hundred Muslim singers (qawwāl) joined the marriage party of Lakshmīnār, son of Chand Saudagar.5 The Hindus also made presents and gifts to the Muslims on the occasion of their festivities. Chand Saudagar sent present of pān (betel-leaf) to the qāḍī of Hasanhati at the time of the marriage of his son.6

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1 Bahārīstān (Tr.), I, p. 97.
2 Akbar-nāma, III, p. 711.
3 Bahārīstān, I, p. 127.
4 In the Rajshahi Museum, there is the representation of a person on stone with flowing beards and pagri (turban) type head-dress. Some scholars think that this person was Chand Saudagar. They also maintain that Chand Saudagar was a Muslim. The name Chand and Saudagar and also Chand Saudagar’s association of the Muslim pilots and sailors would suggest him to be a Muslim. But his worshipping Siva and later on of the snake goddess is irreconcilable with the faith of a Muslim.
5 Vijayagupta—Manasamangalā, p. 179.
6 Ibid.
The Muslims also invited the Hindus to their social festivities. The Hindus of the upper class participated in such functions of the Muslims as the birthday and marriage celebrations. A study of the contemporary records relating to the Hindu social life reveals that many Brahmin and Kayastha families fell from kulinism because of this type of contact with the Muslims. The Sher Khānī, Pirāli and Srimanta Khānī Brahmin and Kayastha families bear testimony to this fact.

As a result of social intercourse and exchange of ideas, the Hindus and the Muslims came to form a better understanding of each other. The Muslim interest in the knowledge of the Hindu scriptures naturally evoked the reverence of the enlightened Hindus to the religious works of the Muslims. This mutual appreciation of each other’s culture paved the way for the development of social amity of the two communities of Bengal.

It is known from the literatures of the time that the Hindus had great veneration for the Qur’ān and the Muslim saints and pirs. A Hindu merchant invited the Brahmins to pray that he might be blessed with a son. The Brahmins consulted the Qur’ān and advised the merchant to recite the name of Allah at the time he set out for his voyage. There are also instances which show that the Brahmins consulted the Qur’ān to find out an auspicious day for the journey and the Hindu merchants set out for trade praying to Allah for their safety. Poet Ksemananda writes in his Manasamangala that in the steel-chamber prepared for Laksmindar, a copy of the Qur’ān was kept along with other sacred charm to avert Manasadevi’s wrath. It was also common among the Hindus to offer shirni (shirini) or offerings at the dargah of the Muslim saints. They adored the pirs and invoked their blessings. Shek Subhodaya illustrates the adoration of Shaikh Jalāl al-Din Tabrizī by the Hindus for generations. Its author Halayodh Misra writes, “Makhudum Shaikh Shāh Jalāl, who is famed all over, I offer my prostration

2 Ibid.
at your feet; I pray to you to save my life and property. After return home, I shall offer as gift half of my property in your honour." The poet also records that some people prayed to the saint for son and some for recovery from illness.¹

It is also noteworthy that the Hindu poets generally began the composition of their works with a praise of the Muslim saints. Ksemananda adored Bara Khān Ghāzi and many other pirs in the introduction of his Manasamangala work. The Raymangala kavya of Krishnaramdas represents how reverentially the Hindu traders, sailors and boatmen of Bengal adored Bara Khān Ghāzi. It also records the Muslim boatmen of Southern Bengal venerating the legendary Hindu ascetic Dakshrima Ray.²

Muslim reaction:

One significant fact of the social intercourse of the two communities is that while the Hindus were greatly influenced in many fundamental aspects of their life by the ideals and ideas of the Muslims, the latter however did not react much to the traditions of the former. The simple faith and the democratic social set-up of the Muslims had practically nothing to take from the complex, caste-ridden and priest dominated Hindu society. Yet centuries of contact could not but leave behind some influence of the Hindus on the social life of the Muslims. Although this influence is not appreciable and did not produce any change in the faith and fundamentals of the Muslim life, nevertheless this cannot be dismissed unnoticed in a study of the social life of Bengal. It is however to be noted that the mere contact of the two communities cannot wholly explain the development of such an influence. Cognizance has to be taken of the fact that a major section of the Bengali Muslims were recruits from the Hindus and the Buddhists. Naturally enough, these converts could not altogether forget their traditional beliefs and practices. While following the fundamentals of the

faith, the converted Muslims, particularly of the common class, maintained some of their former traditions and superstitions in their social life.

There are traces of the influence of the Nath Cult on the Muslim society. A study of the Bengali literature reveals that the traditions and teachings of the Nath teachers have been preserved and popularised by the Muslims. A Muslim poet Faid Allâh first compiled Gorakshavijaya, the story and ideas of one of the important Nath gurus, Gorakshanath. The songs of Minanath and Gorakshanath as well as the Gopichandra Rajar Gan (Mainamati Gan) are popular among the Yogi sects and the sufistic Muslims of East Bengal and North Bengal. It is specially noteworthy that the salient features of the Nath Cult and the Nath literature inspired the Muslims more than the Hindus in composing a large number of Yoga literature in Bengali. To such a type belong the Jnana-sagara of ‘Ali Riḍa, Jnana-pradipa and Jnana-chauṭisa of Syed Sultan, Nur-Kandila of Muhammad Shafi, Varamasya, Yoga Qalandar and Satya Jnana-pradipa of Murshid. These texts represent a popular mixture of the different kinds of Yoga, the Yoga of the Sahajiyas and the Naths as well as of the sufistic yogic system. These reflect the influence of the Indian yoga system on the Muslim šūfis. The Muslim yogic literature is but the result of such a compromise.¹

The reason for the preservation of the Nath traditions among certain sections of the Muslims is due to the fact that their ancestors were the followers of the Nath gurus. The stories and traditions of the Nath Cult have therefore passed as a common heritage of the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. There are some stories which depict Gorakshanath as the guardian-spirit of the cattle and Manikpîr as his disciple. These further express that both these faqîrs were adored by the people, Hindus and Muslims, who had cattle.² This reflects how yogism and šuﬁsm blended into one institution, so as to appear

as a common spiritual force to the common people of all communities of Bengal.

**Common Cultural Institutions:**

The veneration for *Panch Pir* bears the mark of the Buddhist and Hindu influence on the Muslims. The common Muslims as well as the Hindus of West Bengal adored *Panch Pir* in a ceremonious manner. They erected a small mound on a clay plinth in the north-west corner of one of the rooms of the house. On this was fixed an iron, resembling a human hand, "each finger symbolizing one of the quintette, with a piece of yellow cloth bound where the wrist should be."¹ A *dargah* of *Panch Pir* exists in Sonargaon. The sailors and boatmen of East Bengal even now invoke the blessings of *Panch Pir* along with the name of Pir Badr who is identified with Badr al-Din Badr-i-‘Ālam. The name of Ghāzi is also associated with the *Panch Pir*. He was most probably Bara Khān Ghāzi of Satgaon.

The numeral *panch* (five) is a significant number among the Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. The Muslims have five fundamentals of the faith, five times prayer, etc. The Hindus put importance to *panchsati* (five chaste women), Panchavati and others. Among the Buddhists there is the theory of the five *Tathāgatas* or five *Dhyāni* Buddhhas who have been transformed in the *Dharma Cult* into five *Pandits.*² It is to be noted that the *panch* of the Muslims and Hindus does not indicate the institution of *guru* or *pir,* while the *panch Tathāgatas* and *panch pandits* of the Buddhists and the Naths represent in form and essence spiritual personalities. This suggests that the followers of the *Nath Cult* who accepted Islam, carried with them to the Muslim society the idea of the five *pandits* which they in course of time applied to five Muslim *pirs.* Thus there arose the institution of *Panch Pir* as a common heritage of the various communities of Bengal.

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² S. B. Dasgupta, p. 305.
The Satyapir Cult is a remarkable common cultural heritage of Muslim Bengal. A product of the social contacts of the two communities of Bengal, this cult however bore the predominant influence of the monotheism and social equality of the Muslims. There are stories about the origin of the Satyapir Cult. It is said that a Brahmin youth of Mymensingh named Kanka, being outcaste from the Hindu society, accepted a Muslim saint as his pir or spiritual preceptor. At the order of the pir, Kanka composed his epic entitled Vidyasundara Kahinti to propagate the glories of Satyapir. It was composed about 1502 A.D. in the reign of Husain Shāh. The Muslim poet Faid Allāh who flourished in the middle of the sixteenth century composed a poem in praise of Satyapir. In giving the origin of this cult, Bharatchandra, a poet of the eighteenth century, says that a faqir (Muslim mendicant) appeared before a Brahmin and asked him to offer shirni (shirni, i.e., offering of sweets) to him. As the Brahmin refused, the faqir disappeared, and reappeared in the form of a Hindu god, Hari, and again disappeared. Being now convinced that the Hindu god Saiya (Hari) and the Muslim pīr (faqir) were, in fact, spiritually one and the same person, the Brahmin then adored Satyapir and offered him shirni.

The story reflects that the Satyapir Cult originated in the Hindu society as a result of the influence of the Muslim saints. The contemporary Bengali literature shows the general belief of the Hindus and of the Muslims in the miraculous power of the Satyapir. It was believed that by adoring the Satyapir the devotee would be blessed with everything he prayed for. The writings of most of the poets represent that the Hindu god was blended in the Muslim pīr. In other words, the Hindus accepted the Satyapir as the sole object of adoration, and thus in principle adopted the idea of monotheism and brotherhood of the Muslims. So, Krishnaharidas advocates that there is no difference between Vishnu and Allah.

1 E. Haq—Muslim Bangala Sahitya, p. 37.
2 Bharatchandra—Satya Narain Vratakatha.
3 Prachin Puthir Vivarana, B. S. 1320, pp. 24-28 and 819.
The Satyapir Cult prevailed as a great force in the Bengali society from the sixteenth century. Its great influence is illustrated by the fact that a rich literature, which compares favourably with that of the Vaishnavas, was produced on this cult. Even now the Satyapir is ceremoniously adored by many Hindus and Muslims of North and West Bengal. People make a wooden plank as the seat of the Satyapir and adorn it with flowers. On the day of the full moon, they offer shirni of various kinds in his adoration. The mullah reads the mantra and then the shirni is distributed among the people. In Rajshahi there is a place called Satyapir Bitha. Its custodians still enjoy rent-free lands.  

The Bengali language and literature is the most significant common cultural tradition of the Muslims and the Hindus. It was developed as a result of the common effort of the two communities of Bengal. The Muslim contribution is however more substantial than that of the Hindus. It has been discussed earlier that the Muslim rulers first accorded a place of respectability to Bengali and also the Muslim poets enriched Bengali literature by introducing a new tradition, themes, ideas and vocabularies.

The social contacts and the common social and cultural traditions speak of the existence of harmony and amity between the Hindus and the Muslims in the period of Muslim rule in Bengal. The Bengali literature expresses that the harmonious and friendly relations of the two communities were occasionally disturbed by an outburst of animosity. These were not however serious enough to embitter the otherwise cordial relations of the two. The Manasamangala kavyas give the impression that in the sixteenth century there was some trouble between the Hindus and the Muslims at the time of the worship of Manasa, the snake goddess.  

2 Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, pp. 50-54.
referred previously how the Vaishnavas burnt the house of the qāḍī of Navadvip and the latter settled the matter with them even by accepting the great loss he had suffered.

The Vaishnava poet Jayananda mentions of a trouble between the Hindus and the Muslims on the eve of the birth of Chaitanya. He says that at that time there was a strong rumour among the Hindus of Navadvip that a Brahmin would be born in that city who would destroy the Muslim rule and restore the sovereignty of the Brahmins in Gaur. The rumour was strengthened by the Brahmins, who stated that their scripture contained the prophesy of such a restoration of their rule in the province. The poet's writings express that the Muslim rulers came to know of this rumour and they took strong action on the Hindus.¹

Jayananda's writings of this incident, in fact, reveal a conspiracy of the Navadvip Brahmins to overthrow the Muslim rule in Bengal. It shows that, in spite of the liberal and tolerant policy of the Muslims, the orthodox section of the Brahmins could not reconcile themselves to the loss of their sovereignty and privileged position. Naturally at bottom they remained hostile to the Muslim rule. In another place Jayananda has given expression to this feeling of the Brahmins. He said, "There is age-long conflict between the Brahmin and the Yavana (Muslims)."² The use of the terms, Yavana and Mlechha, for the Muslims also represents the feeling of hatred of the Brahmins towards the Muslims. This feeling however remained suppressed in the minds of the orthodox section of the Hindus and they somehow kept a show of cordiality towards their Muslim rulers and neighbours.

1 Jayananda—Chaitanyamangala, p. 11.
2 Ibid.
CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL LIFE OF THE HINDUS

During the period of Muslim rule in Bengal, the bulk of the people were Hindus. There were a few Buddhists; but being persecuted by the Brahmanical society and also attracted by the higher ideals of Islam, most of them accepted the Muslim faith. *Niranjaner Ruksmā*, a poem of the Hindu poet Ramai Pandit, has left a picture of the tyranny of the Brahmins over the Buddhists.¹

**Castes and occupations:**

The Hindus were divided into four castes, the Brahmin, the Kayastha, Vaisya and Sudra. There were rigid social barriers between these castes, so that one could not have any social intercourse with the other. The Brahmins still maintained their position of precedence in the Hindu social life, although the Muslim rule and their social ideals greatly relieved the lower class people from their domination and exclusiveness and accorded them many rights and facilities to improve their life and status in the society. The Brahmins however lost the monopoly of the rights and privileges and were virtually faced with the condition of competition from the Hindus of other castes in intellectual, political and social life with the establishment of the Muslim power in Bengal.

Being thus denied of the monopoly of the privileges in the State, the Brahmins took to different professions. These pro-

¹ Ramai Pandit—*Niranjaner Ruksmā* quoted by E. Haq, *Muslim Bangali Sahitya*, pp. 6-1, and Chapter II, p. 70.

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essions decided their status in the Brahmin society. Thus the Brahmins were divided into several sections on the basis of their occupation and they also lived in separate quarters of the villages or towns. In his Chandikavya, poet Mukundaram Chakravarti has given a picture of the Brahmin society. He says, “One quarter is called Kulasthan (place of aristocracy) where live the Rarh Brahmins, with their temples and tols (educational institutions). Here also live the unlettered Brahmins. The officiate as priests and teach the rituals of worship. They mark their forehead with sandais or with tilak marks. They worship idols and run from house to house with bundles of offered rice tied on the end of their cloths. They get a pice worth of sweetmeat in the house of the sweetmeat seller and a vessel full of milk from the house of milkman. They get their monthly cowries from some houses and dried pulse from others. The village priest thus lives in happiness. The priest officiates at the shradh or death ceremonies of the locality. The mantras (incantations) over the Brahmin declares the dakshina (present) to be a kahan (slightly above three annas) and haggles for it.”

About the ghatak (match-maker) Brahmins Mukundaram writes, “They live by abuses. Their occupation was the reading of the Kulapanjis (genealogies). People, who do not secure their goodwill by presents, are abused by them at public gatherings till such time as the presents come.” There was a class of Brahmin astrologers who went from house to house in villages foretelling fortunes of men and earned their livelihood. They also cast the horoscope of the children.

The most interesting is the description of the Vaidyas (medicine men) by Mukundaram. He says, “They are Guptas, Senas, Dasses, Dattas, etc. They live in one corner of the Kulasthan of the town. Some of them become famous for mercurial treatment, prescribed in the mantras. They rise in the

2 Ibid p. 347 and Dasgupta—Bengal in the 16th Century, p. 156.
morning and place a tilak mark high on their forehead; they wrap a piece of cloth round the head, and, putting on a fine dhuti and taking the puthi (palm leaf book) under their arm, they stalk forth in the different wards of the town. When the disease is curable, the Vaidya, beating his raised chest, proclaims a cure; but if the disease is incurable, he contrives to retreat and asks for leave on various pretences. He will suggest, "If I can make a decoction of camphor, I am sure to effect a cure." The sickman will eagerly say, "Search for camphor" and the Vaidya, on this pretence, takes to his heels." This shows the craftiness of the Vaidyas in their profession.

The Vaidyas however prospered in their profession and some of them distinguished themselves in treatment, so that they were engaged by the Muslim rulers and nobles. The Vaidyas, Anantasena and Mukunda Das, were the royal physician of Bārbak Shāh and Husain Shāh respectively. A Kāviraj (Vaidya) cured Mirzā Nathan's father, when all the physicians had failed in their treatment of his disease. The Vaidyas as a class advanced rapidly in literary and intellectual life in the Muslim period. They acquired distinction as poets and attained high position in the State by dint of their merit and talent. There was a low class Brahmans called Agardans. They lived close to the quarter of the Vaidyas and followed the profession of officiating at the funerals. Mukundaram wittingly observes that they were in daily search of patients. They paid no taxes, but it was their due to take the cow that was given away by the dying, to secure a passage across the river Bytarini (the Indian Styx), and the til-dan (the sesamum gift) with gold pieces.

The Vaishnava literatures represent the picture of a demoralised life of Brahmans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were given to sexual pleasures and other vices and immoralities. They took to dishonesty and falsehood in their greed for

2 History of Bengal, D.U. Ip, P. 151.
3 Badhrisudh (Tr.), I, p. 39.
money. Many of the Brahmins had turned dacoits. Premvilas records, "Govinda Baruuya (Banerji), Lalit Ghosal and Kalidas Bhatta (Bhattacharya) are vicious persons. Nilmani, Mukhuti (Mukherjee), Ramjai Chakravarti, Harinath Ganguli and Siva Chakravarti were formerly in the army of Chand Ray, zamindar of Rajmahal. They committed many dacoities in the company of Chand Ray." Vrindavandas and Krishnadas Kaviraj also refer to some Brahmin dacoits of Chaitanya's time. They inform that a Brahmin tried to rob Nityananda of his valuable ornaments.

The Kayasthas lived in one side of the town or village and represented the middle class in the Hindu society. Under the Muslim rule, they got opportunities to show their talents and attainments. They excelled in learning and intellect and qualified themselves for a dignified position in the State and society. By virtue of their accomplishments, they could demand from the rulers a preferential treatment, saying, "The goddess Saraswati is bountiful to us all (Kayasthas). We can all read and write. We are the ornaments of a town. Decide to give us the best lands and houses and make them rent-free." Because of their learning and devotion to government and the patronage of the Muslim rulers, the Kayasthas prospered in government service and also as revenue-farmers and zamindars. Indeed they occupied a position of pre-eminence in the Hindu society in consequence of their rise to office and wealth during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal.

The Kayasthas were noted for their craftiness, as they are even today. The character of Bharu Datt drawn by poet Mukundaram expresses this. The poet says that Kalaketu, the hunter, founded a city called Gujrat by the grace of the goddess Chandi. Bharu Datt, a Kayastha, approached the hunter-king with a basketful of bananas, desiring to get a

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1 See Jayananda's Chaitanya-Mangala, p. 139; and Govindadas's Karacha.
2 See Sahitya Parishad Patrika, 1331 B.S., Pt III, p. 141.
4 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 354.
5 See Chapter VIII.
position at his court. There were some proud marks on his forehead indicative of his caste. His outer coat was torn in places, but his cocha (the folded skirt of his dhuti) fell down to its full length. A long reed pen was on one of his ears. He saluted the king and addressed him as his uncle. He made presents and with fair words expressed his desire to serve his kingdom. Bharu spoke enthusiastically of his own qualifications that he belonged to a kulín Kayastha family, which was honoured by all other Kayasthas with gifts and presents. He had two wives, both were of the kulín families, connected with the Ghosh and the Bose. His daughters were married to a Mitra family. He assured king Kalaketu that, if he was given the management of his kingdom, it would soon rise to prosperity and progress.¹

To please Kalaketu, a low born Hindu, Bharu Datt did not hesitate to address him as his uncle, and at the same time extolled his own social position and prestige. This was the typical character of the Kayasthas.

According to Mukundaram, craftiness was a striking characteristic of the goldsmith and the money-lending class of the Hindus. They bought and sold gold and tested the precious metals. In the process they drew to themselves the wealth of the people.² They also lent money against security of ornaments. Mukundaram’s description of the deal of Murari Seal, a money-lender, with Kalaketu, the hunter, reflects the craftiness of this class of people. Kalaketu got a valuable ring from goddess Chandi and went to sell it to Murari Seal. Murari owed Kalaketu a small amount, on account of buying fuel from him on a previous occasion. Fearing that Kalaketu had come to demand his dues, Murari at once went to the inner apartment of his house to evade his creditor. Murari’s wife met Kalaketu and told him that her husband was out to collect interest from his debtors. She also ordered the hunter for some fuel and

² Ibid, p. 358.
forest plum, promising that his bills, old and new, would be paid the next day. But Kalaketu informed her that he had come to dispose of a valuable ring. Hearing of a transaction from which he expected to make profit, Murari Seal entered his outer mansion by a back-door. He charged Kalaketu for not coming to his house as often as he used to do before.

The haggling of Murari Seal with Kalaketu over the price of the ring is interesting and it reveals the lack of honesty and integrity of the money-lenders and the banias of the Hindu society. At first he tried to get the ring practically without price, saying that it was just a copper ring, polished cleverly. He weighed it, calculated its price carefully and offered him a price of 8 pans and 5 gandas of cowries, while the ring was worth more than seven crores of rupees. As Kalaketu had learnt the worth of the ring from the goddess, he did not agree with Murari Seal’s offer of price and desired to go to some other merchant. Murari Seal then gradually raised the price and, after much haggling, ultimately bought the ring at a price of seven crore rupees.\footnote{1} Literature is generally based on the ideas and character of the society. In this sense, this incident of Murari, although just a story, reflects the nature of the typical class of money-lenders and banias. The accounts of the foreign travellers corroborate that the banias lacked straightforward dealing. Manucci observes that the banias “are very careful about the answers they give to questions. According to popular saying, it is their habit to dissemble even when someone asks them what day it is. They give a useless answer; but if the questioner insists on a reply, they say first of all that they do not know. After that if he still demands a direct answer they say: Do you not know that yesterday it was Thursday? If the other returns to the charge, they say, “Do you not know that to-morrow is Saturday?” And if the inquirer still persists, they answer with hesitation: Everybody says that today is Friday.”\footnote{2}

\footnote{1} Mukundaram—Chandikarya, pp. 292-95, and D. C. Sen—Glimpse of Bengal Life, p. 225.
\footnote{2} Manucci, I, pp. 155-56.
The Vaisyas were mostly cultivators and traders. Regarding them Mukundaram says”, “Some till lands, others tend cows. Some act as carriers with pack bullocks, while some make purchases at the proper season, growing crops, to sell when the markets rise. Some travel from place to place, making purchases of precious stones. Some arrange for long journeys in boats with various goods, and bring back with them camphors, sandal-wood and conch shells, shawl pushthys, and coats (angarakhi). They are always buying and selling and the Vaisyas are a happy lot at Gujrat (the new city of the hero of the story).”

The Vaisyas lived in one part of the village or town, on the lines of their occupations. The Vaisya cultivators lived in one quarter and the trading Vaisyas of various categories were settled in their neighbourhood. There were also various classes of manufacturers and artisans among them.

The Sudras were either cultivators or labourers in the society. They were divided into many sub-castes on the basis of their occupations. One class ploughed land and another caught fish. There were weavers, barbers, blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, washermen and other class of Sudras. They lived in one extremity of the town or the village. The 

Social morality:

On the eve of the Muslim conquest of Bengal, the Hindu society was demoralised. There was not only the tyranny of the Brahmans over the non-Brahmins, particularly over the lower class Hindus, and the Buddhists, but corruptions and vices of all sorts prevailed in the social life. The contemporary Sanskrit literature reveals the immoralities among the people of the time. It is known from Pavanadhota of poet Dhuyi and Ramcharita of poet Sandhyakar Nandi that the Sena kings introduced

1 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 352.
2 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, pp. 357-59.
the custom of engaging *Devadasis*, young Brahmin widows, for the service of the temples. In this the upper class and influential Hindus got an element of enjoyment. This undermined the morality of the Hindu society and corruption and vices pervaded all the strata of their social life. The Hindu caste system did not permit an upper class person marrying a Sudra woman. But this did not prevent a Brahmin from cohabiting with a Sudra woman. Even after committing such an immoral and unsocial act he could maintain his *kulnism* by simply paying a small fine. According to poet Vrihaspati, the females of the time were given to too much sexual pleasures. Tantrikism and Saktism of the time were greatly responsible for this demoralisation of the Hindu society.

The writings of the *Kalavivekagrantha* and *Kalikapurana* express that even the Hindu religious ceremonies, such as the *Durgapuja*, Holi, etc., were marked by sensualities and vulgarities of both the males and females. In a religio-social festivity, known as *Kam-nahotsava*, the Hindu men and women held lewd dance to please their god, so that they might be blessed with son and wealth. Poet Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* represents the existing moral degradation of the society. The poems and books of the type of *Gitagovinda*, whose subject appealed to sexes, were recited at the court and gatherings of peoples and these were highly enjoyed by them. After the Muslim conquest of Bengal, there was moral and cultural development of the Hindu society, as a result of the religious and social influence of the Muslims. The Muslim society represented a highly moral and refined life. The Hindus came in contact with their life and were impressed by it. There was in particular the influence of the Muslim saints on the Hindus. The Muslim rule shook the authority of the Brahmins who were primarily responsible for social inequalities and immoralities, and opened the way for the non-Brahmin Hindus to elevate their intellectual, moral and social life. The Muslim contact and the consequent agitation

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1 Nihar Ray—*Bāgalīr Itihāsha*, p. 525.
2 Ibid.
3 See Nihar Ray—*Bāgalīr Itihāsha*, p. 525.
it produced among the Hindus in general rudely awoke the Brahmans from their pursuits of pleasures and sense of complacency. They felt the urgency of reforming their life and society. So there arose several reform movements among the Brahmans, of which an account has been given in a previous chapter. This feeling of reform also produced the great religious revolution in the Hindu society in the form of Vaishnavism of Sri-Chaitanya. The conservative group of the Brahmans still continued to have their old way of life. But speaking broadly, the Hindus in general, including a large section of the Brahmans, re-organised their social life on moral and decent lines.

Sri-Chaitanya’s Vaishnavism represented an improved morality of the Hindu society. It was a protest against the prevalent immoralities, inequalities and injustices of the Hindu social life. The Vaishnavas were noted for their piety and integrity of character. It is said that the enemies of the Vaishnavas tried to corrupt them by means of temptations, but they failed. The case of Haridas illustrates this. The zamindar of Benapol, Ramchandra, held before him allurements. A young beautiful dancing girl spread all her charms on Haridas to entice him to an act of immorality. Haridas however maintained the purity and integrity of his character. Even among the lower class Hindus, morality was higher in the Muslim period. This is illustrated by the character of Kalaketu, the hunter and the hero of Mukandaram’s Chandikavya. The goddess Chandi came to the house of Kalaketu in the guise of a beautiful damsel when his wife was away and proposed to live with him. This she did just to test the character of the hunter. Kalaketu refused to have anything to do with her. Being pleased, the goddess put off her disguise and admired him. She gave him a precious ring which he sold at seven crores of rupees. Although this narrative is just a story, it however represents the life and character of the common people of the society.

The Chinese envoys of the early fifteenth century have

1 Vrindavandas—Chaitanya Bhagavata; Dasgupta—Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 32-33.
2 Mukundaram—Chandikavya, pp. 245 and 287.
referred to the honesty and good temper of the people of Bengal. This appreciation was applied both to the Muslims and the Hindus of the province. These Chinese writers have mentioned some specific qualities of the Hindus. Sing Ch’a Sheng lan observes, “There is a clan of people Y’n tu (Hindu) who do not eat beef, and men and women do not eat in the same place. When the husband dies, the wife does not marry again, and when the wife dies, the husband does not marry again. The destitute (orphans and widows of the Hindus) of the village are maintained by the co-villagers and they are not allowed to seek their food in any other village. So they are praised for their broad public spirit.”¹ This account reflects the life of the common Hindus. As for the upper class like the Brahmins, polygamy was the prevailing practice among them. Even the Kulin Kayasthas used to have two or more wives.²

*Religious groups*

During the period of the Muslim rule in Bengal, the Hindu society, apart from the various castes and sub-castes were divided into many religious groups. Reference has already been made of the Vaishnavas and the followers of the Dharma-thakur creed. The *Satya-Pir* cult, also known as *Satya Narain* creed, was adopted by many Hindus of the sixteenth century. The Hindus in general believed in innumerable gods and goddesses. There were however many of them who adored principally one god or goddess, although they had veneration for all, so that there were *Saivas, Saktas* and others among them. Siva was the chief god of the *Saivas* and he was regarded as the power. A few Hindus gave prominence to the female goddess and believed that she was the source of all power. They were known as *Saktas*. *Yoga* was the significant feature of *Saivism*, while *tantras* and sacrifices, including human beings, were the striking characteristics of *Saktism*.

*Sahajiya*

The rise of the *Sahajiya* cult is a noteworthy phenomenon of the social and religious life of the Hindus in the Muslim

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¹ Visva Bharati Annals, 1945, vol. 1, pp. 96-134.
² Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 339.
period. Its origin is traced from the later development of Buddhism, particularly when it was influenced by the idea of the Hindu female goddess or tantrikism. The Buddhist Sangha was, in the beginning, exclusively intended for the males. At the insistence of Buddha's foster-mother, Mahaprajapati, Buddha allowed her and some other women to join the Sangha. This, in the end, made way for the coming of the influence of Hinduism, particularly tantrikism and sexual rites, in the Buddhist community. As a result the Buddhists were divided into two sections, Hinayana and Mahayana. The Hinayana Buddhists maintained the tradition of the time of the founder of their religion. The Mahayana Buddhists incorporated in their faith the gods and goddesses and the tantrik ideas of the Hindus. Buddha was now made a god and Tara was introduced as a goddess and as his power. Buddha and Tara, in different modes of adoration and manifestation of power, turned into various minor gods and goddesses of the Buddhists. The Tantragranthas were written to regulate the rites of this tantrik Buddhism.

In course of time, tantrik Buddhism was divided into three groups, Bajrayana, Kalachakrayana and Sahajayana. The Bajrayanis elaborated rites and ceremonials of worship. The Sahajayanas abhored complexities of rituals and followed the system of tantrik communion through the process of sexual rites. According to them, this was the best adoration leading to the attainment of eternal bliss. Some scholars think that the celebrated poet Chandidas was the best exponent of this later form of Sahajayana or Sahajiya cult.¹ The worship of women occupied a prominent place in the theology of the Sahajiyas in the time of Chandidas. It is stated in the Jnanadi Sadhan Tantra that a woman of the Chandala caste, along with those of other nine different low castes, is a fit object of worship. This love for and worship of woman develops into spiritualism. The poems of Chandidas express this idea. The sexual love verging on worship is traced in the monastic life (Sangha) of the Bhikhshus and Bhikshunis, where the order of the Guru was

supreme and he expounded the doctrine that it was a duty to offer heart and soul as well as body for the worship of the Guru. It was thus a religious duty of the Bhikshuns to please the Guru and thus adore him.¹

Chandidas worships man more than a god. He says, "Love a man, or love a woman, and the highest truth shall be revealed to you."² His love for the washer-woman Rami is free from any touch of the passion of the flesh. To him she was not only dear as a mistress or wife, but esteemed as parents, sacred as religion and worshipped as the goddess of his temple. Chandidas says "To conquer the flesh, and yet love, to love with the soul and not merely with the flesh is the secret of this love." He then sounds a warning that the love is not an easy one; "One who wants to practise this love should make his body lost to all senses like a log."³ He even announced that he adored the feet of the washer-woman Rami. It was indeed very bold of a Brahmin in the orthodox society of the time.

The Sahajiya cult was thus transformed into the worship of woman as a means to the spiritual bliss. Its followers passed through several phases. In the first instance the lovers, man and woman, selected each other. Then they separated and lived under temptation in different places. If they still felt the warmth of love, then they lived together. After passing through some tests, the lover would wake up the whole night, laying his hand on the feet of his beloved woman. This would continue six months. Passing through this process, they would feel that the body was merely a dry log and wholly subservient to the spirit.⁴

The Sahajiya form of the adoration of woman as propounded by poet Chandidas is neither practicable nor spiritual. On the other hand, it let loose immoralities and corruptions in

¹ D. C. Sen—Glimpse of Bengal Life, p. 129.
² Ibid.
³ Chandidas; quoted by D. C. Sen—Glimpse of Bengal Life, pp. 133-47.
⁴ According to some scholars, Ranubhatt was the founder of Sahajiya and Ananda Bajra was the founder of the Bajrayana.
the Hindu society. So Chaitanya condemned this sexual romance among the Hindus of his time.

Avadhuta: This rise of a mendicant sect known as Avadhuta is a noticeable feature of the Hindu society in the period under study. The teachings of the Buddhist Siddhacharyas fostered its growth. The Avadhutas followed the Buddhist method of Yoga in which an exact knowledge of the nadi (artery) called Avadhuti was essential. There was also the influence in their life of the twelve Dhutangas of Buddhism, such as living on begging, dwelling under trees in forests far away from the human habitation, wearing torn clothes, etc. It is thought that the Avadhutas received their inspiration from the old tradition of the followers of Dhuta discipline.¹

The Avadhutas adopted renunciation and asceticism as their life. They had no attachment for anything and believed that neither the Sastras nor the places of pilgrimage could lead to salvation. They behaved like mad men. Before joining the new order of Chaitanyas his companion disciple Nityananda was an Avadhuta. An idea of the religious life of the Avadhuta sect can be obtained from the description of the manners of Nityananda given by Vrindavandas, the author of Chaitanya Bhagavata.²

Religious hostilities:

Because of the existence of many castes and sects, there was religious and social conflict among the Hindus. The hostilities of the Brahmanical society towards Chandidas and Chaitanya illustrate this fact. Chandidas had to suffer social odium for his love to the washer-woman Rami. From the beginning, the Brahmans oppressed Chaitanya and his followers and tried to destroy his new and revolutionary faith. Vaishnavism however flourished, on account of the patronising attitude

² See Vrindavandas—Chaitanya Bhagavata, Antakhandā.
of the Muslim rulers. It was due to the protection extended by them to Chaitanya and his followers that the vindictive Brahmans failed to stop the progress of Vaishnavism.

This hostility of the Brahmans towards the Vaishnavas however passed as a tradition to the succeeding generations of the Hindus. By that time, the Vaishnavas however became powerful and they could return to their enemies any injury on them. There was bitter conflict particularly between the Saktas and the Vaishnavas. The Saktas sometimes following the corpse of a Vaishnava worthy clapped their hands with loud ejaculations and declared that the upstart Vaishnava was rightly served with death for his folly in adopting the Vaishnava creed.

Poet Dasarathi says that a Vaishnava would on no account call ink by its ordinary name kali, for it was the name of a goddess worshipped by the Saktas. They would call it by the Persian name siāhī. Java flowers with which Saktas generally worshipped Kali, are contumously called by the Vaishnavas as ora flowers. The Vaishnavas even shuddered, if the name of Kali was pronounced in their presence. They declared that the shrine of Vadarikasrama was not worth a straw.

Poet Dasarathi's Pravas Milan reveals the hatred of the Saktas to the Vaishnavas. He says, "The lay Vaishnavas indiscriminately sit to dine together; the washerman, the phariah, the grocers, and the Bagdi form but one caste in the dinner hall. They can take a woman, with children, as wife, paying one rupee and four ananas to their religious preceptor, and a Mohammedan convert enjoys as high a prestige in their community as an aristocrat (kulin)."1

Rites and Ceremonials:

The Hindus observed many religious rites and ceremonies.

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Besides the worship of Siva and Kali, they worshipped many gods and goddesses. The contemporary Bengali literature reflects that the worship of the goddesses Manasa and Chandi occupied a prominent place in the Hindu society from the fifteenth century. The Manasa was the goddess of snakes and Chandi was a goddess who bestowed bounties. On the occasion of the Manasa puja and Mangal Chandi puja, Manasamangala and Chandimangala panchalis were read and heard by II the villagers. In the Ramayana of Krittivas, there is reverence of Durga puja in the Hindu society. In the sixteenth century, the worship of Durga became common among the Hindus. It is known from the Chaitanya Bhagavata of Vrindavandas that in his time Durga puja was celebrated in every house. There were also Laksmi puja, Saraswati puja, Vasuli puja, Sasthi puja, Charak puja, etc., in the Hindu society. The goddess Laksmi was worshipped for fortune and the goddess Sasthi was adored by the women desiring to be blessed with children. The Charak puja was connected with the adoration of Siva. Saraswati was worshipped as the goddess of learning.

The Hindus of the time regarded it as a religious duty to bathe in the Ganges and the Brahmaputra rivers. The former was known as Dasahara and the latter as Astami Snan. Bathing in a holy river on the seventh of the Bengali month, Magh, was known as Maghi Saptami Snan. Dolyatra, Rathayatra and Holi festival became very common in this period. The Holi festival originated before the twelfth century. Desiring to have bounteous crop, the Hindus performed this religious ritual by sacrificing human being to propitiate the deity (Kali). It was also accompanied by sexual dancing and singing. Kamatsava or festival of passion was associated with the Holi. In the sixteenth century it lost its separate identity and was merged

1 S. K. Sen—Bengala Sahityer Itihasha, pp. 155-56.
Panchalis are poems sung in adoration of gods or goddesses. It perhaps originated from the name Panchal, the old name of the region between the Himalayas and the Chambal river. See Hindi Sahula Sagar of Nagar, p. 467.
2 Krittivas—Ramayana, Introduction.
with the ritual of the Holi. In course of time, the Dhulan of Radha-Krishna and the Holi formed a common festival of the Hindus. It was performed amidst great rejoicings. The sprinkling of colour and illumination of houses were the significant features of the Holi. The Muslims patronised and even participated in this festival of the Hindus.

**Suddhi:**

There are some religio-social customs among the Hindus which need mention. One of these was the Suddhi or the purificatory rite. This was a rite devised in order to recover the Hindu converts to Islam. Jādu, son of Raja Kans, was converted to Islam. Afterwards Raja Kans persuaded him to come back to the fold of Hinduism. To decontaminate Jādu of Muslim influence, he performed the purificatory rite by passing him through the womb of a cow made of gold plates, which were given away to the Brahmin priests. But the Hindu society, including the Brahmin participants of the Suddhi and recipients of the gold plates, refused to accept this reconversion and allow him any social status.

If a Hindu took beef or drank water from the lota (pitcher, ewer) of a Muslim, he was regarded as an outcaste in the society. But as the number of such cases increased, the Brahmins felt the necessity of allowing some relaxation of the rigidity of their social system. They prescribed atonement by performing some religious ceremonies and paying fines to the priests. There is evidence for this fact in the Ramayana of poet Adbhucharya. Krishnadas Kaviraj relates a story that Sultan Husain Shāh made a Brahmin named Subudhi Ray drink water from the lota of the Muslims as a punishment for his bad treatment on him when he was in the employ of that Brahmin zamindar. Being outcaste Subudhi Ray went to Benaras to atone for his contamination. The Brahmin pandits prescribed for him the

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1 Nihar Ray—Bangalir Itihasa, pp. 585-86.
3 Quoted in Sahitya Parishad Patrika, 1327, B. S., XXXVII, p. 108.
eating of hot butter (ghee). Still Subudhi Ray could not obtain peace of mind. In the end he became a Vaishnava at the hands of Chaitanya when the latter arrived at Benaras.\(^1\) The allegation of Krishnadas Kaviraj that ‘Alā al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh contaminated Subudhi Ray is a pure fabrication. It goes against the spirit of liberalism of the great Sultān who was so tolerant that he was highly admired even by the Hindu poets for his generous treatment to all religious communities. The writings of the poet however reflect the prevailing practice of the Hindus to purify those who were contaminated in consequence of Muslim contact.

**Dress:**

The *dhuti* was the common dress of the Hindus. The upper class people wore an *angarakhi* or a long coat reaching the knee-joint and fastened in the neck and breast. There was also the use of *chadar* and turban in the aristocratic and educated circles.\(^2\) The wealthy Hindus, particularly the merchants, put on necklace, ear-ring, and rings of diamonds and precious metals. The dress of Lakshmindar at the time of his marriage illustrates these facts.\(^3\)

The common dress of the women was *sari*. There were different kinds and qualities of *saries*. Some were made of cotton and some of silk. Sack-cloths or jute *saries* were worn by women of the poorer class.\(^4\) The women of well-to-do families generally put on *kanchulli* (tight-breast) and *orna* (scarf). They adorned themselves with various ornaments, such as necklace, bracelet, bangles, ear-rings, nose-ring, etc. They put on *mupur* or anklet in their feet. The use of vermillion marks was common among all classes of women. They used

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2. See Bansidas—*Manasamangala*, p. 195 and Mukundaram-Chandikavya, p. 338.
scented musk and sandal-wood.\(^1\)

Abūl Fadl remarks that the men and women of Bengal for the most part went naked, wearing only a cloth about their loins.\(^2\) Ralph Fitch also had similar reflection about the Bengali people. He says, "They go with a little cloth before them, and all the rest of their bodies is naked."\(^3\) The statements of Abūl Fadl and Fitch should not be accepted in their literal meaning. It was not that the Bengalis were poor and could not afford to buy clothes. But in view of the rains, waters and mud, trouser, shirt, etc., were inconvenient for work in the field in Bengal. A small dhuii was therefore the most convenient dress for the cultivators and labourers working in the soil of this reverine province.

The Chinese envoys noticed that among the common people of Bengal both men and women worked in the fields and wove according to the season. Abūl Fadl states that the women of Bengal bore the main burden of work.\(^4\) These show that the Bengali women were very active and industrious.

Food:

Rice and fish were the chief food of the Bengali people. According to the accounts of Ralph Fitch, there was a section of the Hindus who were strictly vegetarians. Regarding the people of Sonargaon, this English traveller writes, "Here they will eat no flesh, nor kill a beast. They live on rice, milk and fruits."\(^5\) The people in general took rice, fish and vegetables. On festive occasions however they used to take flesh. In Vijayagupta’s Manasamangala and Naraindeva’s Padmapurana there are references of various fish and flesh curries and sweet dishes. They prepared flesh curries of goat, deer, sheep and pigeon.

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2 A’in-i-Akbari (Jarret), II, p. 134.
3 Purchas, His Pilgrims, X, pp. 174-75.
4 A’in-i-Akbari (Jarret), II, p. 134.
5 Naraindeva—Manasamangala, p. 48 and Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, pp. 96-97.
Fish curries were of Saul, Chithal, Hilsa, Magur, Khalisa, Ruho, Paba, etc. They *laun, kumra, put, kachu*, kachu, brinjal, banana, jackfruits, mango and other vegetables and fruits. Varieties of sweets and milk preparations were common in the society of the time.

Khichri was a favourite dish among the people.\(^1\) The Hindus did not know the use of achars (pickles) which was an essential item in the menu of the food of the Muslims. In the literature of the Hindus there are good accounts of their various curries and dishes; but nowhere the mention of achars in available. It seems that the Hindus afterwards adopted this item of food from the Muslims.

**Custom of Sati:**

In the Manikchandra Rajar Gan, there is reference of the practice of sati or the self-immolation of the Hindus. It states that, after the death of king Manikchandra, his queen Maina became a sati by placing herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband; but she came back unburnt and in due course gave birth to a son, who was Govindachandra.\(^2\) No one would believe that anybody returned unburnt from the funeral pyre. The self-immolation of Maina however indicates the existence of the custom of sati in Hindu Bengal. In the Muslim period no reference is available of this social institution among the Bengali Hindus in the contemporary literatures. The *Manasamangala kavyas* of the sixteenth century vaguely refer to the practice of the sati. When Lakshmindar died of snake-bite and his dead body was floated on a raft in the river, his wife Behula accompanied it. But her mother-in-law and other relatives tried to prevent her from thus consigning her life with the dead husband. According to Ketakadas-Kshemananda, Behula's mother-in-law Sanaka at that time wept and said that she did not hear in this world that a young widow ever accompanied her dead husband. On the other hand, a girl or a young

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1. Vijayagupta—*Manasamangala*, p. 133.
woman, whose husband was dead, lived as a widow in her house.¹

The above incident expresses that the sati was not a regular practice of the fifteenth and sixteenth century Bengali Hindu society. The society did not force the widow to enter the funeral pyre of her husband in order to become a sati. This type of self-immolation was rather discouraged. Some of the devoted wives however, thinking life unbearable, followed their dead husbands by entering the fire. Thus the sati was a voluntary among the Hindus in the Muslim period. It is known from the account of the Chinese also that among the Hindus there was the custom that when the husband died his wife remained a widow and did not marry again.

The institution of sati, which originated with the Rajputs, was a prevailing social practice among the Hindus of Northern India. It is known from Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Abul Fadl, Bernier and other writers that this custom was enforced with great rigidity by the Hindu society of Northern India. But the Muslim government, actuated by humanitarian motive, were vigilant to stop forcible self-immolation.

Superstitions:

There were many superstitious customs in the society of the time. A few of these are found mentioned in the Manasamangala kavya of poet Vijayagupta. According to the prevalent idea, it was inauspicious to set out for marriage celebration or for any business, if a pitcher was found broken or the jackals howled in the mid-day. To see a begging woman or a snake moving from the right to the left was interpreted as an ill omen. To be called from behind at the time of setting out and to see

¹ Ketakadas-Kshemananda—Manasamangala (ed. C.U. 1949), p. 261:
Sanaka kandi bale ālo abhāgini.
A tin bhūbānechā kothāi na shumi,
Sīsu jūbā abalā zāhār patī mirē,
Bishaba haīa se thākai nij ghare.
a flying vulture descending in front were considered as ominous signs. It was also thought inauspicious to sneeze by anyone or to stumble at the time a person sets out from his house on his work. Many other superstitions of this type were common among the people of Bengal during the period of Muslim rule.

Several interesting superstitious beliefs need special mention. People believed in sorceries and charms of magic incantations. There were actually some women who practised these arts. These women prepared potions, which, according to the conviction of the people, could endow childless women with child. They also made love-compelling decoction which was thought to be effective in winning the love of a woman or of a man, is spite of all hostile forces. In his Chandikavya, Mukundaram has given an idea of the elements which were used in preparing this magic potion. This was made of nail of tortoise, blood of crow, teeth of crocodile, feather of bat, gall of black dog, bowl of reptile and owl of the hole. This is indeed a terribly amusing decoction that was used in compelling a woman to love a man and a man to love a woman.

1 Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, pp. 122 and 180.
CHAPTER X

THE ART OF WARFARE IN BENGAL

A new development:

As in other fields, in the military life also, the Muslim rule left significant marks, which were of far-reaching consequence in the history of Bengal. The Muslims introduced in this province an energetic and robust people, who were noted for their martial qualities and military organisation. Possessed of wide experience in fighting in the mountainous regions as well as in the plains, the Muslim generals and warriors developed, keeping in view the geography and nature of Bengal, an art of warfare that revolutionised the military machine and the technique of battles in this province. It was this system of warfare modelled by them that enabled the Bengali soldiers to earn military distinctions in their struggle for independence and also in the expansion of territories.

It is to be noted that the Muslim governors, generals, soldiers and others, who came to Bengal with the Muslim conquest, settled down in this province and made it their permanent home. Naturally enough, they identified themselves with the interests of the soil and devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the promotion of its prosperity and strength. Moreover, political expediency of the governors, who aimed at establishing their independent rule in Bengal, dictated them to conduct themselves as leaders of the Bengali people, both Muslims and Hindus. They championed the cause of the people of the province and thus enlisted their support and co-operation in their scheme of political ambition. It is admitted that the governors, chiefs
and soldiers of Bengal fought for a narrow cause of local interests as against the bigger cause of a political union of this sub-continent represented by the Sultanate of Delhi. But in those days individual and local interests dominated the political life and the governors and their followers did never miss an opportunity to instal sovereign power in their respective provinces. Although ideally unsound, this tendency to independent sovereignty was particularly striking in Bengal, a province which was far off from Delhi and also enjoyed a large measure of inaccessibility on account of its geography and climate. Bengal had thus a history of an independent political career under the Muslim rulers. The works and achievements of these rulers and warriors, therefore, rightly belong to the history of the Bengali people. Their short-comings are also equally shared by the people of this province.

The great general and conqueror Iqhtiyar al-Din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji and his companions in arms, the Khalji Malik and soldiers, who lived, toiled and died in this province, were the earliest heroes of Muslim Bengal. The Turkoman rulers, who were domiciled in Bengal and served its cause, are to be rightly regarded as Bengali warriors. It is significant to note that the Bengali generals and soldiers maintained the independence of their province for several centuries in the face of the strong opposition of the Sultanate of Delhi. Their successes against the great forces of Northern India and also their extension of the frontier of Bengal to Assam, Orissa and Bihar are a testimony to the fighting quality of the Bengali people. In these days, the Bengalis are stigmatised as unfit for active military service. Their history in the Muslim period does not justify this condemnation. It reveals that by the valour of their arms they kept the independence of their homeland at a time, when other provinces and territories were long under the yoke of Delhi.

Elements of Warfare:

The development of an art of warfare well suited to the geography of Bengal and the natural military qualities of its
people mainly accounted for the military distinctions of the province in the Muslim time. Several elements contributed to this development. The first was the element of shrewd generalship. The Muslim Bengal was particularly fortunate in the production of a series of talented rulers and generals, who excelled both in the art of peace as well as in war. Sagacious and practical, they shaped their military organisation and system of warfare on the basis of the natural features of the province and the special talent of its people for a particular mode of fighting. The second element in this system of warfare was supplied by the infantry. The military organisers of the time realized that in the field operations in the riverine territory of Bengal footmen would be of greater advantage than the cavalry force. So they attached much importance to the infantry force and to its training in guerrilla tactics, which were well adapted to a land abounding in forests, bushes, marshes and rivers. The infantry, commonly known as the paiks, were so skilfully trained that they excelled in clever fighting and won glories in many a battle. For their military distinctions in upholding the independence of the province, the paiks were renowned as Abu Bangalah, i.e., the father or guardian of Bengal. 1

The most vital element of the art of warfare in Bengal was the navy. The naval force played a momentous role in the life of the Bengali people. From the beginning, the Muslim rulers were keenly alive to the importance of a navy in the warfare of the province. Ghiyāth al-Dīn ʿIwāḍ Khalji (1213–27 A. D.) was the first ruler to devote himself to the building of an efficient navy. He constructed a powerful fleet of war-boats and manned it with persons well trained in naval fighting and boatmanship. 2 In a short time the navy became an effective element of warfare in the riverine country of Bengal. Ghiyāth al-Dīn ʿIwāḍ Khalji is thus rightly entitled to be called the Father of Bengal Navy.

1 Barani, p. 593.
2 Minhāj, p. 158.
The fourth element in the development of the art of warfare was provided by a scientific combination of the naval fighting with the infantry manoeuvring. The swift sailing war-boats cleverly covered the movement of the foot soldiers and the two made simultaneous operations against the enemy.

Another element of the new method of warfare in Bengal was the use of the indigenous implements which proved to be very convenient and effective in fighting. Noteworthy of these implements were the bamboo sticks. Available in abundance in the province, the long bamboo sticks were superior to the swords and many other weapons of war. Soldiers with long sticks could fight with greater advantage from a distance against the swordsmen whose superiority lay in fighting at close quarters. Moreover, these long sticks served more than one purpose. Apart from its use as a weapon in fighting, these were used in rowing the war-boats.

**Strategy and Tactics:**

The military leaders of Muslim Bengal planned the strategy and tactics of war in such a way so that they might derive the maximum advantages of the geographical and natural features of the province. They fully utilised the strategic position of the Teliagarhi pass as a first line of defence against an invader from Northern India. In that narrow pass with hills on one side and the steep bank of the mighty Ganges on the other, a small body of Bengali soldiers could withhold the advance of a large enemy force. The Bengali navy patrolling the river near that route prevented the entry of the enemy by the Ganges. The invading forces were put to a severe test of patience and harassment at Teliagarhi. The clever Bengali captains seized every opportunity to cause sufferings to the enemy. Thus tired and harassed, the invaders often abandoned their intention of subjugating Bengal and returned from Teliagarhi. At times the vigilant Bengali forces suddenly fell upon their much wearied and unsuspecting opponents and dispersed them.
By adopting this strategy the Bengali army under Ghiyāth al-Din 'Iwâd Khâlji checked the advance of Sulṭān Ilutmish at Teliagarhi for a considerable time.\footnote{History of Bengal (D. U.), II, p. 26.} Aware of this strategy at this pass, Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Din Balban took to a different route and entered Bengal by the circuitous Tirhut route.\footnote{Barani, pp. 86-93.} Sulṭān Firūz Shâh Tughlaq also avoided the Teliagarhi route and came to Bengal via Tirhut.\footnote{Ibid, p. 589.} In 1538 a contingent of the Afghāns under Jalâl Khân, son of Sher Khân (later Shâh) stayed the vast Mughul force of Emperor Humāyun at the Teliagarhi pass.\footnote{Maktab-n-i Afghana, I, 114a.} Dâud Khân Karrani also held up the Mughul force under Khān Jahân, general of Emperor Akbar, at this strategic pass for more than six months in 1575-76 A. D.\footnote{A. N., III, pp. 162-63.}

It is to be noted that the army leaders of Bengal tried to avoid bloodshed as far as practicable and adopted tactics of outwitting and overcoming the enemy in a clever manner. So, if a large enemy force entered Bengal somehow bypassing the defenders, they generally avoided open engagements with them and followed a strategy that was conditioned by geography and prudence. They often took shelter in some forts which were inaccessible to the invaders. The forts were surrounded with marshes and waters and were also well-provided with food and necessaries to stand a long siege. From their refuge in the forts they conveniently salilled forth in an opportune moment to harass the besiegers. Shams al-Din Ilyâs Shâh and his son and successor Sikandar Shâh had recourse to this clever strategy at the time of the campaign of Sulṭān Firūz Shâh Tughlaq in this province. They took shelter in the inaccessible Ikdala fort and harassed the large invading force of the Delhi Sulṭān. Tired and wearied of a long siege, Firūz Shâh Tughlaq ultimately thought it wise to come to a compromise settlement with the rulers of Bengal.\footnote{History of Bengal (D. U.), II, p. 112.} Thus his two big campaigns in Bengal failed, due to the clever tactics of the Bengali generals.
One remarkable aspect of the war tactics of the Bengali army was the construction of forts in strategic places as a line of defence as well as of offence. In the time of war such forts were built almost bserostructione. Bengali soldiers and sailors themselves. In speaking of the building of such forts, Mirzâ Nathan observes, “In Bengal there are no ancient forts except those of Gaur, Akbarmahal alias Rajmahal, Ghoraghat, Dacca and some other places of this type; but in time of need, the boatmen quickly construct such a fort that even the expert masters are unable to build one like it within months and years.”

Sometimes the Bengali forces took the road to the forests and bushes in order to wear out the powerful enemy. In this game of hide and seek, it was a problem for the enemy to find out their trace. Even after year’s wandering they failed to discover the Bengali troops. When Sulṭān Balban led his campaign in Bengal with a force of more than two lakhs Mughīth al-Din Tughral adopted this tactics of wiring out the Sulṭān and his army. For about two years Balban and his huge army moved from North Bengal to East Bengal and then to West Bengal in search of the rebel Bengal governor. His soldiers were terribly tired of the long tedious campaign through the waters, jungles and the trackless way and in despair gave up all hope of ever returning to their homes and families in Northern India. It was by sheer luck that at last they knew of the whereabouts of Tughral from a trader. After this they secretly and swiftly fell upon Tughral’s camp and killed him.

It is noteworthy in this connection that the Bengalis of the time were so patriotic that, while the Delhi Sulṭān roamed about in search of Tughral, no one of this province gave him any information about the whereabouts of the Bengali governor. Even the two beparis (small traders), who were returning from the camp of Tughral, expressed their ignorance of him, when they were questioned by the captains of the Sulṭān. It was

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2. Barari (Elliot), p. 28.
when one of the beparis was put to death that the other, in fear of losing his life, gave the information about the place where Turghal and his men were encamped.¹

The forests and bushes favoured guerrila tactics of the Bengali soldiers, who would lay in ambush for the enemy troops in strategic points on the way and discomfit them by a surprise attack. So we find that 'Isa Khan, merely a zamindar, secured military advantages over the forces of the great general Mansingh and endangered his camp at Ghoraghat.²

It is not however to be thought that the method of warfare of the Bengalis was all a game of hide and seek. If the Bengali forces saw the chance of victory in regular fighting, they engaged their opponents in pitched battles. In the following pages there would be occasions to discuss such instances.

Military Distinctions:

The Khalji Maliks, who were credited with the modelling of a scientific art of warfare and war tactics by incorporating all that was useful in nature and people, laid down the basis of the military achievements of Muslim Bengal. This method of warfare facilitated success in battles. It was by this clever mode of fighting that Ghiyath al-Din 'Iwaḍ Khalji felt strong to defy Sulṭan Ilutmish and assume sovereign power in Bengal, and force the Hindu kings of Kamrup and Tirhut to pay him tribute. Having failed to suppress this rebel governor, Delhi Sulṭan was at last obliged to leave the Khalji chief in the undisturbed possession of Bengal. He had to be content with some presents and the promise of tribute by the Bengali ruler. Later on prince Naṣir al-Din Mahmūd defeated and killed Ghiyāth al-Din 'Iwaḍ Khalji (1127 A. D.). The prince was however soon killed by Malik Ikhṭiyār al-Din Ba'khī, a partisan of 'Iwaḍ (1229 A. D.).³

¹ Ibid. p. 29.
² A. N., III, p. 714.
³ History of Bengal (O.U.), I, pp. 21-27 and 44.
Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Īwād Khalji was indeed a great warrior of Bengal. He was a gifted military organiser and consummate general and his warfare with the powerful Sultan Iltutmish is a record of the military distinction of the Bengali soldiers.

Malik Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Balkhī’s rule ended with his death in 1231 A.D. and for some years Bengal was governed by persons who remained loyal to the Delhi Sultanate. In the reigns of the weak successors of Iltutmish, a Mameluke chief Malik ‘Īzz al-Dīn Tughral Tughān Khān (1236-45) usurped power and ruled Bengal in practical independence, owing only a nominal homage to Sultāna Rażiyah. He built a very strong fleet of war-boats and maintained an efficient cavalry and infantry force. In 1242 A.D. he made a grand expedition on land and water to Oudh and advanced as far as Kara near Allahabad. Sultan ‘Alā al-Dīn Mas‘ūd Shāh however conciliated him by khilat and presents.¹

Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral (1268—81 A.D.) is another distinguished warrior of Bengal. In the days of the powerful Delhi Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban, he declared himself as an independent ruler in Bengal with the title of Sultān Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral, and struck coins and issued the khubba in his own name in Lakhnawti. His power was felt at the court of Tripura where he installed his own nominee Ratna Fa on the throne and conferred on him the title of Manikya, which since then was associated with the names of the kings of his family.² He also defeated Amin Khān, Balban’s governor of Bihar. Sultān Balban despatched large forces twice under his great amīrs and generals against Tughral, who however defeated them decisively at the frontier every time. This asserted the superiority of the Bengali soldiers over the northerners. Mightily enraged, Sultān Balban made a grand preparation for two years and

¹ Ibid, pp. 46-47.
² According to a tradition in Tripura Ratna Fa made the present of a Manikya (jewel) to Tughral, his patron, and in return got the title of Manikya. History of Bengal (D. U.), II. p. 59.
then set out with three *lakhs* of men for Bengal to suppress the rebel governor. Tughral was ultimately killed after a tiresome campaign of about two years in 1281 A.D. Tughral fell; the fact however remains that he and his Bengali soldiers fought successfully for several years against the vast forces and resources of the mighty Sultan of Delhi and thus displayed the marvellous fighting qualities of the Bengali peoples.

Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shāh was a great Bengali warrior and military organiser. He established an independent dynasty in East Bengal with Sonargaon as capital, and extended his dominion up to Chittagong. His naval force was incomparably strong and with it he every year successfully raided North Bengal, which was ruled by 'Alā al-Din 'Ali Shāh.

Shams al-Din Ilyās Shāh was a hero of Bengal, who maintained the independence of the province in the teeth of the opposition of the Delhi forces. Zia al-Din Barani has incidentally referred to the gallantry and fighting qualities of the Bengali generals and soldiers in the struggle of Ilyās Shāh against Sultan Firuz Tughlaq. This contemporary historian writes, "The well-known *paiks* of *Bangalāh*, who, for years, gave themselves the name of *Abū Bangalāh* (Father of Bengal) and claimed to be heroic men, took promise before Ilyās, the *bhang*-eater, to sacrifice their lives for him." Barani further says that the *Rais* of the river-girt *Bangalāh* vaulted much of their heroism. 1 Although derisive in his language, this Delhi historian, who was highly prejudiced against the rebels of his royal master, has however admitted the bravery and heroism of the Bengali soldiers (*paiks*) and generals (*Rais*). The warfare of Ilyās Shāh and his generals and soldiers also illustrates that they were clever fighters and they preserved their independence, frustrating all the attempts of Sultan Firuz Tughlaq to crush them. Under the training of Ilyās Shāh, the *Hindus* of Bengal also fought bravely for the cause of their native land. Yahyā Sirhindī has mentioned

1 Barānī, p. 593.
of a Hindu chief, Shahdeo, as a general of Ilyās Shāh. As has been referred earlier, many other Hindu chiefs and military officers fought in the army of Ilyās Shah for the common cause of Bengal. With the support of the brave Bengali soldiers and generals, Ilyās Shāh successfully defied the imperial forces of Delhi and established his authority throughout Bengal and even over the neighbouring kings. It is known from a Katmandu inscription that he devastated and burnt even a distant territory like Nepal.

The saint-warriors, Zafar Khān Ghāzi, Isma‘īl Ghāzi and Khān Jahān ‘Ali Khān are also great heroes of Bengal, who extended the dominion of the Bengali kingdom by the valour of their arms. The Bengali soldiers distinguished themselves as brave fighters in the reigns of Ḥusain Shāh and Nūsrat Shāh. They conquered Kamrup, Tripura and Bihar and brought glory to the Bengali people. The most remarkable achievement of the Bengali warriors was however their successful resistance to the great Mughul general Bābur. Following the troublesome Afghāns, who took shelter with Sulṭān Nūsrat Shāh, Bābur advanced to cross over to the territory of the Bengali kingdom. The generals and soldiers of Bengal opposed him and, after some skirmishing, when Bābur failed to obtain any advantage, he made peace and entered into friendship with Nūsrat Shāh. In speaking of the Bengali artillery, Bābur wrote, “The Bengalis are famous for their skill in artillery. On this occasion we had a good opportunity of observing them. They do not direct their fire against a particular point, but discharge at random.”

This check to the advance of the greatest general of the time is indeed a glowing testimony to the bravery and fighting qualities of the Bengali people.

The Bengali soldiers showed their valour during the period of the Afghān rule. Muḥammad Khān Sūr’s generals and soldiers

1 Yahyā Sirhīd i-Tarikh-i-Mubārak, Shāhī, translation by K. K. Basu, p. 129.
3 Elliot (Susil Pub.), Tāżuk-i-Bābūr, p. 77.
conquered territories as far as Arakan and the *Arakan coin* of this Sultan is a testimony to this fact. Sulaimān Karrani, his general Kalapahar and nephew Junaid Karrani are celebrated for their gallantry and heroic exploits. Kalapahar distinguished himself in the conquest of Orissa and in the military expedition in Koch Bihar. By his excellent military organisation and the valour of his generals and soldiers, Sulaimān Karrani ruled over the vast area of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and rivalled the glories of Emperor Akbar. Junaid Karrani was the prop of his cousin Dāud. The death of this great warrior, as a result of a random shot from the enemy on the eve of the Battle of Rajmahal, was a severe blow to the strength of the last Karrani ruler of Bengal.

The career of the *Bara Bhūyans* of Bengal illustrates best the valour and fighting qualities of the Bengali soldiers. They struggled against the formidable forces of the mighty Mughul Emperor Akbar and foiled all attempts of the veteran Mughul generals to establish the authority of Delhi over them. 'Isa Khān, Ma'sum Kābul, Kedar Ray, Pratapaditya, Bahadur Ghāzi, Sona Ghāzi, Anwār Ghāzi, Majlis Quṭb, Pahlwān, Uthmān Lohānī and other great zamīndārs known as the *Bara Bhūyans* had efficient land and naval forces which were not inferior to the Mughul soldiers in gallantry and clever fighting. Their navy in particular was distinguished for strategic warfare and this enabled the Bengali zamīndārs to achieve brilliant success over the powerful Mughul army.

It was the scientific combination of the infantry with the naval force that accounted for the successes of the *Bara Bhūyans* in defying the Mughul authority for about forty years. It is to be noted that two zamīndārs, Majlis Dilāwar and Majlis Quṭb, drove away the distinguished Mughul general Khān Jahān, the victor of the battle of Rajmahal, and his large forces from the territories of East Bengal in 1578 A.D.¹ This is indeed an extraordinary military performance of the Bengali soldiers and a brilliant record of their distinction in the art of warfare.

¹ *A. N.*, II, pp. 259-60.
of the *Bara Bhūyans*, was one of the most illustrious warriors and generals of Bengal. In military organisation, generalship and chivalry, he surpassed even the best generals of Emperor Akbar, such as Shāhbaż Khān, Sadiq Khān and Mansingh. He cleverly built up a military confederacy of the *Bara Bhūyans* under his leadership and inspired them to fight against the Mughuls for the independence of their homeland. He and his allies and brave soldiers fought courageously, defying the Mughul rule in the province for many years. The Bengali navy scored several signal victories over the Mughul fleet. In 1575 after the death of the Mughul general and šūbahdār Mun‘īm Khān, ‘Isa Khān distinguished himself by driving out the Mughul Nawwarā from the eastern waters.¹ Though defeated several times in land warfare at the hands of the superior forces of Khān Jahān and Shāhbaż Khān, this enterprising warrior and his brave soldiers however remained invincible and every time recovered the lost ground from the hands of the Mughuls.

‘Isa Khān’s warfare with the veteran general Mansingh illustrates the brilliant military distinction of the Bengali people. In spite of all his military tactics and prolonged campaigning, Mansingh failed to achieve any tangible success against this Bengali warrior. In a naval engagement near Vikrampur, ‘Isa Khān defeated the Mughul navy. Mansingh’s son Durjan Singh was killed and a few Mughul officers were taken prisoners.² A local tradition refers to a personal combat between ‘Isa Khān and Mansingh in a land engagement. It records that the Mughul forces confronted the army of ‘Isa Khān in a field of battle. In spite of the general superiority in number, there was no hope of victory for the Mughuls. On the other hand, a large number of their soldiers were killed by the Bengali warriors. ‘Isa Khān also felt for the loss of so many human lives in the field and he wanted to avoid any further bloodshed. So he proposed to Mansingh to have a personal duel with him, and thus to decide the victory or defeat in the battle. Mansingh accepted the proposal, but despising the valour of the Bengali warrior,

¹ *A. N.*, III, p. 161.
² *A. N.*, III, p. 733.
he sent his son-in-law to combat with 'Isa Khān. 'Isa Khān easily overpowered the Rajput warrior and killed him. Mansingh now realized that the gallantry of the Bengalis was not a thing to be despised and he then personally came to have duel with 'Isa Khān. Both the warriors were engaged in displaying their valour and skill in the use of all kinds of weapons. While fighting with sword, Mansingh's sword was broken at the heavy blow of 'Isa Khān and that Mughul general thought that he would surely die. But 'Isa Khān was magnanimous enough not to kill his unarmed rival. He offered his own sword to Mansingh. Mansingh was greatly moved at the chivalry and highmindedness of the Bengali hero and admitted his defeat in the combat. From this time they became friends and admirers of each other. Indeed the Bengali people could rightly be proud of the gallantry and chivalry of 'Isa Khān, the great warrior and champion of freedom.

The Afghān chief 'Uthmān of Sylhet is another gallant warrior of Bengal. With a small force he fought against the vast resources of the Mughul Empire of Akbar and foiled the efforts of the great Mughul generals to suppress him. Emperor Jahāngīr and his competent sūbahdār of Bengal, Islām Khān, used all the best military resources of the Empire to crush him. Though greatly outnumbered, 'Uthmān and his brave soldiers fought gallantly. Uthmān's heroism and generalship threw the Mughuls into confusion, and the life of the Mughul general Iftikhar Khān was in danger. At that time an arrow from a Mughul soldier pierced through Uthmān's left eye and reached his brain. Mirzā Nathan, the author of Bahāristān Ghaybi and a Mughul soldier who fought in this battle of Daulambapur, has left a graphic account of this incident and the indomitable gallatry of Uthmān, even after this mortal injury. He writes, "In order to conceal his wound from the sight of his men, Uthmān drew out the arrow from his eye with his two hands, and as the arteries of both the eyes are connected together, by the will of God, his other eye also came out. He then covered his eyes with his left hand with a handkerchief and asked his elephant-driver named 'Umar, "where is the army of Shujā‘at Khān?"
As the elephant-driver was not aware of the fact that by a heaven-
ly decree his master has been made absolutely blind, he replied,
"May my lord live long. The flag is visible under the mahna
tree which you see from here. Shuja'at Khan must be staying
under that flag." Uthman could not speak any more, so with
his right hand which he placed on the back of the elephant-
driver he gave a signal to him to drive the elephant to that place."1

The author does not say further about Uthman except referring
to his death. In his Memoirs, Jahangir however mentions the
last scene, saying, "As soon as he received the wound, Uthman
fell back, for he knew that it was mortal. Still for two watches
and a half, in spite of his wound, he kept urging his men on
and the fight and slaughter was continued."2 In the night
Uthman died and his men, falling into confusion, thought it
prudent to submit to the authority of the Emperor. Jahangir
considered the death of 'Uthman and the submission of his
people as a great achievement of his reign. He says, "During
the reign of my father, the royal forces had continual encounters
with Uthman, but were unable to subdue him."3 Uthman
thus died honourably fighting bravely to the last moment of his
life, in 1612 A. D. Jahangir writes in his Memoirs that when the
news of Uthman's death and the Mughul victory over the
Afghans of Bengal reached him he could not at first believe
that the great Afghan warrior, who had for years defied the
Mughuls, was dead at Daulambahur.4

'Uthman was the last distinguished hero of Bengal. Some-
time before his death, the other Bara Bhuyans of Bengal, such as
Musa Khan, son of 'Isa Khan, Pratapadiya, Majlis Qutb, Mum'im
Khan, son of Masum Kabuli, Pahlwan, the Ghazis of Bhowal
and others were eliminated and Mughul rule was established in
Bengal by the shrewd and energetic subahdar Islam Khan. It
was after a long and protracted struggle that the Bengali warriors

1 Baharistan, I, p. 178.
2 Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (Susil-Elliot) p. 91.
3 Tuzuk (Susil-Elliot), p. 89.
4 Tuzuk (Text), p. 104.
and soldiers ultimately submitted to the mighty Mughul power (1611 A.D.).

The Bara Bhūyans thus represented the valour and fighting quality of the Bengali peoples. They proved that the Bengalis excelled in military organisation, consummate generalship, personal bravery and clever fighting. Because of these qualities, these small chiefs could maintain the independence of Bengal in the face of the opposition of the formidable power of the great Mughul Empire.

Military Organisation

To preserve independent power in Bengal and also to expand their jurisdiction over the neighbouring kingdoms and territories the Muslim rulers necessarily maintained a large army and a strong naval force. The prosperity and wealth of the province enabled them to keep the army and navy well equipped. The soldiers and sailors were well paid for their services. In speaking of the military strength of the Bengali rulers, the early fifteenth century Chinese writer Mahuan observes, "They have a standing army which is paid in kind, the commander-in-chief of which is called pa-szu-la-ursh." Mahuan states that the Bengali soldiers were paid in kind, i.e., in fiefs or lands. This statement of the Chinese writer is corroborated by evidence available in other contemporary accounts. While referring to a peculiar custom among the Bengali rulers, Bābur, in his Memoirs, writes, "Parganas have been assigned from early times to defray the expenses of each department, the treasury, the stable and the royal establishments. No expenses are paid in any other manner." Bābur's account shows that it was the practice of the rulers of Bengal to keep some territory as Khalsah, exclusively for the State, whose revenues were used to meet the expenses of the Sultan, his court and administration. The rest of the territories were given to the officers and soldiers in fiefs in payment of their salaries.

1 Translation in N.K. Bhattasali—Coins and Chronology of the Sultans of Bengal, p. 171.

Pa-szu-la-ursh was not probably sipasālār or faujdār.

2 Bāburnāma (Elliot Susil publication), p. 49.
The land force of the Bengali rulers consisted of the infantry, cavalry and elephants. Barani’s writings express that Shams al-Dīn Ilāy Shāh possessed a large force of these three elements and this encouraged him to defy the authority of Sultān Firūz Shāh Tughlaq.¹ Emperor Jahāngīr’s records bear out the fact that the Muslim rulers of Bengal kept a large military establishment. In his Tūzk, the Emperor writes, “In former times the rulers of Bengal always maintained a force of 20,000 horse, one lakh foot soldiers, 100 war elephants and 5,000 war-boats.”² In speaking of the revenue of Bengal, this Mughul Emperor says that it amounted to sixty crores of dams, which was equivalent to one crore and fifty lakhs of rupees.³ It is known from the evidence of Abū Fadl that Sulaimān Khān Karrani, the Afghān ruler of Bengal, was possessed of immense riches and a large army.⁴ Stewart’s statement that Sulaimān Karrani had a force of 3,600 elephants, 40,000 cavalry, 14,000 infantry, 20,000 pieces of cannon and several hundred war-boats ⁵ cannot be rejected as fantastic.

The Paiks:

Since Bengal is a riverine country and is submerged in water for about half the year, cavalry was not of much significance in warfare in its territories except in the dry season and in North and West Bengal. The natural features of the province hampered cavalry manoeuvring, while these facilitated the guerrila tactics of the footmen. So, the Bengali rulers attached greater importance to the development of the infantry, although they also maintained a cavalry force as a component part of the military machine. The footmen, commonly known as the paiks, were noted for their training, courage and fighting qualities. For meritorious services in fighting for the independence of the province the paiks earned the proud title of Abū Bangalah.

¹ Barani, p. 591.
² Tūzk (Urdu), p. 230.
⁴ A. N., II, p. 325.
⁵ Stewart—History of Bengal, p. 152.
An elephant force was also an integral part of the Bengali army. Elephants were available in large numbers in the forests of Bengal as well as of Assam. According to Abūl Fadl, the Sarkar of Mahmudabad (North Nadia, North Jessore and West Faridpur) abounded in elephants. Because of the large size, the elephants of Bengal and Assam were very much prized by the rulers of Delhi. No present was more valuable to them than elephants and muslin from the Bengal governors and rulers. As elephants were in abundance, the Bengal rulers always kept a considerable number of this animal and used them in warfare. The war-elephants were of great advantage in fighting in watery places because of their mobility in marshes and rivers. Even the zamindārs of Bengal maintained an elephant force. Uthmān Khān Lohāni engaged more than one hundred elephants in the battle of Daulambapur.

The Navy:

The navy was the most vital element of the military organisation of the Muslim rulers of Bengal. Founded by Ghāyūth al-Dīn ʿIwād Khaljī, the naval force made continuous progress under the succeeding generations of rulers, particularly under Mughith al-Dīn Tughr al, Fakhral-Dīn Mubārak Shāh and Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh, who constituted it into a most effective institution of warfare in Bengal. Expert in boat-making, the Bengalis excelled in sailing as well as in naval fighting. The author of Masālik al-Albār, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmari, has recorded glowing tribute for the ship-building workmanship and the boatmanship of the Bengali people of his time. Speaking of their skill in rowing and of the speed of their boats, he observes, “There are in Lakhnawti two hundred thousand small but swift-moving boats. If one were to shoot an arrow at the foremost one of them, it will fall on the middle one of them on account of their fast speed.” Abūl Fadl says, “The Bengalis make boats of different kinds for purposes of war, carriage or swift sailing. For attacking a fort they are so constructed that

1 Aʿla (Jarret), I, p. 135.
2 Bahārīsīn (Tr.), I, p. 173.
when run ashore, their prow overtops the fort and facilitates its capture."1 The skill of the Bengalis in shaping and organising their war-boats in a most scientific manner was the secret of their success over the opponents.

Fully conscious of the great importance of the naval forces, the Bengali rulers always maintained a big fleet of war-boats. The writings of Ibn Baṭṭūta reflect the naval strength of Fakhr al-Din Mubārāk Shāh and the decisive role the navy played in the warfare in Bengal.2 Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmari’s record of two hundred thousand boats in Lakhnawti3 might be an exaggerated number, even though the private boats were included. It however leaves the impression that the rulers of Bengal had a large establishment of the naval force. This idea is confirmed from the evidence of Emperor Jahāngīr who writes that the Bengali rulers always kept 5,000 war-boats.”4 Even the Bara Bhīyans of Bengal had each a large fleet of war-boats.

There were in Bengal various types of war-boats, such as kūshas, jallīa, dhura, sundara, bajra, khelna, piara, bālia, pal, ghurab, machua, pashta, sloops, patīta, ulakh, mayurpankhi, ghārdur, chalkar, panshī, palwar, etc.5 Different in size and shape, these boats were used for different modes of naval fighting. The ghurab was the floating battery or gun-boat and jallīa was the galliot. Some were for the use of the cannoniers, archers, lancemen and other classes of soldiers and naval fighters. From Mirzā Nathan’s account of the naval battle of Salka, it is known that the ghurabs and piaras led the attack in the naval engagement.6

In their swift war-boats, the Bengali soldiers, who were noted for their boatmanship and clever naval tactics, enjoyed

1 Aʿīn (Jarret), II, p. 134.
2 N. K. Bhattasali—Coins and Chronology, etc., p. 137.
3 Masalik al-Abṣar (Tr.), p. 17.
5 Bahārīstān (Tr.), I, pp. 56 and 127-28 and Mutaaffarnamah, Sarkar MS., 41a; B.P.P., 1949, p. 2.
great superiority over the enemy forces. They appeared suddenly to surprise the enemy and disappeared before their opponents could prepare themselves for retaliation. Skilled in rowing as well as swimming, they were also ingenious in improvising newer tactics of warfare. In appreciating the skill of the Bengali boatmen, Mirzâ Nathan says that they also excelled in building ingenious forts overnight. Such a fort they constructed near Dakchera to resist the imperial forces. It was covered by the river on one side and marshes on the other three.¹

The boatmanship and naval tactics of the Bengali soldiers accounted for their great advantages in the warfare in Bengal. Merely a zamindâr, 'Isa Khân drove away the Mughul Nawara from the waters of East Bengal in 1575 A.D. It was with the help of his swift navy and skilled naval force that he often raided the Mughul possessions in North Bengal as far as Ghoraghat and even threatened the position of the great Mughul general Mansingh. His brilliant naval victory near Vikrampur over the fleet of Mansingh is a remarkable distinction of the naval force of Bengal in the sixteenth century.² It was because of this naval superiority that the Muslim rulers of Bengal could maintain an independent career in this province and the zamindârs could defy for many years the might of the powerful Emperor Akbar and his veteran generals.

The Mughuls succeeded over the zamindârs of Bengal only when they built a powerful fleet of war-boats. Emperor Jahângîr's shrewd subahdâr Islâm Khân realized the necessity of a strong naval force to subjugate Bara Bhûyans. Accordingly he equipped a large number of war-boats and made an effective combination of the land force with the navy. He also engaged the services of the expert Bengali boatmen. The plan of Islâm Khân succeeded well. The zamindârs, in spite of heavy odds, fought valiantly against the formidable combination of the powerful navy with the mighty land force of the Mughuls and were in the end obliged to submit to the energetic subahdâr.

¹ Bahâristân (Tr.), I, p. 57.
² Akbarndama, III, p. 714.
The zamīndārs fought for local independence. Their independent existence was opposed to the unity and progress of Bengal. With their fall, there ended the last obstacle to the integration of the province to the great Mughul Empire. Though they fought for a narrow cause of local patriotism, the zamīndārs however left a glorious record of the fighting qualities and the naval skill of the Bengali people in Indo-Muslim history.

Weapons of War:

Like the soldiers of other parts of India, the Bengalis used various kinds of arms and weapons in warfare. In the Tārikh-i-Firūz Shāhī of Barāni there is special mention of the paiks (footmen) and dhanūks (bowmen) in the army of Ilyās Shāh.¹ This gives the impression that, on the basis of the use of arms, the Bengali soldiers fell into two main divisions. One division were dhanūks, fighting with bows. In another place Barāni refers to the use of swords and arrows by the paiks of Bengal.² The use of bows and arrows by the dhanūks as well as by the paiks shows that these weapons played a very prominent part in the art of warfare in this province. It is known from poet Mukundaram that there was a class of people among the Muslims of Bengal who manufactured bows and arrows.³

Besides bows, arrows and swords, spears, javelins and lances were in common use among the Bengali soldiers. Javelin was largely used in the battle of Daulambapur.⁴ In the sixteenth century, the guns and cannons formed essential weapons of warfare. In the contemporary Bengali literature there are references of gunners in the army of the Bengali rulers.⁵ Bābūr had a poor opinion about the Bengali gunners and stated that they fired at random without directing to a particular point.

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¹ Baraṇ, p. 586.
² Baraṇ, p. 593.
³ Mukundaram—Chandikavya, p. 345.
⁵ Tūzuk-i-Bābūr (Elliot—Susil pub.), p. 77.
It has been referred earlier that one significant weapon of warfare of the Bengali soldiers was the long bamboo stick. According to poet Bansibadan, there was a large number of soldiers who fought with this indigenous weapon.\(^1\) They were perhaps irregular soldiers recruited in the time of war. It is interesting to note that the bamboo poles of the Bengali boatmen served double purposes; they used these rowing instruments conveniently as weapons of warfare as well.

CHAPTER XI

THE ECONOMIC LIFE IN BENGAL

The Muslim conquest of Bengal conferred great benefits on its people. It not only integrated the Bengali people into one political platform and contributed to the development of a common social and cultural life but stimulated to their progress and prosperity in economic life as well. With a plenty of allu-

vial soil and an industrious population, both men and women, Bengal's economy made such gigantic strides under the benign and fostering Muslim rule that it was transformed into a pro-

verbially rich country in the world. There was unprecedented prosperity in agriculture, industries and commerce. The fertility of the soil of Bengal, the abundance of its agricultural and industrial products and the large volume of its foreign trade evoked the wonder and admiration of the foreign merchants and travellers so much that they called it a garden and even a paradise.

That with the introduction of Muslim rule Bengal made definitely substantial advance in economic life is proved by the non-existence of gold coins, even of silver currency, in the time of the Pala and the Sena kings and the circulation of the gold and silver coinage in the province from the very beginning of the Muslim administration. In the time of the Palas there was no gold coin and even the silver coin was very rare. Both the gold and silver coins were absent in the reigns of the Sena kings.1 Only the cowries (shell) were in circulation to act as the medium of exchange in every kind of transaction, small or big. This shows the backwardness of Bengal's economy in the

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1 See Nihar Ray—Bengalir Itihasa, pp. 195-98.
Hindu period and the dearth of metals for minting coins. This reveals the absence of big deal in trade as well as industry in the province of Bengal under the Hindus. According to Minhaj, when the Muslim conquerors entered Bengal they did not find gold or silver coins there. Cowries were used in buying and selling. Even the king made donations and gifts in cowries. The contemporary Muslim chronicler states that the Hindu king Lakshmansena used to bestow gifts of more than a lakh of cowries.\(^1\) If the gold and silver or even copper coins were in circulation, the king would have made gifts in any one of them, instead of in such voluminous quantity. In the Muslim time, on the other hand, there was such abundance of gold and silver coins in circulation that people paid their revenues in them.\(^2\)

The prosperity of a country is indicated by four things: first, the abundance of agricultural and manufactured produce; second, the cheapness of necessaries; third, the large volume of foreign trade; and fourth, the accumulation of bullion and precious metals in the country. The writings of the contemporary Persian historians and foreign travellers express that Bengal under Muslim rule possessed in a remarkable degree these four essentials of prosperity.

**Agricultural prosperity**

**Fertility of soil:** With the natural irrigation facilities on account of the blessings of many rivers and of seasonal rains, the plains of Bengal were the most fertile region on earth throughout centuries. The visitors in Bengal noticed the extraordinary fertility of its soil. In the course of his trip by boat

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1. *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* (Raverty—Elliot), pp. 555-56. According to the *Lilavati*, a work of mathematics, 20 cowries made one *kakini*, 4 *kakini* made one *pan* and 16 *pans* made one *drachma* or silver coin, 16 drachmas made one *nikk*. According to Amargosh, one *nikk* was equivalent to one *dinar*. See Nihar Ray—*Bangalir Itihasha*, p. 126.

2. *A’in*, II (Jarrett), p. 134. Abul Fadl writes, “The demands of each year are paid by instalments in eight months, they themselves bringing *mohtars* and rupees to the appointed place for the receipt of revenue, as the division of grain between the government and the husbandmen is not here customary.”
from Sylhet, Ibn Baṭṭuṭa was so much struck at the sight of the greenery and fruitful fields on both sides of the Meghna that he observed, "By the river were water-wheels, gardens and villages on the right as well as on the left, as in Egypt by the Nile.... We sailed on this river for 15 days by villages and garden, as if we were going through a market place." The records of the Chinese envoys who visited Bengal in the first quarter of the fifteenth century confirm the evidence of the great Moorish traveller. One Chinese envoy remarked, "The seven heavens have scattered the gold of this earth to this kingdom, the riches and integrity of the people surpass perhaps those of Palembang and equal to that of Java." Another Chinese envoy recorded, "The soil is fertile and produces are in abundance, for they have two crops every year. They do not weed or hoe their fields; but men and women work in the soil and weave according to season (in season other than crop season)." The Chinese accounts thus speak of the fertility of the soil and the industry of the men and women of Bengal in the Muslim period. Bābur's accounts testify to the wealth of Bengal. Rizq Allāh states that when Humāyun entered Bengal, he found gardens and paradise in every nook and corner of the province.

According to Abūl Faḍl, the soil of Bengal was so fertile that the same plot yielded three crops a year and the rice stalks grew sixty cubits in a single night. Although obviously an exaggeration, the writings of the great Mughul court historian, however, represents the prevailing idea regarding the extraordinary fertility of alluvial Bengal of the time. Bengal continued to be a fertile land all throughout the period of Muslim rule. Visiting the province in the third quarter of the seventeenth century in the reign of Emperor 'Ālamgīr, the French traveller Bernier observed that throughout the country of Bengal he saw rivers and endless number of channels, lined on every side with

1. Ibn Baṭṭuṭa—Extracts translated and published in N. K. Bhattasali's Coins and Chronology, pp. 142-43.
3. Ibid.
4. A'īn (Jarret), 1, p. 130.
thickly populated towns and villages and fertile and green fields abounding in crops and fruit trees.¹

**Rice:** The extraordinary fertility of the soil contributed to the abundance of the crops, vegetables and fruits in Bengal. The rice was the principal agricultural product. There were large varieties of rice, fine and coarse, grown in the province. Giving an idea of these varieties of rice, Abūl Faḍl observes, “If a single grain of each kind were collected, they would fill a large vase.”² It was grown in such abundance that it formed an important item of export trade. Sugarcane was also produced in such large quantity that, after meeting the needs of the people, it used to bring considerable amount of foreign exchange to Bengal. There was also large production of cotton. The flourishing cotton weaving industries and large volume of cotton export trade express this. The long pepper as well as mustard were other major agricultural produces of the province. Bengal enjoyed the monopoly of lac production. It was one of the chief exportable commodities in the Muslim period.

**Jute:** There is reference of jute crop in Bengal from the fourteenth century. The mention of nalita (jute plant) is found in a work known as *Prakrit Pingala*. It is known from this book that the jute leaves were a favourite vegetable curry of the Bengalis. It records that a husband was considered fortunate, if his wife could entertain him with hot rice, pure ghee (butter), soup of maulali fish and jute leaf vegetable.³ Plenty of reference about jute and jute cloths are available from the literatures of the Muslim time. *Varnarainakar*, compiled by Pandit Jyotiri-

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¹ Bernier, I, p. 44.
² ʿAlī-ʾi-Akbari (Jarret), I, p. 134.
³ Quoted by Nihar Ray—Bengalir Itihasha, pp. 173 and 537.

**D. C. Sen** has given the names of a few of the varieties of rice: amlo, ashare, ashay, urashali, Kachki, Kanakchuri, Kangad, Kana, fujna, Kalakarik, Kushummali, Khirakamba, Khejursari, Khatmral, Gujura, Gondampalal, Gopalvogh, Chhichhra, Jhingashal, Parvatjira, pheferi, bhadoli, maipal, mahipal, shanakhurki, salchhuti, sitasali, halipanjar, mukilkar, mukalsak, lāsuli, lalakotini, basmari, boudi, etc.

³ Quoted by Nihar Ray—Bengalir Itihasha, pp. 173 and 537.
The jute, or sari, was a staple crop in Bengal during the fourteenth century, as recorded in various works. For example, in the Ramayana of Krittivas, Manikchand Rajar Gan by Jayananda, Chaitanyakamagala by Vijayagupta, Manasamangala by Muhammad Kabir, and Monohar-Madhumalati, among many other Bengali works, there is evidence of the use of jute sari by the common women of the society.

The evidence of the Bengali poets gets corroboration from the writings of Abul Faqil who says, “In the sarkar of Ghoghat in Bengal, silk is produced and a kind of sack cloth (jute cloth).” Thus the records of the contemporaries leave no room for doubt about the existence of jute crop and the manufacture of cloths, rags, etc., from jute in Bengal. Jute and jute manufactures were not yet an exportable commodity in the sixteenth century. It was Tavernier in the seventeenth century who introduced to the notice of the European manufacturers the jute fibre. It made in those days coarse gunny bags for wrapping up merchandise.

Although the jute did not come to the notice of the Europeans until the later part of the seventeenth century, there is positive evidence of jute crop and jute manufactures in Bengal from the fourteenth century, if not earlier. The Bengali literature also refers to the export of jute cloths to the neighbouring countries. It is known from the Manasamangala Kavyas that the merchant Chand Saudagar went to a country with many merchandise, including jute sari and jute dhutis. He cleverly

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1. Nihar Ray—Bangali Itihasha, p. 537.
3. Manik Chandra Rajar Gan. It records that a maid-slave Bina does not like to put on pater pachhra (sack cloth).
5. Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, p. 149.
extolled the qualities of these jute cloths to the king of that country, who was thus induced to buy several clothes for himself and for his queen. This proves that jute product and manufacture existed in the fifteenth century and jute manufactures were also exported in some quantities in the neighbouring countries. In the early records of the East India Company references of hand-woven jute and jute trade are available. In a letter dated 12 August 1753, the Bombay Council enclosed an indent for gunnies. Similar indent for Madras is found in a record of 21 July 1759. There is mention in another record of the despatch of 2,000 gunny bags and 1,200 bags of fine rice from Bengal by the East India Company.

Sericulture: Bengal reared mulberry trees and silk worms. The first notice of this fact is found in the records of the Chinese envoys, visiting this province in the early fifteenth century. It is also to be noted that the silk worm of the domesticated type and of commercial character was unknown in India of the Hindu times. It was first introduced in Bengal, probably from China, in the Muslim period. Abūl Faṣl refers to the production of silk in Ghoraghat. It is known from Tavernier, who visited Qassimbazar in 1666, that the annual output of raw silk at that city was about two and a half million pounds (22,000 bales, each bale weighing 100 livres), out of which 3/4 million was sent to Gujarat and other parts of India, but a portion of it was taken to Central Asia by the merchants of Tartary. Streynsham Master (1675–80) describes in his diary the country around Qassimbazar as full of mulberry trees. The Dutch also exported every year about 3/4 million lb. of raw silk of Qassimbazar to Japan and Holland and worked up one million lb. into silk fabrics in Bengal. The raw silk was so cheap that it had a flourishing trade. In the time of Nawāb ‘Alivārdi, nearly 70 lakh rupees worth of raw silk was entered in

1 Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, p. 133.
3 Chinese Accounts, Visva—Bharatī Annals, pp. 96-134.
5 A’in (Jarret), II, p. 136.
6 Tavernier, Travels in India, (Ball’s ed.), II, p. 2.
custom office books at Murshidabad, exclusive of the European investments.  

Among other products of Bengal mention may be made of millets, sesamum, beans, glutinous millets, mustard and pulses. The vegetables, such as onions, garlics, cucumbers, etc., grew in plenty. The betel-leaf, betel-nut and cocoanut were in such abundance that they were exported to other countries. Banana, mango, jack-fruit, pomegranate, orange, dates, etc., were some of the well-known fruits of Bengal. Abūl Faḍl states that flowers and fruits were in plenty in this province. The sarkar of Sylhet produced abundant Aloe-wood.

The Chinese envoys have mentioned camel, horse, mule, water-buffalo, cattle and goat as the domestic animals of Bengal. The cows and goats were abundant and cheap. The fowls, ducks, geese, etc., were in plenty in the province. Ibn Baṭṭūtā and Barbosa mention of sheep as a domestic animal in Bengal. The reference of the existence of camel in this riverine territory is interesting. It is also known from the Persian sources of the sixteenth century that Sher Shāh used camel in transporting the wealth of Gaur to Rohtasgarh on the eve of Humāyūn’s invasion of Bengal.

Bengal was also rich in some mineral products. According to Abūl Faḍl, there were iron mines in the Sakar of Bazuha (part of Rajshahi, Bogra, Mymensingh and Dacca districts). A place named Harpah in the Sarkar of Mandaran (Bankura, Vishnupur, S.E. Burdwan and West Hughli) had a diamond mine producing chiefly very small stones.

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2 See Chinese Accounts and Ā’in (Jarret), II, p. 136.
3 Ā’in (Jarret), I, p. 136; Vijaya Gupta—Manasamangala, pp. 131-36.
4 Ā’in, II (Jarret), pp. 135-37 and Visva Bharati Annals, I, pp. 96-134.
5 Ā’in (Jarret), II, pp. 136-38.
Judged by the standard of the time, Bengal was one of the most advanced industrial countries of the world during the period of Muslim rule. In the prosperity of textile and silk industries, it was without a rival and was famed all over the civilized countries of the time. Varieties of cotton clothes were produced. These were various in qualities, size and colour. The finest quality, known as muslin, had a wide renown and was prized even by the foreign kings and aristocrats. Ibn Baṭṭuta has referred to the abundance of cotton cloths in Bengal.

Industries:

Textile: The Chinese envoys spoke very highly of the cotton manufacture of Bengal and gave a good account of the various types of cotton cloths produced in the province. They mentioned of six varieties of textile: (i) Pi-po was a kind of cloth of different colours which was two to three feet broad and fifty-six inches in length. It was very fine and glossy. (ii) Man-che-tí was a ginger yellow fabric, four feet or more wide and fifty feet long. It was very closely woven and strong. (iii) Shah-na-kieh (sha-na-pa-fu) was a fabric five feet wide and twenty feet long and resembled the Chinese lo-pu (sheng-lo). (iv) Hin-pêi-tung-ta-li (ki-pet-let-ta-li) was the foreign name of a type of cotton product three feet wide and sixty feet long. It was of coarse quality. (v) Sha-ta-eul was of two types; one measured five inches in breadth and forty feet in length and the other two and a half feet broad and four feet long. It resembled very much the Chinese san-so. (vi) Ma-hei-ma-li (malmal) was a fabric made up in length of twenty feet or more and in breadth four feet. On one side it was covered with a nap half an inch long. It was like tu-lo-kieh of China.¹

An idea of the cotton products of Bengal is available in the

records of the European travellers also. In reference to the Bengal textile, Barbosa says, “There is much cotton in this country. They manufacture many kinds of stuffs, extremely fine and delicate; coloured for their own use, and white for trade to all parts. They are very precious, and also some which they call extravantes, a certain sort very thin kind of cloth much esteemed among us for ladies’ head-dresses, and by the Moors, Arabs and Persians for turbans. Of these great store is woven so much so that many ships take cargoes thereof for abroad; others they make called mamonas, others duguazas, others chautares, others sinabafas which latter are the best of all, and the Moors held them the best for shirts. All these sorts of cloth are in pieces, each one whereof contains about three and twenty or four and twenty Portuguese yards. In this (Bengal) they are sold at a low price. They are spun on wheels by men and woven by them.”¹ In speaking of the varieties of fine cloth, Varthema mentions of hairam, namone, lizati, caintar, douzar and sinabaff. He observes that nowhere in the world he found such abundance of cotton cloth as in Bengal.²

Bengal produced the finest quality of cotton known as muslin. Amīr Khusrau is warm in praise of this manufacture of Bengal and writes, “It was so fine and light that a hundred yards of this muslin could be wrap round the head and one could still see the hair underneath.” He also observes that one could hold a whole piece of this cloth inside one’s nail; yet it was large enough to cover the world when unfolded.³ This is confirmed by the evidence of Abūl Faḍl, who writes, “The sarkar of Sonargaon produces a species of muslin fine and in great quantity. In the township of Egarasindur is a very large reservoir which gives a peculiar whiteness to the clothes that are washed in it.” He also says that the sarkar of Barbakabad (Rajshahi, South Bogra and South-east Malda) produced a fine cloth called

² See K. M. Ashraf—Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan, p. 97.
³ Qiran al-Salām (Lucknow ed. 1845), pp. 32-33 and 100-101.

It is known from Chandikavya (p. 356), of Mukundaram that hundreds and hundreds of pairs of dhutties were woven in a small colony at Gujarat founded by Kalaketu, a hunter.
Gangajal. The finest quality of muslin was very costly. Mirzâ Nathan says that he bought a piece of muslin at Malda at a price of rupees four thousand.

"It needs mention in this connection that a large quantity of raw cotton was grown in this period in Bengal and the muslins were made entirely out of this product. At the time of visit Barbosa saw many cotton fields. Bombay and Surat sent their raw cotton to feed the Bengal looms for the production of general varieties of cotton clothes.

The muslin and silk industries flourished under the patronage of the Muslim rulers, nobles and rich people. Silk clothes were generally manufactured in North Bengal and some parts of West Bengal. The upper class people, men and women, dressed themselves in silk clothes.

Sugar: Sugarcane production was quite extensive in Bengal. Barbosa says that he saw many patches of sugarcane in this province. Sugar manufacture developed into an important industry in the Muslim period. About this industry of Bengal Barbosa observes, "white sugar of a very good quality is made in this city, but they do not know how to join it to make loafs, and so they pack it up in powder in stuff covered with raw hide, well sewn up. They load many ships with it and export it for sale to all parts." Varthema also speaks of the abundance of sugar production of this province. Indeed in the Muslim time Bengal had flourishing export trade with the countries of the eastern and western coasts as well as of the Persian Gulf. Even in 1576 this province exported 50,000 maunds.

1 A’in (Jarret), II, p. 136.
The reference of muslin is found in the Hindu times from the account of Sulaiman, the Merchant who wrote that it was so fine that a long piece of muslin could be entered in a ring.
2 Baharistan (Tr.), I, p. 43.
3 J. C. Sinha—Economic Annals of Bengal, p. 34.
4 Krittivas—Ramayana, Vijayagupta—Manasamangala, Chinese Accounts.
5 Hakhuvt Society, II, p. 145.
6 See Dasgupta—Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, p. 117.
of sugar at 50 per cent profit. After 1757 the Java sugar introduced in Western India by the Dutch caused the decline of Bengal's sugar trade and industry.¹ Besides the varieties of sugar, unrefined (gur) and white qand, the Bengali manufacturers manufactured granulated sugar and prepared various candied and preserved fruits. The numerous references of sweets and sweet dishes in Bengali literature prove that the Bengali people in general took sugar and its production was quite large.

The Chinese envoys have mentioned the existence of several other industries in this province. These were carpet, paper, steel, guns, jewelleries, etc. Mahuan says that the Bengali people manufactured white paper from the bark of a tree, which is smooth and glossy like a deer's skin.² White paper manufacture was most probably borrowed from China.³ The metal work industries included agricultural implements, hardware and weapons. The swords manufactured in East Bengal had a wider fame. According to the Chinese records, Bengal manufactured very strong and double-edged swords of fine quality. The Bengali jewellers were renowned for their skill. The Bengali artisans were noted for their workmanship in bronze-work, wood-work, stone-carving, ivory-carving, and ornamentation of gold and silver dishes. Conch-shell making was a very thriving industry. A class of Hindu workmen called Sankha Banias manufactured beautiful bracelets, etc., out of conch-shells. Spices and scents of different kinds were made in Bengal. This industry was almost a monopoly of a class of Hindus who were known as Gaida Banik (Banias).⁴

The manufacture of salt both from sea-water and sub-soil brine was one of the principal industries of Muslim Bengal.

² Mahuan’s Account, extracts translated in N.K. Bhattarali’s Coins and chronology, etc., p. 171.
³ The mention of manufacture of guns in fourteenth century Bengal by the Chinese is interesting.
⁴ See K.M. Ashraf—Life and Conditions, etc., p. 102.
Abundant quantities of fish was available in the rivers of Bengal. Hence there was prosperous fish industry both fresh and dried in the province. It is thought that salt and dried fish were exported to the neighbouring countries.¹

**Ship-building:** Bengal had a glorious tradition of ship-building industry. For the purpose of communications, internal trade and naval warfare in the riverine country, the Bengali artisans manufactured varieties of boats, big and small, from the Hindu times. In the Muslim time, the ship-building industry received further impetus in view of the growing need for naval warfare and unprecedented stimulus to the sea-faring and commercial activities. It is known from the contemporary records of the period of the independent Muslim rule in Bengal that the Bengali merchants built very big and swift-sailing boats. The author of *Masālik al-Abṣār* mentions that many of the ships of Bengal had mills, ovens and bazārs. He says that these ships were so large that the passengers of the same vessel came to know each other only after some time. Regarding the speed of the boats, he observes that if an arrow was shot at the foremost one of two hundred moving boats it would fall on the middle one of them on account of their fast speed.²

The evidence of *Masālik al-Abṣār* is corroborated by the accounts of the Italian merchant Varthema, who records, “These people (of Bengalah) make use of very large ships and of various kinds, some of which are made flat-bottomed, because such can enter into places where there is not much water. Another kind are made with prows before and behind, and they carry two helms and two masts and are uncovered. There is also another kind of large ship which is called Giunchi, and each of these is of the tonnage of one thousand butts, on which they carry some little vessels to a city called Melacha.”³

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1 Ibid, p. 173.
2 *Masālik al-Abṣār* (Tr.) by Prof. A. Rashid, pp. 17.
3 Purchas, *His Pilgrims*, ix. extracts in Dasgupta’s *Bengal in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 117.
The accounts of the Portuguese merchant Barbosa further confirms the existence of ship-building industry in the sixteenth century Bengal. In writing of the Arab, Persian, Abyssinian and Indian merchants of the city of Bengalah, he says, "They are all great merchants and own large ships of the same build which they call jungs (junks), which are very large and carry a very considerable cargo. With these ships they navigate to Cholemender (Coromondal), Malabar, Cambay, Peigu, Tarnasari (Tenasserim), Sumatra, Ceylon and Malaca, and they trade in all kinds of goods, from many places to others."

The contemporary Bengali literature reflects the ship-building industries and commercial enterprises of the merchants of this province during the Muslim rule. Mukundaram records the adventures of the merchant Dhanapati of Gaur and his son Srimanta in ships of 100 yards length and 20 yards breadth with prows shaped like makara (crocodile), or the head of an elephant or a lion. The Manasamangala peom of Jagajjivana throws some light on the prosperity of the ship-building industry in Bengal. It says, "The merchant Chand Saudagar summons to his presence the master craftsman named Kusai and orders him to build fourteen ships for him at once. Forthwith goes Kusai with his many apprentices to the forest, where he fells all kinds of trees for material to build the various parts of the boats with. There were soon hewed out three or four lakhs of planks which were afterwards joined together by means of iron nails." It is significant to note that some very old masts of ships have been unearthed in some of the villages in the neighbourhood of Pandua through which the Mahananda once flowed.

Commerce: The great surplus of the agricultural and manufactured articles and the new maritime spirit brought about by

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2 R.K. Mukherjee — History of Indian Shipping, p. 159.
3 Ibid.
the Muslims stimulated to the expansion of Bengal's commerce. The great ship-building industry which has been discussed earlier is an evidence of the commercial activities of the Bengali peoples in the Muslim period. The foreign travellers and merchants have referred to the big merchants, Arab, Persian, Abyssinian and Indian and their large merchant ships they saw in the ports and cities of Bengal. Speaking of the Muslims of the city of Bengalah, Barbosa writes, "They are all great merchants, and own large ships of the same build as those of Mokah."1 Mahuan observed about the Muslims that the rich people among them built large ships in which they carried on commerce with the foreign countries. The Manasakavyas and Chandikavyas give an idea of the commercial enterprise of the Hindu merchants of the time.

The commercial activities led to the development of many sea ports and river ports in Bengal. From the beginning of the Muslim rule, Chittagong was a great port and flourishing centre of foreign trade. A Chinese envoy records, "Tso-ti-king (Chatigaon or Chittagong) is at the mouth of the sea. Merchants from outside come and anchor there. They assemble and divide the profits of their merchandise at this place."2 The Portuguese called it as the Porto Grande and their records reveal that it was the centre of a brisk trade of the Muslim merchants and was coveted by the Portuguese merchants. Ralph Fitch refers to it as a bone of contention among the rulers of Bengal, Tripura and Arakan, because of its great commercial importance.3 Abūl Fāḍl also mentions Chittagong as a flourishing sea port and the resort of the Chistrian and other merchants.4

Satgaon was another great emporium of foreign commerce, and was termed Porto Piqueno or small port, by the Portuguese who established their trading factory in that port in 1537-38 with the permission of the last Saiyid Sultan Mahmūd III. The

1 Hakluyt Society, II, pp. 144-45.
3 Purchas—His Pilgrims, v, p. 183.
4 A'in (Jarret), II, p. 137.
Venetian merchant Master Caesar Frederick, who visited the port in 1567, found that the Portuguese had enough business to keep there 30 to 35 merchant ships fully engaged. He writes, “In the port of Satgaon every year they lade thirty or thirty-five ships, great or small, with rice, cloth of Bombast and of diverse sorts of lacca, great abundance of sugar, mirabolans dried and preserved, long pepper, oyle of zerzeline and many other sorts of merchandise.”¹ The prosperity of Satgaon waned at the time of the visit of Ralph Fitch (1583-91) and Hughli had become the Porto Piqueno of the Portuguese, though this English traveller found Satgaon yet a busy trading mart and referred to it as “a faire citie for a cities of the Moors, and very plentiful of things. Here in Bengal they have every day, in one place or the other, a great market which they call chand deun and they have many great boats which they call pencose wherewithal they go from place to place and buy rice and many other things, their boats have 24 or 26 oars to row them, they be of great burthen.”² Abūl Faḍl refers to Satgaon and Hughli as two ports at a distance of half a kos from each other.³ Thus towards the later part of the sixteenth century Satgaon was declining on account of the shifting of the course of the Bhagirathi Ganges, while Hughli was coming into prominence as a port.

The rivers being navigable to big merchant ships, many inland cities developed into great commercial ports in the Muslim period. It is gathered from the writings of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa that Sonargaon was an important port where the merchants of China and Java came with their ships for trade. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa says, “On our arrival at (Sonargaon) Sonarkawan we found a Chinese junk which intended to go to Java, which was 40 days’ journey. We embarked on this junk.”⁴ The Chinese records corroborate the evidence of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. One Chinese envoy states,” Sona-urh-Kong (Sonargaon) is an emporium of trade where all goods are collected and distributed.”⁵

¹ Hakluyt Society, V, pp. 411-12.
² Purchas,—His Pilgrims, X, p. 183.
³ A‘īn (Jarret), II, p. 137.
⁴ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, quoted in N. K. Bhattasali—Coins and Chronology, etc.
⁵ Visva Bharati Annals, 1945, II, pp. 96-134.
It continued to be a flourishing port even to the later part of the sixteenth century. Ralph Fitch, who visited Sonargaon in 1586, writes, "Great store of cotton cloth goeth from hence (Sonargaon) and much rice wherewith they serve all India, Ceilon (Ceylon), Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and many other places."

Varthema and Barbosa have mentioned the city of Bengal as a flourishing port at the time of their visit in the early part of the sixteenth century. There they met large number of Muslim merchants and brisk foreign trade in cotton, sugar and other articles. It was situated at the mouth of the Meghna near the island of Sandvip. Tande, Gaur and Bacla (Barisal) were also great trading centres during the period of early Muslim rule in Bengal. Regarding Tanda, Ralph Fitch says, "Great trade and traffic is here of cotton, and of cotton cloth."

Because of the superabundance of agricultural and manufactured produce, Bengal had a large export trade. Cotton cloths, rice, sugar, silk-stuffs, ginger, pepper, lac, mirabolans, etc., were the principal articles of export. Of these, cotton manufactures were exported in great volumes. The export of rice occupied the second important position in Bengal’s foreign trade. Bengal is now a deficit province; but during the Muslim rule it was sold to the foreign countries in large quantities. Now it imports sugar; in that period Bengal earned considerable amount of foreign exchange in terms of gold and precious metals from many countries by exporting this produce. Bengal produced the best kind of lac and enjoyed a sort of monopoly of the foreign market in this commodity.

Referring to the export trade of the port of Sonargaon, Ralph Fitch says, "Great store of cotton cloth goeth from hence and much rice where with they serve all India, Ceilon (Ceylon),

1 Purchas,—His Pilgrims, X, p. 185.
2 See Chapter I, and Das Gupta—Bengal in Sixteenth Century pp. 119-20.
3 Purchas—His Pilgrims, X, p. 181.
4 See Caesar Frederick’s Account, Hakluyt, V, p. 41, Varthema’s Account, Purchas—His Pilgrims, IX.
Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and many other places. In the middle of the fourteenth century, Ibn Batūṭa sailed in a Chinese junk (a big merchant ship) which was bound for Java. This proves that China, Burma, the Malayan Islands, Ceylon and other countries had direct commercial connections with Bengal in cotton goods, rice and other commodities. The records of the Chinese envoys state of the existence of China's trade with Bengal in the early fifteenth century. According to them, China traded with Bengal in gold, silver, satins, silk, blue and white porcelain, copper, iron, musk, vermillion, quick-silver and grass mats. Bengal generally took gold and precious metals in exchange for its cotton, silk stuffs and other commodities.

From a single port of Satgaon, the Portuguese merchants alone loaded thirty-five ships with rice, cotton-stuffs, lac, sugar, long pepper, mirabolans, etc., in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, when the port was on the decline. There were also other merchants, Indians as well as foreigners trading with Satgaon.

According to Barbosa, many ships carrying great store of cotton cloth, sugar, ginger long pepper, etc., sailed to the Malayan Islands, Burma, Coromandel coast, Ceylon, Arabia, Persia and Abyssinia from the port of Bengalah. Varthema says that every year fifty ships laden with cotton and silk stuffs sailed from the city of Bengalah. Marco Polo, who visited Southern India, has referred to Bengal export trade in sugar. It is known that Bengal successfully competed with Southern India in this commodity. It is specially noteworthy that Bengal exported butter to other countries in the sixteenth century.

1 Purchas—His Pilgrims, X, p. 185.
2 Visva Bharati Annals, 1945, II, pp. 96-134.
3 C. Frederick; Hakluyt Society, V, p. 411.
4 Hakluyt Society, II, pp. 136-147.
5 Nihar Ray—Bengalir Itihasha, p. 173.
6 Ralph Fitch's Accounts, Purchas—His Pilgrims, X, p. 182.
In the Bengali literature there is evidence of great sea-borne commerce of Bengal. The merchants went to trade with the southern coast, Ceylon and Gujrat. These have referred to various commodities of export. It is known that Bengal produced sea salt in such large quantity that it was sold in foreign countries. Oil, butter, dry fish, fruits, pulses, betel-leaves, betel-nut, onion, garlic, camphor, aloe-wood, goats, sheep, deer, pigeon, jutes-tuff, etc., were some of the minor articles of export. The *Manasamangala* of Bansidas and *Chandikavya* of Mukundaram reflects how the clever Hindu merchants of Bengal exchanged their minor commodities in exchange for the precious metals of the foreign countries.¹

In Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal*, there is a story preserved in the tradition that one Shaikh Bhik of Gaur, a cloth merchant who once set sail for Russia with three ships laden with silk cloths, but two of his ships were wrecked somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf.² Though there is no reliable evidence in support of Bengal's sea-borne trade with Russia, this tradition however reflects the expanding commerce of the province in the Muslim time.

Bengal's abundance of agricultural and manufactured produce and its great export trade were noticed by Bernier in the seventeenth century. He has observed that nowhere in the universe were found so great varieties of valuable commodities to attract foreign merchants as in Bengal. He has referred to the principal commodities of export. He says, "Bengal produces rice in such abundance that it supplies not only the neighbouring but remote states. It is carried up the Ganges as far as Patna and exported by sea to Maspalipatam and many other ports of Coromandel. It is also sent to foreign kingdoms, particularly to the island of Ceylon and the Maldives."³ Regarding the sugar export, Bernier writes, "Bengala abounds like-

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¹ Bansidas—*Manasamangala* (Chakravarti ed.), pp. 380-93 and Mukundaram—*Chandikavya*, p. 191.
³ Bernier, pp. 437-38.
wise in sugar, with which it supplies the kingdom of Golconda and the Carnatic, where very little is grown, Arabia and Mesopotamia through the towns of Moka and Bassora, and even Persia, by way of Bendar-Abbasi.~1

Referring to the export of cotton and silk goods, he says, "There is in Bengal such a quantity of cotton and silks that the kingdom may be called the common storehouse for those two kinds of merchandise, not in Hindustan or the empire of the Great Mughal only, but of all the neighbouring kingdoms, and even of Europe. I have been sometimes amazed at the vast quantity of cotton cloths of every sort, fine and coarse, white and coloured which the Hollanders alone export to different places, especially to Japan and Europe. The English, the Portuguese and the native merchants deal also in these articles to a considerable extent. The same may be said of silk and silk-stuffs of all sorts."~2

Bernier also speaks of Bengal’s trade in salt and other commodities. He records, "Bengal is also the principal emporium of saltpetre." He adds that large cargoes of saltpetre were sent by the Dutch and English traders to many parts of the Indies, and to Europe. He states that Bengal produced the best lac and exported it as well as opium, wax, civet, long pepper and drugs. Mentioning the export of butter (ghee) he says, "Butter is in such plenty that, although it to be a bulky article to export, yet it is sent by sea to numberless places."~3 According to Bernier, sweets and fruits, such as mango, pineapple, mirabolans, limes and ginger were exported from Bengal in considerable quantities.~4

Bernier’s accounts refer to Bengal’s trade in the period of Mughul rule in this province. In the Mughul time there was great expansion of the trade of Bengal because of its inclusion in the vast Mughul empire and its link with Central and Western

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1 Bernier, p. 437.
2 Bernier, p. 439.
3 Bernier, p. 430.
4 Bernier, pp. 30 and 38.
Asia as well as Europe. His records however give an idea of the plenty of Bengal in agricultural and manufactured goods and the existence of its prosperous export trade in the period preceding the Mughul rule.

Because of the large volume of export, Bengal enjoyed a highly favourable balance of trade. It produced every article of conventional necessity and of comforts and luxuries. Hence Bengal had not to import any commodity from the countries with whom it carried on trade. The foreigners paid for its commodities mostly in gold, diamond and precious metals. The contemporary literatures express that the Bengali merchants exchanged their commodities in bullion and precious metals and thus brought enormous riches to their homeland. The only noteworthy commodities that Bengal imported were the Chinese porcelain and African slaves.

Bengal maintained this great favourable trade all throughout the Muslim period. As a result, there was a large flow of gold and precious metals in the province. So Alexander Dow remarks, that, till the establishment of British rule and the commercial monopoly of the East India Company, Bengal was considered as a sink where gold and silver disappeared without the least prospect of return.

**Economic Prosperity**

The abundance of produce, agricultural and manufactured, and the flourishing export trade in many commodities contributed to the prosperity of Bengal during the Muslim rule. Because of plenty and cheapness even the ordinary class of labourers could have sumptuous dishes and a decent life. This fact is evident even from the writings of the Europeans who were generally prejudiced against the people of this country. Bernier says, "The three or four sorts of vegetables, which whether with rice and butter form the chief food of the common

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3 Alexander Dow—*Indoostan*, p. cxii.
people, were purchased for the merest trifle. Geese and ducks are proportionately cheap. Fish of every species, whether fresh or salt, is in the same profusion." Reference has been made of the marketing of the maid-servant Durbala of various kinds of fish, vegetables, mutton, etc. In Vijayagupta's Manasamanagala, there is mention of the marketing of a weaver, who bought varieties of fish, vegetables, etc., which will excite the envy of a middle class person of the present day. It is because of the comfortable living in Bengal that a proverb was in common use among the Portuguese, English and Dutch that 'the Kingdom of Bengale has a hundred gates open for entrance, but not one for departure.'

The splendour of Court, the luxuries of the nobles and upper class people express the great prosperity of Bengal. The Chinese have referred to it. Firishta has mentioned that the people of Bengal used gold and silver vessels. The Bengali literatures refer to a pompous life of the merchants and farmers. Gold vessels were common among the merchants. Bābur has recorded that there was great hoard of wealth in Bengal. Humāyun was struck by the prosperity of Bengal and he called it Jamnatabād. After the occupation of Gaur, the capital of Bengal, in 1538, Sher Shāh engaged more than two hundred horses and camels to transport its gold and precious metals to Rohtas fearing Humāyun's invasion of the province. This wealth enabled Sher Shāh in recruiting a large force and defeating Humāyun at Chausa and Kanauj. It is known from Abū Faḍl and Badāuni that every Mughul soldier who came to serve in Bengal at the time of Akbar returned to Northern India rich and prosperous with the gold of this Province.

One significant feature of the economic life of Bengal in the Muslim time was the development of the banking system.

2 D. C. Sen—Benga Bhasa o Sahitya, p. 233
3 Vi jayagupta—Manasamanagala, pp. 58-61.
5 Maḥãzān-i-Afghānā, MS., 11a.
6 Badāuni, I, p. 269.
There were bankers who had agents in different places of the subcontinent. The bankers issued hundis or bank drafts and bills of exchange which enabled the drawee to get money in a different province and also facilitated the payment between merchants of distant places. For this type of banking transactions they charged a handsome commission. It is known from Sri-Narsibhakta Charitra of Bhaktamal that a Vaishnava, intending to go on a pilgrimage to Dwarkanath (United Provinces) went to a banker for a hundi. The banker gave him a hundi for one thousand rupees charging one hundred rupees as commission. The drawee was to receive the money from the banker's agent at Dwarkanath on the production of the hundi. The development of the banking system is indeed a great index of the flourishing trade and prosperity of Bengal of the time.

Cheap living;

The fertility of the soil, the development of industries and the diligence and craftsmanship of the people accounted for plentiful agricultural and manufactured products. There was such a super-abundance of produce in Bengal that these not only met sufficiently the needs of its inhabitants, but left a big surplus for a prosperous export trade as well. Because of great abundance, the necessaries of life were extraordinarily cheap and gold and precious metals of other countries flowed to enrich this province.

The contemporary records represent Bengal as a land of plenty and cheapness. Ibn Battuta remarked that nowhere in the universe did he see a country where commodities sold so cheap as in Bengal. He wrote that it abounded in rice and was full of all good things. This great Moorish traveller visited many places of Africa, Egypt, India and most of the countries of Asia and hence his observation, based as it was on personal experience, is deserving of the merit of a direct and authentic evidence. His evidence is, moreover, corroborated by the statements of many other foreign travellers as well as chronicles of the period.

The Chinese envoys of the early fifteenth century referred to the prosperity of Bengal in agricultural and industrial products. The Italian merchant Varthema was struck by the abundance of everything he saw all around in this province and observed that it was the best place to live in. The writings of Barbosa, Ralph Fitch and others express the same note of wonder and admiration. The abundance and cheapness continued throughout the centuries of Muslim rule in this province. Visiting Bengal about 1640 A.D., Sebastian Manrique wrote that in every mart or town there was such super-abundance of eatables, household necessaries and manufactured articles, such as cotton cloths, that each of these articles of one mart could load several vessels. He observed that prices were so low in the cities of Bengal especially of eatables that he was tempted to have many meals a day.

An idea of the cheapness of necessaries is obtained from the accounts of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who mentioned the price of a few articles.

80 Delhi rats of paddy at 8 dirhams.
25 rats of rice = 1 silver dinār.
1 md. (modern) rice = 1 as. 9 pies.
1 ratl ghee = 4 dirhams = $\frac{1}{2}$ dinār = 8 annas.
1 md. (modern) ghee = 1 rupee and 7 as.
1 ratl sugar = 4 dirhams = $\frac{1}{2}$ dinār = 8 as.
1 md. (modern) sugar = 1 rupee and 7 as.
1 ratl sesame oil = 2 dirhams = $\frac{1}{2}$ dinār = 4 as.
1 md. (modern) sesame = 11 as. and 6 pies.
1 ratl syrup (honey) = 8 dirhams = 1 dinār = 1 rupee.
1 md. (modern) syrup = Rs. 2 and 14 as.

1. Mahuan’s Accounts, in N. K. Bhattacharyya—Coins and Chronology, etc. 169.
2. Purchas—His Pilgrims, IX; Dasgupta—Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, 117.
4. One ratl = 1 md. of that time = 28 lbs. — 14 seers of present time.
Dinar (gold) = 10 silver dinars.
Silver dinar = 8 dirhams = 1 rupee approximately.
Cheap Living

1 milch cow—3 silver dinārs=3 rupees.
1 fat ram—2 dirhams=4 annas.
8 fat fowls—1 dirham=2 as.
1 fat fowl—1 anna.
15 pigeons—1 dirham=2 as.
15 yards of fine cotton cloth—2 rupees.
A beautiful slave girl—1 gold dinār=10 rupees.

The cheapness of necessaries prevailed down to the time of ẓūbahdār Shayesta Khān when rice sold at two annas per maund. Even at the time of Nawāb Shujā ‘al-Dīn there was abundance and cheapness of rice and other articles.

A comparative study of the prices of articles of Northern India shows that Bengal, even after large exports, had a lower price level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>'Ala al-Dīn Khaljī</th>
<th>Muḥammad Tughlāq</th>
<th>Firūz Shāh Tughlāq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice 1 md. (40 seers)†</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>10 as.</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>5 as. 6 pies</td>
<td>9 as. 6 as.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>3 as.</td>
<td>6 as. 3 as.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghee (butter)</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Re. 1 and 9 as.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>15 as.</td>
<td>Re. 1 and 4 as.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mash</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>2 as 9 pies</td>
<td>Rs. 2 and 3 as.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moth</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>2 as 3 pies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3 as.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef, mutton</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3 as 3 pies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† In giving prices I have converted the maund of that time, which was 14 seers, into the present maund of 40 seers. I have also reduced the jitals into rupee on the basis of 64 jitals a rupee. The value of jitals varied from 48 to 64 to a rupee of that time. According to Firishita (I, p. 199), a tanka was equal to 50 jitals.

See K. M. Ashraf—Life and Conditions of People of Hindustan, 251.
The Bengali literature reflects the cheapness and comfortable living of the people of Bengal in the Muslim time. The Vaishnava poets write that the marriage ceremony of Chaitanya was performed with a few cowries and they mention it as a magnificent and costly marriage.\(^1\) The Chandikavya of Mukundaram gives an idea of the cheapness of articles in the sixteenth century. In recording the marketing of a maid-slave, the poet writes, "Dhurbhala went to market with 50 kahans of cowries. She bought a long gourd pumpkin (lau) and green pumpkin gourds (kumra) at hundred cowries. She bought a basket of ripe mangoes at one hundred cowries... she bought big rohit (rahu) fish and other varieties of fish, such as chital, sheat (boal) and 64l oysters. The clever maid-servant also bought a castrated goat at 8 kahans of cowries and mustard oil at the rate of 10 budis per seer."\(^2\)

A maid-servant making a grand marketing, which will excite the surprise of even the wealthiest persons of this time, illustrates that the people of that period could have sumptuous dishes at their table and had a very comfortable life. Her marketing shows the prevalence of cheapness in the market. The Chandikavya of Madhavacharya\(^3\) has given an account of the expenditure incurred in celebrating the marriage of an ordinary person, Kalaketu, the hunter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost in Cowries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 dharas (small cloth)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khayer (kattha)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermillion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khua (ordinary sari)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Vrindavanda—Chaitanya Bhagavata, pp. 95-96.  
\(^2\) Mukundaram—Chandikavya, pp. 155-56.  
\(^3\) D. C. Sen—Banga Bhasa O Sahitya, p. 233.
In the Muslim time generally the following system was adopted in converting cowries in terms of silver and copper coins:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 cowries</th>
<th>1 ganda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 gandas</td>
<td>1 buḍi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 buḍis</td>
<td>1 pan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 pans</td>
<td>1 kahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 kahans</td>
<td>1 rupee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of this system, which made 125 cowries a pice and 8,000 cowries a rupee, the marriage marketing of Kalaketu, costing 52 cowries, amounted to even less than half a price.

In the Hindu times, cowries had higher value. At that time the following table of *Lilavati*, a mathematical work, was in use to determine the value of cowries in relation of silver coins:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20 cowries</th>
<th>1 kakini</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 kakinis</td>
<td>1 pan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 pans</td>
<td>1 drachma or a silver coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 drachmas</td>
<td>1 nisk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Amargosh, one nisk was equivalent to one dīnār.2

This table shows that 1,280 cowries were equivalent to a rupee in Bengal of the Hindu period, while in the time of the Muslim rule 8,000 cowries made one rupee. The fall of the price of cowries was due to the large influx of gold and silver

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1 Abūl Faḍl (A’in Tr., I, p. 138) says that the following system of cowries prevailed in Bengal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 cowries</th>
<th>1 ganda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 gandas</td>
<td>1 buḍi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 buḍis</td>
<td>1 pan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 pans</td>
<td>1 kahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 kahans</td>
<td>1 rupee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 N. Ray—*Bengalir Itihasha*, p. 136.
in the province out of extensive export trade. Moreover, there was great paucity of silver and gold coins in the pre-Muslim Bengal and cowries were the important medium of exchange. During the Muslim period there were sufficient silver and gold coins in circulation, and cowries were used only in smaller transactions. Hence the importance and value of cowries greatly diminished. This is indeed an index of the abundance and cheapness of articles and of the prosperity of Bengal under the Muslim rule.

In the Muslim time Bengal had a smaller population, but a plenty of arable lands, yielding abundance of crops without much labour. The people were industrious; both men and women of the cultivator class worked in the field, and in off-season took to spinning, weaving or some other trade.¹ So the life of the cultivators, who formed the bulk of Bengali population, was comfortable. The number of the landless people was very small. These people took to some minor arts or crafts or worked as agricultural labour. The agricultural labourers were paid well for their work. They were generally paid in kind. For reaping paddy, they got a share, one-fourth or one-third, of the harvest. This system, called dini, still obtains in some areas of Bengal.

In some respects, the condition of the agricultural labourers was even better than the landholders. Because of the dearth of this class of labourers, they were much in demand. The cultivators, who possessed more land than they could cultivate themselves, had to pay handsome wages to induce the labourers to work in their fields. In the rural areas, we hear stories from many families of the cultivators that several generations before their ancestors had distributed lands to the labourers to attract them work in their fields.

The agricultural labourers, who thus received a fair share of the crops of the landholders, did not have to pay any land tax.

¹ See Chinese Accounts.
As such the share of a worker was quite sufficient to maintain himself and his family. He need not have to buy fish, which was available in plenty in rivers, canals, marshes and waters around. Vegetables of all varieties grew profusely even in the patches of land about his dwelling. He required cloth to buy. Bengal being a country of mild climate, he had a very modest need of clothing. He needed coarse clothes which were very cheap.

Among the ordinary labourers other than the agricultural, were the carpenters, bamboo-cutters, thatchers, ordinary bricklayers and men of similar callings. There is no reference to the wages of these labourers of Bengal. An idea may however be obtained from the wages of these classes of labourers of the time in Northern India. Emperor Akbar's ordinance regulating wages of workers would be of some use in this connection.\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of labour</th>
<th>1st Class</th>
<th>2nd Class</th>
<th>3rd Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gilkars (worked in. lime)</td>
<td>7 dams</td>
<td>6 dams</td>
<td>5 dams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sang-tarash (stone mason)</td>
<td>6 d. (per gaz)</td>
<td>5 d.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bildars (brick-layers)</td>
<td>3(\frac{1}{4}) d.</td>
<td>3 d.</td>
<td>2(\frac{1}{2}) d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>7 d.</td>
<td>6 d.</td>
<td>4 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapkan (well-diggers)</td>
<td>2 d. (per gaz)</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{2}) d.</td>
<td>1(\frac{1}{4}) d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghota-khur</td>
<td>4 d. (cold season)</td>
<td>3 d. (hot season)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kisht-tarash (tile-makers)</td>
<td>8 d. for 100 moulds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass-cutters</td>
<td>100 d. per diem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) *A'lu* (Blochmann), I, pp. 235-36.
Bamboo-cutters ... 2 d. per diem.

Chapparband (thatchers) 3 d. per diem. 24 d. for a job of 100 gaz.

Akbash (Water-carriers) ... 3 d. 2 d.

In the above list, the wood-cutter is the least skilled and the lowest paid labourer. With 2 dams as wages per diem, he earned 60 dams, equivalent to Rs. 1½ a month and Rs.18 a year. Because of the prevailing low prices of necessaries of life, he did not have to spend much to support his family. Ibn Battūta says that one of his friends Almasudi, who lived in Bengal, had bought at 8 dirhams, i.e., one rupee, provisions required for a year for three persons.1 Three persons could live conveniently a year at one rupee. If the wood-cutter with an income of Rs.18 a year had 6 members in his family, he needed Rs.2, or at best Rs.3 for the whole year's consumption. He was still left with a balance of Rs.15. In view of cheapness, he did not spend more than Rs.2 for the clothes of his family. Education was more or less free because of the land-grants to mokātab and mosques. So he spent at most Rs.2 for the education of his children. One rupee was for his other incidental expenses. Meeting all these expenses, he was left with a saving of Rs.10 a year.

If this was the condition of the most unskilled labour, the position of a comparatively skilled worker, such as the thatchers, brick-layers, carpenters and others, was better still, as they received higher wages. This shows that the life of even the most ordinary people was easy, because of plenty and cheapness. They had fewer needs and their life was simple.

1 Ibn Battūta's Accounts, N. K. Bhattasali—Coins, etc., p. 169. Māsālik al-Abṣār records that a person named Khoudi and his three friends had a meal, which included roast beef, bread and butter at only one jital, equivalent to 1/64 of a tanka or a pice. K. M. Ashraf—Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan, p. 131.
One significant fact to be noted in connection with the economic life is that there is no reference of any famine in Bengal during the Muslim period. While Northern India had the visitation of many famines, as we know from the contemporary records of the Muslim time, Bengal did not have the experience of this calamity in that period. It is a fact that there were occasional floods and cyclones in this province, which destroyed crops and houses in some areas. But the people did not suffer much from these calamities. Because of plenty the affected area could easily receive food and other necessaries from the other parts of Bengal. The rivers and canals helped the quickest despatch of articles to the people living in the area where scarcity and sufferings had been caused on account of flood and cyclone.

To conclude, it may be said that in the Muslim period under review Bengal enjoyed unusual prosperity in agriculture, industry and commerce and peace and happiness held sway in this province. The common people, who were unaffected by the complexities of life, had enough to eat and had a convenient living.
CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

Politically the history of Bengal during the Muslim rule falls into four periods. The first period covers the years from 1201 A.D. to 1342 A.D. In this period, Bengal maintained a semblance of allegiance to the Sultanate of Delhi. The Bengal governors appointed by the Delhi Sultans were more or less submissive, although they very often disowned the authority of their sovereign and ruled in practical independence. The second period begins with the installation of a sovereign power in the province by Ilyas Shah in 1342 A.D. and it continued, with the exception of a few years of the reign of Sher Shah (1539—45) and Islam Shah (1545—52), till 1576 when its independence was terminated in the Battle of Rajmahal. The third was the period of Mughul rule and it extended from 1576 to 1717 A.D. During this time Bengal was a shtub of the great Mughul Empire. The fourth was the period of independent nizamat introduced by Murshid Quli Khan in 1717. This period came to an end with the Battle of Plassey in 1757 A.D.

These political divisions of the history of Bengal had some social and cultural bearing in the life of the Bengali people. The Muslim rule during 1201-1576 A.D., particularly in the period from 1342 to 1576, is a momentous phase. It was the formative age of the political and socio-cultural life of the province. It was the time of the development of the Muslim society. Vital forces and ideas were in operation and new institutions were in the process of development. These were of far-reaching consequences for the Bengali people. The Muslims supplied an
extraordinary vigour in this province and stimulated its progress and prosperity in every aspect of life. In assessing the tremendous significance of these forces, it will not be an exaggeration to say that Bengal and the Bengali people were really born with the establishment of the Muslim rule in this territory.

Unknown was the name Bangala for this province. Unknown was also the name Bangali for its people as well as Bangalah for its language. The Muslims first integrated the whole territories of Bengal into a political union and gave it the name of Bangala. This was indeed the starting point of the History of Bengal and the Bengali people. For about three centuries this history had a continuous growth and contributed to the development of the distinctive characteristics and institutions of the Bengali people. The fall of the Karrani Sultanate and the incorporation of Bengal into the Mughul Empire checked its independent career. This was indeed the end of a significant phase of the history of Bengal.

The Mughul rule marked a new phase in the life of Bengal. It broke the narrow isolation of this province and introduced it to the cultural influences of Northern India as well as Central and Western Asia. It also opened a wider market for its surplus commodities, and further enriched it by providing stimulus to agriculture, industry and trade. The fall of the Sultanate however did not much disturb the growth of the social and cultural institutions of Bengal. These continued to develop side by side with the new cultural forces that flowed in the wake of the Mughul conquest. When in 1717 Bengal drifted away from the Mughul imperial authority and set up an independent nizāmat, there was again the progress of the distinguishing features and institutions of the Bengali people in the province.

The introduction of the Muslim element of population is an important landmark in the social and cultural history of Bengal. The Muslim conquerors and immigrants were a robust and enterprising people with all the freshness of life. They greatly strengthened the
existing population and gave a new lease of life to the province. In course of time, their number increased and this increase was caused on one hand by immigration from Northern India as well as from Central and Western Asia and on the other by the acceptance of Islam by many non-Muslim. There was also higher birth-rate among the Muslims. The süfis and ʻulema had the most significant rôle in the spread of Islam and the development of the Muslim community in Bengal. The khâṅgahs and madrasahs acted as powerful integrating forces of the Muslim society. The deep religious feeling of the Muslim rulers, their enlightenment and liberal patronage to the men and institutions of religion and learning had also a share in the process of the integration and progress of the Muslims of Bengal. These naturally promoted the religious and moral feeling and stimulated learning among the Muslims of this province. The Bengali Muslims also fostered in themselves the sense of oneness with the Islamic community in the world. This provided for further integration of the Muslims of Bengal. It is also noteworthy that they were noted for their qualities of sincerity and straightforwardness, and these won them the admiration even of the foreigners.

One remarkable fact of the social history of Bengal in the period under review is the interaction of Islam and Hinduism in many aspects of the life of its people. The coming of the Muslims produced a Reformation as well as a Renaissance in the Hindu society. The superior ideals of the Muslims in religious-social order greatly influenced the Hindu society and set in motion a movement to reform the caste-ridden and illiberal social life of that community. So, there arose the Dharma Cult, the Vaishnavism of Sri-Chaitanya and also other reform associations of the Hindus. There was also a great stir among the lower class Hindus for education which was so long denied to them by the priestly Brahmmins, who, as leaders of the society, had the exclusive monopoly of learning. The Bengali language and literature also now received a respectable status. As a result, education and learning received an unprecedented momentum and made gigantic progress.
Conclusion

In certain fields there was understanding and compromise of the Hindus and Muslims in social life. This resulted in the rise of several common social and cultural institutions of the two communities. The Bengali literature, the *Satyapir Cult* and the *Baul* mystic order represent this spirit of understanding and harmony in cultural life.

In the process of the impact and interaction of the Muslims and Hindus, the Muslim culture predominated in the Bengali social life throughout the period. Although numerically inferior to the Hindus, the Muslims were the influential section of the people, because of their political power and position, their superiority in enlightenment and culture and also their economic prosperity. Persian was the language of the State and of culture. Every youth, Muslim and Hindu, who aspired for a position in the government and wanted to have a distinction in the society, studied Persian. The Muslim dress as well as manners, customs and etiquette became the fashion of the day. In food also, the Muslims had influence on the Hindus. The educated and enlightened Hindus and their aristocratic section specially imitated the Muslim culture, dress, food and etiquettes in their life, so that they became Muslimised, like the Anglicised peoples of this subcontinent during the period of the British rule. The Bengali literature of the time bears out this fact. It was because of the contact with the Muslims and imitation of their culture and way of life that many Brahmins and Kayasthas were made outcaste by the *Kulin* Hindus. These outcaste Brahmins and Kayasthas either accepted Islam or formed groups of their own in the Hindu society. The *Firâlî*, *Sherkhâni*, and *Srimânt khâm* Brahmins remind us of the great influence of the Muslim culture on the Hindu social life in the period of Muslim rule in this province.

The Muslims indeed made remarkable contributions to the development of the social and cultural life in Bengal. They broke the narrow isolation of the province and opened to her the routes to cultural progress and economic prosperity. Cultural influence came with the constant stream of the Muslim
immigration. There was prosperity as a result of the extension of trade and commerce and because of an unprecedented stimulus to industries and agriculture. The Muslim rule gave unity to the whole territories of Bengal and provided the basis for the growth of the linguistic and cultural uniformity among the peoples of the different regions of the province. It conferred on them oneness in political life, in system of government and law, in language, education, art and culture. The rise of a common *lingua franca* and vernacular literature, Bengali, was the most precious legacy of the Muslims to the people of Bengal. The monotheistic and sufistic ideas of the Muslims left a profound influence on the religio-social and cultural life of the province.

The paramount influence of the Muslims on the social life was however in the field of education and enlightenment. The general prevalence of education among Muslims awakened the Hindu masses to the consciousness of their right to acquire learning which were hitherto denied to them by the ruling Brahmins. The Muslims opened before them equal facilities for education to all and as such even the lower class Hindus felt encouraged to use this opportunity to better their life. In consequence, education permeated all stratas of the Bengali society and learning received a great stimulus to advancement.

Judged dispassionately, it can be concluded that the Muslim rule under study was the most constructive period of the history of Bengal. It had also wider prospects for the future. It was a period when the social and cultural institutions which are distinctive to the Bengali people took shape and these attained such a remarkable development and progress that they passed as a most precious legacy to the posterity. If the trends in the political life of the province during the Muslim rule continued undisturbed, the Bengali people, in course of time, would have emerged as a full-fledged nation.

It was a period when the Muslims and Hindus lived in perfect peace and harmony and there was cooperation and cordiality in
every sphere of life. Though a ruling people, the Muslims did not follow the policy of exclusiveness as is generally the attitude of the rulers to the subject people. They generously shared the political power with the Hindu majority and extended liberal patronage to their talent in every field. The elevation of many Hindus to high and responsible offices of the State, and in particular the rise of the Kayasthas as a class unto prominence, is an eloquent testimony to the liberal policy of the Muslim rulers. In a foregoing chapter an account has been given of the rise of the Hindus in the reigns of the Ilyās Shāhī, the Saiyid and the Karrānt rulers. This liberal policy of promoting the Hindus to key positions in the State at times reached the danger point. Thus there was danger to the Muslim rule from the Hindu wazir Raja Kans. It was the timely intervention of Hadrat Nur Quṭb 'Ālam and Hadrat Mīr Ashraf Simnānī that saved the Muslim State in Bengal at that time.

It is noteworthy that the Hindus enjoyed much better position under Muslim rule than they could have expected as a subject people. The Muslim rule in Bengal provides the rarest instance where in the rulers are found entrusting the subject peoples with so much confidence in high matters of the State. The Hindus rose to the great office of the wazir, personal secretaries to the Sultan, commanders of the army and many other important posts in the government. It is to be noted by way of a comparative study that even in the most palmy days under the British rule in this province or in this subcontinent, the Hindus did not attain such offices of trust.

It is remarkable that during the Muslim rule the Hindus were treated at par with the Muslims in every field. There was no inferiority of the Hindus to the Muslims either on account of their religion or their being subject peoples. The Muslim rulers of Bengal exempted the Hindus from the payment of Jījya, which was generally imposed on the non-

1 There is no mention of jījya at any contemporary record. It is thought that the independent Muslim rulers of Bengal, in order to enlist the cooperation of the Hindus in their struggle against the Delhi Sultanate, did not impose this tax on them.
Muslims under the Muslim rule. There was no case of the destruction of any Hindu temple by the Muslîms. No Hindu was ever persecuted on account of his religious belief. The fact that Sri-Chaitanya was appreciated and allowed to preach his new faith of Vaishnavism uninterfered and under full protection of the State is an eloquent testimony to the policy of enlightened toleration of Muslims to the people of other creeds.

The Muslims in general lived as friendly neighbours of the Hindus. There was no ill-feeling or contemptuous attitude of the Muslims as a ruling race towards the Hindus. They always looked upon them as their relations. So, we find that the Qâdi of Navadvip regarded himself as a maternal uncle of Sri-Chaitanya and looked upon this Hindu reformer as his nephew.

It goes to the credit of the Muslims that they always followed a policy of cooperation and maintained a feeling of understanding and harmony towards the Hindus. But the Hindus seem to have remained at bottom irreconciled to the loss of their sovereignty in Bengal. By a show of loyalty and devotion to the Muslim rulers, they improved their political and social status, but never missed an opportune moment to revive their lost political power in this province, or to cause an embarrassment to the Muslim State. Thus they endangered the Muslim rule in the time of Ilyâs Shâhî Sultanate. In spite of all favours, Rup and Sanatan deserted the service of their master, Sulţân 'Alâ al-Dîn Husain Shâh. The favourite wazîr of Dâud Khân Karrâni also played a traitor to his royal master and patron in the time of his great crisis to his throne. The Hindus also at times repaid the friendly feeling of the Muslims by an act of animosity. It is to be noted that on the eve of the advent of Chaitanya the Brahmins of Navadvip conspired to overthrow the Muslim rule in Bengal. Sri-Chaitanya and his followers once burnt the house of the Qâdi with all the belongings.

Thus the occasional outburst of the Hindu animosity to the Muslims marred the otherwise sweet relations of the two
Conclusion

Communities of Bengal. It is however gratifying to note that such instances are not many. On the whole, there was a large measure of co-operation and understanding through centuries between the Hindus and Muslims. Because of many common institutions and harmony between them in many fields, there was a big prospect for the development of the Bengali nation. In fact, the Bengali nation of the Muslims and Hindus was growing at a pace under Muslim rule. This great possibility was disturbed with a rude shock by the coming of the English, who fanned the flame of the communal feeling of the Hindus against the Muslim rulers and through them caused the fall of the national government of the Bengali people. There ended the Hindu-Muslim co-operation and understanding and the two communities of the Bengali people parted company from each other.
APPENDIX A

Jajpur pur badi, shula shai ghar bed,
Bedi lai kannai nagun,
Dakshina magite zai, zar ghare nahi pai,
Shap dia purai bhutan.
Maldhe lage kar, na chine apan par,
Jale nabik dishpash.
Balishtha haiya bara, dash bish haiya jara,
Saddharmire karai binash.
Vede kari uchcharan, barai agni ghane ghan,
Dekhia sabai kampaman.
Maneta paia marma, sabe bole rakha Dharma,
Tuma bina ke kare paritran.
Airupe Dvijgan, kar sisti sangharan,
E bara haila abichar.
Vaikunthe thakia Dharma, maneta paia marma
Mayata haila andhakar.
Dharma haila Yavana rupi, mathaita kala tupi,
Hate shuve trikach kaman.
Chapia uttam hai, tribhubane lage bhai
Khudai bal'a ek nam.
Niranjan nirakar ha la Bhest (Behest) ekakar,
Mukheta balai dambadar.
Zathek devatagan, sabe haiya ekman,
Anandeta parila ijar.
Brama haila Mahamad, Vishnu haila Pekambar,
Adampha (Adam) haila Sulapani.
Ganes haila Ghazi, Kartik haila qadi,
Faqir haila zatha muni.
Tejia apan bhek, Narad haila shek (shaikh),
Purandar haila malna (maulana).
Chandra, Surya adi deve, padatik haiya sebe,
Sabe mile bajai bajna.
Apani Chandika Devi, thinha haila Haya Bibi,
Padmavati haila Bibi Nur.
Zathek devatagan, sabe haiya ek man,
Prabesh karila Jajpur.
Deul dehara bhang, karya firya khai range,
Pakhar pakhar bole bol,
Dharia Dharmer pai, Ramai Pandit gai,
E bara bisham gandagul.


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**APPENDIX B**

The following passages of the sixteenth century Hindu poet Jayananda reflects the Muslim influence on the upper class of the Hindus. These illustrate p.302 of the work:—

Sudrani laia ghar kariba Brahma,
Kanya bichibek ze sab sastra jane,
Brahmane rakhiba dari Parashya (Persian) paribe,
Moja pai nari hathe kaman dharibe,
Mansaria (masnavi) britti se karibe dvij bare,
Sudra jagat guru haba Mlechchha habek raja.

Navadvipe brahma daitya Jagai Madhai,
Mansaria britti kare thake nalbane;
Go-mangsa shukar-mangsa kare surapan.

Jayananda, *Chaitanyamangala*, p.139 and 56.

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**APPENDIX C**

The following passage of the contemporary Vaishnava poet Krishnadas shows Sri-Chaitanya's knowledge of Islam. This is quoted to illustrate p. 323 of the work:—

Sei Mlechchha madhye ek param gamvir,
Kala bastra pare sei luke kahe phr,
Chitta ardha haila tar Prabhuke (Chaitanya) dekhia,
Nirbisheshe brahma sathape sasstra uthaia,
Advai brahmabad sei karila sthapan,
Tari sastra zuktye Prabhu karila khandan,
Zei zei kahe Prabhu sakali khandila,
Uttar na aise mukhe maha stabdha haila.
Prabhu kahe tomar sastra sthape nirbishesh,
Taha khandi sabishesh sthapiachhe shesh.
Tomar sastra kahe sheshe ekai Ishvar,
Sarbaishvarya purna tinho shyam kalbar.
Sachchidananda deha purna Brahma svarup,
Sarbatna sarbajya nitya sarbadi svarup.
Sristi sthiti pralai tanha haite hai,
Stuhl suksma jagater tinhu samashrai.
Sarbashreshtha sarbaradhyo karaner karan,
Tar bhaktye hai jiber sangsar taran.
Tar seba bina jiber nai zai sangsar,
Tahar charane priti purushartha sar.
Moksmadi ananda hai zar ek kan,
Purnananda-prapti tar charana seban.
Karma jyan yog age karia sthapan,
Sakal khandia sthape Ishvar seban.
Tomar pandit sabar nahi sastra jyan,
Purba par bidhi madhiye par balaban.
Nij sastra dekha tumi bichar karia,
Ki likhiachhe sheshhe nirnai karia.

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