HUSAIN SHAHI BENGAL
1494-1538 A.D.
A Socio-Political Study

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TO

MY MOTHER

WHO IS NO MORE
PREFACE

The aim of the present work is to give a comprehensive account of socio-political life in Bengal under the Ḥusain Shāhī rule (1494-1538 A.D.) which has a significant place in the history of the country. As a fairly abundant amount of materials has already come to light, it is possible to write the socio-cultural history of the period which cannot be divorced from its political and economic background. No attempt has so far been made to write a book on the diverse aspects of Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal such as administrative structure, economic life, religious movements, cultural activities and all that significantly counted in the history of the country. The present work makes a modest attempt to deal with these topics by analysing the forces that were at work in the socio-political life of Bengal in the period in question.

While discussing the different aspects, the author has tried to keep in view their relative importance and take care to see that nothing of any real significance is ignored or left out. The first chapter of the work is intended to give an idea about the general nature of the leading tendencies which characterized the social and political life of Bengal during centuries of Muslim rule preceding the Ḥusain Shāhī period.

Materials have been used from published and unpublished sources. On a comparison of the Varendra Research Society manuscript of the Yoga Kālandar, edited by Dr. Enamul Huq, with two other MSS. of the same work in Arabic script, included in Abdul Karim Sahitya Vishārad’s Collection (nos. 386 and 388) of the Dacca University Library, the author has found that their texts do not materially differ except in cases of a few stanzas quite insignificant for the present purpose. This explains why Dr. Huq’s text has been uniformly referred to in this work to the exclusion of the Dacca University manuscripts.
In transliterating Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Bengali words, the generally accepted oriental system has been adopted with slight modifications. In spelling place-names and names of modern writers, no rigid method has been followed.

I like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable help I have received from many scholars in preparing this volume. To my teachers, Professor A. B. M. Habibullah and Mr. A. M. Khan, of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Dacca, I owe so much that it is difficult for me to specify my indebtedness. It will be really a matter of pride for me, if I have been able to fulfil their expectations. As the present work has grown out of a Ph. D. thesis successfully presented to the University of Dacca in January, 1961, I should like to acknowledge my gratitude to my examiners, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah of Dacca, Professor Nihar Ranjan Ray of Calcutta University and Dr. C. C. Davies of Oxford University, whose valuable suggestions and critical comments have given me incentive to reassess the problems related to the period under review and this I have done with a considerable amount of profit. I am grateful to Professor Sukumar Sen and Mr. S. K. Saraswati of Calcutta University who cheerfully read through chapters VII and VIII respectively and suggested many improvements. I am deeply obliged to Dr. Enamul Huq for the extreme promptness with which he placed at my disposal the Varendra Research Society manuscripts of the Ādya Parichaya and the Yoga Kālandara. My friend, Mr. A. Sharif of the Department of Bengali, University of Dacca, has greatly helped me in going through the D. U. manuscript of the Jhāna-pradīpa. It is my melancholy duty to remember the late Mr. S. A. Sobhan, M.A. (Alig.), B. Litt. (Oxon.), who helped me a great deal in collecting materials. My friend, Mr. S. C. Bhattacharyya of the Department of History, University of Dacca, has greatly eased my task by reading the proofs and suggesting useful improvements upon my language. Another friend of mine, Dr. M. A. Aziz, of the Departments of International Relations and Foreign Languages, University of Dacca, helped me at the initial
stage of the preparation of the work and also by preparing the Index at a great cost of time and energy. My friend, Mr. A. K. M. Abdul Alim, of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Dacca, drew my attention to certain important materials. I am under deep obligation to my student, Mr. Nurullah, M.A., LL.B., who greatly expedited the checking up of the typed copy of the book at its initial stage. It is my pleasant duty to record my feelings of gratitude to the authorities of the Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi, the National Library, Calcutta, the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Sahitya Parishat of Calcutta, all of whom have ungrudgingly helped me in getting access to the necessary books and journals. It would have been difficult to make the work presentable, had I not received whole-hearted co-operation from Mr. Abdul Hai and Mr. Ahmad Usama Siddiqui of the Asiatic Press. I remain deeply obliged to the Council of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan for having accepted my book for publication.

Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Dacca November 15, 1965.

Momtazur Rahman Tarafdar
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CHAPTER 1

THE BACKGROUND

IN order to understand the socio-political life in Ḥusain Shāh Bengal, it is necessary to review the social and cultural trends characterizing the preceding period.

The political tension that had originated in Central Asia after the decline of the Ghaznavide and Saljūk powers and continuous flow of emigration of the adventurous Turkish hordes to India, greatly influenced the subsequent history of the subcontinent. In the period in question, the rulers of Ghor and Khwārizm dominated the entire political scene. In the early thirteenth century A.D., Muʿizz-ud-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām's empire extended from Ghazna in Afghanistan to Varendra in Bengal. But it could hardly retain its territorial integrity. While the Ghūrī ruler was suffering in his life-time both military and diplomatic defeats at the hands of his more powerful rival, the Khwārizm Shāh, his Ghazna principality was swallowed by the latter within a few years of his death.¹ The possessions in India

in which the Slave rulers carried on the Ghuride political legacy, were going through a process of transformation. Theoretically speaking, Iktiyar-ud-din Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji was but a subordinate officer of Qutb-ud-din Aibak, then Mu'izz-ud-din Muhammad bin Saim’s viceregal representative in India. But his activities in Magadh and Varendra clearly indicate that the Khalji leader enjoyed a wide measure of autonomy in respect of his military plans and administrative reorganization in the newly conquered regions. Considered from the point of view of his relationship with the Delhi ruler, the chroniclers’ contention that Bakhtiyar had the privilege of using the royal canopy and of having the Friday sermons read and coins struck in his own name,¹ seems quite significant. Muhammad Shirin who succeeded Bakhtiyar was practically independent and ‘Ali Mardan became free from Delhi’s control after the death of Aibak. The political separation of the province of Bengal from the centre was but a corollary of the hierarchical scheme of Turkish feudalism in which a highly centralized government was hardly possible.

The process of Bengal’s political isolation from North India received a fresh momentum from Ghiyath-ud-din Iwad Khalji who seems to have followed a deliberate policy of consolidation. It is numismatically established that ‘Iwad expressed tacit allegiance to the Khalifah of Baghdad, the theoretical suzerain of the Muslim world, by calling himself the “Helper of the Commander of the faithful”, that he was anxious to get legal sanction to his own rule and to leave to his successors a sort of safe inheritance within the constitutional frame-work of the Khalifat and that while accepting the phraseology of Ghazna coins as a model for Bengal coinage, he applied to himself the regal titles assumed by Ghiyath-ud-din Muhammad bin Saim and mentioned Mu’izz-ud-din Muhammad bin Saim’s regal titles on his

own coins. The Bengal ruler seems to have tried to assert his claims to Mu'tizzülf legacy in Indian politics by showing his political connection with the Ghurid ruling family of Ghazna. He adopted these diplomatic measures perhaps with a view to stabilizing his political position against Ilutmish, the contemporary Delhi ruler. Attacked by the latter in 622 A.H./1225 A.D., he warded off his opponent's hostility by concluding a treaty whose terms he never respected. He wrested the lost territories over which he could exercise uninterrupted control till 624 A.H./1227 A.D. when he was finally attacked and killed by the Delhi troops.

Though the establishment of the Mamlūk governorship (1227-87 A.D.) in Bengal seems to have temporarily checked her separatist tendencies, Mughīškh-ud-dīn Yūzbak (1252-1257 A.D.) did not fail to declare independence. The rule of the House of Balban (1286-1328 A.D.) was a regular prelude to the political independence of this country. While Ṭughril (1268-81 A.D.) rose in rebellion against Delhi, Rukn-ud-dīn Kaikāš, (1291-1301 A.D.) Shams-ud-dīn Firuz (1301-22 A.D.) and the last ruler's sons enjoyed independent status.

As a result of the disintegration of the Tughluq sultanate, independent kingdoms came into being in Gujrat, Mālwa, Jaunpūr, the Deccan and Bengal. The first phase of independence in Bengal was represented by Ilyās Shāhi rule which could retain its position in the teeth of Firuz Tughluq's repeated attempts to bring this country back to Delhi's control. In the early fifteenth century, internal contradictions resulting from rivalry between the 'Ulemā class and local administrators led to the rise of Rāja Gaṇeshā who became eventually the founder of a new dynasty.

1. These points have been fully discussed in my paper: "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours: A Numismatic Study," (to be published in N. K. Bhattasali Commemoration Volume).
3. For details, see History of Bengal, ii, chaps. ii and iii.
The celebrated Chishtiyah saint Shaikh Nūr Qūb-i-‘Ālam who represented the ‘Ulema section and who had spiritual affinities with the Chishtiyah șūfis of Jaunpur and Delhi, exchanged letters with the Jaunpūrī saint, Ḍhaḥif Ǧahāṅgīr Simnānī, expressing his dissatisfaction with the increasing power of the Hindu chief and inviting Ibrāhīm Sharqī to attack Bengal. Such a design, if effectively translated into action, would lead to the re-establishment of Bengal’s political and cultural connection with North India which the rulers of this country could hardly view with equanimity. Rājā Ganesha faced the situation by offering his son Jadu for conversion to Islam and placing him on the throne—a move that could hardly be objected by Nūr Qūb-i-‘Ālam. Secular interests seem to have actuated Jadu to accept Islam. Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad, the converted son of Rājā Ganesha, tried to consolidate his position by establishing diplomatic relations with China and Egypt. The political friendship which he cultivated with these foreign powers had probably its origin in his eagerness to check the growth of Sharqī influence on Bengal politics. He also assumed the title of Ḳhalifatullāh not only to win the support and respect of the sunnīs of Bengal,

1. Bengal Past and Present, lxvii, 1948, 32-39; Salīm: op. cit. 111-14. Motivated possibly by political considerations, Rājā Ganesha started suppressing the ‘Ulema class in Bengal. It is said of Deva Simha of Tirhut that he also adopted at the instigation of the Rājā, a similar policy of persecution whose pressure was felt by the learned divines including Sulṭān Husain of Darbhanga, a spiritual successor of ‘Ala’-ul-Ḥaq of Paṇḍua; Mullā Taqīya’s Bayād, quoted in Muʿāṣir, May-June, 1949, pp. 98-99. These East Indian rulers were perhaps trying to free their respective regions from North Indian political influence which could infiltrate through the ‘Ulema domination. Sulṭān Husain’s active participation in Tirhut politics is proved beyond doubt by Vidyāpati’s reference to one Makhdūm Shāh fighting for Ibrāhīm Sharqī even before the latter attacked the country in 1402 a.d. Ibid. Makhdūm Shāh mentioned in the Kirtīratā (R. K. Choudhury: “The Oinwaras of Mithila,” J. B. R. S. xx, 2, 1954, p. 14) may be identified with Makhdūm Shāh Sulṭān Husain referred to above.
but perhaps to legalize his own position against his Sharqī rival. His successor Aḥmad Shāh is believed to have countered the aggressive design of Ibrāhīm Sharqī by sending an envoy to Hirāt and seeking the interference of Shāh Rūkh, son of Taimūr. Numismatic records indicate the continuation of hostility between Bengal and Jaunpūr during the reigns of Maḥmūd and Ḥusain, the immediate successors of Ibrāhīm. After the disappearance of the Sharqī power, ‘Alā’-ud-dīn Ḥusain of Bengal adopted diplomatic measures obviously to render the Lūṭī power ineffective on the western frontier of Bengal.

While discussing Bengal’s relationship with the neighbouring countries, it is appropriate to notice how geography has influenced the expansion of Muslim political power in this region. In their eagerness to isolate Bengal from North Indian political influence, the independent sultāns tried to have an effective hold on the western approaches of this country which cover the strip of land stretching on either side of the Ganges, the natural dividing line between Mithila or Tirhut and South Bihār. Thus the whole region extending from Rājmahal to Patna with the inclusion of Bāgalpur, Monghyr and Bihār Sharif in South Bihār and the southern reaches of North Bihār starting from the meeting point of the Ganges and the Kosi in the east and reaching upto Chapra and Balia districts in the west within which lies the confluence of the Ghogra and the Ganges, seems to have been considered an area of immense strategic importance. For control over the trans-Gangetic region was an essential pre-requisite to the defence of the Teliagarhi pass near the Rājmahal

1. I am here drawing on my review of A. H. Dani’s “Bibliography of the Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal,” J.A.S.P. iii, pp. 207-08.
2. Charles Stewart: History of Bengal, pp. 111-13; J.A.S.B. 1952, p. 168, f.n. I. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay has recently expressed doubts about this information supplied by Stewart, see Viṅglīr Ithārī Dusho Vachhar, pp. 64-65.
3. Elaborately discussed in my paper: “Bengal’s Relations with Her Neighbours” .......op. cit.
hills and of the fords of the Kosi, the traditional boundary of medieval Bengal. Armies could proceed from the west towards Bengal along the north bank of the Ganges crossing the Gandak and the Kosi at some fordable points. The highway which connected Delhi with Lakhnauti through the upper part of south Bihar\(^1\) led to Bengal across the narrow Teliagarhi which, together with the narrowed stream of the Ganges, made the defensive position of this country quite satisfactory. Invaders like Bakhtiyar Khalji and Sher Khan perhaps understood the geographical peculiarities of the western entrance so that they found it necessary to follow the more difficult route across Jharkhand which used to lead to the course of the Ganges beyond Birbhum.\(^2\) The belt of land along the southern bank of the Ganges in Bihar formed, so to say, an important strategic point in Bengal’s first line of defence and was in all probability used as the base of operations against Tirhut in the upper Gangetic valley which constituted the gateway to Bengal.

Bengal rulers’ eagerness to rule over the upper part of Bihar is thus easily intelligible. It seems that ‘Iwaḍ exercised some control over the region, east of Bihar, including Bhagalpur whence he might have proceeded to intercept Ilutmish in Bihar district or to attack and exact tribute from Tirhut.\(^3\) Epigraphic records from the times of Rukn-ud-din Kairānī (690 A.H./1291 A.D.—701 A.H./1301 A.D.) and Shams-ud-din Firuz (701 A.H./1301 A.D.—722 A.H./1322 A.D.) discovered in Monghyr and Bihar

1. Minhaj, p. 159.
2. A.B.M. Habibullah: *op. cit.* p. 71; *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 5-6 and 162.
Sharif, prove beyond doubt that these rulers ruled over parts of Bihār independently. Ilyās Shāhī and Abyssinian sultāns like Shams-ud-dīn Ilyās (1342-57 A.D.), Nāṣir-ud-dīn Maḥmūd (1433-59 A.D.) and Shams-ud-dīn Muẓaffar (1491-94 A.D.) held sway over Bhāgalpur and the territorial expansion of the Ḥusain Shāhī kingdom in that direction was but the continuation of an earlier policy.

The northern route across Tīrṭhūt which led direct to the plains of North Bengal, east of the Kosi, was easier for any invading army than the southern one whose strategic importance has already been discussed. It was frequently followed by such invaders as Balban, Ghiyāḥ-ud-dīn Tughluq, Firuz Tughluq, Ibrāhīm Shārqī and Babur. The presence of any invading army in Tīrṭhūt controlling the main entrance to Bengal, would mean a positive threat to the political security of this country which the foresighted sultāns might have tried to safeguard by exercising a sort of diplomatic or administrative control over that upper Gangetic region. Political developments characterizing the history of medieval Tīrṭhūt clearly indicate that Delhi or Jaunpur rulers did not fail to adopt adequate measures to counter Bengal influences in that country. Ghiyāḥ-ud-dīn Tughluq who was returning to Delhi after having encountered Bahādur Shāh of Bengal in 724 A.H./1324 A.D., is said to have attacked and defeated Hari Simha Deva of Tīrṭhūt, for the Kārnāṭīc king had helped the Bengal ruler in his aggressive designs against Delhi.


The governorship of Tirhut was conferred on Aḥmad Shāh ibn Malik Tabligha. The country was ultimately reduced by Muḥammad Tughluq to the position of one of the iq̄lims or provinces of the Tughluq empire. Shams-ud-din Ilyās Shāh had conquered Tirhut in the life-time of the Tughluq sultan after whose death he brought about important changes in the administrative set-up by dividing the country into two regions. While the tract of land north of the Burhi Gandak, fell to the share of the Oinwāra ruler Kāmeshvara, the whole area extending from the Terai of Nepal in the north to Begusarai in the south, came under the direct control of Ilyās. Although the Bengal sultan had retained the headquarters at Darbhanga till the death of Muḥammad Tughluq, he founded later the town of Ḥājīpur on the north bank of the Ganges obviously with a view to guarding the courses of the Ganges and the Gandak and pushing the western boundary at the expense of Delhi. His military control over Tirhut appears to have served as a necessary step to his expedition against Nepal and his acquisitions in Oudh including Bhaīrahz and Benares. It is in this context that the student of history can, perhaps, account for Firūz Tughluq’s expedition which brought back Tirhut to Delhi’s control. After the decline of the Shārqī power and of the Oinwāra dynasty, which must have given a welcome relief to the later Ilyās Shāhī rulers,

2. Darbhanga was renamed Tughluqpur by Muḥammad Tughluq. Bayṇā : op. cit. pp. 89-90 and 91. For coins issued from Tughluq-pūr ʿurf Tirhut, see Wright : Catalogue, ii, pt. i, no. 384. See also Thomas : Chronicles, p. 203, f.n.1.
3. Bayṇā : op. cit. pp. 93-94. It is also stated that a fort was erected at Ḥājīpur and that a village on the left bank of the Burhi Gandak was named Shams-ud-dīnpūr. Local people call this village Shamstipur.
Bārbak Shāh re-established administrative hold over Tīrhut in 875 A.H./1470 A.D. Reviving the old political divisions of Ilyās Shāh, he brought the lower part of that country within the jurisdiction of Bengal administration with Ḥājīpur as its headquarters and the region to the north of the Burhi Gandak was left under Rājā Dhir Simha with a na‘ib named Kēdar Ray to collect tribute from the Rājā. As will be shown in the next chapter, Sikandar Lūdī who had concluded a non-aggression pact with Ḥūsain Shāh, found it necessary to appoint administrative officers in Tughluqpur or Tīrhut and Bīhār which were subsequently occupied by the Bengal sultāns. Control on Tīrhut appears to have helped Nuṣrat Shāh in expanding his territories even beyond the Ghogra upto Azamgarh and Kharīd. By virtue of his hold on the mouths of the Ghogra and the Gandak, Nuṣrat could give at least an initial resistance to Bābur.

The first phase of Muslim political power was limited within the north-western districts of Bengal wherein lay most of the political centres including Dēkot, Mahisantosh and Lakhnaūti. Within a century after the foundation of Muslim rule, the principality of Lakhnaūti expanded itself in the south-western direction to include the regions on either side of the Bhāṣgirāthī. The foundation of settlements at Sātgaon, Pāṇḍuṭā and Trivenī in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries may be regarded as an expression of the Muslim rulers’ determination not only to check the advance of the powerful Orissan rulers on the south-west, but also to control the maritime commerce

2. For the location and identification of these places, see History of Bengal, u, p. 13, f.n.1 and pp. 36 and 37.
3. The names of Zafar Kān and Shāh Ẓafī’-ud-dīn are inseparably connected with the history of the conquest and annexation of
which Bengal was trying to build up along the Ganges and through the emporium of Sātgaon. Political and economic considerations of a similar nature appeared to have influenced the inclusion of Sonārgaon, Sylhet and Chittagong area within the boundary of the Muslim kingdom whose immediate concern might be the growing power of the Ahom, Tippera and Arakan kings and the trade-route along the Meghna-Padma and Chittagong leading to the Bay of Bengal.

south-west Bengal. For the traditions about these commanders current at Trivenî and Panḍuṣa, see D. Money’s article in J.A.S.B. 1847, pp. 393-401; H. Blochmann in the same journal for 1870, pp. 280-83 and P.A.S.B. 1870, pp. 121-25. The Devikot inscription dated in 697 A.H./1297 A.D. and two other epigraphic records from Triveni, dated in 698 A.H./1298 A.D. and 713 A.H./1313 A.D., containing the name and titles of Zafar Khan, help us in ascertaining the flourishing period of his career with an amount of accuracy. Zafar Khan’s Turkish origin is established beyond doubt by the epithet Alītīn applied to him in one of these inscriptions; see J.A.S.B. XXXIX, 1870, pp. 286-87; A. H. Dani: op. cit. pp. 5-6 and S. Ahmad: op. cit. pp. 12, 17-21. Blochmann infers on the basis of traditional accounts found at Chhoṭa Panḍuṣa, that Shāh Ṣafī’-ud-din was a contemporary of Zafar Khan and Bu ‘Ali Qalandar who died at Panipat in 1324 A.D.; P.A.S.B. 1870, pp. 124-25. It seems that these warriors were connected with a series of battles fought against Orissa and that Bhūdeva Rāja and Panḍava Rāja whom they encountered, are but the legendary forms of the names of Hindu chieftains ruling under the Orissan king. That the region under discussion was very often under the control of Orissa needs hardly any emphasis. Blochmann saw at Triveni “the ghāt of the last king of Orissa” and an old road near Panḍuṣa which used to be pointed out as “the frontier of the kingdom of the Gajpatis of Orissa.” Ibid. p. 114. Mandaran in the Arambag sub-division of Hooghly district which was occupied by Yūzbak in 1355 A.D. (History of Bengal, II, p. 52) and which continued to serve as the base of operations against Orissa in the 15th and 16th centuries, was prior to the Muslim occupation, the headquarters of an Orissan chieftain. Moreover, Narasimha II issued in 1296 A.D. a grant from the bank of the Ganges where he had arrived in the course of a “conquering expedition.” A. B. M. Habibullah: op. cit. pp. 144-45.
II

It is fairly certain that Ilyās Shāhī rulers and the House of Rāja Ganeshā had tried to build up a state system independent of Delhi’s control. Bengal’s isolation from North India and Central Asia led to her cultural isolation which seems to have accelerated the process of the growth of local culture. The Pāla rule that established an independent administration after a long period of strife and confusion following the break-up of the Gupta empire, coincided with the composition of Charyā songs—the first literary fruits produced by the vernacular language which had already gone through a long process of evolution. The spirit of hostility to Brahminism that they breathe, indicates a popular reaction against the Brahminical culture that had dominated the life of Bengal for centuries. Coming to the Sultānate period, we notice significant developments. Persian was, no doubt, retained as court language; but there was no North Indian or Iranian streams to feed it so that its very life was gone. A’zam Shāh’s invitation to the Persian poet Ḥašī to complete the Persian verses he had unsuccessfully tried to compose,¹ gains significance in such a context. As the influence of Persian culture on the life of Bengal was limited, Bengali language found a congenial atmosphere for development. Parallels to these situations, also within the sub-continent of India, are perhaps what we notice in the development of indigenous architectural styles in Jaunpūr and Gujrat and in the growth of Dakini Urdu language and literature.² Freed from

2. For the indigenous features of the medieval monuments of Jaunpūr and Gujrat, see P. Brown: Indian Architecture (Islamic Period), pp. 44, 48, 52, 59. Nasir ud-din Hashmi has discussed the growth of Dakini Urdu literature in his book Dakin Men Urdu. Elsewhere I have suggested that medieval Bengal and the Deccan followed, in the field of literature, parallel lines of development which were in a large measure due to their basic cultural needs, their contact with Iran and their political independence. Madhumalatīr Kahini, Sahitya Patrika, 1370 B. S. I, pp. 121-22.
the political and cultural domination of North India, these kingdoms including Bengal, found time and opportunity to give expression to their respective regional faculties through the cultivation of literature, arts and architecture. If the Charyā songs represent Old Bengali, the Shrikṛṣṇa-kīrtana written presumably in the fifteenth century by Ananta Baṣu Chāṇḍīdāsa contains Middle Bengali.¹ The translation of Sanskrit epics and purāṇic stories into Bengali as exemplified by the Rāmāyaṇa of Kṛttivāsa and the Shrikṛṣṇa-vijaya of Mālādhara Vasu, was a prominent feature of the cultural life of the period under discussion. The versified stories served the purpose of satisfying the antiquarian interests and imagination of the people. But original pānchālī poems on local gods and goddesses that began to appear towards the end of the fifteenth century, drew their inspiration from the cultural climate and physical geography of Bengal. The stage of the infancy of vernacular literature was over. Thus the Sultānate period seems to have marked the evolution of a national life which had not only a homogeneity of language used as a medium of literary expression in the different parts of the country, but also political unity and geographical contiguity forming its basic characteristics.

1. Twenty-two lyrics discovered in Nepal by Arnold Bake of the London school of Oriental and African Studies in 1955, may ultimately provide the missing link between the Charyāpadas and the Shrikṛṣṇa-kīrtana. S. B. Das Gupta of Calcutta University has detected in them “traces of the verse form and the language of the Charyācharya Binischaya.” He thinks that these lyrics known as cha cha songs in Nepal, show a definite process of transition “from the Charyāpada to the Srikrisna-kīrtana and that they are in spirit “nearer the older Charyāpada than the Vaishnava Padavali.” The Statesman, 25th April, 1963. It is interesting to note that these songs were heard from a Nepalese Buddhist monk of the Vajrachārya sect to be tentatively identified with the Vajrayāna order to which the Siddhācharyas who composed charyāpadas belonged. The recently discovered lyrics pay homage to the goddess Vasuli repeatedly mentioned also in the verses of Chāṇḍīdāsa.
The rulers who had to depend upon regional patriotism in the process of countering the imperialistic designs of Delhi or Jaunpur, must have adopted a secular policy in administration. Ḍiyāʿ-ud-dīn Barānī’s and Yaḥyā ibn Aḥmad’s mention of the Hindu Rāyas who had helped Ilyās Shāh fighting Fīrūz Shāh Tughrul.1 seems significant in the present context. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we find a considerable number of Hindus holding highly responsible posts under Muslim rulers and forming the landed aristocracy of the country. These Hindu officers constituted the intellectual repository of the people, helping as they did the development of language and literature. Thus the sultāns made significant contributions to the growth of Hindu middle class with all its economic and cultural paraphernalia.

The Muslim counterpart of this Hindu middle class having deep roots into the soil of the country, was yet to come into being. The existence of an elaborate order of nobility evidenced by numerous epigraphic records, does not possibly contradict this contention. For generals and military governors formed the military aristocracy of the country. Their contributions except in the fields of administration and warfare, seem so negligible that they could hardly come within the category of an enlightened Muslim intelligentsia whose retarded growth may be attributed to obvious historical forces operating in the society. The foreign Muslims who had come in the wake of Muslim conquest were yet to settle down here and the local converts most of whom seem to have originally belonged to the lower grades of Hindu society had hardly any sociological reasons to spring suddenly into a stable group of enlightened people. Yet it appears reasonable to believe that pre-Mughal Bengal saw the first phase of the evolution of a Bengali-speaking Muslim middle class. Saiyid Sultān, Ṣaḥīb Fāḍullāh, Daulat Qāḍī and Ālūsul who flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are largely

the product of this evolution. The Mughal rule pushed them to the obscure background of Muslim culture so that they had to be discovered by the modern scholar.

Islamic trends in the composite social structure of pre-Mughal Bengal were accordingly quite weak. Literary and epigraphic sources indicate that sufis or Muslim teachers had tried to impart Islamic knowledge to the people.\(^1\) As Bengal was geographically and politically separated from the main centres of Islamic culture, neither these teachers nor their pupils could drink deep at the fountain of Muslim civilization with the inevitable result that they could produce no significant works on such branches of knowledge as Muslim law and jurisprudence, traditions and Qur'\'\textsuperscript{anic} exegesis.\(^2\) It was not before the establishment of contacts between Eastern and Northern India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that books dealing with Islamic religious science and ethics began to be written in Bengali, the main source of inspiration being, in this case, Persian and Arabic works that had obviously come here with

1. While referring to `Iwa\d Khalji's patronage to the learned, Minh\aj says that Jalal-ud-din, son of Jam\al-ud-din Ghaznawi, an inhabitant of Fir\'uz Koh, had an occasion to deliver a lecture on religious sciences in the audience chamber of that sul\'\textfrak{an}.\textit{Op. cit.} pp. 161-62. Before Jaunp\ur grew into an important centre of learning, Sonargaon used to attract teachers and students from countries outside Bengal. Sharf-ud-din Ab\u Tawwamah and his disciple Sharf-ud-din Yah\y\a Maneri who belonged to the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, spent considerable parts of their lives at Sonargaon. For details see A. Karim: \textit{Social History of The Muslims in Bengal}, 67 ff and 97 ff.

2. The view that \textit{N\u\c{m}-i-Haq}, a book on fiqh, was written in Bengal by one of the students of Sharf-ud-din Ab\u Tawwamah, held on the basis of slender evidences by A. Karim: \textit{Ibid.} 73 ff., has been contradicted by A. B. M. Habibullah in \textit{J.A.S.P. v}, 1960, p. 214.
the Mughal imperialists. These Bengali translations or adaptations were perhaps the product of an orthodox reaction which had started against the syncretic movement whose sings are clearly discernible in the poems of Shaikh Faydullah and Saiyid Sultan belonging to the cultural milieu of the pre-Mughal period. But the religious and spiritual demands of the early Muslims had to be satisfied. Response to their mental craving came in all probability from the old and inexhaustible stock of indigenous culture on which the Tantric yogi and the Buddhist Sahajiya or the Natha-panthi had been drawing for centuries. Thus a synthesis of Islamic mysticism with local hieratic ideas and aspirations became inevitable. The Amrta-kunda, a Tantric religious text in Sanskrit used in those days by the followers of the Natha cult, attracted the mystic mind even in the early thirteenth century when Rukn-ud-din Samarqandi, the imam and chief qadi in Lakhnauti in the reign of ‘Ali Mardan Khalji, translated it into

1. We may mention here such seventeenth century poems as the Nastiyat namah of Shaikh Parang, Kifayit-ul-Musallin of Shaikh Muttalib and Shariyat namah of Nasrullah Khan which aim at Islamization. For an account of these, see E. Haq: Muslim Vangala Sahitya, pp. 164-66 and 177-78. As contrasted with the Muslim poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which are replete with Yogic-tantric themes and ideas, these works have Islamic contents. The growth of Islamic literature is perhaps explained by such factors as the general degeneration of tantricism which was the source of the Yogic-sufi ideas of the Muslim poets, the influence of Hadith literature on the life of North India intensified by the tirades of 'Abd-ul-Haqq Dehlawi against liberal thinking and the probable infiltration of some of these reactionary ideas to Bengal through the Mughal rule.

2. Saiyid Sultan who has combined history with mythology and sufism with Yoga philosophy in such works as the Navi-Vanisha and Janah-pradipa complains about this reactionary tendency of the time. While firmly believing that his writings represent Islamic ideas, the poet wonders at the allegation that he has Hinduized Islam. Ofate Rasul, 5 ff. Bengali Muslim poets of the time dealing with Islamic themes start with a definite attitude of apology.
Arabic with the help of a converted yogi from Kāmrūpa originally known as Bhojar Brahman (Bajra Brahma?). Its repeated translation into Arabic and Persian in medieval days indicates its utilitarian value to the Muslim mind. Its Bengali spiritual descendents are the Ādya Parichaya of Shaikh Zāhid, the Jñāna-pradīpa and the Jñāna-chautishā of Saiyid Sultan, the Yoga-Kālandar (by Saiyid Murtuza?) and the Jñāna-sāgara of ‘Alī Riḍā whose dates range from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, so that we have a continuous Yogic-ṣūfī tradition in Bengal. This body of literature clearly indicates that a significant group of Muslim mystics had adopted the regressive method of psycho-physical culture obviously under the influence of local cults and that they accordingly shared the Austrik and puranic elements that had dominated the cosmological theories of these obscure systems. There is no wonder then that other aspects of Muslim life had developed similar affinities with local traditions.

Although the outer crust of Hindu society showed the continuation of old traditions and institutions, one could possibly notice beneath the surface a significant process of change and transformation. The traditional ideas with regard to the coming of the Brahmins to Bengal and the origin of Kulīnism which Kulaji literature connects with the legendary king Ādīshūra and Vallala Sena respectively, can hardly satisfy the student of history. The introduction of Kulīnism in Hindu society does not appear to be earlier than the foundation of Muslim rule.

1. The letters of Nur Quṭb-i-‘Ālam to which the generic term makrūb is applied, do not refer to the yogic exercise of controlling nerves and chakras. As they deal with religious topics of a special variety such as the ṣūfī’s devotion to God, his belief in the Ultimate Reality, his detachment from the transitory and phenomenal objects of the material world and principles and institutions connected with shari‘ah, they have hardly any scope for inclusion of ṣūfī practices.

THE BACKGROUND

against which it symbolized the reaction of the Brahminical mind priding over its past glory. The silence of literary and epigraphic records of the Pala and Sena periods on the existence of the institution of Kulinism, the repeated classification of the Brahmmins into melas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and a self-conscious Brahminical revival effected through the codification of socio-religious laws that we notice in the smṛti writings of Shūlapāṇi, Rāyamukuta Bhāspati and Raghunandana, lend support to our hypothesis.

The spirit of merciless criticism of Brahminical socio-religious rites and rituals that we notice in the Charyāpadas¹ and the hostile attitude of the followers of local cults expressed in certain sections of the liturgical texts of the Dharmites, indicate that Brahminical orthodoxy was at a disfavour with those adhering to indigenous cults. The general tightening of Brahminical socio-religious code to which smṛti writings bear eloquent testimony, seems to have stopped contacts between the higher and lower grades of Hindu society and the social isolation of Brahminism which resulted from this must have left the lower class people considerably free to give frank expression to their ideas and beliefs through the growing Bengali language. Now that the pressure of Sena political power with its Brahminical leanings and support for Sanskrit culture was withdrawn, non-Aryan deities and ideas could make themselves felt in cultural fields. Thus came into being a considerable number of poems on Manasā, Chaṇḍī, Gorakhnātha and Satyaprī in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.² It may be noted in this connection that these cults have hardly any concern with spiritualism; for

The institution of Kulinism must have come into being before the fifteenth century A.D.

2. We may mention here the Manasā-maṅgala of Vijaya Gupta and the Manasā-vijaya of Vipradāsa, both composed within the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the Gorakh-vijaya and the Satyaprī of Shaikh Faidullah and the Chaṇḍī-maṅgala of Kavi-Kaṅkan
their followers aim at achieving material welfare by propitiating the gods and goddesses concerned. The Nāthpanthīs want to attain immortality through a process of Yogic exercise expected to bring stability to their physical existence. The devotees of Manasā, Dharma and Satyāpīr are anxious to satisfy these deities so that they may not turn harmful to their material existence. Initially recruited from amongst the animists and totemists, these people could hardly respond to subtle or abstruse forms of any religious philosophy.

The anomalous social conditions noticed above, appear to have facilitated the expansion of Islamic faith to a considerable extent. Mass conversion to Islam in Rāgh which produced celebrated writers on Nyāya and Smṛti in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and which was the centre of Brahminical orthodoxy also in the earlier period, must have been a difficult task. The overwhelming majority of Muslim population observed at Chhoṭa Pāṇḍuā by Blochmann¹ nearly a century ago, was perhaps the result of a sort of militant Islam which had come to that region in the wake of the conquering hordes led by Šafi'-ud-din and Zafar Khān “smiting the infideels with sword and spear.”² North and East Bengal, considerably free from Brahminical influence, perhaps opened up welcome vista for Islam. There was in all probability no difficulty faced by Muslim missionaries in converting the tribal people of the Tibeto-Burman group³ whose attachment to any form of formal

written in the sixteenth century. These religious poems excepting the Satyāpīr, have already been published. See the Bibliography; for quotations from the Satyāpīr, see E. Haq: op. cit. p. 89.

3. We may mention in this connection the Khen and Kocha dynasties of Kamrupa, the Tippera and Ahom Kingdoms—all representing the Tibeto-Burman group of population. Minhaj also noticed the Kochas, Mechas and Thārus living in North Bengal. Taḥaqāt-
religion could but be purely temporary and Islām sat quite lightly on the heart of this region till orthodoxy was brought to bear on it by the Wahhābī-Fārābī movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the areas dominated by the caste system, social repression might have driven the lower class people to the fold of Islām. Although we have no definite evidence in support of this contention, there are clear indications of the hostile attitude of non-Brahminical people towards Brahminism and their sympathy for Islām, as expressed in Niraṅjaner Uṣmā,1 a section of the Shūnya Purāṇa, having enough of sociological interest. Again Tārānātha2 mentions how the Buddhist priests reacted to the Sena policy by inviting the Turuska king to Magadha which resulted in the destruction of Odantapuri and Vikramashīla.

The cult of Bhakti took a definite shape in early Muslim Bengal. Kṛṣṇa's love dalliances with the gopis including Rādhā, are mentioned in early Indian literature.3 But Rādhā appears for the first time, as the fully established lady-love of Shri-kṛṣṇa in the Gita-govinda of Jayadeva. Most of the esoteric religious systems are based on the fundamental tenet of male and female aspects of the Absolute Reality represented as Shiva and Shakti in Hindu tantras and as Prajñā and Upāya in Buddhist tantras. It was in accordance with this principle that Tāntrikas and Buddhist Sahajiyās used to believe that the state of the absolute or Sahaja could be attained through the unification of the male and the female principles mentioned above. Probably under the influence of this two-fold concept of the Supreme Being, the Vaiṣṇava mind found it imperative to bring Rādhā into being as a counterpart of the female energy noticed in Tantras. The melodious verses of Vidyāpati and Chaṇḍīdāsa representing the

1-Nāṣiri : pp. 152 and 156. The conversion of the tribal chief might lead to the conversion of the whole tribe.
2. Discussed in detail in Ch. vi, sec. v.
theme of the Gita-govinda must have made the cult of Rādhā-krṣṇa quite popular whose subsequent resurgence is symbolized by Shri-chaitanya who is believed to have realized in his own self both the Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa aspects of the Reality. The verses of the three poets mentioned above, give us the crude form of the cult which finds its subtle metaphysics in the writings of the Gosvamīs of Brndavana. The amorous pictures of Kṛṣṇa's sensuous relationship with Rādhā as depicted in the late sixteenth-century Sanskrit Kavyas and Champus, have close parallels in the poems of Jayadeva and Chaṇḍidāsa. It is interesting to note that the poems of these two poets together with those of Vidyāpati used to inspire Chaitanya to a considerable extent.

III

In the field of art, architecture and numismatics, as in that of religion and literature, we notice certain developments which may be called typical, if not regional. Almost all the buildings of the thirteenth century have disappeared so that it is difficult to have an idea about the phase of transition from the early Hindu or Buddhist art traditions to the school of architecture brought into existence by the foundation of Muslim rule. The mosque of Žafar Khan Ghazi at Triveni and the mosque of Chhoṭa Pāṇḍuā constructed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century represent the multi-domed, rectangular type showing the application of such technical methods as the true arch based on voussoirs and the corbelled pendentive used as a means to achieving the phase of transition from the square

1. For the interior view of the mosque of Pāṇḍuā, see J.A.S.B. 1870, xxxix, pt. I, pls. viii and ix. P. Brown's view that the Pāṇḍuā mosque was the model for the Adina mosque is based on the assumption that the former has a quadrangular plan. Op. cit. p. 36. The courtyard of the Adina mosque is enclosed on three sides by arcaded cloisters and its sanctuary has a prominent central nave and well-designed side wings. But the Chhoṭa Pāṇḍuā mosque totally lacks in these features. Its plan is similar to that of the mosque of Žafar Khan Ghazi.
to the circle. It was this multi-domed, rectangular type of mosque and the corbelled pendentive method which persisted throughout the whole pre-Mughal period. The rarity of squinch in Bengal and its absence in Gujrāt are quite surprising, if we bear in mind that scientific and perfect constructional methods like squinch were almost uniformly adopted in North India, Iran and other Muslim countries. The workmen of Bengal and Gujrāt were so much acquainted with the Indian trabeate system that they could hardly realize the technical significance of the squinch. Perhaps a similar state of mind is exemplified by the presence of the Indianized squinch in Ilutmish’s tomb, constructed according to the process of overlapping courses so familiar to the Indian architect. The problem of adjustment between the square shape of the compartment and the circular base of the dome was faced by the masons of Bengal who tried to solve it in the Eklākhī mausoleum at Paṇḍua (early 15th century) by resorting to an ingenious device, namely, that of filling up the core from floor to ceiling with bricks in order to change the interior of this square building into an octagon. The architects of Gujrāt overcame the difficulty involved in the phase of transition by converting the square room into an octagon with the help of additional pillars placed across the corners. This is what we notice in the central room of the tomb of Shaikh Ahmed Khatīr at Sārkhej in Gujrāt and all the domes of the adjoining buildings are based on the trabeate system involving the horizontal principle. These devices, when compared with the perfect method of squinch so widely used in the different parts of the Muslim world, look quite antiquated. The solitary use of the squinch is found in the Gumti Gate at gauḍ (early 16th century) in which one can perhaps detect the hand of an architect inherently acquainted with a tradition almost foreign to the builders of Pre-Mughal Bengal.

1. The tomb of Darya Khān at Sārkhej in Gujrāt containing squinches has been placed by P. Brown in pre-Mughal period. *Ibid.* p. 54. But the pure arcuate system and the use of brick in place of grey granite stone, which characterize the building, indicate that it was constructed in the Mughal period.
The presence of the ladies' gallery and the general division of the sanctuary into a central nave and side transepts noticed in the mosque architecture of Eastern India and Western India, point perhaps to a cultural tie connecting Bengal with Jaunpur and Gujrat. This inter-relationship becomes almost clear when we compare the sanctuary of the Adina mosque with those of the Jami' mosque of Ahmedabad and the fifteenth century mosques of Jaunpur. The western cloister of each of these buildings has an imposing nave rising above the skyline of the facade of the transept on either side and forming the central point in the design of the whole sanctuary. The soaring height of the nave and the pyramidal elevation of the western cloister noticed particularly in the Jami' mosque of Ahmedabad, seem to have been suggested by such West Indian structures as the eleventh century temple of Gopaleshvara at Sinar possessing a high mandapa and a staged facade.1 Percy Brown has shown that the structural design of the three-storied nave of the Jami' mosques at Ahmedabad and Champanir betrays a considerable amount of temple influence.2 The architects of Bengal and Jaunpur who were also striving after the effect of height in the nave of Adina and Jaunpur mosques, adopted different roofing systems. Though the general features of the Adina mosque are believed to have been derived from al-Walid's mosque at Damascus,3 the sanctuaries of the two structures show significant constructional difference. While the middle part of the sanctuary of al-Walid's mosque has a gable roof surmounted by a slightly raised dome,4 the central nave in the Adina mosque is roofed over by a vault which, though completely fallen, can perhaps be con-

1. Cf: woodcut No. 344 on p. 145 of Fergusson's History of India and Eastern Architecture, II, showing the cross-section of Gopaleshvara temple, with woodcut Nos. 387, 389 and 390 on pp. 231-33, explaining the elevation of Ahmedabad mosques.
jecturally restored from the one covering the nave of the old Malda mosque.¹ The side wings of the Adina mosque which have flat roofs spanned by a large number of small domes, differ from those of al-Walid's mosque showing the gable roofing system. Although it is very difficult to locate the source of the vault of the Adina mosque, it may be pointed out here that the type of medieval Persian mosque with a vault in the middle of each of its four cloisters, has inspired the workmen of Bengal to adopt the system.² The height and dignity of the nave of the Jaunpūr mosques have been emphasised by a huge arched pylon behind which rises the dome³ which is internally a two-staged structure showing squinches in the lower stage and brackets in the upper one. The vaulted transepts⁴ in the Jāmī' mosque of Jaunpūr (1470 A.D.) remind us of the vaulted nave of the Adina mosque. The secluded ladies' gallery generally in the form of a screened upper compartment occupying the north-western corner of the sanctuary, is a striking feature of the mosque architecture of Eastern and Western India. Its location and shape are almost uniform in the mosques of Bengal, Jaunpūr and Gujrāt, except that it is located in the Lal Darwāzah mosque in a central place adjacent to the nave and that the Aṭalā mosque and the Jāmī' mosque of Jaunpūr have each two such compartments, one at the end of either transept. The predominance of ladies' gallery in East Indian and West Indian mosques and the total absence of this particular element in the mosques of the countries outside India perhaps point to its Indian origin to be traced in temple architecture containing very often anterooms and two-storyed compartments supported by squat pillars, bracket capitals and horizontal architraves.

2. For this suggestion, I am indebted to Dr. M. S. Islam of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, Dacca University.
3. Brown: *op. cit.* pl. XXX, pl. XXXI, Fig 2 and pl. XXXII.
The buildings of Bengal possess an inherent monotony caused by the horizontal effect of the skyline hardly relieved by any sort of vertical elongation. If we exclude the facade of the sanctuary of the Adina mosque, other structures have a continuous skyline and the shoulderless domes roofing them have a little imposing effect. The mosques of pre-Mughal Bengal present, in this respect, marked contrast to those of Jaunpūr and Gujrāt whose massive pylons or slender but proportionately elongated minarets counter the horizontal effect by breaking the skyline.

But the two detached minarets which we come across in Bengal are typical and point perhaps to a distant source of inspiration to be located outside the sub-continent. The presence of a colossal monument like the Qūb Minār in Old Delhi suggests the idea that the construction of the Minār of Chhoa Pāṇḍūā has been influenced by the former.¹ Structurally, however, the two minārs differ from each other. With its unbroken tapering facade which has no recess, but a projecting balcony dividing each story, the Qūb minār comes closer to the minār of Jar Kurghan in Turkestan having similar features.² But each of the five stories of the minār of Chhoa Pāṇḍūā diminishing in height and diameter, as it goes up, contains sharp recess at the upper end which serves the purpose of a balcony.³ The receding elevation of this structure looks like a copy of the recently discovered minār of Jam in Afghanistān which shows recess at the end of each stage.⁴ Other features which the former

1. This view has been accepted by O’ Malley: Bengal District Gazeteers, Hooghly, p. 298 and P. Brown: op. cit. p. 37. For the measurement, see Cunningham: A.S.I. xv, p. 126; Dani: Muslim Architecture, p. 46.
2. The minār of Jar Kurghan was originally built in the eleventh or tenth century a.d. A. B. M. Habibullah: op. cit. p. 359.
4. For details and illustrations, see Andre Marieq and Gaston Wiet: Le Minaret de Djam; A. B. M. Habibullah: op. cit. pp. 359-60
possesses in common with the minārs of Jam and Quṭb Delhi, are a circular plan and an internal staircase which spirals its way from the base to the top, except that the base of the tower of Jam has an octagonal shape. Its disproportionate width in relation to height is explained by the thicker base with which the workmen started in order to have a recessed balcony at the top of each stage. The minār of Chhoṭa Paṇḍuā which is thus distinguished from other similar structures in India including the Quṭb Minār, indicates contact between the fourteenth-century Bengal and contemporary Afghanistan established through such early Turkish adventurers as Ŭafar Khān Ghīṣlī and Ŭafī'ūd-dīn under whose direction the tower is believed to have been constructed. The Firozah minār of Gauḍ built towards the end of the fifteenth century exhibits several sections, upper ones separated from each other by a shallow recess which seems to have been influenced by its predecessor at Chhoṭa Paṇḍuā.

The buildings of pre-Mughal Bengal may be conveniently classed into two broad divisions according to secular or religious purpose they are intended to serve. While the secular variety is illustrated by such examples as citadel-gates, baths and city-walls some of which are found at Gauḍ and Paṇḍuā, religious structures include mosques and tombs admitting of classification in accordance with their shape and singularity or multiplicity of domes they possess. Brick constitutes the chief building material throughout the whole period and stone, besides being used as pillars and door-jambs, covers the surface and pls. I and IV. I have discussed the point in a paper: “Notes on Two Indo-Muslim Monuments” (to be published in Dr. Shahidullah Presentation Volume.)

of walls, particularly of the buildings belonging to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. A bewildering profusion of terra-cotta decoration adds charm and variegation to wall surface in general and this is imitated also on stone facing. The influence of Bengal architecture is visible on the facade of the Dimāpur gateway and in the curvature of cornice, the shape of pillars and the disposition of doors of such temples as represented by those at Viṣṇupur and Kāntanagar.

Bengal developed certain varieties of writing known as Organ Pipe and Lance type of the Ṭughrā style exhibited by some of the inscriptions preserved in the Dacca Museum. It is the Organ Pipe type which seems to have influenced lettering on a few of the Jaunpur coins.

The coinage of Bengal adheres to the ancient Indian standard of 175 grains showing very little fluctuation in ratio between the purity of metal and the amount of alloy which, combined with the crude execution of the silver issues of the period, points perhaps to an unfluctuating state of economy and to a regular demand for metallic currency felt in this coastal region dominated by overseas trade. The few gold coins which seem to have been struck in commemoration of significant political and administrative events,\(^1\) conform to the 172.8-grains

1. A gold piece of Ilyas Shāh containing the title "Sikandar-us-thānī" or "Alexander the second", (no. 23a in Wright: Catalogue, II, pt. II) seems to have been issued on the occasion of the assumption of that title by the sultan. Jalal-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh appears to have signalized the occupation of a part of Jaunpur by striking a gold coin (no. 81 in Lane-Poole's Catalogue) exhibiting Ṭughrā lettering on both sides. The gold coin of Shams-ud-dīn Muẓaffar dated in 896 A.H. (no. 119 in Hakim Habibur Rahman Collection) which is the first regnal year of that ruler, was struck perhaps to celebrate his accession to the throne. A similar coin of Ḥusain Shāh (no. 167 in Wright's Catalogue, II and no. 108 in Lane-Poole's Catalogue) gains significance from its abnormal weight of 176.4 grains. Another gold
standard. We have hardly any information about the rate of exchange between gold and silver, except that it was 1:10 in medieval Muslim India.1

The coins of the early sultans including those of ‘Iwaḍ Khaliṣ contain the name and regal titles of the ruling sovereign, the name of the Khalifah or such titles of the ruler as might indicate his association with the Khalifah, the kalimah and date. Mention of month in addition to date on some of the coins of ‘Iwaḍ is a unique feature2 not to be found in the numismatics of medieval Muslim world. The independent sultans accepted most of the numismatic features mentioned above excluding the name of the Khalifah replaced by expressions like “the Right Hand of the Khalifah” and “the Helper of the Commander of the Faithful.” Some rulers of the fifteenth century assumed the title of “the Khalifah of God”, often followed by the qualifying phrase, “by proof and evidence.”3 The practice of inscribing the mint-name was started from the time of sultan Rādiyāḥ one of whose coins dated in 634/1236, mentions Lakhnauti.4

In instituting the coinage of Bengal, Ghiyāṣ-ud-dīn ‘Iwaḍ appears to have been influenced by the Ghazna coins of the


3. A. Karim: Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal, p. 166 ff.

Ghūride rulers, whose phraseology he accepted with slight modifications. Titles like "the Helper of the Commander of the Faithful", "the Right Hand of the Khalifah", "Alexander of the age", and "Alexander the second" appearing on some Bengal coins, indicate the attitude of Bengal rulers towards Delhi.

Bengal seems to have contributed to the stabilization of the standard of initial Delhi coins, for a significant type of the silver issues of Iltutmish ranging in dates from 622/1225 to 624/1227, imitates the coins of Iwaḍ in weight, design and regal titles. Particular varieties of Bengal coins served as models for the coinage of the countries like Jaunpūr, Tippera, Assam, Kāmrūpa and Arakan. Some of the gold coins of ʻIbrāhīm, Maḥmūd and Ḥusain of Jaunpūr, bear close resemblance in lettering to the coins of Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad of Bengal. The features like the grotesque lion or the double square, the rayed or scalloped circle, Bengali letters, expressions indicating the faith of the ruler and the debased form of the 172.8-grains standard which characterize the monetary system of the medieval kingdom of Tippera, are perhaps adaptations from Bengal issues. It will be discussed in the next chapter that Koch and Ahom coins had as their model particular types of Bengal coins. Some of the Arakan and Jayantiya silver issues also betray Bengal influence. In absorbing these numismatic features, the neighbouring countries were perhaps imitating the superior culture of medieval Bengal which had a stable government.

1. Discussed in the paper: "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours"... op. cit.
2. Ibid.
5. Lane-Poole: op. cit. nos. 81 and 83.
6. The whole question has been thoroughly discussed in the paper, "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours"... op. cit.
Muslim rule presents a significant contrast with the preceding Sena rule in respect of economic conditions in Bengal. In the Sena period, external trade appears to have come to an end and a sort of rural economy characterized the life of the people. This decline of maritime commerce was probably linked up with the break-down of Roman civilization and the Mediterranean Commonwealth the Romans had built up. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the commercial activities of the Italian cities and of Scandinavia led to the economic awakening of Europe which made her turn to herself with the inevitable result that her earlier maritime contacts with the coastal regions of India were no longer renewed. Bengal failed to get any benefit from this urban revival of the West. It is significant to note that Minhaj noticed circulation of conch-shells and a total absence of metallic currency in the mid-thirteenth century Bengal. In the initial period of Muslim rule, coins were circulated not only as a symbol of the ruler’s sovereignty, but perhaps as a medium of exchange as well. With the foundation of independent Sultanate, important ports like Sātgan, Sonargāon and Chittagong began to come into existence. These coupled with the foundation of a considerable number of mint-towns indicate

4. Numismatic sources give us the names of Lakhnauti, Sonārgāon, Ghīyāshpūr, Fīrūzābd, Shahr-i-Nau, Mu‘azzamābd, Chāwalistān (?) ʿurf Kamrū, Jannatabād, Chātgāon, Fatḥābd, Muḥammadābd, Suvarṇagrama (identified with Sonārgāon), Chāṭigrama (identified with Chātgāon), Puṇḍinagara (tentatively identified with Paṇḍūr or Fīrūzābd), Rotaṣpūr, Maḥmūdābd, Barbakābd, Muẓaffarābd, Ḥusainābd, Chandrabād (?), Nuṣratābd, Khālfatābd, etc. In addition to relevant Catalogues of coins, consult E. Thomas: “On the Initial Coinage of Bengal,” J.A.S.B. 1867, I ff; Mir Jahan: “Mint-towns of Medieval Bengal,” P. P. H. C. 1953, 224 ff; A. Karim:
the revival of Bengal's maritime commerce and the consequent establishment of her connection with the different parts of the world. Thus Muslim rule was responsible for bringing Bengal back from the rural to urban phase of civilization based on the introduction of money economy.

V

Socio-political trends in the life of Bengal during the earlier part of Muslim rule continued in Ḫusain Shāhī period which witnessed also the culmination of some of the historical processes long at work. The vaiṣṇava movement, the growth of Nava Nyāya, the final codification of Hindu socio-religious laws by Raghunandana, the formation of the local cults of Dharma, Manasī and Satyapīr and composition of pāncāli poems on some of them—all taking place in the period in question—seem to be the results of a long process of change and transformation. Ḫusain Shāhī rule showed also the signs of certain new forces which would soon influence not only the life of Bengal, but also that of the Indian sub-continent.

Of the new forces at work, the coming of the Portuguese was a matter of considerable importance. As a result of the Papal sanction, the king of Portugal had taken the title of "Lord of the Navigation, Conquests and Trade of Aethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India" and the Portuguese felt fully justified in monopolizing the trade and commerce of the East. The capture of Goa in 1510 A.D. by Affonso de Albuquerque from Bijapur Sultānate with the help of a governor and general of the kingdom of Vijayanagar, had the effect of stabilizing Portuguese influence over the western coast of India.

Corpus, 157 ff.; Infra; Ch. III, section on names of provinces.
Centuries of Muslim rule in Spain, Turkish and Arab influence over the Mediterranean region and the control exercised by the Arab merchants over the Eastern trade had embittered the feelings of Portugal to such an extent that her children would now vindicate her supremacy over the Moor. The expansion of political and commercial power and the spread of Christianity were the basic features of Portuguese policy in India often backed by an intense hatred of the Muslims and occasional piratical activities. While Barbosa does not conceal his feeling of disrespect to the Prophet, de Barros can hardly “acknowledge the existence of a Muslim civilisation in India.” Castanheda who gives accounts of the Portuguese fighting against the Moor, frequently slips into the vision of “the priests with the cross in their hands encouraging the soldiers.” If commerce was their main concern, Bengal could hardly disappoint them. Vasco da Gama has recorded in his notes the incredibly high price of Bengal cloth selling at Calicut. Albuquerque wrote a letter to his king dwelling upon the prospect of trade in Bengal. Portuguese activities in the Bay of Bengal and at Chittagong and Gaur in the early sixteenth century are thus quite intelligible.

The advent of the Mughal in India marked the beginning of the empire-building movement which would reach its climax in Akbar’s time. Husain Shahi Bengal had to feel the pressure of Mughal imperialism and also of the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy.

Bengal under Husain Shahi rule thus showed a number of distinct elements constituting the complex pattern of her

society, culture and politics which call for careful study. Discussions on the socio-religious and cultural conditions are meant to cover only the Bengali-speaking area and have hardly any bearing on the regions beyond Bhāgalpur and Rājmahal which occasionally came within the political boundary of Bengal and which were very often a bone of contention between Bengal and Delhi or Jaunpūr kingdom. The delimitation of the scope of this study has been influenced not merely by the fluctuating nature of western frontier of the country, but by the linguistic and cultural peculiarities which distinguish her from the rest of India.
CHAPTER II

HUSAIN SHAHI DYNASTY
(1494-1538)

The Husain Shahi dynasty which ruled over Bengal for about half a century, did not fail to shed its lustre on the pages of the history of Bengal, already darkened by the misdeeds of Muhammad Shah, the last of the Habsi rulers. The Habsi rule, in general, was far from congenial for the welfare of the country, for it had fallen into a state of anarchy and disorder as a result of constant political murders, frequent changes of rulers and misrule and tyranny. The Husain Shahis who restored peace and prosperity to the country by establishing a stable government and extending its boundaries on all frontiers, seem to have added a significant chapter to the history of Bengal. Moreover, certain social movements also characterized this period. It is necessary here to study the political history of this illustrious dynasty with a special reference to its founder, 'Alm'-ud-din Husain Shahi to whom Bengal was indebted for the various advantages he conferred on her people.

The fragments of biography and legendary stories relating to the career of Husain clearly indicate that he came in contact
with Bengali society quite early in life. How Husain became associated with the Habshī government is not clearly known. Both Salim and Firīštah maintain that he was holding the office of wazīr under Shams-ud-din Muṣaffar Shāh. According to Niẓām-ud-dīn, he was a sipāḥī or ordinary soldier of Muṣaffar Shāh. But this view does not appear to be reasonable. The nobility and the army chiefs could hardly select a man of such an inferior status as their ruler. It is, therefore, quite reasonable to assume that he was holding a position of influence and responsibility under the last Habshī sultan. Salīm holds that he was not only the wazīr, but also the manager of the affairs of the government of Muṣaffar Shāh. The account left by Firīštah shows how powerful he had become under Muṣaffar. Niẓām-ud-dīn’s view may be partly correct, if we think that Husain was, in the beginning of his career, an ordinary soldier of Muṣaffar Shāh from which humble position he gradually rose to the rank of a minister. But no information is available to corroborate this conjecture. If the Riyāḍ is to be relied upon, Husain was directly made the minister of the sultan at the instance of the qāḍī of Rāgh whose daughter he had married.

It may not be out of place to notice here what Husain did as the minister of Muṣaffar Shāh. He had intelligence and sagacity to fulfil the ambition which seems to have taken possession of his mind. The measures which he adopted to achieve his ends were surely detrimental to his royal patron. Husain reduced the pay of the soldiers and collected revenues quite extortionately. It may be quite reasonably inferred here that these unpopular actions were the result of a pre-conceived plan of the minister who wanted to undermine the royal power with

5. Salim: op. cit. p. 132; appendix B.
a view to gaining ascendancy over Musaffar Shah who had neither capacity nor determination to take any independent action which the situation demanded. The shrewd minister went, on several occasions, to the extent of telling the people that Musaffar was a stingy, rude and avaricious ruler whom he was constantly trying to correct. He was probably preparing the field for his own ascendancy and digging the grave of his master simultaneously. The shrewd and calculated policy of Husain had its expected results. It created among the principal nobles and military chiefs, a violent opposition to the ruling authority which finally resulted in a sanguinary civil war between the royalists and the dissatisfied nobles. The minister who was waiting for this opportunity cautiously sided with the nobles. Assuming the leadership of the party, he laid siege to the fort of Gauḍ within the walls of which Musaffar Shah with a number of soldiers and supporters had confined himself. The part played by Husain at this critical juncture appears to have been in complete conformity with his ambitious policy.

There is a difference of opinion among the chroniclers with regard to the death of Musaffar. According to the Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Husain, winning over the commandant of the household troops to his side, entered one night into the seraglio of the sultan and killed him secretly. This view is corroborated not only by Joao de Barros, but also by another writer, Hajji Muhammad Qandahari whose work has been referred to by Firishtah. Firishtah does not accept Qandahari’s view, nor does Salim rely on the Tabaqat. According to them, the unfortunate sultan was killed on the battlefield. Salim and Firishtah do not mention the source of their information. It seems that Salim has entirely relied on Firishtah whose account he has reproduced almost

in extenso. But one can hardly accept their statement about Muṣaffar's death in preference to Nizām-ud-dīn's view which, as we have already seen, finds support in other sources earlier than Firīšṭāh. Nizām-ud-dīn's view appears to be acceptable in view of the fact that it reveals consistency in Ḥusain's attitude to Muṣaffar.

Thus it seems fairly certain that Ḥusain contributed much to the tragic end of the life of Muṣaffar with whom the inglorious Ḥabshī regime came to a final end. This incident opened a bright chapter in the history of medieval Bengal to which the infamous activities connected with the wazārat of Ḥusain served as an unhappy prelude. The assassination of Muṣaffar did not mean the automatic accession of Ḥusain to the throne of Gaḍṭ. The latter was elected sultān by the leading nobles who had formally met in a council immediately after the death of Muṣaffar. Ḥusain, in his turn, expressed his gratitude to these people promising them all the unhidden wealth to be found in the city. This was followed by the pillage of the city of Gaḍṭ, which situation was, of course, promptly checked by Ḥusain before it could go beyond control. The sultān started his reign by disbanding the faithless paiks and insolent Abyssinians, transferring the capital from Gaḍṭ to Ekdāla, appointing efficient district officers and getting rid of all disloyal elements.\footnote{Nizām-ud-dīn: op. cit. iii, p. 270; Salīm: op. cit. pp. 130 and 132-133; Firīšṭāh: ii, p. 301; cf. History of Bengal, ii, p. 144.}

It seems that these measures were necessary for the stability of the newly established regime.

The circumstances preceding and following the death of Muṣaffar indicate that an influential circle of nobles was responsible for bringing Ḥusain to power. In the early part of his reign, Bārbak Shah recruited a considerable number of Ḥabshī soldiers and palace-guards who may be compared with the Janīzarī or the Mamlūk retainers on whom the Ottoman and 'Abbāsid rulers wanted to rely for active support. Within
a short period of time, the Abyssinian slaves occupied high positions in the state so that they constituted the most powerful element in the nobility. We may mention in this connection that Fathi Shāh’s drastic attempts at restricting the power and influence of the Ḥabšī soldiers had led to his murder and to the consequent passing away of the Ḥiyās Shāhī dynasty whose place was filled in by the Abyssinian usurpers. It is not difficult to understand that the Ḥabšī element of population had desperately stood by their kinsman Muṣaffar Shāh who was fighting with Ḥusain. Viewed in the light of these circumstances, Ḥusain’s policy of administrative reorganization and the persecution of the Abyssinians becomes intelligible. The total elimination of Ḥabšī soldiers from the administrative machinery must have left a vacuum which the new ruler had to fill in with local elements. Thus the rise of Bengali Hindus to key positions in the state finds a satisfactory explanation.

The Paṇḍūra inscription of Muṣaffar Shāh is dated 17th Ramaḍān, 898 A.H./2nd July, 1493 A.D. and the earliest coins of Ḥusain Shāh are all dated in 899 A.H./1494 A.D. Thus it is fairly established that 1494 A.D. is the first regnal year of Ḥusain Shāh. Muṣaffar seems to have been alive in the early part of that year.

1. History of Bengal, ii, p. 135.
2. Ibid. p. 137.
4. H. N. Wright: Catalogue, ii, pt. ii, pp. 172-76, pl. v (Bengal), nos. 167 and 169; Lane-Poole: op. cit. pp. 44-48 pls. v and vi,
The reign of Ḥusain Shāh witnessed the territorial extension of the kingdom of Bengal on every side as is evident from literary, epigraphic and numismatic sources. Ḥusain’s military exploits as gleaned from these sources may be grouped under five heads: (a) achievements in Bihār, (b) war with Kāmrūpa and Assam, (c) war with Orissa, (d) war with Tippera and (e) occupation of Chittagong.

The Sharqī kingdom of Jaunpur was being swallowed up by the Lūḍī rulers. Completely defeated by Sikandar Lūḍī in 1494 A.D., Ḥusain Shāh, the last ruler of the Sharqī dynasty, was forced to go to Bengal with a view to finding refuge with his Gauḍīya namesake, ‘Ala’-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh. Receiving him with all honour and magnanimity, Ḥusain used to pay proper attention to the Sharqī ruler’s comfort and happiness until the latter died in complete obscurity at his residence at Kahlīson in Bhāgalpur.1 The friendly relation of Ḥusain with the Sharqī kingdom reveals his attitude to the Delhi Sulṭānate. Sikandar Lūḍī promptly reacted to this situation by sending an expedition to Bengal. Ḥusain Shāh sent an army under his son Dāniyal to meet the Delhi troops at Barh. Badāyūnī mentions that the troops of the Lūḍī ruler suffered from the lack of adequate supplies due to the scarcity of food in Bihār in that year. This is probably one of the reasons why Sikandar was willing to conclude a treaty of peace with the sulṭān of Bengal. According to the terms of the treaty, it was decided that both parties should cease to attack each other and that they should not give protection to their mutual enemies. Sikandar appointed governors in Bihār, Tughluqpūr and Sāran.2

nos. 108, 109, 116 and 123; A. W. Botham: Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet Assam, pp. 166,168 and 170; pl. ii, no. 1, pl. iv, no. 5; infra. appendix A.
Thus the Persian sources tell us that the Lûdî sultân occupied almost the whole of the Sharqî kingdom. But epigraphic sources give a different version. The inscriptions found at Sâran and Munghyr⁴ prove that Hûsain Shâh Bengal included the whole of north Bihâr and a part of south Bihâr. The contradictory pieces of information relating to the Bengal ruler’s hold on Bihâr need reconciliation. Hûsain Shâh might have actually occupied these places; but this fact has been either suppressed or ignored by the Persian authorities. Again it is just possible that the places were occupied by Sikandar immediately after the conclusion of peace with Hûsain who extended his kingdom subsequently at the cost of the territories of the former. Thus the treaty did not adversely affect the political position of Hûsain Shâh in Bihâr, nor does he seem to have respected its terms.

A study of the so-called posthumous coins of the last Sharqî ruler, ‘Alî-ud-în Hûsain Shâh, reveals an interesting fact. Although Hûsain had taken shelter at Kahlgson after having lost his territories in 1494 A.D., the dates of some of his coins range between 901 A.H./1495 A.D. and 910 A.H./1504 A.D.⁵ These post-regnal coins have presented a problem to students of history. Following Lane-Poole,⁶ Wright⁴ and Stapleton⁵ consider some of these coins to be posthumous. Stapleton has gone to the extent of suggesting that “These coins were probably issued benami by Hûsain Shâh of Bengal or one of his governors.”⁶ Most of the scholars maintain that Hûsain Shâh Sharqî died in

6. Ibid.
905 A.H./1499 A.D., although there is hardly any clear evidence in favour of such a contention. Qutbân, one of the close associates of the Sharqi ruler, who wrote his Mrgâvat in 909 A.H./1503 A.D., speaks very highly of the kingly virtues of that fallen monarch, who would regain, as the poet believed, his lost royal chhatra or umbrella and simhâsana or throne. Again, the last of the post-reignal coins of the sultan bears the date 910 A.H./1506 A.D. Thus Hūsain Sharqi seems to have lived at least till that year. These post-reignal coins seem to reveal the attitude of the sultan of Bengal not only to the Sharqi sultan, but also to the Delhi Sultânate. Actuated by political interests, the Bengal sultan appears to have allowed the crownless king to issue coins so that the latter might continue to retain his claim to the Jaunpur kingdom. It was probably an attempt on the part of the sultan of Gaud to counteract the growing political influence of the Lūdî rulers in Bihār and the western outskirts of Bengal.

Bengal’s hostility to Kāmrupa was of a traditional nature. ‘Alî’-ud-dîn Hūsain Shâh who followed this tradition quite faithfully, led several expeditions against Kāmrupa. On the coins and inscriptions of the sultan, we find mention of two places, viz., Kāmrupa and Kâmta. The Bahâristân-i-Ghaibî throws sufficient light on the geographical position of these two territories. We are told that Kāmrupa extended from the western bank of the Brahmaputra to the eastern bank of the river Banâs (Manas) and the region lying between this river and the river Karatoya in the west was called Kâmta. Nîlâmvar, the third ruler of

3. Discussed in the paper: “Bengal’s Relations with Her Neighbours...” op. cit.
4. Lakṣmî-Nârayâna was the king of Kâmta and his cousin Parîkṣî-Nârayâna was the ruler of Kâmrupa in Jahângîr’s time. With the help of Lakṣmî-Nârayâna, the Mughals subdued the king of Kâmrupa.
the Khen dynasty seems to have united both of these regions under him by extending his territory from the Barnadi in the east to the Karatoja in the west and establishing his headquarters and residence at Ghoraghat and Kantiadur. In attacking Kamrupa, Husain is said to have been secretly assisted by Nilsamvar’s minister whose son he had brutally murdered. The Muslim attack on Kamtapur, the Khen capital, did not produce any tangible result in its initial stage. The capital was besieged. The siege was a protracted one and the Muslims could ultimately occupy it by certain questionable means. Thus the Khen dynasty was overthrown and Kamrupa and Kama were annexed to the kingdom of Gaug.

On the basis of certain points of similarity between the coinage of the Hsain Shahi rulers and that of the Koch kings of Kamrupa, Stapleton has inferred, “...the fact that Nara Narayan adopted a coin of the Husaini dynasty as a type for his own coinage probably points to his father Bisva Simha having been a tributary of ‘Aliuddin and his successors.” But the contention seems too far-fetched to stand historical criticism. It is true that the resemblance of some of the Koch coins to a type of the Hsain Shahi coins is quite striking. The type of the coins of Husain Shah which was accepted by Nara Narayan as a model, is represented by four specimens dated 900, 909, 912 and 913 A.H. Their weight and size vary from 161.5 to 164.5 grains and from 1.2” to 1.25” respectively. These coins have on each side four lines of inscription enclosed within two solid circles with a circle of dots between. The coin of Nara Narayan which


6—
resembles the Husaini coins referred to, is dated 1477 Shaka, its weight being 157.49 grains. On each side of this coin four lines of inscription are placed in a double circle with a circle of dots between. Although the question of the resemblance of Koch coins to those of Bengal cannot be rejected as entirely groundless, we do not have adequate reason to presume that Vishva Simha had any tributary relationship with Husain Shah. Persian and Assamese sources dealing with the history of the then Kamarupa do not contain any reference to the Koch ruler's subordinate relationship or to his indirect contact with the sultans of Gauḍ. Countries like Assam, Nepal, Tibet and Arakan also imitated the coinage of contemporary Bengal, although no one of them is known to have been a tributary to this country. One of the coins of the Ahom ruler, Sukhenmuns, bearing the date 1465 Shaka/1543 A.D. shows that the Ahom coinage was modeled on a type of coins belonging to the reigns of Nusrat and Ghiyath ud-din Mahmud. The Nepalese king Jaya Mahendra Malla (1566-76 A.D.), seems to have reproduced on his own coinage a small circle in the middle and a circle of dots round the margin from two of the coins of Ghiyath ud-din Mahmud. This type of coin was in circulation also in Tibet. A Jayantia coin


5. Lane-Poole: op. cit. pl. vii, nos. 147 and 149; J.R.A.S. 1908, p. 687, nos. 1 and 2; elaborately discussed in the paper: "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours..." op. cit.

contains three dots on the right of the first line of the obverse with a crescent above which seem to have been taken from a coin of Nuṣrat or from a similar coin belonging to the reign of Ghiyāsh-ud-dīn Maḥmūd. Some of the rulers of the fifteenth-century Arakan used to inscribe the kalima in Persian script on their coins. Thus it is fairly certain that the coinage of Bengal had influence on that of these countries. The coins of the sultans must have found their way into the adjoining territories. When the rulers of the countries co-terminous with Bengal wanted to institute coinage, they seem to have felt tempted to imitate the coins of Bengal which constituted a stable and dominating political force in Eastern India. This seems to explain why the coinage of the Koch rulers of Kamrūpa was modelled on a group of Ḥusain Shāh coins. This tendency towards imitation may be attributed to another historical fact. After the fall of the Khmer dynasty, Ḥusain Shāh and his successors exercised political control over Kamrūpa for a considerable period of time so that the people of that region might have been acquainted with the coins issued by the Muslim rulers. When the successors of Vishva Siṃha consolidated their political power in Kamrūpa, they appear to have issued coins imitating those of their predecessors with a view to getting the minds of the people adjusted to their own rule. This psychology seems to have prompted Muhammad bin Sām, Ilutmīs, Rūn-ud-dīn Firūz I, Raḍiyāh, Muʿīzz-ud-dīn Bahārām, ‘Ala’-ud-dīn Masʿūd and other Muslim rulers to have Nagri script, Sanskrit epithet and even a crude representation of the Hindu goddess Lākṣmī on their respective coins.

1. J.A.S.B. 1895, lxiv, no. 3, pl. xxiv, no. 9; J.A.S.B. 1910, iv, 4, pl. xxiii, no. 9.
2. Ibid., 1910, iv, pl. xxiii, nos. 11 and 13.
4. H. N. Wright: Catalogue, ii, pt. i, pls. i-iii, nos. 2, 12, 25, 31, 41, 52 etc; Botham: op. cit. pp. 72-74, and 76-78 etc.; Botham
The victorious soldiers of Gauḍ proceeded eastwards along the upper Brahmaputra valley. According to the ‘Ālamgīrnāmah, Ḥusain Shāh’s army consisting of infantry and cavalry, won an initial victory over the Assamese. Incapable of withstanding the Bengali forces, the king of Assam retired to the hills leaving the plains below to be occupied by the Muslim soldiers. Leaving his son to bring about the subjugation of that region, Ḥusain Shāh returned to Bengal. When rains set in, the Rājā accompanied by his followers, descended from the hills, blocked the roads, surrounded the Muslims and captured them to the last man. We find an exact reproduction of this description in the Fathiyah-i-‘ibriyah and the Riyāḍ-us-Salāṭīn.

The Ahom Burāṇjī gives more details about this expedition. The Muslim army consisting of infantry, cavalry and boats attacked Assam under the command of ‘Mit Malik’ and ‘Baḍa Wazir’. Following the course of the Brahmaputra, it came upto Darrang district and arrived very soon at the banks of the Burai river. It was resisted by the army of the Ahom Rājā at Temeni where the Bengali soldiers appear to have won an initial victory over their opponents. Baḍa Wazir, the commander of the Muslim army, was ultimately defeated and had to retreat. The Ahom ruler strengthened his defences with a view to preventing any further Muslim attacks. Mit Malik and Baḍa Wazir once again attacked the Ahom outpost at Singri where they were completely discomfitted. A good number

2. Bodleian ms. or. 589, fol. 35b; Eng. tran. by Blochmann: J.A.S.B. 1872, p. 79.
of Bengali soldiers including Mit Malik was killed in the battle and Baṣa Waṣir managed to escape.¹

Gait is not willing to ascribe this incident to the reign of Ḫusain Shāh, for he thinks that it took place in 1527 A.D.² But this date is mentioned nowhere in the original Buraṇji and is supplied by its translator. That this event is connected with the reign of Ḫusain seems fairly well-established. The name of Ḫusain appears as Khuphang of Bengal in the Purāṇi Āsām Buraṇji,³ in connection with the incident mentioned above. The Rājamālā, while narrating Ḫusain's war with Tippera, incidentally refers to his Assam affairs. After suffering a defeat at the hands of the Rāja of Tippera, Ḫusain is said to have exclaimed, "The Assamese and the Koch people inflicted injury on me in the battle and the soldiers of Tipperah also insulted me."⁴ These facts taken together with the information supplied by the Persian sources cited by us, leave no room for doubt about Ḫusain's war and subsequent defeat in Assam. Thus the Bengal sultan's Assam expedition ended in complete failure which does not appear to have affected his hold on Kāmrūpa. Nuṣrat seems to have utilized Hajo as a base of operations against the Ahoms.

The dates of Ḫusain Shāh's expeditions against Kāmrūpa and Assam have not been properly ascertained. Dāniyāl who was the first governor of Kāmrūpa and Assam⁵ could not join his new post in Assam before 1498 A.D., for he was in Munghyr

5. According to the Āsām Buraṇji, reproduced in Prinsep's Useful Tables, Dulāl Ghāzi or Dāniyāl was succeeded by two other governors named Musundar Ghāzi and sultan Ghiyāth-ud-din respectively; J.A.S.B. 1872, p. 335. But this account is not found in the Ahom Buraṇji edited and translated by G. C. Barua.
at least till that year. Again the Malda inscription of Ḥusain Shāh which is dated 907 A.H./1502 A.D. records the victory of the sultan over Kāmrūpa and Kāmta.1 Due to these reasons, some scholars are in favour of placing the conquest of Kāmrūpa and Kāmta between 1498 and 1502 A.D.2 But this view seems to be based on a superficial consideration of facts. That Dānyāl was in Munghyr in 1498 A.D. is confirmed beyond doubt by the Munghyr inscription dated 904 A.H./1497-98 A.D. in which year he contracted a vault over the shrine of Pir Nafah.3 But we have hardly any reason to think that the Kāmrūpa expedition started in 1498 A.D. Several Ḥusain Shāh coins recording “the conquest of Kāmtah and Orissa and Jājnagar” are dated 899 A.H./1493 A.D., 910/1504, 915/1509, 919/1513, 921/1515, 922/1516, and 924/1518.4

Thus we find that the earliest and the latest coins recording the conquest of Kāmrūpa, Kāmta and Orissa are dated 1494 A.D. and 1518 A.D. respectively. Apparently Ḥusain Shāh led expeditions against these countries from 1494 to 1518 A.D. But an unqualified acceptance of this suggestion is not possible due to certain obvious reasons. That the expedition started in 1494 A.D., seems fairly well-established, for the legend relating

It is absent also in other versions of the Burānji. Due to these reasons, the present writer is unwilling to attach any undue importance to this information.

4. Lane-Poole: op. cit. p. 47, pl. 6, no. 122; H. N. Wright: Catalogue, ii, p. 173, pl. v, no. 173 (Bengal); Botham: op. cit. pp. 169-171; N. K. Bhattasali: Hakim Habibur Rahman Collection of Coins, p. 24, pl. II, no. 120.
to the conquest of Kāmrūpa and Kāmta appears for the first


2. The Risālat-ush-shuhadā, text in J. A. S. B. 1874, pp. 235 and

3. History of Bengal, ii, p. 10.

But what is the date of the conclusion of Husain's Kāmrūpa war? Traditions give 1498 A.D. as the year of the fall of Kāmtapur, the capital of Nīlāmvar. This date is accepted by the scholars of our time. This date may also appear to be satisfactory to those who are in favour of connecting Dānyāl with the affairs of Kāmrūpa and Assam. It seems that Dānyāl joined his post of governorship in Kāmrūpa in 1498 A.D., i.e. five or six years after the Kāmrūpa expedition had started. He might have gone to Kāmrūpa in 1498 A.D. even after having completed the erection of the vault at Munghyr in the same year. Thus the Kāmrūpa expedition of Husain Shāh seems to have taken place between 1494 and 1498 A.D. and not between 1498 and 1502 A.D., as certain scholars would have us believe. A gold coin dated 919 A.H./1513 A.D. records "the conquest of Kāmrū and Kāmtah and Orissa and Jāṅnagar". Since gold coins of the independent rulers of Bengal are quite few in number, (and their use was also quite rare), it may be inferred here that this gold coin was issued as a souvenir to commemorate the achievement of the sultān when the conquest of Kāmrūpa and a part of Orissa was already a fait accompli. This also explains why the legend relating to the conquest of these countries appears repeatedly on the coins dated 910, 915, 919, 921, 922 and 924 A.H. already referred to by us. The Maldah inscription dated 907 A.H./1502 A.D. and the Sylhet inscription dated 918 A.H./1512 A.D. refer to the conquest of Kāmrūpa only as an incident of the past.

The traditions show that Kāmtapur was occupied by the Muslims in 1498 A.D. It is, therefore, quite likely that Husain

2. Ibid. pp. 41 and 88; Gunabhiram Baruā: Āsām Burağji, p. 49.
4. Lane-Poole: op. cit. p. 47, pl. vi, no. 122.
attacked Assam immediately after the fall of Kāmtapur. Kāmrūpa was used as a stepping stone to Assam because of the geographical contiguity of the two countries. Husain Shāh could conceive of the bold project of attacking the upper Brahmaputra valley only after having subjugated the lower valley. The Muslim occupation of Assam narrated in Persian sources did not last for even one year, for the Muslims are said to have been completely defeated in the rainy season that followed the expedition. This defeat seems to have taken place in the rainy season of 1499 A.D.

There was a state of war between Bengal and Orissa. Barbosa, the Portuguese traveller, who visited Bengal in the beginning of the sixteenth century, states that Orissa was for sometime at war with the kingdom of 'Bengala.' Salīm says, "and subduing the rāyas of the surrounding region and conquering (countries) upto Orissa, he (Husain) imposed tribute on them." Buchanan's manuscript history gives to Husain the credit of conquering Orissa. These statements find at least a partial support in the contemporary Bengali literature which has incidentally referred to the Orissa affairs of Husain Shāh. According to Brāndāvanadās, in course of his war with Orissa, Husain Shāh destroyed a number of Hindu temples. After his renunciation, when Shri-

1. The Book of Duarte Barbosa, vol. II, p. 134. Barbosa, further observes that the people of south-west Bengal were under the rule of Vijayanagar (op. cit. p. 135). This statement does not seem to have any historical foundation whatsoever. Had Barbosa maintained the same view in connection with the boundary between Orissa and Vijayanagar, it should have deserved some consideration, for military hostilities were going on between these two countries from time to time. R. D. Banerjee: History of Orissa, vol. i, pp. 323-26. There was no war between Bengal and Vijayanagar and the two countries were not contiguous either. It is quite probable that Barbosa has confused Orissa with Vijayanagar.


chaitanya was proceeding from Navadvipa to Puri, Rāmchandra Khān, who was probably a frontier officer of Ḫusain Shāh, informed him of the frontier hostilities then in progress between Ḫusain and the king of Orissa, Pratāp Rudra Deva, so that he had to depend on the Khān’s help to cross the Ganges at Chhatrabhog. While returning to Bengal after passing a number of years in other countries, Chaitanya was requested to wait by a frontier officer of Orissa until a truce was concluded with the Muslim king. The author of the Chaitanya-charitāmṛta has stated at another place that Sanātan, one of the officers of Ḫusain Shāh once refused to accompany him on his expeditions against Orissa, lest the sulṭān should kill the Udiyās and destroy the deities of Utkal. According to the Mādla Pañji, ‘surathāna’ Ḫusain Shāh attacked Puri in 1509 A.D. and destroyed a number of temples. Pratāp Rudra who was absent from his kingdom, came back and compelled the Muslims to fall back on their fortress at Mandaran which was also besieged by the

1. Brāndvanadās: op. cit. antya, ii, 316: “My lord, now that this is a dangerous time, thoroughfare between the two countries has been stopped. The rulers have planted tridents at various places with a view to impaling the travellers that might be found by the spies. I am in charge of the affairs of this place. If they can catch hold of me, I shall face danger. If you are willing to go under these circumstances, I will carry out whatever order you may give me.” Also quoted in I.H.Q. op. cit. p. 62, f.n. 19.

2. Kṛṣṇadās Kaviṛaj: op. cit. mādhyā, xvi, p. 179. Addressing Chaitanya the officer said: “The drunkard Muslim king possesses the land ahead. No body can walk in the road out of fear for him. The king possesses the whole tract of land upto Pichhaldas, and because of fear for him, no one can cross the river. Wait a few days until we can conclude treaty with him. Then we shall easily send you by boat.” (f.n. 1 and 2, tran. by the author from the original.) See also I.H.Q. op. cit. p. 62, f.n. 20, where the relevant Bengali text has been quoted. Almost a similar account is found in the 9th act of the dramma, Chaitanya-chandrodaya: quoted by S. Mukhopadhyay, op. cit. pp. 200-201.

king of Orissa. Because of the treachery of one of his Hindu officers named Govinda Vidyadhara, he had to withdraw to his own country. Thus the Madhâ Pañji corroborates the account given by the Vaisnava literature.

The sources cited above give us an unconnected account of Ḫusain’s war with Orissa and clearly show that the hostility between the two countries was of a chronic nature. They do not help us in forming a definite idea about the ultimate results of this long-drawn conflict. The Sylhet inscription of Ḫusain Shâh dated 918 A.H. /1512 A.D. which throws some light on this event reads as follows: “This building (has been erected by) Rukn Khan, the conqueror of Hašht Gâmbhâryân, who being Wazir and General for many months at the time of the conquest of Kâmrû, Kāmtâ, Jâznagar and Urîshâ, served in the army in several places in the train of the King. (Written) in the year 918.” The expression ‘the conquest of Kâmrû, Kâmtah, Jâznagar and Orissa’ which appears on Ḫusain Shâh coins dated variously, is also found in this inscription. It has been proved beyond doubt that Kâmrûpa was occupied by Ḫusain Shâh. Considering that Orissa was under Pratâpa Rudra Deva, a powerful ruler, should we think that the country could not be conquered by Ḫusain Shâh? Then why did the sultan style himself so frequently as the conqueror of Jâznagar and Orissa? Was it an empty boast on the part of a powerful ruler like Ḫusain Shâh? At the present stage of our knowledge, these queries cannot be satisfactorily answered. But it seems that Ḫusain could attain at least a temporary success in his Orissan expeditions. The

2. J.A.S.B. 1922, pl. IX, p. 413. Only the relevant portion of the inscription has been quoted here. The remaining portion refers to the first conquest of ārâșh Śrîhat by Sikandar Khân Ghâzi in the reign of sultan Firûz Shâh in 703 A.H.
coins and inscriptions of the sultan dub him as the conqueror of Orissa and this is supported by the manuscript history of Bengal found by Buchanan Hamilton at Pāndaūra.1 Bengali sources also depict Husain as breaking temples and deities in Orissa.2 All these evidences seem to indicate that Husain occupied a part of Orissa at least temporarily. This contention is borne out by the Kāvāli plate inscription of Pratapā Rudra Deva dated 1432 Shaka/1510-11 A.D., according to which the Orissa ruler assumed the title of Pañcha-Gauḍ-adhināyaka or the Overlord of the Five Guadas, after having recovered his lost territory from the Muslim ruler.3

We have already noticed that the coins which refer to the conquest of Kāmrūpa, also mention the conquest of Orissa and that the earliest of these coins is dated 1494 A.D. and the latest one, 1518 A.D. It is, therefore, numismatically established that the Orissa expedition started simultaneously with Kāmrūpa expedition in 1494 A.D. and continued till the year 1518 A.D.4 Thus the duration of the Orissan war was longer than that of the Kāmrūpa war. The Bengali sources and the Mādīa Paṇji which seem to give the dates, 1509, 1513 and 1516 A.D.5 do not in any way contradict this contention. Thus it seems fairly established that Bengal's war with Orissa continued throughout the reign of Husain Shāh.

The first phase of Husain Shāh Bengal's military conflict with the neighbouring kingdom of Tippera commenced, when

1. Supra, p. 49.
2. Supra, pp. 49 and 50.
5. History of Bengal, ii, p. 148, f. n. 3; supra. p. 50.
the ambitious ruler, Dhanya Māñikya, adopted a policy of territorial expansion by occupying Gaṅgāmaṇḍal, Pāṭikārā, Meherkul, Kailāsahar, Bejorā, Bhānugachh, Viṣṇujūḍi, Lāṅglā and Baradākhāt which were previously under the administrative control of Gauḍ. The king of Tippera appointed a governor in Khaṇḍal who was, however, sent captive by the people to the court of Gauḍ. Dhanya Māñikya conferred the governorship on Rāykāchhāg. He firmly established his hold over Khaṇḍal after having treacherously killed the twelve chiefs of the locality\(^1\) who had perhaps lent support to the Bengal ruler. How Ḥusain Shāh reacted to the situation is not known.

Dhanya Māñikya expelled the soldiers of Gauḍ from Chittagong in 1435 Shaka/1513-14 a.d. after capturing it from the Muslims who were probably defeated by him on this occasion. At this suḥtān Ḥusain Shāh sent an expedition against Tippera under the command of Gauḍ Mallik who, following the course of the Gumti, occupied Meherkul in Comilla, while the opposing army under Rāykāchhāg had released the water of the river held up at a distance by an earthen barrier. After the hasty retreat of the survivors, the king of Tippera occupied Chittagong in 1437 Shaka/1515-16 a.d. To avenge this reverse, Ḥusain Shāh sent another expedition against Tippera under Ḥatīyān Kān. Although this general occupied Jamir Kāṅgād and inflicted an initial defeat on the Tippera soldiers at Chhaghariyāgād under Gāgan Kān, he failed to utilize the experience of his predecessor Gauḍ Mallik, so that the result

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1. The above account is based on the Vaṅgiya Sahitya Pariṣad MS. (no. 2259) of the Rājamālā quoted by S. Mukhopadhyay: op. cit., pp. 217-19. It is absent in the two published versions of the poem consulted by me. About the other phases of Bengal’s war with Tippera, I have depended on K. P. Sen’s edition of the Rājamālā whose relevant sections do not basically differ from those of the Pariṣad MS. quoted by S. Mukhopadhyay, op. cit., pp. 219-24. For similar accounts, see R. D. Banerjee: Vaṅglā Itihāsa, ii, pp. 251-52; History of Bengal, ii, p. 149.
of this expedition was the same as that of the previous one. On their way to Rāngāmāṭi, the soldiers of Hātiyān Khān were drowned at night in the river. The victory of Dhanya Māṇikya was largely due to the same stratagem as that to which he had recourse in defeating the soldiers of Gauḍ Mallik. Hātiyān Khān was punished by the sultan for his inefficiency and lack of foresight. The fourth expedition of Hūsain Shāh has not been properly recorded in the Rājamāla.\(^1\)

But the Bengali literature of an early period does not corroborate the information supplied by the Rājamāla. According to the Pāragaṭi Māhābhārat, written in the reign of Hūsain Shāh, Tippera had to surrender herself to the sultan of Gauḍ.\(^2\) In the Ashvamedha Parva of Shrikara Nandi, another contemporary of Hūsain Shāh, we are told that the king of Tippera who lived in a chronic state of fear for Chhuṭi Khān, Hūsain's governor in Chittagong, had to retire to the hills because of the onrush of the Muslim soldiers in his country and ultimately acknowledged the Bengal governor's supremacy by offering him a number of horses and elephants as tribute.\(^3\) This statement is borne out by an epigraphic evidence also. The Sonārgāon inscription of Hūsain Shāh dated 919 A.H./1513 A.D. shows that Khwāṣ Khān was sar-i-lauḍkār or "the military governor of the land of Tippera and wazīr of iqṭīm Muʿaẓẓamābād."\(^4\) The expression seems to indicate that Khwāṣ Khān who was already the governor of Muʿaẓẓamābād was subsequently allowed to exercise administrative control over the newly conquered region of Tippera. Thus the conquest of

4. J.A.S.B. 1872, vol. xli, pt. i, p. 333. The governorship of two countries was conferred upon the same person, for Muʿaẓẓamābād identified by Blochmann with Sonārgāon region (ibid. p. 334) was contiguous with Tippera.
a part of Tippera by Ḥusain Shāh seems fairly established. In the face of so many positive proofs in favour of this conclusion, it is not possible for us to safely rely on the information supplied by the Rājamālā, written towards the end of the sixteenth century. The Rājamālā appears to have referred to the initial stage of Ḥusain’s war with Tippera in the course of which the sultān had to face some reverses; but the hostilities culminated in the conquest of a part of Tippera by Ḥusain Shāh. Kavindra Parameshvara’s and Shrīkara Nandi’s statements indicate that Parāgal Khān and Chūti Khān, governors of Chittagong, probably exercised some control over a part of Tippera.

The possession of Chittagong was being disputed by the kings of Gauḍ, Tippera and Arakan. The foregoing account shows that the hostilities between the sultān and the king of Tippera centred very often on the occupation of Chittagong and that the latter was successful in wresting it from Ḥusain Shāh in 1513-14 A.D. and 1515-16 A.D. The Rājamālā categorically states that Tippera successfully held control over Chittagong after her war with Ḥusain Shāh was over. But it is proved beyond doubt that it came under the sultān ultimately. We are told that the ruler of Arakan (Rosāṅga), taking advantage of Ḥusain’s pre-occupation with Tippera, occupied Chittagong. The Aḥādīth-ul-Khawānin states that Nuṣrat who expelled the Arakanese from Chittagong, renamed it Fotḥābād with a view to commemorating the conquest. This statement finds support in Daulat Wazīr Bahārām Khān’s Lāli-Majnu according to which Ḥusain Shāh sent one wazīr Ḥamīd Khān to occupy Chittagong which was named Fotḥābād. It seems that Ḥamīd Khān was

2. *Supra.* pp. 53.
3. The Rājamālā, ii, pp. 30, 31 and 33.
sent together with Nūsrat to conquer Chittagong. The Parāgala Mahābhārata maintains that Parāgal Khān was appointed military governor of Chittagong. Corroborating this information, Shrīkara Nandī says that Parāgal was succeeded by his son, Chhuṭi Khān, in the governorship, their political headquarters being situated on the bank of the river Feni. Thus the evidence gathered from Bengali literature and the Persian history of Chittagong conclusively show that Husain Shāh was able to occupy Chittagong which ultimately formed an integral part of his kingdom. This explains why João de Silveira, the Portuguese emissary, found Chittagong in 1517 A.D. in the possession of the king of Bengal of whom the king of Arakan was a vassal. Thus we can distinguish several stages of development in the history of Chittagong under the Husain Shāh rule: first the recovery of Chittagong from the Arakanese by Rukn-ud-dīn Bārbak (1459-1474 A.D.) and the continuous sway of Gauḍ over Chittagong till at least 1513-14 A.D.; second the conquest of the place by Dhanya Māṇikya between 1513 and 1516 A.D.; third - reconquest of Chittagong by Husain probably in 1516 A.D.; fourth the occupation of Chittagong by the king of Arakan who seems to have taken advantage of Husain’s preoccupation with Tippera and fifth the recovery of Chittagong by Husain in 1517 A.D. and the uninterrupted hold of Husain and his successors over Chittagong till 1538 A.D.

The tripartite war which was going on among the rulers

3. J. J. A. Campos: History of the Portuguese in Bengal, p. 28, foot note. O’Malley says in Chittagong Gazetteer, p. 22, that it was under the ruler of Arakan in 1517. But this statement is nowhere supported. cf: History of Bengal, II, p. 150
4. This is proved by the inscription of Rāṭī Khān who built a mosque in Chittagong in 1473-74 A.D. at the order of Majlis-i-‘Ala who was an officer of Bārbak. History of Bengal, II, p. 135.
5. Supra. p. 55.
of Bengal, Tippera and Arakan over the possession of Chittagong was primarily due to its strategic and commercial importance. The sea-port used to control the entrance and exit of mercantile vessels, ambassadors and strangers visiting Bengal. It was at Chittagong that the Muslim ruler had provided for the reception of the Chinese diplomatic mission which was coming to the court of Pāṇḍuṇa in the early fifteenth century. Like the port of Sāţgāon, this city became the cynosure of the Portuguese who called it Porto Grande and who, later on, controlled its custom-houses which used to bring a considerable amount of revenue to the Muslim ruler. Moreover, the defence of the south-eastern boundary of the country could be properly strengthened only by an effective hold on Chittagong. As a preliminary to the occupation of this place of commercial and strategic importance, Ḥusain Shāh seems to have attacked Tippera. As indicated in the Ashvamedha Parva, the conquest of Chittagong and the establishment of a Muslim military base on the banks of the Feni protected by the walls of the Chandra Shekhari range, had the effect of weakening the position of the Tippera ruler. Ḥusain Shāh rulers showed practical wisdom by locating their military and administrative machinery at a considerable distance from Chittagong, then exposed to external attacks. It is, therefore, no mere accident that the Mughal governors should have built an outpost at Jagdia on the Feni and strong fortifications near Chittagong on either side of the Karṇafuli, and that the Nawabs of the eighteenth-century Bengal should have had, in the neighbourhood of this place, the thānah of Feni, "the rare base of" the thānah of Chittagong, which was kept under vigilant defence, when the latter was recovered from the Arakanese in 1729 A.D.

2. The military out-post of Parāgal Khand, now reduced to the position of an insignificant village near the Sītakundā hill, called Parāgalpur, shows hardly any relics of medieval period.
It is very difficult to form an accurate idea about the frontiers of Ḫusain Shāh Bengal. Since the country was in a state of war with Orissa, Delhi, Kāmrūpa, Assam, Tippera and Arakan, its frontiers were constantly fluctuating. Still it is worth-while to discuss the position of the frontiers of Bengal on the basis of the sources at our disposal.

The meeting points of Bengal and Orissa have nowhere been mentioned. If the Risāla and the ṛadā Pañji are to be relied upon, Bengal had a frontier outpost at Mandaran which constituted her base of operations against the ruler of Orissa.¹ The whole region extending from Mandaran to Jājnagar appears to have been a debatable ground between Bengal and Orissa. While giving an account of the kingdom of Orissa, Barbosa remarks, “It extends along the coast northwards where there is a river called Ganges (but they call it Guorigua), and on the further bank of this river begins the kingdom of Bengal where also the King of Otisa is sometimes at war.”² Thus we find that the river Ganges is stated to have formed the boundary between Bengal and Orissa. It cannot be denied that Bengal at that time was separated from Orissa by a river reference to which has been made by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāj.³ The universally known Ganges which has always been sacred to the Hindus, was not the boundary between Bengal and Orissa, for Mandaran which was included in the kingdom of Ḫusain Shāh is situated far beyond the modern Ganges. The map of Joao de Barros shows that Mandaram was at a considerable distance from the river. Barbosa appears to have confused one of the tributaries of the Ganges which was known also by that name, with the main stream of the Ganges. Before projecting this hypothesis, we may cast a glance at the map of Joao de Barros, drawn in 1550 A.D. in which a river called Ganga has been shown as falling into the estuary of the Hooghly from the north-

The real Ganges is shown as flowing far above south-western Bengal. Let us notice here what de Barros has said about this river. "The kingdom of Bengal", he says, "then is situated in that region where the River Ganges discharges its waters by two principal branches into the Eastern Ocean, and where the land drawing further back from its waters forms the great gulf which geographers term Gangetic and which we now name from Bengal. Into the mouths of these two branches two notable rivers discharge themselves, one from the east, and the other from the west, both being boundaries of the Kingdom.... The other river enters the western arm of the Ganges below another city called Satigam..... The other river which enters the Ganges below Satigam runs through the Kingdom of Orixa and its source is on the slopes of the mountains called Gate (Ghats) by Indians in those parts which are near Chaul. And as this river is a great one, and flows through many lands, the natives, in imitation of the Ganges into which it discharges its waters give it also the name of Ganga, and hold its water to be as holy as those of the Ganges itself." 

If carefully analyzed, the above statement of de Barros shows the following features: (a) the river Ganga, drawn in his map, forms the western boundary of Bengal; (b) falls into the branch of the Ganges below Satgoun; (c) has its sources in the Ghât mountains and (d) is called Ganga by the Hindus who consider its water to be as sacred as that of the Ganges. Ganga was, therefore, an imitation name. It is due to these reasons that we are in favour of identifying the Ganges of Barbosa with the river Ganga shown in the map of de Barros. It seems that this river is no other than modern Kansai which

1. See the map attached.
2. João de Barros: *Da Asia*, reproduced in the *Book of Barbosa* ii, pp. 244-45, Appendix 1.
3. This contention seems to be confirmed, if the map of João de Barros is compared with that of modern Bengal. The maps of Rennell and Van den Broucke also corroborate this view. The
may be tentatively regarded as the western boundary of Husain Shāh's Bengal. De Barros has located Reino de Orixa on the western side of this river. Several inscriptions of Husain Shāh mention 'arzah Sajjā Manbād together with thanah Lāoblā and the towns of Husainābād and Hādīgar which have been correctly identified by Rakhal Das Banerji and Blochmann. Thus it appears that the sarkārs of Sātgāon, Sharifābād, Sulaimanābād, and Mādāran which formed the region south of the Ganges and west of the Bhāgrathā were included in the kingdom of Husain.

The northern outskirts of the Sundarbans into which Husain does not seem to have penetrated probably formed the southern frontier of his kingdom. Brndāvanadīs has made incidental reference to Chhatrabhog whose inclusion in Bengal is proved beyond doubt. The evidence supplied by the Trieni inscription clearly shows that Hādīgar, identified with Hātiāgarh, south of Diamond Harbour on the Hooghly, formed an integral

Ganges of Barbosa answers to the Kambyson, called by Ptolemy the westernmost mouth of the Ganges. H. C. Roychaudhury thinks that the "Kambyson stands for the Sanskrit Kapiṣa" and "This answers to the modern Kasi which flows past Midnapore and, like the Rupnātīyan, may have been erroneously supposed to be a branch of the Ganges." History of Bengal, i, p. 11. But see S. Mukhopadhaya who is inclined to accept the Mantreshvara as the river crossed by Chaitanya. op. cit. p. 286.


3. Supra. p. 50. Chhatrabhog is at present situated in Diamond Harbour subdivision in the 24-Parganas.

part of his dominions. It may be reasonaly inferred here that Ḥusain's southern frontier extended from this place to Khalisafatābād or modern Bāgerhāt, for the latter was one of the mint-towns of Bengal in the reign of 'Alā'ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh. The sūltān had jurisdiction over Barisal district which was situated in the taqsim of Vāṅgḍorā in Fatḥābād division. Thus he had a continuous frontier in the south.

Regarding the south-eastern boundary, Joao de Barros has the following: "......one of these our people call the River of Chatingam, as it enters the eastern mouth of the Ganges at a city of this name......The Chatigam river rises in the mountains of the kingdoms of Ava and of Vagaru, and flowing from N. E. to S. W. divides the kingdom of Bengal from the lands of Codavascam, and along the courses of this river lie the kingdoms of Tipora and of Brema Limma which surround Bengal in the East".

The map of de Barros shows that what the cartographer calls the Chatigam river is nothing but the modern Karṇāphuli which finds mention also in the Ḥāʾī Ḥaḍīnā of Daulat Wazir. We have already noticed that the governors of Ḥusain had their

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1. Nuṣrat was allowed to issue coins from this place even in the life time of his father. These coins are dated 922 A.H. Wright: Catalogue, pp. 177-78, nos. 211 and 212; N. K. Bhattasali: Talfoor Collection, p. 31, no. 162 in pl. v-t; Blochmann: J.A.S.B. 1873, p. 297, pl. ix, no. 10.

2. Vijaya Gupta: Manasarā-mahgal, ed. Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya, 3rd ed. p. 4. The poet writing in 1494-95 A.D. says that his village, Fullanārī (at present a village in Barisal) was included in "muluk Fatḥābād Vāṅgḍorā taksim" to be tentatively identified with Baṅgalabaḍa mentioned in the Madhyapada inscription of Vishvarūpaṇasena, History of Bengal, 1, p. 18.


headquarters on the Feni river. Thus the region extending from the Feni to the Karaphuli seems to have belonged to Husain Shah at least after the year 1517 A.D.

In the east, Bengal was separated from the kingdom of Tippera by the Gumti river which, as we have seen, the soldiers of Husain Shah tried to cross on several occasions. The Sylhet inscription of Husain Shah clearly indicates that Sylhet was, for all practical purposes, the north-eastern boundary of the kingdom of Bengal. Kamrupa which appears as Reino De Comotah, on the map of de Barros, was the northernmost region of Bengal. The capital Kamtapur, marked as Comotah by de Barros, was situated on the bank of the Darla river which joins the Brahmaputra in the south. In the north-west, the kingdom of Husain included probably the whole of northern Bihar and a part of southern Bihar. De Barros says, "these mountains separate the Bengalas from the Patane peoples, and, lower down towards the south, from the Kingdom of Orixa, the level lands of Bengal a lying between the mountains and the stream of the Ganges." These mountains were probably the Kharagpur hills. Thus the Portuguese writer seems to maintain that the Ganges and the mountains of the west separated Bengal from the 'Patane people' or the Afghans (Pathans?) of Bihar and the Orissan people. This is what he has clearly shown in the map. The soldiers of Sikandar faced the Bengali soldiers at Barh which seems to have marked the meeting point of Bihar and Bengal.

1. Supra. p. 56.
2. Supra. p. 53 and 54.
4. For this consult the map of Joao de Barros attached hereto.
5. The inscriptions of Husain found at Monghyr, Bonahara and Siran seem to confirm this contention. Supra. p. 39.
7. Supra. p. 38.
In Rennell's map, Barh is located on the southern bank of the Ganges and is 22 miles north-east of Bihār town.\(^3\)

Nisām-ud-din holds that Ḥusain Shāh died in 929 A.H. after having enjoyed a considerably long reign of twenty-seven years and a few months.\(^2\) Firishtah,\(^3\) and Salīm\(^4\) give 930 and 927 respectively as the dates of the Šultan's death neither of which can be accepted. The Sonārgān inscription\(^6\) shows that Ḥusain was alive in 925 A.H./1519 A.D. His son Nūṣrat Shāh began to issue coins in the same year.\(^6\) Thus it is conclusively proved that 1519 A.D. is the last year of Ḥusain Shāh's reign.

We have seen that Ḥusain was fighting against all the kingdoms that surrounded Bengal. It is really surprising that he could maintain the independent status of Bengal even without entering into any military or political alliance with any one of these powers. His failure at the Assam frontier does not appear to have adversely affected the political life of Bengal. It only checked the progress of the Muslim arms in that direction. Ḥusain seems to have avoided a direct war with Sikandar by concluding a treaty with him; but he succeeded ultimately in expanding his kingdom by occupying the parts of the territories that once formed the Sharqī kingdom.

1. The reign of Ḥusain's son, Nūṣrat, was characterized by the territorial expansion of Bengal in the north-western direction. *Infra*, sec. n of this chapter. See also my paper: "The Frontiers of Bengal under Husain Shahi rule." *B. P. P. op. cit.* p. 44.
The country enjoyed undisturbed security and peace during his regime and this was unquestionably due to his personal ability and the efficiency of his government. Even during the earliest part of his reign, he appears to have made an impression upon the mind of his subjects and captured their imagination to a great extent. Vijaya Gupta, a contemporary of ‘Alā’-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh, who composed in 1494-95 A.D. a poem on the snake-cult popularly known as Manasā-maṅgal, has spoken highly of the achievements of the sultan. “Sultān Ḥusain Shāh,” he says, “is the tilak-mark of kings. He may be compared with Arjuna in fighting and as such he resembles the morning sun. The king rules the earth with the strength of his arm. Because of the protection offered by him, his subjects enjoy happiness regularly.”¹ The glowing tributes which the poet has paid to the sultan seem justifiable, if we take into account his subsequent military, administrative and cultural attainments.

Ḥusain’s religious policy seems to have been free from narrowness and bigotry. His attitude towards the Hindus was marked by tolerance and liberalism. Some of the most important offices were held by the Hindus. On this point Bengali sources are clear and certain. Rūpa was the SākarMallik, and Sanatana, the Dabir-i-Khāz, of the sultan. Rām Chandra Khān enjoyed a small estate in south-west Bengal. Similar was the case with the Majumdār family to which Hiranya Dās and Govardhan Dās belonged. Jagāī and Māhbāī were the kotwals of Nava dvipa. Again Gopīnāth Vasu, his minister, Mukunda-dās, his private physician, Keshava Khān Chhatrī, the chief of his bodyguards and Anupa, in charge of mint, were Hindus. According to the Rajamāla, Guaḍ Mallik was placed in charge of a Tippera expedition.² Some of the governors were patronizing the Hindu

¹ Op. cit. p. 4; also quoted by me in I H.Q. op. cit. p. 59.
² For the mention of these officers, see, Bṛndāvana-dās: op. cit. pp. 8, 82 (ādikhaṇḍa), 205 (madhya) and 316 and p. 350 (antya), supra, pp. 50 and 53. History of Bengal, ii, pp. 151-52; Sukumar Sen: Madhya Yuger Vāṅgālā O Vāṅgālī, pp. 14-15; Kṛgpadas
poets of the time. The names of Parāgal Khān and Chhuṭi Khān have become proverbially associated with those of Kavindra Parameshvara and Shrikara Nandi who prepared Bengali versions of the Mahābhārata. The liberal policy adopted by Ḩusain Shāh was followed by his successors. We find Hindu soldiers fighting in the army of Nuṣrat.

Some writers have maintained that Ḩusain Shāh oppressed the Hindus occasionally. They base their arguments generally on the Suvuddhi Ray episode, mentioned in the Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, on the alleged destruction of the temples of Orissa by Ḩusain and also on the view of Jayānanda that the Hindus of Navadvipa suffered at the hands of the ruler. But their arguments seem to have been based on a superficial examination of facts. The Suvuddhi Ray episode does not indicate any persistent policy adopted by the sultān, but shows only the influence exerted on him by his wife. The destruction of the temples of Orissa by the sultān does not necessarily prove that he was hostile to the Hindus, for such destruction may take place in the wake of military operations attended by chaos and confusion. What Jayānanda has said may be summarized in the following lines: the followers of the sultān informed him that the Brahmins of Navadvipa would usurp the throne of Gauḍ.

Kavirāj: op. cit. pp. 76, 278 and 293. For a long list of seventeen Hindu officers of Ḩusain Shāh, see S. Mukhopadhyay: op. cit. 264-84.

1. Parāgal Mahābhārat, quoted by D. C. Sen: op. cit. pp. 94-96; Shrikara Nandi: op. cit. p. 4; infra: Section on literature.


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Seized by anger, the sultan ordered Navadvipa to be destroyed. The castes of the Brahmins were desecrated and the lives of many of them taken. The religious activities of the Hindus were suspended and the normalcy of the life of Navadvipa was seriously affected. Chaos and confusion were reigning supreme so that Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya migrated to Benares, leaving his brother Vidyā-vīchāraspati at Gauḍ.¹

If we analyse the Bengali text, we find that the Brahminical section of Navadvipa believed that the throne of Gauḍ would be occupied by the Brahmins—a fact corroborated also by Brṇḍavāna-dās.² Whatever might be the reason for this way of thinking, this was sufficient to arouse anger in the sultan who wanted to put an end to the spirit of sedition pervading the Brahminical society of Navadvipa. This explains why we find him in the above account oppressing the Brahmins only to the exclusion of other classes of Hindu population. One may question the measures he adopted against the Brahmins; but what he did, was meant to stamp out sedition in which communal feeling or religious zeal does not seem to have played any part. Moreover, Jayānanda says that this incident took place just on the eve of the birth of Shri Chaitanya in 1486 A.D. when Jalāl-ud-din Fatḥ Shāh (1481-87) was the reigning sultan of Bengal. Ḥusain Shāh cannot be held responsible for what was done by Jalāl-ud-din, an earlier ruler. Immediately on his accession to the throne of Gauḍ, Ḥusain is said to have pillaged the city.³ It seems that Jayānanda has referred to this incident in the course of which some Hindus of Gauḍ might have suffered.

That the sultan appointed a large number of Hindus to some of the key posts under him is a clear indication of the

3. Supra, p. 36.
liberalism with which he treated the Hindus. The catholicity of his mind is reflected in the Vaiśāvya works which maintain that he had much respect for Shri-chaitanya whom he regarded as an incarnation of God. The kindness and consideration which he showed to the Hindus have impelled the Hindu poets of the day to call him the tilak-mark of kings (rpati-tilak), the adornment of the universe (jagatabhūṣaṇa) and the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa avatār).

It is numismatically and epigraphically established that the rulers of pre-Ḥusain Shāhi Bengal used to assume the title, "the helper of Islām and the Muslims". It shows how closely they associated Islām with the state affairs. The sultan and his successors made a complete departure from this policy, dropping as they did this title from the coins. The kalima which appears only on a few coins may be regarded as a traditional feature of their coinage without having any religious significance. Again the names of the first four Caliphs found on the margin of a single coin indicate simply their connection with the Saiyids of Arabia.

Most of the rulers of northern India imposed jiziyah or poll-tax on the Hindus. But the institution did not possibly prevail in Ḥusain Shāhi Bengal, for the Vaiśāvya literature of the time which has devoted enough of space to the description of Hindu-Muslim conflict, does not mention it at all. The zakāt does not seem to have been realized by the government from the Muslims. In fact, Ḥusain Shāh and his successors were probably following a non-religious policy. This may be largely

3. H. N. Wright: Catalogue ii, pp. 154-163, pt. ii, pl. ii, nos. 52, 57, 66, 68 etc. See also other catalogues.
4. Lane-Poole: op. cit. p. 45, pl. v, no. 118.
due to the precarious circumstances under which the ruling authority was placed. The kingdom of Gaud was surrounded on all sides by a number of hostile countries. No sooner had the Ludis disappeared from the political field of India than the rising tide of Mughal imperialism began to carry everything before it. Under these circumstances, Husain Shah and his successors must have tried to strengthen the foundation of the state on the basis of the support and sympathy of the different sections of people irrespective of religion and creed.

To sum up, the reign of Husain Shah constitutes a brilliant epoch in the history of medieval Bengal. Besides waging wars against the adjoining kingdoms, the sultan conferred all sorts of advantages on his subjects who acknowledged this by holding him in high esteem so that he is remembered even at present as a legendary hero of medieval Bengal.

II

'Ala-ud-din Husain Shah was succeeded by his eldest son Nušrat in 1519 A.D. Even during the life-time of his father Nušrat was associated with the administration of the country and was acquainted with the art of warfare. As an apprentice to his father, he seems to have acquired certain qualities which were necessary for the royal office. Some of his coins bear the dates 922 A.H./1516 A.D. and 923 A.H./1517 A.D.,¹ on the basis of which it may be suggested that Nušrat as a crown-prince, was allowed by his father to issue coins even before he actually ascended the throne.²

Significant political changes were taking place in contemporary northern India. Taking advantage of Ibrahim Ludi's weakness, the Luḥānis and the Farmūlis tried to parcel out

2. For a detailed discussion on this point, see appendix A; cf. also History of Bengal, ii, p. 152.
among themselves the entire territory from Patna to Jaunpur. A Lūhānī kingdom was established in Bihār.¹ This chaotic political condition gave a chance to Nuṣrat to extend his territory up to Azamgarh the inclusion of which place in his kingdom is proved beyond doubt by the Sikandarpūr inscription dated 1527 A.D.² Annexing the whole of Tirhut to Bengal, he placed it under the control of his brother-in-law, ‘Ala’-ud-din and Makhdūm ‘Ālam and Hājipūr situated on the confluence of the Gandak and the Ganges became his political head-quarters in north Bihār.³ We suggested in the preceding chapter that these measures conformed to the military and strategic needs of Bengal. Kharid on the right bank of the Ghogra remained under Nuṣrat’s sway so that Bābur, on his way to the east felt the necessity of requiring him for a passage through that region.⁴

Bābur inflicted a crushing blow to the Lūdī kingdom in the battle field of Panipat in 1526 A.D. This meant a threat to the sovereignty of Bengal. The Afghāns who escaped to Bengal were given not only nominal shelter, but also pensions and estates by Nuṣrat,⁵ who, it seems, was actuated by humanitarian considerations. In 1527 A.D., the soldiers of Bābur advanced up to the Ghogra, after having plundered Kharid.⁶ Seeing that the Afghāns were suffering defeat at every stage in their resistance against Bābur, Nuṣrat was probably at a loss as to the course

2. J.A.S.B. 1873, p. 296. According to this inscription, Kharid was under the control of a governor of Nuṣrat. History of Bengal, ii, p. 153.
of action he should follow. As early as 1527 A.D., Bābur sent Mullāh Muḥammad Madīnī to the court of Gauḍ with a view to ascertaining Nuṣrat’s attitude to his military policy in the east.\(^1\) Without giving any direct reply to Bābur, Nuṣrat held up his envoy for about one year. Bābur was not sure of Nuṣrat’s attitude even towards the end of 1528 A.D., for he said, “that explicit representation should be made as to whether the Bengalis were friendly and single-minded; that, if nothing needed my presence in those parts, I should not make stay, but should move elsewhere at once.”\(^2\) Since the whole situation was fraught with danger, Nuṣrat had to profess neutrality. On January 1, 1529, A.D. Bābur could know that Nuṣrat’s attitude was “loyal and single-minded,” whereupon he decided not to have any “move” on Bengal. In the same month, Nuṣrat’s envoy, Ismā’il Mīta, waited on Bābur, with presents and a letter from the sultan.\(^3\) With this incident, the first phase of Nuṣrat’s relation with Bābur was over. Bābur attached much importance to the neutrality of Nuṣrat, for he seems to have understood that an active coalition between Nuṣrat and the Afghān chiefs would completely frustrate his political ambition in the east. The sequel suggests that he was successful in preventing Nuṣrat from entering into an entente with the Afghāns.

It has been suggested that Nuṣrat actively helped the Afghāns against Bābur.\(^4\) But this view does not seem to find support either in Bābur’s auto-biography, or in sources like Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīḫ, Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī, Tārīḵ-i-Fīrūzhāh and Tārīḵ-i-Salāṭīn-i-Afghānah. To determine the exact nature of relationship between Nuṣrat and the Afghāns, it is necessary to discuss here Bābur’s military achievements in Bihār and the adjoining regions. Early in 1528 A.D., some of the Afghān chiefs tried to resist Bābur’s army at Qanauj but in vain.\(^5\) Bābur

1. Ibid. ii, p. 637.
2. Ibid. ii, p. 628.
3. Ibid. ii, pp. 637 and 640.
proceeded along the Ghogra and conferred on Shâh Muḥammad Farmuli, the government of Sarân. The persons who could stand on Bâbur's way were Nuṣrat of Bengal, Maḥmūd Lūdî, Jalâl Khān Sharqī and Jalâl Khān Luhānī of Bihâr.

The detailed account of Bâbur's relation with these political personalities found in the Memoirs clearly shows that Nuṣrat had hardly any connection with the anti-Mughal confederacy which was going to be formed in Bihâr. Maḥmūd Lūdî occupied Bihâr in 1529 A.D. from the Luhānī ruler, Jalâl Khān who then proceeded to meet Bâbur to whom he used to write "dutiful letters" from time to time, probably expressing his intention to accept vassalage under him. What was Nuṣrat's reaction to these political changes, is not clearly known. Jalâl and his followers were detained at Ḥâjīpūr by Nuṣrat's soldiers who seem to have acted under the impression that Bâbur's army reinforced by Jalâl might create danger for Bengal. Since Bâbur had already advanced upto Sarân and Kharīd which were under the control of Nuṣrat, it was natural on the part of the governor of Ḥâjīpūr to try to weaken the enemy by adopting such a measure. This does not indicate that Nuṣrat had a previous understanding with Maḥmūd Lūdî as to the formation of an anti-Mughal coalition.

But the sequel is quite interesting to us. Having collected a body of 10,000 Afghāns, Maḥmūd placed himself at the head of an anti-Mughal confederacy which was joined by several prominent Afghan chiefs such as Bâyazīd, Bīban, Fatḥ Khān and Shēr Khān Sur all of whom agreed to launch a three-pronged attack on the Mughals. Bâyazīd and Bīban proceeded to the north in the direction of Gorakhpur, while Maḥmūd accompanied by Fatḥ Khān advanced along the banks of the Ganges towards Chunar and Benares. If the autobiography of Bâbur

1. Ibid. p. 675.
2. Ibid. ii, pp. 659 and 664.
3. Ibid. ii, p. 664.
4. Ibid. ii, pp. 561, 637 and 664.
is to be relied upon, the ultimate results of these expeditions were quite frustrating for the leaders of the coalition. Had Nuṣrat played any role, direct or indirect, in this connection, it would have been mentioned in the sources at our disposal. A careful scrutiny of the details given above, seems to suggest that he was not a party to Maḥmūd’s anti-Mughal scheme.

The Afghān leaders had conflicting interests so that it was hardly possible for them to stand for a common cause. Maḥmūd Lūdi, Jalāl Lūhānī and Jalāl Sharqī were vying with one another for curving out kingdoms for themselves. This explains why the coalition formed by Maḥmūd could not win the support of Jalāl Lūhānī and Jalāl Sharqī both of whom had already recognized Bābur’s supremacy by actively placing themselves at the Mughal conqueror’s disposal. Similar was the case with Sher Khān Sūr who accepted service under the Mughals. Nuṣrat Shāh who was conscious of the inherent weakness of the coalition, does not seem to have joined it, for his active support to the Afghāns could have hardly served his self-interest. Realizing that an entente with the Afghāns who were fighting a loosing battle, would give unnecessary provocation to Bābur, he appears to have evaded the so-called anti-Mughal confederacy. Again it is doubtful if Maḥmūd could at all think of inviting Nuṣrat to join his coalition, for the latter had territorial ambition in the north-west the partial fulfilment of which has already been noticed. Thus the Bengal sultān’s north-west frontier policy which was detrimental to Maḥmūd’s interests was probably partly responsible for his exclusion from the anti-Mughal confederacy.

1. Ibid. ii, pp. 651-52, 654 and 685.
2. Ibid. pp. 651-52, 669 and 676. It has been suggested by Qanungo that Bābur wanted to utilize Jalāl Sharqī against the Afghāns. See Sher Shāh, p. 61, footnote.
4. Supra, p. 69.
The sultān of Bengal ultimately realized that a direct conflict with the Mughals could hardly be avoided. Having occupied parts of Sārān and Khārid, they were now going to resume their eastward journey with a view to subjugating the eastern territories. Compelled by these circumstances, Nuṣrat felt the necessity of adopting certain practical measures to check the progress of the Mughal arms. He sent Quṭb Khān towards Bharaich to have certain engagements with the Mughals of which no record is preserved in Bābur’s autobiography. In April, 1529 A.D., Makhdūm-i-ʿĀlam, governor of Ḥājipūr, posted garrisons along the Gandak and held back a number of Afghāns who were going to join Bābur. These incidents combined with the treatment meted out to Jalāl Khān and his party made it sufficiently clear that Bābur’s fighting with the Bengalis was “probable.” Meanwhile, the Bengali army supported by a number of war-boats was waiting at the meeting point of the Ghogra and the Ganges to face any emergency. Bābur had already written a letter to Nuṣrat, containing “three articles”; but the latter’s reply to it was “long in coming.” The Bengali envoy, Ismāʿil, was sent back to his master with the following memorandum: “We shall be going to this side and that side, in pursuit of our foe, but no hurt or harm will be done to any dependency of yours. As one of those three articles said, when you have told the army of Khārid to rise off our road and to go back to Khārid, let a few Turks be joined with it to reassure these Khārid people and to escort them to their own place. If they quit not the ferry-head, if they cease not their unbecoming words, they must regard as their own act any ill that befalls them, must court any misfortune they confront as the fruit of their own words.”

This passage explicitly shows that Bābur wanted to have a free passage through Khārid—a demand which Nuṣrat does not seem to have conceded.

3. Ibid. p. 665; only one of the three articles is summarized here. Other two articles are nowhere specified; cf.: History of Bengal, ii, p. 155.
The result was a foregone conclusion. Bābur now laid out an elaborate plan for the position to be taken by his generals in the approaching battle with the Bengalis. His narrative taken together with whatever topographical details can be gathered from Rennell’s map, clearly shows that his troops were stationed on the northern and southern banks of the Ganges opposite to the Bengali camp at the confluence, along the left bank of the Ghogra and on the rising ground lying between the two rivers. The site of the battle shows that the Mughal soldiers with their camps up and down the stream of the Ghogra could attack the Bengal army from various directions. On the 4th May, 1529, the Mughal general Aughun Birdi, crossing the Ghogra, faced the foot soldiers of Nūṣrat who were ultimately put to flight, while another group of Bengali soldiers tried to fall on the Mughals under Zamān Mīrzā, posted on the Bihar side of the Ganges. Next day’s engagements decided the issue in favour of the Mughals and on the 6th May, Bābur crossing over into Khartād, “landed at a village named Kundih in the Nirhun pargana......on the north side of the Saru (Ghogra)”. The victory of the Mughals was largely due to the superiority of their military tactics and the advantageous position they took on the western side of the Ghogra. The battle of the Ghogra shows how isolated Nūṣrat stood in his fight against Bābur. Had he been a member of the anti-Mughal coalition of the Afghāns, some of their leaders would have sided with him on the Ghogra. This battle is significant, for it extended Bābur’s territories up to the eastern side of the Ghogra and made the process of the subjugation of the Afghāns easier. It brought him to the outskirts of Tirhut, the gateway to Bengal, whence he could have easily proceeded to Bengal proper, along the banks of the Ganges, crossing the Gandak and the Kosi. But diplomatic

2. See the map attached hereto. See also my paper in B. P. P. op. cit. p. 44.
considerations seem to have prevented him from proceeding to Bengal before subjugating Oudh and Bihār. The Šāhzādah of Monghyr named Abū‘l Fathī and lashkar wazīr Husain Khān, consented to the three articles, dictated by Bābur, and concluded peace with him on behalf of the sultān of Bengal. Thus Bengal was saved from an impending cataclysm.

The Persian sources which have given a brief account of Nuṣrat’s reign, only mention his submission to Bābur, but do not give the details of the relation between the two, as found in the Memoirs. It is stated that Nuṣrat was connected with the Afgāns in the battle of Daurah fought between Humāyūn and the Afgāns. For a statement like this, we have no support in sources earlier and more reliable than Stewart. This writer says, “Although the king of Bengal, from the pusillanimity of his disposition, did not take an active part in these scenes, yet, regardless of his treaty with the emperor Babur, he gave every assistance in his power to Mahmūd”. Thus, according to Stewart, Nuṣrat, who had no active role in the battle of Daurah, gave indirect help to Maḥmūd. Stewart does not mention the source of his information. Of the authorities consulted by him (op. cit, XIII-XVIII), only Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbāri, Tārīkh-i-Fīrūzshah and Rīyād give scrappy accounts of the reign of Nuṣrat. But none of these sources mentions that he gave even indirect help to Maḥmūd Lūdī in the battle of Daurah. The Afgān sources are completely silent on it. It is true that he gave shelter to a number of Afgāns whom Bābur drove away from Oudh and Bihār. But we do not know whether he had any intention to set the Afgāns as a counterpoise to the rising Mughal power. ‘Abbās Shērwanī, Bādāyūnī, Fīrūzshah, Niẓām-ud-dīn, Gulbadan Begum and Jauhar have described the events connected with

1. Ibid. pp. 676-77.
3. History of Bengal, ii, pp. 156-57.
4. History of Bengal, p. 134. (Italics are mine)
5. Supra. p. 69.
this battle. According to these sources, the battle which took place at Daurah, on the bank of the Gumti, resulted in the death of Bībān and Bāyazīd and defeat of Maḥmūd Lūdī. The contention that Sher Shāh played a treacherous role in it, has been refuted by Qanungo. None of these sources seems to have given the correct date of this battle which is 1531 A.D. according to Qanungo who has tried to fix it, relying on Gulbadan’s account. It is quite interesting to notice that no one of the sources cited above, mentions the name of Nuṣrat in connection with this battle. Nuṣrat who was already convinced of the uncertain and vacillating attitude of the Afghāns, seems to have avoided joining them.

After the death of Bābur, it was rumoured that Humāyūn was going to attack Bengal. Nuṣrat sent his envoy Malik Marjān, to Bāḥādur Shāh of Gujrat with a view to concluding a friendly alliance with him. Bāḥādur’s response to this proposal was quite favourable for Nuṣrat, for the former received the Bengali envoy at the fort of Mandū and presented to him a special robe of honour. Bengal had commercial relation with Gujrat. The political relation which was about to take place between the two countries, was largely due to the antipathy of their rulers to a common enemy, for, like Nuṣrat, Bāḥādur Shāh had sufficient political reason to be hostile to Humāyūn. But Nuṣrat died before the alliance could materialize.

3. Ibid. p. 78; footnote.
Bengal's hold on Kāmrūpa and Kāmṭa was probably unaffected till the end of the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh. This sultan was so much preoccupied with the affairs of the north-western frontier that he had hardly any opportunity to pay attention to Assam. The Muslim governors of Kāmrūpa and Kāmṭa who seem to have acted largely on their own initiative, launched several expeditions against the Ahoms without receiving any help from the sultan of Gaud. One of such military operations started in 1532 A.D. under a general named Turbak who compelled the Ahoms to fall back on the fort of Sala after having occupied Temeni. The Ahom king appointed Chao-Shenglung commander-in-chief and stationed soldiers at Barnadi, while the Muslims advanced to Kaliabar where they halted for the time being. Nuṣrat who died in 1532 A.D. could not see the conclusion of Bengal's war with Assam.

The reign of Nuṣrat Shāh marked the beginning of the process of disintegration of the Ḥusain Shāhī regime, which found its culmination in the reign of Ghiyāš-ud-dīn Māḥmūd Shāh. In the north-west, he had to cede the area west of the Gandak, to Bābur who is known to have ruled over Sarān and parts of Kharīd. Bengal's frontier was thus pushed back to the Gandak. He does not appear to have suffered any territorial loss at the eastern and north-eastern frontiers. What happened in the south-west, is not clearly known. Two Santoshpur inscriptions dated 938 A.H./1530-31 A.D. clearly indicate


that the region beyond the river Dārakeshvar, was included in Bengal. One may well imagine that the Orissan ruler Pratāp Rudra was trying to expand his dominions at the expense of Nuṣrat's kingdom—the details of which can perhaps never be known.

Nuṣrat Shāh possessed certain noble virtues which could hardly be found in the rulers of the time. The kind and benevolent treatment which he meted out to his own brothers and also to the Afghān refugees by raising them to important ranks, is an indication of the humanitarian aspect of his character which, however, underwent a complete metamorphosis towards the end of his life. Compared with his illustrious father, 'Alīr-ud-din Husain Shāh, he appears to be a man of pusillanimous disposition. But while judging his achievements, one may well bear in mind the precarious nature of the circumstances under which he was placed. The weakness of his position was largely due to the uncertain character of Afghān politics and the superiority of the Mughal tactics. Nuṣrat gave direct patronage to the cause of Bengali literature in which his name finds repeated mention. While visiting the tomb of his father at Gauḍ, he is said to have been killed by one of his slaves.²

III

The numismatic evidence suggests that Nuṣrat nominated his younger brother, Māhmūd for succession.³ But it is proved beyond doubt that he was succeeded by his young son Firuz and not by his brother Māhmūd. Regarding the accession

1. It said that he turned quite tyrannical towards the end of his reign. Firīshṭāh: op. cit. II, p. 302; Salīm: op. cit. p. 138.
2. Salīm: op. cit. p. 138. Firīshṭāh says that he was unable to ascertain whether Nuṣrat was killed or died a natural death; op. cit. II, p. 302.
3. Māhmūd issued coins in his own name even in the reign of Nuṣrat. For a complete discussion on this point, see appendix-A.
of Firūz, the Riyāḍ has the following. "When Nuṣrat Shāh drank the disagreeable syrup of death, his son Firūz Shāh, by the counsels of the grandees, ascended the throne." A powerful group of nobles seems to have placed Firūz on the throne of Gauḍ, ignoring the claim of Mahmūd. We can well imagine that on the question of succession, the nobles were divided into two parties, one supporting the claim of Mahmūd and the other standing by Firūz. Firūz Shāh had a very brief reign, for Mahmūd who could hardly be satisfied with the obscure position to which he had been reduced, is said to have murdered him soon afterwards.

Bengal's war with Assam seems to have continued in the reign of Firūz who had hardly any direct connection with it. The Muslim general Turbak whose exploits in Assam have already been noticed, made an attempt on the Ahom fort at Sala, from his camp at Geeladhari. The Ahom soldiers defended the fort quite heroically, while the Muslims burnt the houses around Sala and killed several Ahom generals on the field of battle. Finding that Sala could not be surprised by following the land-route, the Muslims now changed their strategy. Advancing both by land and sea, they surrounded the Ahom fort. The siege dragged on for three days and nights and the naval engagement which took place, resulted in the victory of the Ahoms. A Muslim naval officer named Tāju made another attempt to storm Sala, but was defeated at Duimunihila. The result of the battle was quite disastrous for the Muslims who lost their general Shangat together with twenty five hundred soldiers and twenty ships. One Ḥusain Khān backed by cavalry, infantry and elephants came to reinforce Turbak. Coming down to the Dikrai river, the Muslim soldiers engaged themselves in a serious encounter with the Ahoms at whose hands they suffered a disastrous defeat. Towards the end of 1533 A.D., Ḥusain Khān tried to attack the Ahoms near

1. Eng. tran. p. 137; cf. text, p. 139.
2. Ibid. p. 139.
the Bharali river, but was defeated and killed. Thus the attempt of the Bengal sultāns to subjugate the upper Brahmaputra valley ended in a complete failure. The defeat of the Muslims must have been largely due to lack of help from Gauḍ and their weakness in naval force. Their failure in Assam had far-reaching consequences. They could no longer retain their hold on Kāmrupa and Kāmṭa. Vishva Simha who organized the Koch power appears to have put an end to the Muslim rule in Cooch Bihar. Bengal was thus reduced to her original position.

Numismatic and epigraphic evidences do not tell us anything about the achievement of Firūz as a ruler beyond the fact that he assumed the title, ‘Ala’-ud-duniyā-wā’l-dīn Abū’l Muṣṭafār Firūz Shāh, while in a metrical romance called Vidyāsundara, the poet Śrīdhara has made repeated mention of the name of Firūz with gratitude and admiration. The poet speaks very highly of the prince in the following lines: “The beautiful son of the king Nāṣir Shāh (Nuṣrat Shāh) is a bee which enjoys (the honey of) the lotus of all arts. King Firūz is a good-natured man possessing certain pleasing virtues”. Another colophon of the Vidyā-Sundara reads: “The beautiful son of the king of kings (Nuṣrat) is liberal and wise like Kaṅga. The poet Śrīdhara says that Firūz Shāh is endowed with five qualities”. Making sufficient allowance for poetic exaggeration, it may be mentioned here that this eulogy has some truth in it. That he was a good lover of arts is proved by the fact that he had a genuine interest in literature—a quality which he must have inherited from his predecessors. The nobles who preferred him to Muḥammad for the throne of Bengal, seem to

3. S.P.P. 1344 B.S. p. 24; Sāhitya Patrikā, 1364 B.S. I, p. 120.
Plate I (Coins)

Coins of 'Ala'-ud-din Firuz
have been influenced in their decision by the humanitarian qualities which Firūz possessed. But the cruel hand of the murderer put an end to what appeared to be a brilliant reign.

A good deal of controversy has centred on the problem of the exact duration of the reign of Firūz. Salīm holds that he reigned for three years.\(^1\) But Charles Stewart who wrote his *History of Bengal* before the publication of the *Riyāḍ* in the Bibliotheca Indica series, mentions ‘three months’ as the duration of the reign of Firūz.\(^2\) This view is accepted by the scholars of our time,\(^3\) for they think that Stewart who has based his work mainly on the *Riyāḍ*, must have found ‘three months’ mentioned in the manuscript copy of the *Riyāḍ* he consulted. These scholars think that the coins and a single inscription which are the surviving records of the reign of Firūz, are dated 939 A.H. But this view is not correct. Although many of his coins bear the date 939 A.H./1533 A.D.,\(^4\) the Dacca Museum collection includes two coins of Firūz which clearly show the date 938/1532.\(^5\) Three inscriptions\(^6\) show that 938/1532 is also the last regnal year of Nuṣrat Shāh. Thus it may be quite reasonably suggested that Firūz ascended the throne in 938/1532. The single inscription of the sulṭān found

5. Published by me in *J.A.S.P.* vol. iv, 1959, p. 178. As quite usual with some of the Bengal coins, inscriptions on either side of each of these coins are within a solid circle around which there is another circle of dots. Both were issued from the mint of Muʿazzamabād; see the pl. I. attached hereto.
at Kalna\(^1\) is dated Ist Ramaḍān, 939 A.H./27th March, 1533 A.D. Since Ramaḍān is the 9th month of the Arabic year, it is fairly certain that Firūz reigned for about nine months in 939 A.H. His murderer Maḥmūd issued coins in the same year.\(^2\) As already shown, Firūz ascended the throne in 938/1532. If he had occupied the throne even in the last month of 938 A.H., he must have ruled at least for nine months. This contention finds direct support in Buchanan Hamilton’s Pāṇḍuṇ manuscript according to which “his (Nuṣrat’s) son Firuz Shah governed nine months, when he was killed by his uncle Mahmud Shah.”\(^3\)

### IV

The process of disintegration which started in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh, found its culmination in the reign of Maḥmūd who could hardly check the centrifugal forces operating in different parts of his kingdom. The governors who were placed in charge of the outlying regions seem to have assumed virtual independence. In the south-east, a realignment of political powers appears to have taken place. Khudā Bakhsh Khan, who was probably a governor and general of Maḥmūd\(^4\) began to behave like a vassal ruler, having extended his sway over the region lying between the Karṇaphuli and the mountains of Arakan which is marked as Estado Do Covasdocam in the map of de Barros.\(^5\) From his headquarters at Sore he was acting largely

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2. H. N. Wright: Catalogue ii, p. 179; Lane-Poole: op. cit. p. 55; Bhattasali: Taifoor Collection, p. 36, pl. v, no. 195; J. A. S. B. 1874, p. 309, pl. xiii, no. 10.
5. For the geographical position of this estate which includes Chachuria or modern Chakaria, see the map of de Barros attached
on his own. De Barros gives the following details about him: "The Estate of Codovascam, a Moorish prince and a great Lord, is between Bengalla and Arcacam. The Bengallas reckon it to be within the bounds of their Kingdom, and that of Tipora as well, but these lands being very mountainous the Bengallas say that certain powerful Lords therein have risen against the King of Bengalla, and whereas there was ever hatred and rivalry between the Bengallas and the Tiporitas, as there is wont to be between neighbour Kingdoms, when one claims to be greater than the other, the Tiporitas allied themselves with those of the kingdom of Cou, also unfriendly to the Bengallas." This passage shows that Bengal's hold over the estate of Khuda Bakhsh Khan was not perhaps undisputed. There was intense rivalry between Bengal and Tippera over the possession of this place and the latter very often allied herself with the kingdom of the Chakmas with a view to weakening Bengal's hold on the south-east. This was probably the continuation of the hostilities between Bengal and Tippera, which had assumed a significant magnitude during the time of Husain Shah. Details of the relation between the two countries during the reign of Mahmut can perhaps never be known, for the Rajamala is completely silent on it and de Barros is the only source of our information. But the scrappy details supplied by de Barros suggest that Tippera, hereto. The regions beyond the Matamuhari river and the hills of Arakan which formed the south-eastern boundary of Bengal have been shown as Reino De Arracam.

1. Extracts from Da Asia, reproduced in The Book of Duarte Barbosa, ii, appendix-1, p. 245; see also Faria y Souza: Portuguese Asia, 1, p. 416; My paper in B.P.P. op. cit. pp. 48-49. Khuda Bakhsh Khan was helped by the Portuguese in fighting against a neighbouring chief. But he did not hesitate to imprison them subsequently at his headquarters at Sore, When Sher Khan occupied Guad, he tried to take possession of Chittagong town; but Nuno Fernandes Freire, the Portuguese agent at Chittagong, helped Khuda Bakhsh's rival, Amirza Khan; Campos: op. cit. pp. 31-32 and 42; See also Faria y Souza: op. cit. 1, p. 314.
taking advantage of Maḥmūd’s weak position in the north-western frontier, had made a daring bid for expanding her territories at the expense of Bengal. How the kingdom of Arakan reacted to this situation is not known. What fate befell Khudā Bahšū, is also equally uncertain. But from Castanheda’s description, it appears that he could govern his estate until Bengal was finally occupied by Sher Khān Šūr. That he could hold out against countries like Arakan and Tippera, is a sufficient proof of his ability and strength which were, in a large measure, due to “the military discipline and artillery” of the Moors, spoken of highly by de Barros. To these developments in the south-east, Maḥmūd does not appear to have made any direct contributions.

To a student of history, however, the affairs of the north-western frontier of Maḥmūd’s kingdom, are of immense interest. Having rebelled against the sultan, Maḥdūm ‘Ālam, the governor of Ḥājipūr, entered into a friendly alliance with Sher Khān, the deputy of the Lūhānī ruler of Bihār. Maḥmūd sent Qūṭ Khān, the governor of Monghyr in 1533, against Maḥdūm, ostensibly to attack Bihār. Sher Khān tried in vain to dissuade the sultan of Bengal from following this course of action. Qūṭ Khān was defeated and slain by Sher Khān who now increased his strength by acquiring Bengal’s treasures. For Maḥmūd, this was a military defeat ultimately resulting in a serious diplomatic catastrophe. Neither Sher Khān nor Maḥdūm, could any longer be won over to Bengal’s side. The possibility of the formation of an anti-Mughal coalition was thus lost for ever.

Maḥmūd sent an army against Makhdūm 'Ālam who was willing to depend largely on Sher Khān's help. Sher was quite ready to join him personally at Ḥājīpur; but this was not possible. Jalāl Khān and his Lūḥānī supporters held him back so that he had to send one of his representatives to Makhdūm. The engagement which followed ended in Makhdūm's defeat and death. The attitude taken by the Lūḥānīs to this incident seems to indicate that they had already come to an understanding with Maḥmūd with a view to taking concerted action against Sher Khān. Maḥmūd does not seem to have benefited by Makhdūm's death, for with the removal of that powerful governor, the entire trans-Gandak region was now open to both the Afghāns and the Mughals.

The developments which were taking place in the Lūḥānī court of Bihār, were quite significant. The Afghāns seem to have been divided into two hostile groups, viz., the Sūrs united under the leadership of Sher Khān and the opposing group consisting of the Lūḥānīs supporting their royal patron, Jalāl Khān Lūḥānī. When their attempts to kill Sher Khān failed, they advised Jalāl to accept vassalage under Maḥmūd of Bengal. On the pretext of attacking Bengal, Jalāl proceeded to meet Maḥmūd who now sent an army consisting of artillery, cavalry and infantry, under Ibrāhīm Khān, to attack Bihār. The battle which took place in 1534 on the plains of Surajgarh, resulted in the defeat and death of Ibrāhīm and Jalāl had to go back to Maḥmūd. Impatient of Sher's control, Jalāl had joined Maḥmūd to get rid of him with the help of the sultan of Bengal. But his desire was never fulfilled. His flight to Bengal paved the way for Sher's ascendancy in Bihār. Maḥmūd had helped him

with the dual object of punishing Sher, the helper of Maḥmūd and of acquiring parts of Bihār. But Jalāl’s defeat spoiled his ambition. The battle exposed the weakness of Maḥmūd’s army and the strength of his opponent. Thus the battle of Surajgarh was not without its significance.

Taking advantage of Humāyūn’s preoccupation with Gujrat in 1535, Sher annexed the territories upto Bhāgalpur. In 1536, he appeared before the Teliagarhi which was defended by the Bengali garrisons assisted by the Portuguese soldiers. Finding that entry into Bengal through this pass was almost impossible, he placed a body of troops there under his son, Jalāl and unexpectedly appeared before Gauj via Jharkhand. Maḥmūd who was extremely terrified at Sher’s sudden approach, tried to buy off his hostility by a heavy indemnity, although he was advised by the Portuguese to hold on till the help from Goa was available. Sher Khān now extended his territories upto Teliagarhi which was rightly regarded, in those days, as the gateway to Bengal.

By this time, another new force was operating in the political and economic life of Bengal. The Ḥusain Shāhī period of Bengal’s history witnessed the introduction of the Portuguese power in this country. Maḥmūd’s predecessors, Ḥusain and Nuṣrat were not probably sympathetically disposed towards the Portuguese who wanted trading facilities in Bengal. Affonso de Mello and Duarte de Azevedo who landed in Chittagong in 1532 ostensibly “to open commerce with Bengal”, were not kindly received by the sultan at whose instigation, many of the Portuguese were killed in Chittagong. Mello and Azevedo were kept confined. In 1534, Nuno de Gunha, the Portuguese governor

of Goa, sent Antonio de Silva Menezes to Bengal, demanding from the sultan, an explanation of his attitude towards the Portuguese and the immediate release of Affonso de Mello. But nothing could improve Bengal’s relation with the Portuguese till Maḥmūd was forced to depend on the military assistance of the Portuguese to check Sher Shāh’s attack. In 1537, the Portuguese governor let him know that he was incapable of helping him immediately but that he could “assuredly” do so in the following year. Maḥmūd ha already allowed them to build fortresses and factories at Chittagong and Satgāon. The right to have custom-houses at these trade centres together with that of collecting rent from the local people greatly enhanced the power of the Portuguese in Bengal.¹ Short-sighted as he was, Maḥmūd could hardly realize the extent of the economic drainage that such an extravagant concession was going to cause to his kingdom. The political stability of the country was going to be jeopardized as a result of “the first establishment of the Portuguese in Bengal, almost simultaneously in Chittagong and Satgāon.”² Bengal’s commercial interests which were quite carefully safeguarded by ‘Alī-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh and Nūrṣat Shāh, were thus easily sacrificed by their incompetent successor Maḥmūd Shāh.

In 1537, Sher Khān’s position was far better than what it had been in the previous year, for he was not only the de facto ruler of Bihār, but also the absolute master of the Telīagarhi pass. Imprudent and imbecile as he was, Maḥmūd of Bengal was no match for Sher, nor could emperor Humāyūn stand comparison with him. This is what was illustrated by subsequent developments. Sher came to Gaūḍ for the second time and demanded a large sum of money from Maḥmūd as annual tribute. The latter having refused to pay this, he besieged Gaūḍ. When Humāyūn proceeded towards Chunār with a view to laying siege to it, Sher left Jalāl Khān and Khwās Khān to continue the siege of Gaūḍ and hurried to Chunār to keep the

Mughals engaged there till the subjugation of Gauḍ was completely finished. When the Bengalis were going to face starvation, Maḥmūd came out of the fort, encountered the enemy, was wounded and defeated in the battle and fled towards Ḥājīpūr in North Bihār. Gauḍ thus fell into the hands of the Afghāns on the 5th of April, 1538. Maḥmūd sent an envoy to Humāyūn who was now at Barkunda after the capture of Chunar, requesting him to attack Sher’s army in Bengal. Joining Humāyūn at Darwespur, he now proceeded towards Bengal. Arriving at Kahlaaon, he came to know of the execution of his two sons by the Afghāns at Gauḍ, when the unfortunate sultān of Bengal died in utter mental affliction.1

Thus the independence of Bengal came to an end in 1538. Maḥmūd did not have the competence to utilize to his advantage the political legacy left behind by his illustrious predecessors. He had neither diplomatic foresight, nor any practical approach to the political problems which beset Bengal’s life in his reign. Had he been able to win over the Portuguese to his side earlier than 1537, their services

could have been fruitfully utilized in checking Sher’s aggression. But he does not seem to have dreamt of such a course of action until circumstances forced him to take their help quite late. An early alliance with Sher or Humayun could have delayed the catastrophe of 1538 by a few years more. But Mahmud failed totally to have a grasp of the political situation.

The year 1538 marks the end of a significant period of the history of Bengal and the beginning of an era of chaos and confusion which troubled her life down to early seventeenth century.
CHAPTER III

ADMINISTRATION UNDER HUSAIN SHAHI SULTANS

ADMINISTRATION in the period in question is undoubtedly an interesting subject of study. Although materials at our disposal are of a fragmentary nature, an attempt may be made to throw some light on the different aspects of the Husain Shāhi state on the basis of numismatic and epigraphic evidences supplemented by the information gathered from contemporary Persian and Bengali sources.

It was not possible for the Husain Shāhs to build up an administrative structure entirely new. They found a system already at work which was elaborated and followed by the Ilyās Shāhs and the Abyssinians. All that Husain Shāh and his successors could do was to make some improvements upon the existing system. 'Ālī-ud-dīn Husain Shāh, the founder of the dynasty who was closely associated with the administrative affairs of the country in the reign of Shams-ud-dīn Muḥaffar Shāh (1491-1493), the last of the Abyssinians, had no doubt the opportunity of studying the weak points of his administration. Thus it is quite likely that his personal experience greatly helped him in framing the administrative principles for the kingdom of Gauḍ.
He was conscious of the fact that administrative anomalies had worked against the stability of the state during the Abyssinian regime. This explains why we find him disbanding the paiks and banishing the Abyssinians whose conspiracy and ambition had already convulsed the country. Ḩusain addressed himself to the task of political settlement by transferring the seat of administration from Gauḍ to Ekdālā, appointing a number of efficient governors in different provinces and reducing disloyal elements to order.¹ These measures clearly indicate the sultān’s care and anxiety for introducing administrative reforms in the country. Thus the circumstances under which the Ḩusain Shāhīs were placed suggest that they were greatly influenced by their predecessors in administrative details.

It is a well-established fact of history that Bengal formed very often a province of the Delhi Sultānate from the time of Bakhtiyār’s invasion down to the first half of the fourteenth century when the Ilyās Shāhīs successfully tried to assert the independence of this country. During this period Bengal administration was possibly a close copy of the administration of the Sultānate of Delhi. It may be inferred that some of the north Indian features had reached the Ḩusain Shāhīs through the administrative machinery of the Ilyās Shāhīs and the Abyssinians. Although they do not seem to have exercised any dominating influence over the Ḩusain Shāhī administration, they were gradually absorbed into the system. At the present stage of our knowledge, the original contributions of the Ḩusain Shāhīs can hardly be distinguished from what they had borrowed from the Ilyās Shāhīs and the sultāns of Delhi. But some of the official titles of the Ḩusain Shāhīs are commonly present in the systems followed by the Ilyās Shāhīs and the Turko-Afghan rulers of Delhi.²

The state built up by the Ḩusainī rulers was in all possibility indebted to ‘Alā’-ud-dīn Ḩusain Shah for its guiding policy

¹. Supra. ch. II, p. 36.
². For an elaboration of this point, see below.
which was followed by his successors with occasional modifications. 


nuṣrat, Firūz and Mahmūd had hardly any necessity to completely alter the general policies adopted by the founder of the dynasty. The whole political machinery seems to have corresponded to the demand of the time and circumstances.

As the supreme head of the state, the sultan was the fountain-head of all powers. He was inseparably connected with the governmental structure so that the whole picture becomes unthinkable if he is left out. Since he had to personally lead some expeditions against Kāmrūp-Kānta and Jānagar-Orissa, it may be suggested that he had to occasionally delegate the exercise of his authority to an officer to conduct the administration during his absence from the capital. But this was surely a stop-gap measure and the final authority must have remained with the sultan.

‘Ala’-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh assumed the regal title, “Khālifah of God by proof and evidence.” We do not know if his successors had also similar titles. The assumption of this title by Ḥusain Shāh does not seem to be an accidental feature of his policy. The sultan simply revived the practice started by Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh and continued by some of the Īlyās Shāhī and Abyssinian rulers. In fact the title khālisfatullah has got a long, constitutional and historical background. The legal authority of the Khālifah has been explicitly recognized by ‘Īwād Khalji, Muḥṭīḥ-ud-dīn Yūzbak, Rukn-ud-dīn Kaikātūs, Shams-ud-dīn Firūz and

1. The wording of the Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain Shāh dated 918 A.H./1512 A.D., shows that he personally took part in these campaigns; supra. p. 51.

the last ruler’s sons, all of whom have mentioned the name of the ‘Abbāsid Khalifah on their coins. These rulers have declared themselves as ‘the Helper of the Commander of the Faithful.’ With the foundation of the independent state of Bengal, the attitude of the Bengal sultāns towards the institution of Khilāfat underwent a slight change. Dropping the name of the Khalifah from the coins, they began to inscribe such legends as ‘Helper of the Commander of the Faithful’ and ‘Helper of Islam and the Muslims.’ It was Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh who for the first time in the history of Bengal, declared himself khalifatullāh or ‘the Vicegerent of God’. This example was followed by some of the later Ilyās Shāhīs and by at least one of the Abyssinian rulers.¹

A similar process was at work in the Sultānate of Delhi. The sultāns of this part used to get recognition to their rule after having received the diploma of investiture from the Khalifah of Baghdad. Of the Delhi sultāns, Iltutmīs and Muḥammad bin Tughluq received such investiture. There were some sultāns who owed allegiance to the Khalifah even without recognition from him. This explains why the name of Mustaṣṣīm continued to be mentioned on the coins issued from Delhi long after the death of that Khalifah. Rukn-ud-dīn Ibrāhīm and ‘Ala’-ud-dīn Khalji declared their belief in the legal power of the Khalifah by assuming the titles, nāṣir-i-amīr-ul-mumīnīn and yamīn-ul-Khilāfat respectively. The Saiyids, the Lūdis and Bahmani rulers followed similar procedure quite traditionally expressing their belief in the legal status of the Khalifah. Qūṭ-ud-dīn Mubārak Shāh of Delhi proclaimed himself ‘the Khalifah of the Sustainer of the two worlds’, ‘the most mighty Imām’ and ‘the Commander of the Faithful’.²

2. For a discussion on these points, see I. H. Qureshi: The Administration of the Sultāns of Delhi, p. 27 ff; A. Karim in J.N.S.I, xvii, ii, p. 88.
Thus the legal position of the ‘Abbâsid Khilifah was unquestionably established in India and also in pre-Mughal Bengal. With the destruction of the Khilafat, different rulers were assuming the Khilafat titles. It was in this political milieu that Ḥusain Shâh of Bengal was flourishing. So the assumption of the Khilafat title by him seems easily understandable. Since the institution of Khilafat had played an important part in the Sunni Muslim world, Ḥusain Shâh possibly wanted to win the support of the sunnis of Bengal by assuming the Khilafat title. This act thus fictitiously legalized his position as a ruler. Ḥusain Shâh who had supplanted the Abyssinians might have otherwise been regarded as a usurper. Whatever might have been the political motive that actuated him to assume this title, it may be suggested here that Bengal had an apparently legal sovereign in the person of Ḥusain Shâh. The reason why his successors did not not assume this title can hardly be ascertained.

There was no hard and fast rule of succession, nor was the law of primogeniture strictly enforced. This feature has been noticed by Bâbur, Faria y Souza and Niẓâm-ud-din. The death of every sultan was followed generally by chaos and confusion. The nobles used to play an important part in selecting the ruler. In these circumstances, no regular rule of succession could be followed. Ḥusain Shâh seems to have nominated Nuṣrat, as his successor to the throne of Bengal, for the latter issued coins in his own name in 1516. This is a privilege which could be granted only to the crown-prince. It is suggested by some of the coins of Mahmûd that he was the heir-apparent. Although Nuṣrat could succeed his father to the Sulṭânate, his younger brother Mahmûd could not succeed him, for the nobles raised Nuṣrat’s son, Firuz to the throne of

2. Wright: Catalogue, ii, pt. ii, pp. 177-78, nos. 211 and 212 (Bengal).
3. Appendix A.
Gauḍ after having cancelled the claims of Maḥmūd. Maḥmūd, however, asserted his right of inheritance by ascending the throne after having killed Firuz. This irregularity in succession was a regular feature also in pre-Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal. In this connection we may notice a peculiar feature of the Ḥusain Shāhī administration. The crown-prince was probably allowed by the reigning sultan to issue coins in his own name.

The ruler had several servants and officials attached to his person. There was a number of body-guards who were placed under a chief body-guard. Bengali sources give us the name of Keshava Khān Chhatri who served as the Chief of the guards of Ḥusain. Several palace guards were placed in the guardroom and on the band-stand. They were under the control of a commandant. The guards of Ḥusain replaced the pāiks who together with their commandants were playing an extremely mischievous role under the Abyssinians and the Ilyās Shāhīs by deposing or murdering one sultan and placing another on the throne. There was a private physician or antaraṅga whose services were available for all medical purposes.

Epigraphic records show that there was a sharābdār-i-ghair-mahalī, or ‘the bearer of the cup outside the palace,’ also known as jāmdār-i-ghair-mahalī. This office existed also

1. Supra, ch. ii, pp. 79 and 82.
2. See appendix A.
under the Abyssiniëns and Ilyäs Shāhīs. We do not come across this officer under the Sulṭānate of Delhi. Although the title is apparently of no significance, it was no doubt an important office. It was generally conferred on one of the local governors who used to accompany the ruler during his expeditions. His duty was presumably to supervise the drinks to be supplied to the ruler and this was a precaution against poison. As poison could be easily administered through drinks, the office was necessarily given to one who enjoyed the full confidence of the ruler. The expression, sharābdār-i-ghair-mahallī suggests that the sulṭān had another sharābdār inside the palace to look after drinks. This is what we practically find in the Delhi Sulṭānate where drink was generally served by the sāqi-i-ḥāfīs.

The royal household required no doubt the services of various minor and major servants about whom nothing is known. The sulṭāns of Delhi had wakīl-i-dār, amīr hājīb, nāṣīb bārbak, naqīb and other officials whose duties were respectively to control the household affairs, to manage the ceremonies at the court, to act as sulṭān's deputy, to proclaim orders to the soldiers and to the populace and so on. We may reasonably assume here that the Ḫusain Ṣhāhīs could hardly dispense with the services of similar officers whose official titles might have differed from those under the sulṭāns of Delhi. It seems that eunuchs and slaves were serving in various capacities in the royal household. In fact they were playing the roles of kings and kingmakers during the Ḫabshī regime. Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese traveller, has maintained that some of them enjoyed lucrative posts. According to Niẓām-ud-dīn, Malik

Marjān who was sent as envoy by Nuṣrat Shāh to Gujarāt was a cunuch.¹

The ruler used to sit in darbār where he met the important nobles and officials, conferred occasionally honorary titles on them, presented robes of honour to the governors and appointed the high officials, generals and administrators.² It goes without saying that the powerful Ḥusain Shāh and his successors must have had a magnificent court in a richly decorated hall to capture the imagination of the people.

Although we know nothing about the functions of the sultan, it may be maintained here that these must have included the protection of territories, collection of taxes, enforcing laws, maintaining order, appointment of officers and looking after the public interest. These have always been the functions of the royal office.

II

The nobility played an important part in administration. It was composed of heterogeneous elements like Arabs, Pathans, Mughals and Bengalis.³ The nobles used to receive high-sounding honorary titles like khān-i-aʾzam, ḥāqān-i-muʿāẓẓam,

2. According to the *Parāgal Mahābhārat*, Ḥusain Shāh did honour to Paragal Khān, the newly appointed lāshkar of Chittagong, by giving him a golden robe and horses; *op. cit.* quoted by D. C. Sen: *op. cit.* p. 94. Similar information is available in the *Āśvamedha Parva*, p. 3. Ḥusain appointed and dismissed several generals during his Tippera expeditions; *Rājamalā*: pp. 22-28. This could be done obviously in a darbār, a vivid picture of which is available in Chinese accounts; *Si yang ch'iao kung tien lu*; *Sing ch'a sheng lan* and *Shu yu chou tseu lu*; tran. by Bagchi in *Viśva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, pt. i, pp. 121-22, 126-27 and 131.
pahlavi-i\'a sr-waz-zaman, kh\'an-i-mu\'a zsam, majlis-ul-majalis, al-malik
ul-mu\'a zsam-wal-mukarram, malik-ul-umara\' wal-wazara, mahapatra-
dhipatra and so on.¹ They influenced the different departments of
the government, as administrators, generals and sometimes as king-
makers. The nobility does not seem to have had any heredi-
tary character. Its influence considerably increased in the
reigns of Firuz and Mahmud Sh\'ah when the nobles were deciding
the fateful issues of the day.² We shall suggest in a subsequent
section of this work that at least some of them constituted
rent-receiving interest in this country. It is fairly well-established
that they were enjoying jagir in Mughal and pre-Mughal
India. The nobles of Husain Sh\'ahi Bengal do not seem to
have been much different from their north-Indian counterparts.
The somewhat feudal basis of Bengal administration under the
P\'elas and the Senas does not seem to have undergone any
appreciable modification in the early period of Muslim rule.
The system of government introduced by Bakhtiyar clearly indi-
cates what may be called its feudal nature. Bakhtiyar divided the
country into military holdings among a number of military officers
also called muqti\'s.³ This type of government was at work even
long afterwards. At the time of Bengal expedition, Firuz Tughluq
is said to have promised an increase in grants of lands to the
nobility and a similar increase in the land-holdings of the military
officers. It appears that the aqt\'a or a similar system was prevailing
in pre-Mughal Bengal. The military governors of the Husain
Sh\'ahi period perhaps enjoyed revenue assignments like the
muqti\'s. The tendency towards decentralization in Bengal adminis-
tration noticed by Babur, and the provincial wazir depicted in
Bengali literature as controlling revenue farmers, add strength
to this suggestion. Babur has mentioned that the manshadari

1. These titles are found in the inscriptions of Husain Sh\'ahi rulers,
published in different journals and books which we have used in this
2. The nobles were responsible for bringing Firuz to power to the
prejudice of Mahmud; Riyad, pp. 139-40; supra, pp. 51-52.
III. ]

ADMINISTRATION

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system was prevailing in Bengal under Ḥusain Shāh sultān, for which statement we have no support in the contemporary sources. He seems to have confused the local land-lords and provincial governors of Bengal with mansūbdārs.

III

It was not possible for the Ḥusain Shāhīs to conduct the administration without the help of others. They had to depend on a number of officials for the smooth and prompt working of the governmental machinery. It seems that there were several departments, like those of finance, correspondence, police, judiciary and military affairs, though it is not clear whether their functions and jurisdiction were well-defined. These departments worked under the sultāns of Delhi and under Sher Shāh as well. We have hardly any reason to think that the Ḥusain Shāhīs could dispense with the services of these departments which are always necessarily connected with every administrative system.

The Prime Minister had some sort of controlling influence over the different departments. Saiyid Ḥusain who was the wuzūr and administrator of the affairs of the government under the last Ḥabash sultān, was directly responsible for reducing the pay of soldiers, starting the construction of a treasury and making extortionate demands of revenue from the subjects. We find a similar officer named Ḥabash Khān who was connected with the financial and administrative affairs of Nāṣir-ud-dīn Mahmūd II (1490-91). This is, of course, the information about the position of what may be called Administrator General in pre-Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal. It may be conjectured here that the office was retained also by the Ḥusain Shāhīs. From what has

1. Memoirs, ii, p. 482.
4. In one of his works, Saṅatana tells us that he was the Mahāmantrī or Prime Minister of Ḥusain Shāh. S. K. De : Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal, p. 110.
been stated by Salim and Firuztah, it is quite clear that the office was closely connected with the finance and military departments at the centre and that the officer could occasionally act as the sultan's alter ego.

The department of correspondence was perhaps an integral part of the central secretariat. It was under the control of the dabir-i-khāṣ or private secretary who used to deal with all the correspondence between the sultan and his officials and tributaries or the rulers of the foreign countries. Since the dabir-i-khāṣ had to occasionally deal with confidential correspondence, he is supposed to have enjoyed complete confidence of the ruler. This office had its counterpart in the administration of the Delhi Sultanate where it was "a stepping stone to the wazarat."² It seems that the dabir-i-khāṣ was assisted in his activities by a number of subordinate dabirs. The department needed the cooperation of the kār-i-farmān³ whose duty was probably to issue royal orders to those whom they might concern and the katibs who had to copy different letters and documents. The inscription of an earlier period clearly shows that the katib sometimes won the title like zarīn-dast or 'golden-handed'⁴ due to his proficiency in the different styles of writing.

The police department or diwān-i-kotwāli which was placed in charge of the chief police officer or the kotwāl-bakā'li is

1. Kṛṣṇadas Kaviraj: op. cit. p. 76. See also Chaitanya-bhāgavat pp. 8 and 82.
2. I. H. Qureshi: op. cit. 86-88; cf: A. B. M. Habibullah: op. cit. p. 239.
mentioned as a provincial department in the Devikot inscription dated 1512. It may be quite reasonably inferred that this ḍīwān had its central counterpart also. This department had a number of subordinate kotwāls whose duties were to maintain peace and order and also to watch the movement of strangers in the city. It was connected with the criminal court presided over by a judge or munsīf who used to try criminal cases. There was probably a well-organized espionage system which kept the ruler regularly posted about what was happening in and around his territories. The spies or secret agents who were appointed by the ruler has been called jāsu or dānī in Bengali literature. Thus this spy system helped the sullān a great deal in exercising effective control over the governors of the outlying regions of his kingdom.

Although we know nothing about the judiciary department of the Ḥusain Shāḥs, it may be mentioned here that legal problems and Muslim traditions were interpreted by a learned man who was "the chief of the lawyers and teachers of traditions", also known as malik-ul-umara wā'īl wazarā, mentioned in the Sonārgān inscription of Nuṣrat Shāh. The convicts were confined to jail which was under a chief jailor.

No information is avilable about the finance department. It may be easily understood that the vast revenue of the kingdom, its customs and other varieties of income were placed at the disposal of this department with which the prime minister was directly connected. Such was the arrangement made under the Turko-Afghāns and the Mughals. There was an officer

called wazir-i-lashkar in Gauḍ inscription\(^1\) of Fath Shāh dated 1484, which appears to be a mistake for the terms wazir wa sar-lashkar, mentioned so frequently in the inscriptions of pre-Mughal Bengal. But the term is found in the Sylhet inscription\(^2\) of Ḥusain Shāh and also in the Memoirs of Bābur\(^3\) where it appears as lashkar wazir. It appears possibly as baḍa wazir in the Ahom Burāñji.\(^4\) Both the Memoirs and the Burañji connect this officer with military affairs. It may, therefore, be mentioned that the officer dealt with the financial side of the military department.\(^5\) It seems thus identical with the office of the mīr baḷāshah\(^6\) or the Pay Master General of the Mughals. The officer had presumably to come in contact with the head of the finance department in connection with payment to the soldiers. Coins were struck in a mint at the capital and deposited in the treasury. There were a mint-master and a treasurer to look after the mint and treasury administration. A number of Ḥusain Shāh coins containing the term Khazanāh\(^7\) indicates that they were issued direct from the central treasury.

5. In a succeeding section of this chapter, it has been suggested that the provincial governor of this period, known as wazir, dealt with the provincial finance in addition to his military functions hinted at by the term sar-i-lashkar appearing in a number of inscriptions. If any importance is attached to the financial significance of the term wazir, the expression wazir lashkar may be taken to mean the office of the Pay Master General of the army, and not probably that of war minister.
The Ḥusain Shāḥs had a well-organized army which was perhaps under the jurisdiction of the military department. The Ḥusain Shāḥi army was composed of infantry of pāiks, cavalry, artillery, navy and elephants. Since the days of the

1. A rough idea about the numerical strength of the Ḥusain Shāḥi army may be gleaned from the following. Vasco da Gama remarked in 1498: "Bengaula has a Moorish king and a mixed population of Christians and Moors. Its army may be about twenty-four thousand strong, ten thousand being cavalry, and the rest infantry, with four hundred war elephants". Quoted by Campos: op. cit. p. 25. This figure tallies with what has been given by Shihāb-ud-Din Taltish according to whom Ḥusain Shāh attacked Assam with 24,000 soldiers; J.A.S.B. 1872, p. 79, but the figure mentioned in the Bodleian ms., or. 589, fol. 35b, is 20,000. It appears that the sultan utilized the services of the whole army in his war with the Ahoms. This is impossible, for he must have left a considerable number of soldiers at the capital and also at the different frontiers as a precautionary defence measure against any possible external attack. The total strength of the army must have exceeded 24,000. The invading army of Nuṣrat Shāh who attacked the Ahoms consisted of 1,000 horse, one million men including the land and naval forces, a huge park of artillery and thirty elephants. The Ahom Burañji, ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 67-68; Gait: op. cit. p. 90. One million is an incredible figure indeed! This increase in the army of Nuṣrat may be explained in two ways: (a) The Burañji has perhaps magnified the number of the Muslim soldiers. (b) It may otherwise be suggested that the numerical strength of the army had considerably increased under Nuṣrat, the change being due largely to the rising tide of Mughal imperialism which Nuṣrat was unsuccessfully counteracting. Besides a huge body of infantry and a number of elephants, Ḥāji Ilyās had a force of 90,000 cavalry; History of Bengal, ii, p. 108. It follows from Vasbo da Gama’s account, that Ḥusain Shāh reduced the number to 24,000 while his immediate successor increased it so much so that it surpassed the Ilyās Shāhi army in number. In that case Nuṣrat had to raise the strength from 24,000 to one million. But this increase seems to be abnormal.

2. The Ahom Burañji, ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 67-73; Memoirs, ii,
first Ilyās Shāhī, Bengali pāiks were fighting with reckless valour. There were occasions when they tackled the political situation of the country which very often resulted in serious chaos affecting the normalcy of Bengal’s life. Even when Bengal was a part of the Delhi Sultanate, she used to supply the best of the pāiks to the sultāns of Delhi.1 According to Joao de Barros, Husain Shāhī pāiks used bows, arrows and guns.2 Bābur who had the opportunity to meet the soldiers of Nusrat Shāh, has given an account of the disposition of the Bengali foot-soldiers in the battle field. The troops were generally drawn up into three or four divisions so that they might attack the enemy army in the flank and get to grips with them. Without breaking the array, the commander used to fling the foot-soldiers to the front and thus proceeded forward.3 This was a peculiarity of the battle array which naturally drew the attention of Bābur.

The cavalry was possibly the weakest part of the Husain Shāhī army. Since good horses were not available in this part, they had to always depend on foreign countries for the supply of horses. From the inscriptions of pre-Mughal Bengal, we know of the title of two cavalry officers, the sar-i-khālī4 and the sipah sālār,5 the reading of the latter being, of course, of a doubtful nature. But the term sipahsālār, has been mentioned by Mahuan6 who visited Bengal in the beginning of the fifteenth

2. Campos: op. cit. p. 34.
5. The Mandāran inscription of Husain Shāh, dated 1494-95, contains the term shāhlar mubārak, J.A.S.B. 1917, p. 134. It seems that sipah, the first unit of the whole expression, has disappeared.
century. These two titles are not at all sufficient for the formation of an idea about the organization of the cavalry forces of the Husain Shāhīs. But we may see how they have been used in the military organization of contemporary northern India. Several horsemen were usually under a sar-i-khāil; a sipahsālār had several sar-i-khāils under him; a number of sipahsālārs was placed under an amīr; amīrs were subordinate to the khāns.¹ This was, of course, a theoretical arrangement which underwent many changes in practice and the term, sipahsālār, was very often applied to the commander-in-chief. Whatever might have been the gradation of the cavalry officers in North India, we have no reason to think that Bengal accepted it without any modification. It appears that the commander-in-chief was known as sipahsālār and the sar-i-khāil was the chief of the cavalry in Bengal. The cavalry organization made by the Ilyās Shāhīs, continued under the Husain Shāhīs.

Artillery was an important section of the army. Bābur has characterized it as a very effective part of the Bengal army.² De Barros says that the military supremacy which the sultāns of Bengal attained over the rulers of Arakan and Tippera was largely due to the efficiency of their artillery.³ The Ahom Buraṇji gives to the Bengalis the credit of “opening fire from their large guns and flint guns”. In fact, cannon and guns used were of various sizes and the rulers of Bengal were reputed for fire-working.⁴

The admiralty department was an unavoidable necessity in Bengal which is covered by a network of rivers. The cavalry could ensure the hold over this country only for a period of six months, whereas the boat backed by the Bengali pāiks could command supremacy over the enemy in the rainy

² Memoirs, ii, p. 672.
³ Supra, p. 84.
season covering the other half of the year. The sultāns of Delhi who had no strong navy used to attack Bengal generally in the dry season, for no effective head-way could be made during the rainy season. Since the time of 'Iwaḍ, the flotilla of war boats had been playing a significant role in the political history of this country. 'Ala'-ud-din Ḥusain Shāh and his successors used their fleet in different battles, possibly not without success. The Dhamrai inscription of Fath Shāh dated 1482 A.D. mentions the official title mīr-i-bāhr or admiral. It seems highly probable that this office was continued by the Ḥusain Shāhīs also. The naval department was placed in charge of this officer. According to Abū'l Faḍl, the duty of the admiral was as follows: (a) to build boats of all kinds for river transport; (b) to fit out strong boats for transporting war elephants; (c) to recruit efficient seamen; (d) to supervise the rivers and (e) to collect duties at the ferryghāts. Similar ideas about the function of the admiralty can be gleaned from the Bahārīstān-i-Ghaibī. Towards the end of the Ḥusain Shāhī rule, the naval power of Bengal seems to have become extremely weak.

Elephants played an important part in the Bengal army. The power of Ḥājī Ilyās was due largely to his strong and big elephants. Nuṣrat Shāh used elephants in his war with the Ahoms who are said to have captured some of them. Sher Khān who defeated Ḏūb Khān, the general of Maḥmūd Shah III, captured a good number of elephants. In the Sultānate of Delhi, an officer called shahnah-i-pīl, was in charge of elephants. We do not know if the Ḥusain Shāhīs

had a similar office. But it is certain that the body of elephants maintained by them required the services of several men, including the stable-keepers.

IV

It is very difficult to form an estimate of the revenue administration of the Ḥusain Shāhīs, for materials relating to it are extremely meagre. We may take into account what Abū’l Faḍl has said about the revenue system of medieval Bengal. He remarks, ‘The people are submissive and pay their rents duly. The demands of each year are paid by instalments in eight months, they themselves bringing mohars and rupees to the appointed place for the receipt of revenue as the division of grain between the government and the husbandman is not here customary. The harvests are always abundant, measurement is not insisted upon, and the revenue demands are determined by estimate of the crop. His Majesty in goodness has confirmed this custom’.

If carefully analyzed, this statement shows the following features: (a) the annual demands of the government were paid in eight monthly instalments; (b) the cash payments were made by the peasants direct to the government; (c) the method of crop-estimation was generally followed; (d) survey and measurement were not insisted upon and (e) what Abū’l Faḍl has said relates even to pre-Mughal Bengal and this old method was allowed by Akbar to continue.

This account is of immense importance, throwing, as it does, much light on the revenue system which was in vogue towards the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The customs mentioned might have prevailed in Bengal in the period of confusion and also in the Ḥusain Shāhī period, for the Ṣūrūs and the Karrānīs had hardly any time to bring about a complete alteration in the revenue administration of the country. In spite of these circumstances, the statement of Abū’l Faḍl

cannot be accepted in an unqualified manner. So far as the period under review is concerned, uniformity in the revenue administration all over the country was probably rare. Although the statement may be true of the areas under the direct control of the provincial governors, the system might not have applied to the lands which were under the native majmu’adārs and the Portuguese farmers whose existence in some parts of Bengal, serves as a strong argument against the possibility of direct payment categorically mentioned by Abū’l Faḍl. Again the presence of the term taqsim in a Bengali work, which relates, according to Moreland, to the apportionment of produce, points to the prevalence of the system of division of crop at least in some parts of the country. While speaking about an earlier period, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah informs us that the cultivators of the villages on either side of ‘blue river’ used to give to the government half of the crops they produced. Equally untenable is, perhaps, the view that payment in cash was a regular system in those days when use of coins must have been quite limited. Although measurement might not have been “insisted upon”, we do not have adequate reason to believe that it was totally absent in the country. Kavikaṇkan’s incidental reference to the antiquated measuring units like kāṭha and kuḍa, indicates that the system of measurement was in vogue in Bengal. The poet’s statement that the shiqdār was measuring fifteen kāṭhās to a kuḍa without listening to the painful entreaties of the subjects, hints at the fact that the Mughal officers working in Bengal in the period of transition, were bringing about changes in the existing system of measuring, causing hardship to the people. Thus it may be reasonably suggested that while the system of measurement was followed in some parts of the country, that of crop-estimation prevailed in some other parts.

2. The Agrarian System of Moslem India, pp. 243-47, Appendix E.
The sulṭāns derived their revenue from the lands under the control of the provincial governors and also from the local estate-holders and the Portuguese farmers. Lands granted as religious endowments were generally free from the payment of revenue.

There was a section of people known as majmu’adārs. The Chaitanya-charitāmṛta has referred to the estates possessed by Hiraṇya Dās and Govardhana Dās who collected twenty lakhs as rent and paid twelve lakhs to the government.¹ This shows the nature of majmu’adārī in south-west Bengal. The majmu’adārs were thus the contracting parties who used to pay a fixed amount to the royal treasury out of what was collected from the peasants. Within their estates, these farmers possibly conducted the revenue administration as they pleased, sometimes making extortionate demands on the peasants. The government which was satisfied with a fixed sum of money, could hardly be expected to look into the internal affairs of these estates. But the majmu’adārs had no right of hereditary succession to these estates, which could change hands from time to time.² This seems to have served as a positive check on the individual whims of the majmu’adārs subjected also to the authority of provincial governors who could keep a vigilant eye on their activities. To illustrate this, we may cite the case of Rām Chandra Khān who was mercilessly tortured by the Muslim wazīr for his arrear rent.³

The Portuguese also acquired rent-receiving interest in this country. They were allowed by Maḥmut Shāh III to control the customs of Sātgāon and Chittagong, build factories there and collect revenues from the adjoining areas.⁴ It seems that these Portuguese settlements were similar to the majmu’adārī

already discussed. Their relation with the sultan was based on contract, according to which, they paid an annual tribute to the sultan and managed the revenue affairs within their settlements. 'Abd-ul-Hamid Lahori informs us that the Portuguese received Satgoon "at a low rent". This means that much margin was left in favour of the Portuguese ijārar and that the tribute which they were to pay to the sultan was purely of a nominal nature. It appears from what Castanheda has said that the chief of the custom-house of Chittagong collected much revenue from the Hindu and Muslim inhabitants. Nothing is known about the nature of the agrarian system followed by the Portuguese in these areas. The conjecture made by Moreland in this connection is as follows: "In view of the conditions which prevailed", he says, "it is reasonable to infer that these farms were in the nature of clearing leases, that is to say, a fixed annual payment was accepted for vacant land, which the farmer had to bring under cultivation in order to obtain a profit". It must be mentioned here that nothing has been found as yet to substantiate this statement. It is natural that the Portuguese were giving reasonable advantages to the Christians who were settling in these areas.

We do not know if jāgirdar was a regular system in Bengal in the period in question. Nizammud-din tells us, "Naṣib Shāh bestowed on all of them jagirs, as far as possible and depending on the exigencies of the time". Similar ideas have also been expressed by Salīm and Firīštah who do not, of course, mention the term 'jāgir'. These authors have referred to the Afghān political refugees who came to Bengal after

1. Padishāhnāmah, i, pp. 434 and 437; Elliot and Dowson: op. cit. vol. viii, p. 32.
2. Quoted by Campos: op. cit. p. 46.
4. Nizām-ud-din: op. cit. iii, p. 271; Eng. tran. iii, 444.
having escaped the attack of Bābur. Since they are not mentioned by our writers as having accepted service under Nuṣrat Shāh, we do not find any reason to support the view that they enjoyed jāgīrs in Bengal. The jāgīr, in the strict sense of the term, could follow only as a necessary corollary of services which might be rendered to the royalty. Niẓām-ud-dīn who was thoroughly acquainted with the jāgīr system in North India seems to have confused the Afghān settlements of Bengal with jāgīrdārī. These settlements might be of the nature of ijāradārī already noticed by us. Should we then suggest that jāgīrdārī was totally absent in Bengal? An affirmative answer to this question cannot be given due to certain reasons. It was widely in vogue in the different parts of India. Niẓām-ud-dīn actually makes a difference between zamīndārī and jāgīrdārī when he says that Sikandar Lūdī granted some parganahs in jāgīr to his own men, taking them from the possession of zamīndārs in Bihār. The author has quite catagorically mentioned that the system worked under Ibrāhīm Lūdī also. Mahuan who came to Bengal in the early part of the fifteenth century, found the soldiers and military officers receiving cash payments and also noticed the wide circulation of ‘tanka’ and cowries. The system of cash payments does not preclude the possibility of the prevalence of jāgīr system, for both might go on side by side in this country. As there was restricted circulation of coins in those days, payments could be conveniently made only through systems like jāgīrdārī.

The zamīndārī system in the modern sense of the term was probably absent. Abūl Faḍl says that in the sarkār Fatḥābād alone, there were three classes of zamīndārs and that the revenue received from the independent talukdārs of the sarkār

1. Niẓām-ud-dīn: op. cit. vol. i, p. 320; see also pp. 332 and 335.
2. Ibid. i, p. 343. For the mention of jāgīrs under Sher Shāh and Humāyūn, consult Tabaqat, ii, pp. 38, 86 and 87.
Sulaimanabad amounted to 213,067 dams. Kavikaankan states that he lived in the taluk of Gopinath Niog. It may be pointed out here that the rent-roll of Todar Mall which is the basis of Abul Faal’s information might have confused ijara with zamindari. Again what Kavikaankan has said may apply only to the period of transition and not necessarily to the period under discussion. Some writers have tried to indicate the antiquity of some of the zamindar families of Bengal. But their views are generally based on local traditions which are not always historically reliable. It seems that the majmu’adars and ijaraadars had grown into hereditary landlords during the period of confusion. Moreland has shown how the term zamindari was used in various senses. If the local farmers are regarded as zamindars, we have got nothing to say. What appears to us is that the system was not hereditary in a particular family or families in Husain Shahi Bengal.

Customs constituted another source of income. They were generally realized at the river-stations and also at the different ports and towns of the country. The ports were generally provided with custom-houses each of which was placed under a custom-chief, directly appointed by the sultan. The Portuguese accounts speak of the custom-houses of Chittagong and Sattgon. The chief custom officer was probably as powerful as the provincial governor. The mint was a regular source of income in those days.

The Husain Shahis were interested in public works of different kinds which are evidenced by the numerous inscriptions

1. Ain, ii, pp. 144 and 154.
5. Barbosa: op. cit. ii, p. 148; Castanheda: quoted by Campos: op. cit. p. 46; see also p. 39 of the same work.
of this period. Tanks, for the supply of water, bridges and mosques\(^1\) which they constructed undoubtedly increased the facilities for travel and greatly facilitated the internal trade of the country. Again these public works involved employment of a large number of labourers and thus helped the distribution of wealth in the country. But it is not clearly known whether there was a regular governmental department to control public works.

\[ V \]

It is not easy to give a correct list of the provinces into which Bengal was divided. The Ḍɪn has mentioned the following territorial units.\(^2\) The sarkārs called Lakhnauti, Purniyah, Tājpur, Panjrah, Ghorāghāt, Bārbakābad, Bāzūhā, Sylhet, Sonārgāon and Chātgāon comprised the region north and south of the Ganges. Sātgāon, Maḥmūdābad, Fatḥābad and Baklā covered the delta of the Ganges. The sarkārs south of the Ganges and west of the Bhāgrāthi were Tāndā, Shārīfābad, Sulaimānābad and Mandāran.

Blochmann has suggested that the above divisions represent the territorial and fiscal units of pre-Mughal Bengal. This inference can hardly stand scrutiny. The rent-roll of Todar Mall which has given these sarkārs, was prepared in 1582 when the Mughal state was in a fluid condition. It represents only an ideal picture of Bengal. This explains why Chātgāon has been included in the rent-roll, although it was not conquered during


the time of Akbar and Jahāngīr. In fact the territorial extent of Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal was greater than what is mentioned in the Āʿīn. But information as supplied by the Āʿīn cannot be summarily rejected, for the inscriptions of the period mention some of these divisions such as Tippera and Sylhet. 1 Again, Ḥusainābād, Fathābād, Nuṣratābād, Muʿaṣṣamābād, Khalīfatābād, Bārbakābād, Muḥammadābād, Mahmūdābād and Muḥaffārābād were the mint towns of this period. 2 It may be inferred here that these were also the provincial headquarters of Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal, each of these towns representing a particular region after which it was named. Ḥusainābād, Nuṣratābād and Mahmūdābād may be regarded as synonyms of Gauḍ. Bengali literature and Portuguese accounts tell us that Chittagong was under the control of the Ḥusain Shāhīs. 3 'Arṣah Sājīlāmānḵbād appears repeatedly in the Ḥusain Shāhī inscriptions. 4 Bengal inscriptions found at Sāran and Monghyr show that the Ḥusain Shāhī kingdom included southern and northern parts of Bihār. Similar information is supplied by Niẓām-ud-din and Bābur. 5 Mandsarān which appears in the Āʿīn as a sarkār, was partly included in the Ḥusain Shāhī kingdom. Thus the Āʿīn supplemented by numismatic and epigraphic evidences give us the following provinces of the Ḥusain Shāhī kingdom: (i) Chittagong, (ii) Tippera, (iii) iqlim Muʿaṣṣamābād, (iv) Sylhet, (v) Fathābād, (vi) Khalīfatābād, (vii) Lakhnauit or Ḥusainābād, (viii) Bārbakābād, (ix) Sātgaon, (x) 'arṣah Sājīlāmānḵbād, (xi) North

1. For the inscriptions see J.A.S.B. 1872, pp. 333-34; 1873, pp. 285-86; Cunningham: op. cit. p. 141; Dani: Bibliography, pp. 59 and 63; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, pp. 190 and 192. Ṭāmāh Lāud mentioned in the inscriptions of the time formed part of Sylhet.


Bihar with its headquarters at Hajipur, (xii) South Bihar with its political centre at Monghyr and (xiii) the newly conquered area of Kamarupa and Kamta. We do not know if Panjrah, Ghuraghat, Tajpur and Purniyah existed as separate provinces. They might have formed the parts of North Bihar, Barbakabad, and Lakhnauti provinces of the Husain Shâhis. Similarly, Mandaran might have been included in the 'arsah Sajlamankhabad and Bakla, in Fathabad. Sonargan was possibly included in iqlim Mu'tazzamabad.

Each of these provinces was variously known as iqlim, mulk or 'arsah. Thus there was hardly any uniformity in the administrative terminology of the country. The terms, iqlim, 'arsah and diyar were applied to the different parts of Bengal as early as the thirteenth century. 'Arsah Sattgon has been mentioned on the coins of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. These terms are found on a number of coins belonging to the Ilyas Shâhi period. The expression, mulk Chawalistan urf 'arsah Kamarî appearing on a coin of Sikandar Shâh, dated 759 A.H. clearly shows that the term mulk was identical with 'arsah. It is evident that the coins containing these terms were representing the provinces from which they were issued. All of them remained in circulation and neither Husain Shâhi nor Ilyas Shâhi rulers seem to have aimed at any uniformity so far as the use of these terms was concerned.

4. Lane-Poole: op. cit. p. 35; Wright: Catalogue, II, pp. 152, 153, 155, 156 and 159.
5. Ibid. II, 152.
Thus we find that the term *sarkār* which was used by Sher Shāh and the Mughal emperors was totally absent in Ḫusain Shāhī Bengal. Blochmann contends that the term "*arsāh*" means more than a *paraganah* and that it is equivalent to the Mughal term *sarkār.* This inference is vitiated, for, technically "*arsāh*" or *iqṭilām* of the Ḫusain Shāhīs is of wider significance than the *sarkār* of the Mughals. The territorial extent of an "*arsāh*" might have corresponded to that of a *sarkār.* But the *sarkār* was a part of the Mughal province, and the "*arsāh*" was the province of the Ḫusain Shāhī kingdom. Each of these provinces was divided into a number of *mahāls,* the village being the lowest revenue unit.

The province was placed under an officer who had the title *sar-i-lāshkar wa wazīr.* This title may be explained here. It has two parts, i.e. *sar-i-lāshkar* or commander-in-chief and *wazīr* which ordinarily means minister. But the term *wazīr* does nor seem to have been used in its generally accepted sense in Ḫusain Shāhī Bengal. It may be suggested here that it means a revenue officer. In fact this term has on several occasions been used in the sense of a financial officer in Indian history. Ghiyāsh-ud-dīn Tughluq conferred the office

2. *Ibid.* 1870, p. 294, and 1873, pp. 272-73; *Ā’in,* vol. ii, pp. 142-55. The Bara inscription of Bārbak Shāh dated 866/1459 shows that *sar gamāśštah* or chief accountant was placed over a *qašbah*; *E.I.* 1953-54, p. 21, pl. viii (a); Dani: *Bibliography,* p. 22; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions,* p. 71. The term *sar gamāśštah* indicates that there were other subordinate accountants under him, working in the same *qašbah* which was probably the part of the *mahāl.*
of wazir of Diogir on Malik Burhan-ud-din. Similarly, Radi-ul-Mulk was appointed wazir of Ma’bar; Malik Ashraf, wazir of Tilang and Malik Abu Rijal, wazir of Lakhnauti, for revenue administration. Under Akbar, the provincial diwans were originally called wazir. The Bengali sources of our period associate this officer with the revenue administration of the country. Thus it seems fairly certain that the provincial governors of the Husain Shahs were the military and financial heads of their respective provinces. As the highest military officer of the province, his duty was obviously to maintain the soldiers who were placed under him, with a view to utilizing their services in times of war. As the financial officer, he had to look after the revenue administration of the country with the help of a number of subordinate officials.

This will not warrant the conclusion that there was a uniform system of provincial administration all over the country. This explains why we find the governor in various positions. This officer could be placed in charge of a town in a particular locality where he could enjoy a comfortable plurality of offices. The Devikot inscription of Husain Shah shows that Khan Rukn Khan ‘Ali’-ud-din Sarhati who was the sar-i-lashkar wa wazir of the city of Musaffarabad, was also the kotval-i-bak-a’li or the chief police officer and munsif-i-diwani-kotwali.

3. Yahya bin Ahmad: op. cit. p. 98. Originally, however, the term wazir does not seem to have been used in the sense of a minister. It might have been derived from al-wazir meaning a burden, from al-wazar meaning a shelter and also from azr meaning the back. This is in view of the fact that the minister bears the burden of the state, that the ruler gets shelter under the minister’s help and advice and that his backing adds strength to the position of the king. See Mawardi: Aqdam-us-Sultaniyah, Cairo. ed. p. 22. In Bengal administration, the term wazir was applied to the provincial governor probably in the sense of helper to the king.
or judge of the criminal court of another town called Firuzābād. This case, the function of a governor in charge of a single city was not as complicated as that of a provincial governor so that it was possible for him to serve in various capacities in other towns. Again the governor could exercise his power over a province together with a number of cities and mahāls. This may be interpreted in two ways. (a) These cities and mahāls might have been within the province over which the officer was placed and their civil and military administration was under the direct control of the governor. (b) Again if they were outside his province, the extension of his governorship over them would mean additional posts and duties for him. Only in a single inscription, the same man is found to be the sar-i-laḥḥkar of one province and wazīr of another territory. This suggests that a man who was the highest military officer of a province could also act as the highest revenue officer in the adjacent province. Very often thānāhs or military outposts in the frontier region were placed under the control of the governor of the province adjacent to them.

One can easily realize the influence and power enjoyed by these military governors. Certain measures were probably adopted to minimize their power. The sūltān who appointed the governors could also dismiss them and dismissal meant temporary chaos. Bābur remarks, "If the royal heart demand that a person

should be dismissed and another be appointed to sit in his place, the whole body of subordinates attached to that office become the (new) office holders". This statement means that whenever a superior officer was dismissed, the subordinate officers connected with that office were also theoretically dismissed; but they were newly appointed to their respective posts. Thus the subordinate officers were also haunted by a sense of insecurity which prevented them from being blind supporters of a disloyal or rebellious governor or officer. Governorship does not seem to have been hereditary in a particular family. Again, the governor was transferred from one province to another. These measures checked the centrifugal forces which might operate from time to time. If Bābur is to be relied upon, the income of every province was utilized to meet the administrative expenses of that province. "To defray these charges no impost is laid on other lands".

The mahāls were generally placed under an officer bearing the titles shīqdār and jangdār who was connected, as the first title suggests, with the revenue administration of the mahāl or mahāls under him. The second title indicates the military nature of the office. Thus the officer under discussion had to control the soldiers who might be placed in his mahāls. He was thus subordinate to the military governor of the province—a fact evidenced by the Dinajpur inscription of Bārbak Shāh

2. The Devikot inscription of Husain Shāh mentioned above, shows that Rukn Khan was the governor of Muṣaffarādād. According to the Sylhet inscription, quoted in ch. ii, the same person was the governor of Kāmrū-Kāmta and Orissa-Jājnagar. Thus his transfer is indicated.
4. J.A.S.B. 1873, pp. 272-73; E.I.M. 1937-38, p. 38, pl. xii (a); Dani: Bibliography, p. 23; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, p. 73. The reference is to the Dinajpur inscription of Bārbak. It may be assumed that the administrative arrangement of the time of Bārbak, continued also in the period under review. Jangdār is mentioned in the Navagram inscription of Nuṣrat dated 1526 A.D.
in which the šhiqdār and jangdār "of the affairs of Jor and Baror" seems to have carried out the order of the local governor by constructing a mosque. The muqaddam, helped him in collecting revenue from the villages. The šhiqdār must have transmitted surplus revenues to the provincial governor after having met administrative expenses in his own locality.

Hardly anything is known about other officials who were connected with the administrative machinery of the province. It seems highly probable that the provincial administration was a copy of the central structure. We have already seen that there was the police department under an officer called Kotwāl-i-bak alī. The criminal court which was presided over by a munšif was perhaps connected with this department.

The judiciary was undoubtedly an important department. In the Manasa-mangal of Vijaya Gupta, the qādi is associated with another official called hawladār who seems to be a police officer. Apart from conducting judicial administration, the qādi was connected with various civil affairs. Placed in charge of towns and important villages, the qādis had to, very often, supervise religious endowments, and prevent the mullās and landlords from defrauding "legacies", which has been mentioned as one of "the earnest duties" of the qādi and the hakim in the Satgāon inscription of Nuṣrat Shāh. The qādi of the political headquarters of the province seems to have been subordinate to the provincial governor. In the Chaitanya-bhāgabat, the qādi is found deciding cases finally in accordance with the instructions of the Mulukpati or provincial governor. Corporal punishment was sometimes inflicted on the guilty.

Besides these functionaries, there were possibly other departments, viz. those of finance, correspondence, and military affairs about which nothing is known. Coins were issued from the provincial mint towns which must have been placed under mint officials.

VI

It may be pointed out here that some of the administrative terms and honorary titles such as ‘arṣah, muqta‘, jāmdār, ṣharābdār, kotwāl, qāḍī, wazir, ḥān-i-aẓam, khāqān-i-mu’azzam and majlis appearing in the inscriptions of Bengal are also found in those of pre-Mughal Gujrat. A few more official terms such as ‘ārid (paymaster of the forces) and khwājah-sarā (the chief eunuch), which we come across in Gujrat inscriptions are available in Persian chronicles dealing with the history of pre-Mughal Bengal. One of the inscriptions of Aḥmad Shāh of Gujrat, dated 855 A.H./1452 A.D. mentions the granting of six ploughs of rent-free land to an official named Malik Shābān. Mukundarām’s description of the kingdom of Kālaketu suggests that the cultivator in medieval Bengal had very often to pay rents in accordance with the number of ploughs used for tilling the plot of land he possessed. Thus it seems probable that there was a process of mutual contact between Bengal and Gujrat in the spheres of administration and culture. The striking resemblance which the architectural and calligraphic styles of Ḥusain Shāhi Bengal bear to those of Gujrat and political

3. Chagatai: op. cit. pp. 128-30, 136 and 138; pls. xiv, xx (a) and xxii.
4. Ṭārīḵh-i-Mubārak-shāḥi, p. 105 and Riyād, p. 120.
and commercial relationship that appears to have existed between these countries, tend to add strength to the above contention.

Administrative features of Bengal seem to have migrated to Arakan, for we are told by Daulat Qâdî that Aṣḥârāf Khân, an officer of the early seventeenth century Arakan, had the title of wazîr-lâshkar. The history of the contact of some of the Arakanese rulers with the sultâns of Bengal is quite well-known. Narameikhla who was exiled to Gauḍî in the early part of the fifteenth century, is said to have regained his kingdom with the help of the sultân of Bengal. His successors started using Muslim designations and titles and issuing coins bearing the kalîmah. These circumstances seem to explain the reasons of the influence of Bengal on the administrative system of the then Arakan.

VII

In spite of a considerable amount of central control over the provincial affairs, centrifugal forces could work whenever the central authority or the ruler was weak. The authority of the governor who behaved almost like a petty king in all local affairs tended very often to be supreme. We do not hear of any governor revolting in the reigns of Husain Shâh and his immediate successor Nuṣrat Shâh. Towards the end of the period under review, when governmental machinery was going out of gear, the governors of the outlying regions were behaving almost independently. Khudâ Bakhsh Khân, governor of Chittagong and Mâkhjûm ‘Alam, governor of North Bihâr are instances in point.3

Despite the vigilance of the rulers, the local officers very often used to oppress the people. This is what is revealed through the Hasan-Husain episode found in the Manasî-mahâgal

3. Supra, p. 82 ff.
of Vijaya Gupta. The Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta has shown how the Muslim wazir destroyed a village in south-west Bengal which formed a part of the estate of Rām Chandra Khān. Again, Ḥusain Shāh used to complain about the oppressive conduct of Rūpa. Thus it seems that there was hardly any effective check on the local officers who were apt to turn tyrannical. This was probably due to the decentralizing tendencies which characterized the Ḥusain Shāhī rule. Although the administration was not immune from these drawbacks, it may be said in fairness to it that such cases of oppression were rare exceptions at least under the first two rulers.

The defects appear to have been out-weighed by the benefits which Ḥusain Shāhī rule conferred on the people. All sections of people enjoyed various advantages under a government which was free from religious fanaticism. The rulers might have been actuated by political considerations in following a thoroughly liberal policy; nevertheless, it was quite helpful in promoting the country's interest. The gradual rapprochement between the ruler and the ruled which characterized this age, ushered in a new era of socio-political existence. The Ḥusain Shāhīs identified themselves with the interests of the people so completely that they were regarded as the children of the soil. They represented the aspirations of the people by patronizing their literature and giving a local colour to the different aspects of life. Under the benign influence of such a government, trade and industry flourished on an unprecedented scale, art and architecture received attention and national prosperity seems to have considerably increased. Viewed from this angle of vision, Ḥusain Shāhī rule is a land-mark in the history of this country.

3. Ibid. p. 197.
CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

IT is worth while to form an idea about the economic life of Bengal in the period under review. Varthema and Barbosa who visited Bengal in the early part of the sixteenth century and Joao de Barros who wrote immediately after the fall of the Husain Shahi dynasty, have left us quite valuable accounts about the economic condition of the country. These accounts taken together with Bengali poems, Persian literature, coins and inscriptions give a good deal of indications as to the developments in the field of economy that characterized the life of the country. Bengal could derive her wealth mainly from three sources, viz., agriculture, trade and industry. Before giving an account of the different economic classes, it is necessary for us to discuss each of these sources at considerable length.

In the absence of any statistical data, it is impossible to have a precise idea about the ratio of the urban and rural population. As the society of medieval Bengal was basically agricultural, people living in villages must have outnumbered those of towns and cities. The rural settlements of the period under review do not seem to have had a uniform pattern or character. If some of them possessed organized units of
human groups, others contained, in all probability, some scattered population. The Maṅgal poems of the period represent the Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaishyas, Shūdras, Muslim weavers and others\(^1\) living in compact groups in the particular area of the village allotted to each of them. But the distribution of population in some parts of East Bengal and North Bengal appears to have assumed a somewhat different character. Even to-day, the rural areas of the districts like Faridpur, Dacca and Mymensingh, contain isolated habitations interspersed by jungles, meadows and plots of cultivable land. If such is the picture of the village settlements in modern times which are characterized by over-population, we can hardly presume that the limited number of medieval people inhabiting the rural areas, should have lived in closely-knit groups. The scattered nature of the habitations may be explained by such factors as the availability of land, the individualistic nature of the people and the nomadic habits of the tribal folks such as Kochas, Mechhas and Thārus noticed in East and North Bengal.\(^2\)

Rural settlements contained, in addition to habitations, roads and paths, tanks with bathing ghāts which supplied water to the people, jungles serving the purpose of the pasture-land and canals\(^3\) forming a sort of drainage system for the village. There were arable land and fallow land,\(^4\) the latter being brought under cultivation\(^5\) with the gradual increase of population. Some of the villages had local markets or hāts\(^6\) where people used to go to buy and sell the necessaries of life. It is known

3. Roads, tanks, meadows and canals or ditches are frequently mentioned in medieval Bengali literature; Vipradās: *op. cit.* pp. 58, 60, 64 and 66; Shaikh Faiḍullah: *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, p. 34; Chūḍāmaṇidās: *Gaurāṅga-vijaya*, p. 79.
from Shrînâtha Āchâryachûdâmaṇî’s Vivāha-tattvârṇava that rural areas had fertile land (urvarâ bhûmi) pasture-land (gocâranâbhûmi), place for religious sacrifice (vedibhûmi), bâzâr (vikrayasthâna), lake (hrâda) barren land (ūśarabhûmi), cross-way (chatuspathâ) and crematorium (shmashâna). Thus the disposition of land in rural settlements conformed, in many respects, to the needs of the people.

Considered from the point of view of its economic structure, the village in medieval Bengal did not differ much from its modern counterpart. It had a number of inter-dependent, socio-economic groups which lived and functioned for sustaining the life of the entire rural population. The cultivator needed the service of the carpenter and the blacksmith who used to supply ploughs and iron implements for cultivation. All sections of people were dependent on the potter who was the traditional maker of earthen utensils prepared and designed to fulfil the kitchen requirements. Similarly, other groups of people had direct connection with the economic frame-work of the village.

The permanent dependence of the socio-economic classes on particular means of livelihood and the unchanging pattern of the society created a sort of continuity in the rural life which was responsible for the growth of certain manners, customs and institutions having a static character. If anybody tries to compare the rites, ceremonies and festivals obtaining in the Hindu society of medieval or ancient, rural Bengal, with their modern counterparts, he will be perhaps struck with wonder at the essential continuity they are likely to reveal. The rural settlement was, more or less, a self-contained unit of habitation. The peasant could, without much difficulty, exchange his surplus product in the local market for salt, oil, cloth and other necessaries of life. Though mainly based on land and its produce, the village had thus a limited amount of trade and commerce.

In contrast to the rural areas, towns and cities were perhaps characterized by the concentration of people who had gathered with the object of associating themselves with administration, trade and commerce. In addition to Gauḍ, Pāṅḍua, Sātgāon, Chittagong and Sonārgāon whose existence can be explained in terms of political and commercial reasons, there was a large number of towns¹ which sprang into existence as a result of the installation of the governmental mint machinery in the different parts of the country. Although the founder of the Ḥusain Shāhī dynasty shifted the capital to Ekdālā, the importance of Gauḍ and Pāṅḍua which were capitals in the earlier periods of Muslim rule, does not appear to have decreased. Apart from serving as political centres, these two cities communicated with the different parts of the country along the courses of the Ganges, the Bhāgirathī, the Mahānandā and the Kālindī. They kept in touch with such strategic points as the passes of Teliagarhi and Sikrigali at the Rājmahal hills and contributed considerably to the commercial life of Bengal.

A careful examination of the site of Gauḍ which is at present in ruins, shows that the commercial town was located in the northern part and that the citadel stood on the southern part of the city.² The prosperity and population of Gauḍ did not escape the notice of foreign travellers and cartographers. Writing before 1540 A.D., Joao de Barros observes,³ "The streets are broad and straight and the main streets have trees planted in rows along the walls to give shade to the passengers. The population is so great and the streets so thronged with the concourse and traffic of people that they cannot force their way past one another. A great part of the city consists of stately and well-wrought buildings". The account of Faria y Souza written before 1640, refers to "the principal city of Gouro

1. For the names of these towns, see Ch. iii, p. 114
2. Abid Ali: op. cit. pp. 42, 50 and 55; see also pl. ii, showing the site plan of Gauḍ.
3. Quoted, ibid. p. 43.
seated on the bank of Ganges, three leagues in length, containing one million and two hundred thousand families, and well fortified". Manrique who paid a visit to Gauḍ in 1641, speaks of the discovery of "...3 copper vessels, filled with gold coins and precious stones valued at three crores of rupees...... ". While the contemporary accounts tell us that the city was three leagues or about nine miles long, Rennell who visited Gauḍ in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, remarks, "Taking the extent of Gauḍ at the most reasonable calculation it is not less than fifteen miles in length (extending along the old bank of the Ganges) and from 2 to 3 miles in breadth". The transfer of the seat of Ḫusain Shāh administration to Ekdāla was perhaps due to the periodical inundation of Gauḍ caused by the marshes Chhutia Putia which lay on the eastern side of the city and to the changing nature of the course of the Ganges which was affecting the communication system and commerce of the metropolitan area.

Several factors account for the importance of Pāṇḍīva. First, it was the capital city in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Secondly, it lay near the junction of the Mahānandī and a former bed of the Ganges. Thirdly, it was situated on the river-routes and land-routes leading to the different areas

3. The Potuguese agent sent by Affonso de Mello in 1534 to attend the court of Ghiyāṣ-ud-dīn Maḥmūd, noticed that the city was "well fortified and three leagues in length" Stapleton's note, ibid. p. 42; cf. also Faria y Souza cited above.
4. Memoir of a Map of Hindustan, p. 51. The different parts of the present site of Gauḍ were perhaps inhabited at different periods. Hence the difference between the earlier and later writers with regard to the size of the city.
7. Abid Ali: op. cit. pl. v showing the site plan of Pāṇḍīva; Rennell: Memoir of a Map... p. 56.
of North Bengal and Bihār. Finally, it contained the grave of Nūr Qutb-i-Ālam which elevated it to the position of a place of pilgrimage.  

Chinese accounts have referred to the richness and luxury which characterized the life of Pāṇḍūra. One of them gives the following information: "The city walls are very imposing, the bazars well arranged, the shops side by side, the pillars in orderly rows; they are full of every kind of goods. 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 are flat-roofed and white-washed 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...."  

It is stated in another account that the city and the suburbs were "large and elegant". Chinese writings have, no doubt, preserved a record of the life and conditions obtaining in the metropolitan city of Pāṇḍūra particularly under the rule of the house of Rājā Gañesha. But there is hardly any reason to believe that the prosperity of the city completely vanished immediately after or within a few decades of the transfer of the capital to Gauḍ by the later Ilyās Shāhī rulers. The present site of Pāṇḍūra, nearly twenty miles to the north-east of Gauḍ, contains a square mound, five miles

1. Salim says that Ḥusain Shāh used to come from Ekdala every year on foot to visit the tomb of Nūr Qutb-i-Ālam at Pāṇḍūra; Riyād, p. 135.

2. Sing ch‘a sheng lan: compiled by Feisin in 1436; tran. by P. C. Bagchi in Viśva-bhāratī Annals, op. cit. p. 121. For similar descriptions of Pāṇḍūra, see also Si yang ch‘ao kung tien lu, compiled by Huang Sing Ts‘eng in 1520; op. cit. pp. 124 and 126-27; and Shu yu chou tseu lu, compiled by Yen Ts‘ong Kien in 1574; op. cit. p. 130 ff.


in diameter, whose continuous line of fortification is archaeologically considered to have enclosed the city in the Muslim period.

From a close examination of the topography and archaeology of the site of Ekdāla in Dinajpur district stretching from the Bāliya river on the east to the Chirāmati river on the west, it appears that the seat of Ḥusain Shāhī administration like other medieval cities, was protected by a continuous moat having links with the rivers. Its geographical situation clearly indicates that it had approaches to Devikot and Pāņā on along land-routes. Hardly anything is known about the economic condition of Ekdāla which was inhabited at the time of Fīrūz Tughluq’s attack in the late fourteenth century, by such groups as upper class people, students, sūfīs, ascetics, strangers and foreigners. Primarily a political centre, Ekdāla might also have some commercial function sustained by supplies from the adjacent agricultural area.

Several towns were brought into being by strategic and military considerations. Mandāran at the south-western frontier and Parāgal Khān’s headquarters on the Fen̄ in Chittagong were but military outposts.

These towns and cities had, no doubt, considerable importance at least from the point of view of administration if not also from that of trade and commerce. Each of them had at least a local market kept up by supplies from the adjoining agri-

1. Abid Ali : op. cit. pl. v and p. 97; see also pl. 3 in J.A.S.B. 1932.
3. Ibid. pl. 4 facing p. 155.
cultural settlements and also had such fashionable shops and purchasing centres as were demanded by the standard of life of the nobles and members of the royal family living there. It may also be assumed that these groups of people lived on the rents they collected from their estates and their lives were basically dependent on agriculture. The urban settlements mentioned above, were thus distinct from the ports and towns like Sàtgaon, Chittagong and Sonàrgaon which had primarily commercial importance.

II

While the towns and cities were serving as the centres of trade and industry, agriculture could flourish only in the rural areas which provided lands for cultivation and pasturage. The repeated mention of the herdsmen in the Bengali literature of the medieval period tends to suggest that they used to graze cattle on fallow lands. It can be inferred here that lands were generally classified into two categories, khil and lał or waste land and arable land. The government appears to have assessed only the lands under cultivation to the exclusion of waste lands. The revenue officers of Akbar, as mentioned in the Chañqi-\-mangi, contributed to the suffering of the people by recording fallow lands as arable.\(^1\) This clearly indicates that the people in early Mughal Bengal had adequate reason to complain against a type of unfair assessment. We know nothing about the system adopted by the Huśain Shāhis in measuring lands. At this point also, Kavikaśkan may come to our rescue. The story of the oppressive \(shiqdar\) measuring fifteen kaṭhās to a bighā\(^2\) shows that a bighā was normally made of more than fifteen kaṭhās. Thus we get the measuring units of kaṭha and bighā, the former being about one-twentieth part of the latter.

1. Chañqi-\-mangi, 1, p. 22.
2. \textit{Ibid.} Abūl Faḍl says that a bighā could be divided into 20 parts, each known as biswah. \textit{Ā'īn}, ii, p. 67.
We do not know if this system was followed uniformly all over the country. Since Kavikañkana composed his poems towards the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the measurement units mentioned by him were probably in vogue during the Ḩusain Shāh period also, for no radical change seems to have taken place in the system of measurement within a period of three or four decades.

The land-grants of the seventeenth-century rulers of Tippera mention such technical names of land-measure as kāni and droṇa related by the equation of 1:16 which continues even at the present day. It seems certain that these measuring units were in vogue in parts of south-east Bengal also in the earlier period and that they might have continued to be in use in the regions of Tippera and Chittagong brought under control by the Ḩusain Shāh rulers. The equivalents of kāni and droṇa in modern measures can be accurately determined. Writing in 1833, Prinsep gives the following table of land measures which obtained in south-east Bengal:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{nala of 8 hātas or cubits} & = 12 \text{ ft.} \\
\text{gaṅgā of 4 cowries} & = 2 \times 3 \text{ nala} = 96 \text{ sq. yds.} \\
kāni & = 20 \text{ gaṅgās} = 12 \times 10 \text{ nala} = 1920 \text{ sq. yds.} \\
droṇa & = 16 \text{ kānis} = 80720 \text{ sq. yds. or 6.35 acres.}
\end{align*}
\]

The table shows that a kāni is equal to 39,687.5 or 40 decimals approximately. It is also quite clear from the table above that nala or reed was used then, as now, in doing the actual work of measurement. In some areas of Noakhali and Chittagong districts, land is measured in terms of Ḩāḍ Ḩāḍ kāni, a larger unit believed to have been introduced by the Muslim

1. For land grants issued by Kaliyāna Māṇikya, Govinda Māṇikya and Dharma Māṇikya, see Bengali Academy Patrikā, 1366 b. s., ii, pp. 22-23 and 32-34.
2. Useful Tables, 1. p. 91.
3. Ibid.
rulers. We have no precise idea about measures of land used in other parts of the country. As the economy of Bengal was based on agriculture, units of weight used in measuring agricultural products including food grains, appear to have been linked up with land measures. This assumption gets support from the three tables\(^1\) cited below. Kulluka Bhaṭṭa, Raghunandana and the compiler of Shavadakalpadruma mention the following system of weights:

\[
\begin{align*}
8 \text{ handfuls} &= 1 \text{ kuñchi} \\
8 \text{ kuñchis} &= 1 \text{ puskala} \\
4 \text{ puskalas} &= 1 \text{ āḍhaka (āḍhā)} \\
4 \text{ āḍhakas} &= 1 \text{ drouṇa}
\end{align*}
\]

It is known from several documents that land measures obtaining in certain parts of Bengal including the district of Bankura were as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
4 \text{ kākas or kākinis (kāni)} &= 1 \text{ uāna} \\
50 \text{ uānas} &= 1 \text{ āḍhī (āḍhā)} \\
4 \text{ āḍhīs} &= 1 \text{ drouṇa}
\end{align*}
\]

The unit of uāna is, perhaps, explained by the Sundaravarna inscription of Lakṣmaṇa Sena according to which

\[
\begin{align*}
12 \text{ angulis} \text{ (space covered by 12 fingers)} &= 1 \text{ hāṭa (hand)} \\
32 \text{ hātias} &= 1 \text{ unnānā}
\end{align*}
\]

The Delhi rati or maund weighing 8.8 lb avoirdupois or about 14 seers\(^2\) of the present day weight standard does not seem to have been in vogue and if Kaviṇaṅkana is to be relied upon, sera and āḍhā\(^3\) were in use at least in some parts of the sixteenth-century Bengal.

As to the systems of land tenure that prevailed in Bengal in the period in question, materials at our disposal are extremely meagre. Lands could be divided into several classes. As indi-

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cated in the previous chapter, lands might be leased out to local and Portuguese revenue-farmers who used to pay to the government a fixed sum out of what they collected. If Chaitanya-
charitamrta is to be relied upon, some of these farmers were under
direct control of the provincial governor. Lands granted to the
the rulers' relatives and officers in recognition of meritorious
services done by them, seem to have been made rent-free. Daulat
Wazir tells us that wazir Hamid Khan, an officer of Husain
Shah, was allowed to enjoy the possession of two shigs of land
in Chittagong. The sultan is said to have given his son-in-law,
Qutbul Ashageen, landed estates in Sonargao. Although the
original sanad seems irretrievably lost, a number of Mughal
documents including one of Shah Shuja, dated the 27th Rabii-
us-thani, 1051 A.H./5th August, 1641 A.D., confirms Qutbul Asha-
geen's descendants' claim to the possession of one hundred and
thirtythree bighas of cultivable land in the sarkar of Sonargao,
making the estate free from governmental interference "on the
plea of taxes, government expenses, skilled and forced labour,
hunting, raising repeated crops from farms and gardens,........
2 percent for choudhury, salami for......and building,......and
percentage for Qanungo, military governor and collector of
revenue". As the document in question was prepared "according
to the Sanads granted by the past and present governors", the
conditions and immunities enumerated in it, may be taken to
be the continuation of similar advantages enjoyed by the ori-
ginal landlord. Although the grant seems rent-free and accom-
panied with the assignment of the revenue accruing from it,
the donee did not probably have the right to alienate it, nor
could he transfer it to his son or immediate successor. Qutbul

4. For the Persian text and English translation of this document,
    see Taifoor Collection by Bhattachari, x-xv, pls. i-t and vi-t.
5. Ibid. p. xiii.
6. Ibid. pp. x, xiii, etc.
ASHAGEEN’S DESCENDANT, SAIYID MUSTAFA WHO WAS WILLING TO TRANSFER TO HIS SON, SAIYID MUHI-UD-DIN, THE TRACT OF LAND HE HAD BEEN ENJOYING, HAD TO APPEAR BEFORE THE MUGHAL AUTHORITY IN ORDER TO GET THE TRANSFER RECORDED OR REGISTERED IN A DOCUMENT DUNLY ENDORSED BY THE SEAL AND THE TSUGHRĀ OF SHAH JAHAN.¹ WHAT IS NOT, HOWEVER, CLEAR TO US IS WHETHER THE GRANT UNDER CONSIDERATION WAS INalienable ALSO IN THE HUSAIN SHAH PERIOD. FROM THIS TYPE OF LAND SHOULD BE DISTINGUISHED THE RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENTS WHICH APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN RENT-FREE AND WHICH WERE MADE BY THE RULERS IN FAVOUR OF MOSQUES AND SIMILAR OTHER RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS.² IN THE DEOKOT INSRIPTION OF HUSAIN SHAH DATED 918 A.H./1512 A.D.,³ THE RENEWAL OF THESE ‘PIOUS GRANTS’ HAS BEEN CONSIDERED TO BE A WORK OF RELIGIOUS MERIT. AS THE MULLAS AND LANDLORDS MIGHT DEFRAUD LEGACIES, “TO PREVENT SUCH FRAUDS” HAS BEEN REGARDED AS “THE EARNEST DUTIES OF GOVERNORS AND QAḌĪS”.⁴ ALL THESE SEEM TO INDICATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT USED TO EXERCISE DIRECT ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OVER SOME OF THESE RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS. IT IS NOT, HOWEVER, INSISTED THAT THE TENURES MENTIONED ABOVE, COVERED THE ENTIRE CULTIVABLE LAND.

Although nothing is clearly known about the exact relationship between the farmers or the landlords and the actual tillers of the land, it seems fairly certain that the former could behave, within their domains, as freely as they liked. The document of SHAH SHUJA’ shows that the royal officers were asked to try to “leave the said lands in this management and to allow no

1. Ibid. p. x, pl. i—t.
2. Among such grants, we may include the villages endowed by HUSAIN SHAH FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE REST-HOUSE CONNECTED WITH THE SHRINE OF NUR QUṭB-I-ĀLAM; SALIM: OP. CIT. P. 135 AND NIṢĀM-UD-DIN: OP. CIT. P. 270.
change or alteration whatsoever therein”\(^1\). In some areas at least, the tenant had to pay the rent on the basis of the number of ploughs used for tilling the land.\(^2\) We have already suggested that similar system was at work also in pre-Mughal Gujrat.\(^3\) Its existence in ancient Bengal is hinted at by the presence of the term *hala*\(^4\) in some of the inscriptions of pre-Muslim Bengal, dealing with land tenures. It continued to exist in some parts of eastern Bengal.\(^5\) It is difficult to ascertain how much land could be covered by one plough. In Sylhet district, a *hala* or plough can bring about 10\(\frac{1}{2}\) *bighas*, or about 3\(\frac{1}{4}\) acres under cultivation.\(^6\) Buchanan Hamilton, speaking about Dinajpur district in North Bengal, says that “the usual extent which can be cultivated by one plough, is 10 large *bighâs*, or 15 Calcutta *bighâs*, or 5 acres”.\(^7\) Thus the nature of *hala* as a unit of assessment, seems to have varied from place to place.

Nothing is clearly known as to the rate or rates of the state demand. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah who visited Bengal at an earlier period, says that the villagers living by the “blue river” were subjected to the payment of half of their crops as taxes together with some other contributions.\(^8\) Wang-ta-yuan, writing at about the same time, says that the state demand in Muslim Bengal was two-tenth or one-fifth of the total produce.\(^9\) This apparent anomaly may be explained, if we bear in mind that there could be hardly any uniformity in the rate of revenue demands

2. *Kavikaṅkan*: *op. cit.* i, 254 cf: “You will pay rupees on each plough and will be afraid of no one”.
3. *Supra.* ch. iii, p. 121.
5. *Ibid*.
7. Quoted, *ibid*.
which was likely to vary from locality to locality in accordance with the productivity of the soil and the nature of crops produced in different seasons. Thus in pre-Mughal India, there were several rates ranging from one-half to one-fifth of the total produce. There were variations in the rate prevailing in Akbar's India, the ruler's claim being fixed at one-third in some parts of the country. All that can be conjectured as to the rate of the governmental revenue demand obtaining in Bengal under the Husain Shāhi sultāns, is that it must have been characterized by similar local variations.

How the tenancy right of the peasants was acknowledged by the government is not known. The system of giving pāttās to the peasants was generally followed in Mughal and pre-Mughal Bengal. In the Čaṇḍī-maṅgal of Kavikaņkan and the Shivāyana of Rāmeshvara Bhaṭṭāchārya, the legendary ryots are depicted as receiving pāttās from Indra and Kālaketu respectively. The Husain Shāhis must have adopted some such measures to ensure the security of the peasants' tenure.

Since Bengal is primarily an agricultural country, it may be reasonably inferred that a vast number of people belonged to the peasantry. The Shūnya-Purāṇa depicts a Hindu god adopting agriculture. This may suggest that even the people of noble birth did not dislike agriculture as a profession. Vipradās who has given the picture of the Muslim peasantry of West Bengal, indicates that the cultivators had various economic positions. While some of them, and possibly quite a large majority of them, were land slaves, instances of big farmers engaging hundreds of labourers were also not very infrequent. Hindu farmers with vast landed estates, employing a large

3. Čaṇḍī-maṅgal, 1, p. 254; Shivāyana: pp. 70-71.
number of agricultural labourers were common. The style in which the Hindu farmers lived in those days, would compare well with the living standard of the zamindars of the modern age. In between the big farmers and the landless labourers, there used to be another class of agriculturists who were supervisors of these labourers and also men of influence and power. The cow-keeper who was sociologically in the pastoral stage, seems to have been associated with the agricultural producers, for agriculture could hardly be possible without the help of the cows.

Although agriculture was the backbone of the economy of this country, it was surely of a primitive nature. Implements used in those days did not differ from those of our times. These included the plough and the yoke drawn by cows, scythe and others. Very often the cultivators had to depend on the mercy of rain. There was no properly developed irrigation system. Canals were possibly dug to bring water to the cultivable lands. The poor peasants used to borrow seeds from their rich neighbours or landlords. It was the general idea of the people that the cultivators were nourishing the people of the country by maintaining the goddess Lakshmī at their houses.

The deltaic region of Bengal which is proverbially fertile, used to produce numerous crops. Of the three different methods of sowing paddy, broadcasting, drill and transplantation from the original seed-bed, the last one has always been convenient to the cultivator. Paddy was generally planted in the month of Shrāvana and the reaping of harvest was possible in the month of Agrahāyana. The Shūnya-Purūṣa has thus referred to what is

3. Ibid. p. 63; Shūnya-Purūṣa, p. 184.
4. Ibid. p. 185; Shivayana, pp. 68 and 72-73.
5. History of Bengal, 1, p. 650.
now a days called āman paddy. But this was not the only kind of paddy, for Abūl Faḍl informs us that it was “sown and reaped three times a year in the same piece of land with little injury to the crop”. He has mentioned a special variety the stalk of which used to grow up with the gradual rise of water-level so that no harm could come to the crop from water.¹ The names of the different kinds of paddy have been mentioned in the Shūnya-Purāṇa and the Shivāyana and the lists given by them seem to be exhaustive.² It seems that these names were of a local character and they varied from place to place. In fact, rice was of various kinds. Abūl Faḍl corroborates the information supplied by Bengali sources, when he says that a large vase would be filled up, “if a single grain of each kind were collected”.³ There were other agricultural products among which cotton, sugarcane, ginger, long pepper, turmeric, betelnut, radish, pulses and lentil may be mentioned.⁴ Most of the fruits which we find to-day were available in those days also.⁵ The list of the products of Bengal, found in the accounts left by the Chinese and European travellers who visited medieval Bengal, is too long to be reproduced here.

The agriculturists had to face certain difficulties which seem to have been insurmountable. If there was any draught, they were sure to be undone. Those who were living in the territories of the petty landlords, had to depend on the mercy of the latter. We do not know what measures were adopted by the government to help the agriculturists in overcoming these difficulties. If Kavikaṁkan is to be relied upon, the cultivator used to enjoy, in times of natural calamities, various concessions from the local

2. Shūnya-Purāṇa, pp. 191-94; Shivāyana, p. 113.
5. Some of these fruits were mango, orange, lemon and banana; Barbosa : op. cit. p. 147; Kavikaṁkan-chayḍī : ii, pp. 510, 511 and 518.
landlords such as the renewal of the pāṭṭā, partial remission of land taxes and unrestricted purchase and sale of grains which might be exempted from governmental taxes.\(^1\)

III

The sea-borne trade of Bengal which was in a flourishing state, presupposes the growth of internal trade also about which nothing is known. The agricultural products and domestic animals which were numerous must have been sold and purchased in the local markets over which the foreign merchants do not seem to have had any direct control. Money-lenders, money-changers and merchants together with local markets where common people used to come to exchange their commodities, find repeated mention in vernacular literature.\(^2\) Internal trade, when compared with the extensive maritime commerce of this period, appears to be insignificant. The local merchants were probably supplying manufactured goods to the foreign merchants.

Barbosa found the coastal region overwhelmingly populated by the Muslims who had obviously taken to trade and commerce. Attracted by the largeness, wealth and climate of the city of 'Bengala', a large number of Arab, Persian, Abyssinian and Indian merchants had arrived there. They possessed great ships "after the fashion of Macca" by which they were carrying on trade and commerce with the different parts of the world. They were carrying the numerous products of this country to "Charamandel, Malacca, Camatra, Peeguu, Cambaya and Ceilam".\(^3\) Varthema refers to "the richest merchants" of the city of 'Banghella' together with its cotton and silk stuffs which used to "go through all Turkey, through Syria, through Persia, through Arabia Felix, through Ethiopia, and through all India".\(^4\)

---

2. Ibid. i, pp. 22, 116-121, 265, 270, 274, etc.,
Speaking about the volume of trade which Bengal possessed, Joao de Baros maintains that "the King of Bengalla alone held as much as he (Bahādur Shāh of Gujrat) and the king of Narsinga (Vijayanagar) held jointly." Thus the foreign travellers have referred to the glory of the maritime commerce which Bengal possessed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We find a definite confirmation of these reports in the account of Mahuan, the Chinese traveller, who visited Bengal in the fifteenth century. He remarks, "the rich build ships, in which they carry on commerce with foreign nations; many are engaged in trade....." Almost all the Manasa-mangals including those of Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās, have devoted a large number of pages to the description of the maritime activities of the heroes depicted therein. Even if we make sufficient allowance for the poetic fancy and hyperbolic display of imagination exercised by these poets, it seems almost fairly certain that Bengal had established a net-work of commercial ties with the different parts of the world. According to Ralph Fitch, the cotton cloth and rice of Sonārgāon were exported to India, Ceylon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and other countries. Marco Polo and Ibn Batūta have witnessed the commercial progress and prosperity of medieval Bengal. Again Kavikaṅkan has said that the merchants from Bengal had reached Ceylon and Gujrat via Utkal and Coromandel coast and that Magadh, Mathurā, Vijayanagar and Mārāṭhā country were not unknown to them.

An analysis of the accounts left by the foreign travellers shows that the exports of Bengal included rice, wheat, cotton cloth, silk fabrics and sugar. These sold at an incredibly

1. Da Asia: op. cit. p. 246.
higher price in the foreign countries. "Cloth which sell on the spot for twenty-two shillings and six pence fetch ninety shillings in Calicut", says Vasco da Gama. Similar views have also been expressed by Barbosa: "...a quintal of sugar would bring in one thousand and three hundred reis in Malabar, a choutar of the best kind six hundred reis, a sinabafa two cruzados, and a piece of the best beatilha three hundred reis; and thus those who carried them thither made great profits by selling them." In view of the Portuguese character of the weight and currency referred to here, it is, no doubt, difficult to ascertain the prices of the commodities mentioned by Barbosa. But an attempt may be made to get a rough idea about them. A quintal was generally equivalent to 128 lbs. A kind of Portuguese coin called cruzado was worth 420 reis which amounted to 9 shillings, according to the value ascribed by Yule to the reis in the sixteenth century. The price of the commodities exported may be converted into modern money and the valuation of the current prices drawn up in accordance with the modern standard of weight. This is shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodities</th>
<th>Portuguese weight or measure</th>
<th>Modern price</th>
<th>Portuguese Modern price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sugar</td>
<td>1 quintal</td>
<td>128 lbs.</td>
<td>1300 reis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choutar</td>
<td>20 by 3 or 4 Portuguese yds.</td>
<td>600 reis</td>
<td>13s. approx.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sinabafa</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>2 cruzados</td>
<td>18s. approx.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>or 840 reis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beatilha</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>300 reis</td>
<td>6½s. approx.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Quoted by Campos: *op. cit.* p. 25.
2. Barbosa: *op. cit.* ii, pp. 146-47; choutar, sinabafa and beatilha are varieties of cloth, each piece measuring 20 by 3 or 4 Portuguese yds; see below.
These were the prices of the commodities of Bengal sold at Malabar, which must have been much lower in Bengal. Although no precise idea can be formed about the prices of these articles in Bengal, only a somewhat vague speculation is possible. The statement of Vasco da Gama shows that the cloth which would sell in Bengal for 22 shillings could fetch 90 shillings in Calicut, so that the ratio between its prices at Calicut and in Bengal was 4:1 approximately. We do not know if this proportion applied to other articles as well.

Of the imports of Bengal, Abū‘l Faḍl mentions salt, diamonds, emeralds, pearls, cornelians and agates— a list which does not materially differ from that obtaining in the Manasa-mahgal poems of the time. In a subsequent section, we have shown that Bengal had industrial products some of which must have been exported to foreign countries.

A very prominent feature of the economic life of Bengal was the trade in eunuchs and slaves alluded to by Barbosa, Ibn Baṭṭūtah and Marco Polo. The Muslim merchants used to buy native boys and sell them after castrating them and giving them proper training and placed them sometimes in charge of their harem and estates. Some of these slaves rendered valuable service to the Muslim sultans as governors and captains.

The account of Barbosa taken together with that of Varthema shows that there were two principal sea-routes in those days. One of them led in the south-eastern direction touching the countries like Burma, Arakan, Pegu, Ava, Siam, Malacca, Sumatra, Sunda, Java, the Spice Islands, Celebes, Borneo and Champa and extending upto China. The other route led in the

1. Ā‘īn, ii, p. 135.
4. Ibid. pp. 148-215; Ibn Baṭṭūtah: Reḥla, p. 241 and Barbosa:
south-western direction passing Orissa, Coromandel, Ceylon and Malabar coast, and reaching Arabia and Abyssinia via the Persian Gulf and the Arabian sea. Entering Bengal at the point of Chittagong, sea-going ships could perhaps go as far as Sonargaon, following the course of the river Meghna. This route was followed by Ibn Battūta and also by the Chinese ambassadors who visited the court of the sultans of the early fifteenth-century Bengal. The routes indicate that the products of Bengal were reaching the countries lying on them. The market for Bengal goods extended thus from Abyssinia to China. One may notice in this connection the comparative insignificance of the land routes along which Bengal goods could pass out of this country. One explanation seems plausible here. Bengal was politically isolated from her neighbours with whom her relation was far from friendly. Probably the hostilities of the neighbouring rulers prevented the Ḥusain Shāhīs from opening any land routes across the adjacent regions. In fact, maritime commerce was the main feature of the economic life of the country.

Bengal had several ports and towns which greatly facilitated her sea-borne trade. Saptagrama which had replaced the ancient Tāmralipti, continued to enjoy a unique position down to the middle of the sixteenth century. It figures quite prominently in medieval Bengali literature. The poet Vipradās who was the contemporary of Ḥusain Shāh, has described the religious sanctity and economic affluence enjoyed by Saptagrama. Bṛndāvanadās, the author of the Chaitanya-bhāgavata has incidentally

op. cit. ii, p. 145, noticed the presence of junks or Chinese ships in the rivers of Bengal. It seems fairly certain that China had trade relations with Bengal. As a matter of fact, her ships visited the principal islands of the Malay Archipelago, India, Arabia and the Persian Gulf; Barbosa: op. cit. ii, pp. 214-15, f.n.

referred to the merchant class of Saptagrāma. The description of Ralph Fitch clearly shows that this city was frequented by the Arab merchants as late as the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Caesar Frederick who visited Bengal in 1567 says, "In the Port of Satagan every yeere they lade thirtie or five and thirtie ships great and small with Rice, Cloth of Bombast of divers sorts, Lacca, great abundance of sugar, Mirabolans dried and preserved, long Pepper, Oyle of Zerzeline, and many other sorts of merchandise." In fact, the ancient city of Saptagrāma was a great riverport in those days. Considering its commercial importance, the Portuguese used to call it Porto Piqueno. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the river bed near Saptagrāma dried up so that Joao de Barros found this port "not so convenient for the entry and departure of ships". Sātgāon had thus to yield gradually place to Hooghly which began to be frequented by the Portuguese. Sonārgāon which was visited by Ibn Battūtah, Mahuan and Ralph Fitch, used to export rice and cotton cloth to the different parts of the world. Chittagong held a precarious position in the commercial life of Bengal, for its possession was being disputed by the rulers of Bengal, Tippera and Arakan. But it was of unique importance to the Portuguese who subsequently called it Porto Grande. The lucrative positions held by Chittagong and Sātgāon attracted the covetous eyes of the Portuguese who began to control their custom-houses towards the end of the Ḫūsain Shāhi period. Sātgāon, Sonārgāon and Chittagong have been clearly located in the map of Joao de Barros. It was possibly towards the end of the sixteenth century only that Shripur which appears on the maps of later cartographers like Von den Broucke and Rennell, became a prominent trade-centre. One can easily realize the role played by these prosperous cities, with their rich and extensive hinterlands, in the economic life of Bengal.

2. Purchas His Pilgrims, x, p. 182.
3. Ibid. p. 114.
4. Da Asia: op. cit. p. 244.
They maintained the economic and cultural links between Bengal and the distant parts of the world.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the sea-borne trade of Bengal had completely gone out of the reach of the local traders and it was being thoroughly controlled by the Arab and Persian merchants who were enjoying almost a complete monopoly in the navigation of the Eastern seas. These traders were maintaining oceanic communication between Bengal and the Persian Gulf area and were carrying the products of this country to the East as far as China and also to Arabia and Abyssinia. They were subsequently overpowered by the Portuguese and other European traders. Barbosa’s statement that the Arabs and the Persians were largely found in the cities of Bengal, indicates that they had not yet made room for the Portuguese whose commercial activities gained momentum in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The period between 1517 and 1538 is marked by a significant conflict between the sultāns of Bengal and the Portuguese merchants who were persistently endeavouring to gain a foot-hold in this country. The year 1536 is significant in the commercial history of this country, for in this year Martim Affonso de Mello was allowed by Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Mahmūd Shāh III, the ruling sultān, to build factories in Chittagong and Satīgāon and control the custom-houses of these ports. The Portuguese merchants received grants of land which eventually gave them rent-receiving interest in this country.¹ Husain Shāhi Bengal thus marked the beginning of that inevitable historical process which eventually put an end to the Arab supremacy in the field of maritime commerce and which accelerated the growth of the Portuguese as a European trading nation in India. The Arabs did not, however, completely disappear from the field, nor did the Portuguese activities assume any significant magnitude. The Portuguese settlements had their growth at a subsequent period.

IV

The commercial activities discussed above presuppose the growth of industry in this country. As a matter of fact, Bengal made considerable progress in respect of industries like textiles sugar, metal-work, stone-carving and ship-building.

The variety and richness of the textile manufacture of Bengal were sufficient to attract the attention of the foreign travellers who have given valuable information about the textiles that obtained in the country. Barbosa noticed different kinds of fine cloth such as extravantes used as headdress by the Portuguese ladies and as turbans by the Arabs and the Persians, mamonas, duguazas, choutares, sinabafa and beatilha, each of these pieces measuring 3 by 20 or 4 by 20 Portuguese yards. Although it is difficult to identify these fabrics, it may be tentatively suggested here that these terms stand respectively for sirband, malmal or maslin, dugazi cloth, chadar, sinaband and butidar. Varthema who wrote about Bengal in the first decade of the sixteenth century, mentions varieties of fabric such as hairam, mamone, lizati, ciantar, doazar and sinabaff, most of their names being phonetically similar to those found by Barbosa. Chinese travellers have mentioned several kinds of fine cotton fabric known as pi-chih, man-chetti, sha-na-kieh, hinpei-tung-ta-li, sha-ta-urh and mo-hei-mo-leh. Of other foreign travellers who have incidentally referred to the cotton fabrics of medieval Bengal, mention may be made of Marco Polo, Ibn Baṭṭūtah and Caesar Frederick. Abu’l Faḍl informs us

2. Ibid. pp. 145-46; see the translator’s notes.
4. Mahuan’s Account of Bengal; J. R. A. S. 1895, pp. 531-32. For an identification of these terms, see John Beames’s notes, ibid, p. 899. These names appear also in other Chinese accounts translated in Visva-bhūrari Annals, op. cit. pp. 119-20, 125-26 and 132.
5. The Book of Ser Marco Polo, ii, p. 115; Reḥla, p. 235 and Purchas His Pilgrims, x, p. 114.
that the sarkār of Barbakābād produced "a fine cloth called Gaṅgājāl" and that the sarkār of Sonārgāon used to manufacture "a species of muslin very fine and in great quantity". Jute fabrics seem to have constituted another variety of textile goods. The terms like pāṭneta and pāṭer pāchāra which frequently obtain in the Bengali literature of the time, suggest that these fabrics were perhaps manufactured, like many other varieties, from jute. If Abūl Faḍl is to be relied upon, sack cloth was produced in the sarkār of Ghorāghat. Silk industry appears to have made considerable progress in the period under review. While Mahuan refers to silk worms and silk fabrics of the fifteenth century Bengal, Varthema mentions silk stuffs as one of the principal exports of this country. It seems that sarkār Ghorāghat was quite famous for its silk products.

Thus it is fairly certain that Bengal was enjoying much prominence as a centre of textile manufacture. Cotton produced in the extensive fields of the country was generally made into finished goods by the local artisans about whose relation with the local and foreign merchants, nothing is clearly known. Clothes were generally "spun in wheels by men and woven by them". The products of cottage industry that flourished in the country not only met the requirements of the local people, but also enabled the local merchants to earn a good profit by exporting them to the different parts of the world.

The process of the manufacture of sugar seems to have

1. Ā'īn, ii, p. 136.
3. Ā'īn, ii, p. 136.
been widely known in the country. The sugar that was prepared here from locally available cane, was extremely white and of good quality. The people did not know how to crystallize it; so wrapping it "as a powder in parcels of untanned leather, well sewn," they used to export it to the different countries including Malabar and Cambay where it sold at a high price.¹

Metallic industry must have flourished at least in some parts of the country. Abū'ī Faḍi'll says that there were iron mines in the sarkār of Bāzūhā.² Although we do not know how far these mines were workable, it seems fairly certain that blacksmiths and goldsmiths constituted distinct economic classes by themselves. The agriculturists of Bengal must have needed the services of blacksmiths for manufacturing and repairing agricultural implements. Muhuan noticed such commodities as painted ware, basins, steel guns, cups, knives and scissors selling in the open market.³ Foreign accounts and Bengali literature give vivid description of women wearing gold ornaments of a fairly wide variety.⁴ Firīshahī tells us that the wealthy people of Bengal not only used gold vessels, but also considered it to be an honour to display them in occasional social gatherings.⁵ Allowing for obvious exaggerations which these accounts are likely to contain, it may be reasonably inferred that jewellery constituted a profession for a considerable number of people.

Stone-carvers’ art and craft appear to have attained to a considerable degree of perfection. Numerous Ḥusain Shāhī

1. Ibid. 146; cf. also Vartthema: op. cit. p. 212, and Ibn Baṭṭūṭah: Reḥla, p. 235.
inscriptions with their elegant styles of writing and beauty of execution eloquently speak of the artistic skill of the stone-carvers. The use of stones in the Husain Shahi buildings of Gaúḍ and Pándūrā together with the representation of terracotta art on them1 undoubtedly testifies to the existence of a group of stone-cutters. The construction of the numerous brick buildings of the period in question, must have provided occupation to a good number of brick-workers.

Another minor local product was mat which often resembled “woven silk”.2 Bengali literature of the time makes frequent mention of lohit-pāṭī or red mat and shītal-pāṭī or cool mat.3 White paper manufactured from the bark of a tree looked as glossy as deer-skin.4 We do not know if the manufacture of mat and paper had assumed the nature and form of any industry.

Ship-building seems to have developed into a considerable industry. Ocean-going ships were made in Bengal.5 The extensive forests of the sarkar of Bāzūrā used to supply “long and thick timbers” with which masts could be made.6

Thus it is evident that the extensive commerce of the country greatly rested on the various industrial products which Bengal manufactured in the period in question.

V

With the progress of civilization, the system of barter began gradually to recede into the background yielding place

1. Infra. ch. viii.
4. See Mahuan's account in J.R.A.S. 1895, p. 532; see also Chinese accounts. op. cit. p. 126.
to money. The *Mangal* poems state that it was universally prevailing in this country. This view seems hardly tenable. Mahuan found silver coins called *tanka* and sea-shells or cowries in wide circulation in Bengal. He says, "All large business transactions are carried on with this coin, but for small purchases they use a sea-shell called by the foreigners *Kao-li*."\(^1\) In the face of this categorical statement about the currency of the fifteenth century Bengal, the information supplied by the vernacular literature can hardly be credited. It seems that the poets have simply reproduced their memory of the remote past. In fact, the mint towns of the Husain Shāh rulers, which were many in number, issued coins of various sizes and weights. The cowries which represented money of the lowest denomination, were in circulation down to the eighteenth century and their use lingered in rural areas till the end of the nineteenth century. The use of cowries may be explained by the extreme cheapness of commodities so that the people did not have to use even silver coins (which were undoubtedly of a higher value) in buying the necessaries of life. As cowries could be used most conveniently in day-to-day affairs, the use of coins must have been very restricted. Coins were used, as pointed out by Mahuan, only in large-scale transactions which inland and foreign trade involved.

The system followed in counting cowries was like this: 4 cowries make a *gaṇḍā*, 5 *gaṇḍās* a *buṇḍi*, 4 *buṇḍis* a *paṇa*, 16 *paṇas* a *kāhan* and 10 *kāhans* a rupee. This method appears not only in Abū’l Fālq’s account of Orissa in the *Ā’īn*,\(^2\) but also in the antiquated arithmetical tables of Bengal. Vernacular

1. Mahuan’s Account of Bengal: *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 530. This information is available in other Chinese sources, such as *Ying Yai Shenglan* and *Sing Yang Ch’ao Tien Lu*; tran. in *Vivā-bhārati Annals*, 1945, 1, pp. 117, 123 and 125.

2. *Op. cit.* ii, pp. 138-39. Thus, according to this calculation, a rupee is equal to \(4 \times 5 \times 4 \times 16 \times 10\) or 14,400 cowries. The above may be compared with the following table which gives a slightly different
literature$^1$ incidentally refers to the system. It is not, however, clear whether Abu'l Faḍil mentions the rupee of 172·8 grains or the Afghan coin having a slightly higher weight. That cowries were equated to the silver coin at a certain ratio, can hardly be doubted. Bengali poems speak of ᵗᵃᵏᵃ and ᵃⁿᵃ$^2$ of which the latter does not appear to have existed as a metallic piece of small denomination and it was in all probability a unit of counting cowries$^3$ by which a full-rupee was divisible into 16 equal fractional units. The inference gets strength from the rarity of such coins in pre-Mughal Bengal as the half-rupee and the one-fourth rupee and from the total absence of one-ᵃⁿᵃ pieces. As already indicated, the general prevalence of cowries in the currency system of medieval Bengal had rendered the minting of lower denominational coins quite unnecessary.

The Ḥusain Shāhī rulers issued numerous silver coins and only a few gold coins. Copper coins were totally absent. Out of a large number of coins of pre-Mughal Bengal, discovered so far, we have got only a single copper coin of the reign of Bārbak Shāh. It seems that the rulers had hardly any necessity of issuing copper coins, for they were being represented by cowries.

There is a sudden influx of silver coins in the Ḥusain system prevailing in Bengal in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century:

4 cowries = 1 gaṅḍā
20 gaṅḍās = 1 paṇa
5 paṇas = 1 ʰaⁿā.

Prinsep's *Useful Tables*, p. 1.


2. Kavikāṅkan: *op. cit.* 1, p. 22. We are told that in Akbar's time, the *poddār* (foṭahdār) deducted 2½ ʰaⁿās from the rupee and the thing worth one rupee was selling at 10 ʰaⁿās.

3. According to traditional tables, 20 gaṅḍās of cowries make an ʰaⁿā. That the ratio was subject to fluctuation is proved by Prinsep's table cited above.
Shāhī period. One may wonder at the richness of the variety of these coins, which seems to have been absent in the earlier period. This undoubtedly suggests that there was a considerable increase in the volume of foreign trade in this period. There are three types of silver coins of the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers, the average weight of which is 160 grains, 80 grains and 40 grains respectively. Thus the ratio between the weight of the first and the second types is 2:1 which is also the proportionate relation between the weight of the second and the third types. The ratio between the weight of the first and the third types is 4:1. While the first type is represented by numerous issues whose weight varies from 148 to 170 grains, coins belonging to the second and the third types are comparatively small in number. It seems that these three types of coins stand for the full, one-half and one-fourth rupee respectively. The fractional issues were struck in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh in 925/1519 from the mint of Ḥusainābād tentatively identified with Gauḍī. What considerations influenced the governmental decision to issue the one-half and one-fourth rupees, is not clearly known. Of the predecessors of Nuṣrat, Ilyās Shāh was the only sultan to mint half-rupee pieces which have the mint town of Firuzābād and the weight of 83-84 grains. This weight shows that the coins under reference together with the fractional pieces of Nuṣrat are based on the 172-8-grains standard. Various coins of smaller


3. Botham: *op. cit.* p. 150, nos. 33-34; no. 5 on pl. i. These two coins are included also in Botham and Friel: *Supplement*, pp. 132-33, nos. \( \frac{2}{99} \) and \( \frac{2}{90} \); no. 5 on pl. I.
denomination were in almost continuous circulation in North India during the whole pre-Mughal period. Ilyās Shāh appears to have been influenced by the fractional coinage of the sultāns of Delhi in issuing the half-rupee pieces intended to facilitate the monetary transactions of the people of the metropolitan city of Firuzābād or Pāṇḍuṇ. The practice was revived by Nuṣrat Shāh who had perhaps a similar end in view. But the experiment in the field of currency ended in failure which is indicated by the rarity of fractional issues of the ruler. The people of Firuzābād and Husainābād so much acquainted with cowries, had adequate reasons to be indifferent to the coins of smaller denominations.

The maximum weight of the coin or coins issued by each of the sultāns of the period under review is shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sultāns</th>
<th>Maximum weight</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Mint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥusain</td>
<td>167 grains</td>
<td>899 A.H.</td>
<td>The Treasury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuṣrat</td>
<td>165 grains</td>
<td>925 A.H.</td>
<td>Ḥusainābād and Fatḥābād</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firūz</td>
<td>164 grains</td>
<td>939 A.H.</td>
<td>Ḥusainābād</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghıyāṣh-ud-din Maḥmūd</td>
<td>170 grains</td>
<td>935 A.H.</td>
<td>Ḥusainābād</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The total number of these coins including a duplicate issue is four.

2. For the coins of Husain with the maximum weight, see Wright: *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, no. 181, p. 174; pl. v; for the coin of Nuṣrat, *ibid.* no. 207, p. 177 and *Supplement to Catalogue*, II, no. 186, p. 66; for the coin of Firūz, *Catalogue*, II, no. 220, p. 179, pl. vi; for the coin of Ghıyāṣh-ud-din Maḥmūd, *Supplement to Catalogue*, II, no. 216, p. 70. The coin of Maḥmūd referred to in the table was issued before he became the ruler of Bengal.

This problem has been discussed elsewhere; *supra*, ch. II, p. 78
The average weight of the coins cited in the above table being approximately 166 grains Troy, they significantly differ from the Delhi prototypes under the Lūdīs, the standard weight of which was generally 145 grains.¹

Gold was also coming to this country as a result of its foreign trade. Two gold coins of the reign of Ḥusain Shāh have been discovered,² whereas we have found only five gold coins³ of the whole pre-Ḥusain Shāh Muslim Bengal. The weight of these two Ḥusain Shāh coins is 176.4 and 159 grains respectively. The average weight of these coins is, therefore, 167 grains approximately. The ratio between the value of gold and that of silver can hardly be ascertained, for material at our disposal on this point is not at all sufficient. Not a single gold coin of the successors of Ḥusain Shāh has been discovered. The scarcity of gold coins which we notice in this period, may be explained here. Two suggestions are possible. The later Ḥusain Shāhīs were probably depositing gold coins in the treasury with a view to meeting any emergency that might arise out of the state of war existing between Bengal and her neighbours. Again, it might be possible that gold was over-valued. In other words, the face value of the gold coin was less than its intrinsic value so that the people melted it down in order to get a profit out of it. In that case, silver was cheaper than gold and siver coins which represented bad money, drove away good money out of circulation. But Gresham's Law does not seem to explain satisfactorily the situation in Bengal. We have

¹ and infra, appendix A. The maximum weight of his regular issues is 168 grains; Wright: Catalogue, ii, p. 180, no. 225; S. Ahmed: Supplement, p. 71, no. 233.
² Wright: Catalogue, ii, pt. i, p. 11.
³ Ibid. no. 167, p. 172, pl. v; Lane-Poole: op. cit. nos. 108 and 122, pp. 44 and 47, pls. v and vi.
⁴ Wright: Catalogue, ii, pt. ii, nos. 9, 23(a) and 152, pp. 147, 150 and 169, pls. i and iv; Lane-Poole: op. cit. no. 81, p. 34, pl. iv; Bhattachar: Hakim H. Rahman Collection, no. 119.
already pointed out that commodities were extremely cheap in those days. This is what we find in the account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah who had the opportunity of noticing the prices of certain articles obtaining in Bengal.\(^1\) Because of this cheapness, people could purchase their necessaries with cowries representing money of the lowest denomination. This explains why gold coins were issued in small numbers. Their use must have been quite rare. They seem to have served the purpose of souvenirs, for ‘Allā’-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh issued such coins commemorating his accession to the throne of Bengal and signaling his victory over the rulers of Orissa and Kāmrūpa.\(^2\) Thus the limited use of gold coins, which we have noticed above, does not seem to suggest the scarcity of gold in Bengal, for her foreign trade must have brought to her certain quantity of gold and silver. As already mentioned, the gold and silver coins of the period under discussion, were based on the standard weight of 172.8 grains=100 *ratis*, which points to the use of *dhāna*, *rati* and *māṣā*\(^3\) in weighing the precious metals.

**VI**

Before concluding this discussion, it is necessary to mention the different socio-economic groups which constituted the bulk of the Bengali population. We have already seen that the cultivators who were directly connected with the production of wealth, could be divided into several categories and that the big farmers and landless labourers were not absent in the country. The weavers and the producers of different cloths were numerous. Weavers, it seems, formed a major section of Muslim

3. The following table gives the equation of these weights which were in vogue also in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

   \[
   4 \text{ dhānas} = 1 \text{ rati} \\
   8 \text{ ratis} = 1 \text{ māṣā}
   \]

   Prinsep's *Useful Tables*, pt. 1, p. 62.
population in rural Bengal. They were economically self-sufficient, if not also affluent. Vocationally, they did not have anything to do with agriculture. Subodhan, the Muslim weaver in the *Manasā-maṅgal* used to purchase all his necessaries including sweet potatoes and arum. The purchase of these vegetable products, signified two features. The weaver community was so much industrialized that it did not take the trouble to produce even these common vegetables for its kitchen requirements. Secondly, it might have been rich enough to buy these from market rather than produce them itself. Purchase of luxuries by Subodhan for his wife only indicates the comparative affluence of the weaver community which was perhaps natural in those days when Bengal was an exporter of cloth to the various parts of the world. The female folk of the community did not have to help the weavers in their work.

It may be inferred here that the weavers were so much self-sufficient that they did not feel the necessity of dragging their women folk from the management of household affairs to the economic struggle of life. The looms were supplied by a group of people called *ṣāṅkār* or maker of looms, in Kavīkaṇkan’s time. These people seem to have constituted a minor economic class. We have already noticed the growth of metallic industry which must have involved the labour of various classes such as goldsmiths and blacksmiths. The local merchant as depicted in the contemporary vernacular literature, had not yet gone up in the social ladder and was yet a member of the lower class. It is highly probable that these people served as the connecting link between the producers of industrial goods and the foreign traders.

The Brahmins adopted teaching as a profession. Vipradas’s description of the Brahminical society of Saptagrama clearly indicates that it devoted itself to the worship of gods,

teaching and learning philosophy and that poverty and misery could never touch the lives of its members.\(^1\) In fact, some of the Brahmins of the period under review might have a considerable amount of wealth and influence. The Kāyasthas were proverbially the clerical group of people. Kṛṣṇadās Kavitāj has mentioned how assiduously these people were serving the ruling class.\(^2\) The Vaidyas were traditionally following their medical practices. Thus a notable section of the Hindu population being composed of Brahmins, Kāyasthas and Vaidyas, the lower strata of the society was then, as now, composed of professional classes of cultivators, fishermen, woodcutters, potters, barbers, carpenters, milkmen, ojhās (snake-charmers who also cured snake bites), ghatākās or match-makers and astrologers.\(^3\) These classes, originally formed on an economic basis, seem to have assumed the nature of castes. A Musalman priestly class, the mullās, had by that time grown in the society. Their function was to preside over the religio-social ceremonies of the Musalmans, slaughter fowls and give amulets and they were, therefore, at least regarded as men conversant with religious scriptures and formalities.\(^4\) Kavikaṅkan has given an exhaustive account of the numerous economic classes of the sixteenth century Bengal. It is highly probable that some of these classes, both Hindu and Muslim, existed in the Ḥusain Shāhī period also, although the names and nomenclatures applied to them by the poet, might have been unknown in the earlier period. The various professional groups, mentioned by us, clearly indicate that Bengali society was growing to its full economic stature.

It is a general fashion to divide the people of a country into producing and consuming classes. But this classification seems unscientific, for the producers are also consumers and

2. *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, p. 197; see also Vijaya Gupta: *op. cit.* p. 4.
those whom one may call consumers may help the production of wealth at least indirectly. One may regard the high government officials of the period under study as belonging to a purely consuming class. But we should not forget that these officers produced an atmosphere congenial to the production of wealth, by maintaining peace and order in the country and running the administration efficiently. Brahmins, teachers and the local landlords were no doubt enjoying wealth within their respective jurisdiction; but their indirect contribution to the production of wealth is not negligible, although it may be less significant than that of the direct producers. The rulers and governors directly helped the circulation of wealth by employing a good number of architects and masons to carry on public works and also by giving patronage to several poets and scholars. Even then there is hardly anything to minimize the position of the sultan and his nobles as consumers. The ruler with his personal servants, domestics and concubines, must have spent a large amount of money. His colourful darbar, the robes of honour he presented and the titles and distinctions he ceremoniously conferred on the nobles and dignitaries of the state, similarly involved huge expenditure. Although the materials, at our disposal, do not give a clear idea about the standard of life of the nobles, there is every reason to believe that their luxurious ways and living conditions used to drain a considerable portion of the wealth of the country.

Barbosa who has described the lives of the upper class and the lower class, is completely silent on the condition of the middle class people. This silence does not preclude the possibility of the existence of that class. Moreland has noticed "the comparative insignificance" of the middle class people in Akbar's India. He has, of course, confessed that this theory does not possibly apply to Bengal.¹ It seems that there was a sound middle class in our period. While the upper class was composed of the high officials and landlords, the lower class included

the professional groups like cultivators, weavers, and other minor economic grades of people. The landlords constituted landed aristocracy and as such were distinct from the high officials. The middle class was composed of merchants and traders who had accumulated wealth and of the Brahmmins and teachers whose condition does not seem to have been miserable. This broad classification was undoubtedly based on the respective economic strength of the groups mentioned above.

VII

It is very difficult to ascertain the economic condition of the general people living in Bengal in the period under consideration. Foreign travellers give us a rosy picture of the life of medieval Bengal. Thus the fourteenth-century Chinese traveller, Wang Ta-Yuan, enthusiastically remarks, "These people owe all their tranquillity and prosperity to themselves, for its source lies in their devotion to agriculture whereby a land originally covered with jungle has been reclaimed by their unremitting toil in tilling and planting. The seasons of Heaven have scattered the Wealth of the Earth over this kingdom, the riches and integrity of its people surpass, perhaps, those of Ch'en-chiang (Palembang) and equal those of Chao-wa (Java)".¹ Another Chinese account contains the following lines: "Bengal is rich and civilised. To our ambassadors they presented gold basins, gold girdles, gold flagons, and gold bowls and to our vice-ambassador the same articles in silver. To our officials of the ministry of foreign affairs, they presented golden bells and long gowns of white hemp and silk. Our soldiers got silver coins. If they had not been rich, how could they do it in such an extravagant way?"² Again Barbosa tells us that life in the upper circle was marked by wealth and luxury. It is not safe to arrive at any definite conclusion on the basis of these foreign

accounts which do not seem to be free from exaggerations. Moreover, the travellers came in contact with the upper class people and not probably with the poorer sections living in villages. All that can be inferred from the statements quoted above, is that the upper class people lived in affluence. "The respectable Moors" whose, life Barbosa despicts quite vividly,¹ and the local majmu‘adārs who were allowed by the government to enjoy a great part of the revenue they collected, must have been prosperous. Thus there may be some truth in Firuqṭah’s statement that the rich people used to display the golden vessels they possessed.

The condition of the lower stratum of population must have been different from that of those belonging to the upper rung of the social ladder. As stated in the Chaitanya-bhāgavat,² common people were very much concerned with the slight rise or fall in the price of paddy which could affect their lives adversely or otherwise. As a matter of fact, their purchasing power does not appear to have been high. Thus there is probably some justification in Ibn Baṭṭūṭah’s statement that though commodities were quite cheap in Bengal, people were complaining about what they considered to be high prices.³ We do not know how the government mitigated the miseries of famine which broke out from time to time. Jayānanda informs us of a famine that led to the migration of a large number of people,⁴ though we are not told what measures the Muslim ruler took to avert the calamity. Although Bengal was a land of plenty, so far as the availability and cheapness of agricultural products were concerned,⁵ the cultivators do not seem to have

4. Op. cit. p. 11. Frequent references to famines that affected the life of Bengal in the period in question, are found in the Chaitanya-bhāgavat, adi, iv, p. 22; madhya, viii, p. 176.
enjoyed an enviable position. The state demand which was, in
some cases at least, half of their crops in addition to other
governmental charges,\(^1\) appears so high that it is quite likely
to have caused hardship to them. The prevalence of the insti-
tution of slavery indicates the presence of poverty among certain
sections of people. Barbosa informs us that the “Moorish mer-
chants” used to “travel up country to buy Heathen boys from their
parents”\(^2\) who must have been poverty-stricken. Pictures of
poverty obtain in Bengali literature of the time. Vallavāchārya,
a Brahmin of Navadvīpa, was so poor that he could afford
to give only five myrobalans to the bride on the occasion of
his daughter’s marriage, while Shrīdhara, another poor Brahmin of
the same locality, was asked by Chaitanya to earn his livelihood
by worshipping lower class goddesses like Chāndī and Manasa.\(^3\)
Again Kavikānkan devotes a considerable section of his poem
to the description of the poverty-stricken condition of Fullara
throughout the course of the year.\(^4\) These glimpses of the
condition of common people, indicate a position of sharp contrast
between the upper and the lower grades of the population.
The effects of poverty must have been mitigated to a considera-
ble extent by the very nature of the necessaries of life which
were quite limited.

3. Chaitanya-bhāgavat, ṛṣī, ix, p. 60 and x, p. 72.
CHAPTER V

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

THE religious life of the period had a number of distinct elements such as Islam, Vaisnavism, Tantricism and the Manasa, Nath and Dharma cults. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to understand the general nature of each of these religions. The essential features of some these religious systems, particularly those of the minor cults, must have remained unchanged in the periods preceding and succeeding the Husaini Shahi rule.

Islam in its simple and austere aspect, does not appear to have characterized the life of the people, although literary and epigraphic sources indicate that offering prayers regularly, keeping the Ramadhan fast tenaciously, reading the Qur'an together with other religious scriptures, paying the poor-rate and going on pilgrimage to Mecca, were quite common practices. The vernacular literature of the time, depicts the mulla and the qadi as extremely

1. Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina is clearly mentioned in the Bana silicone inscription of Sonarghat, dated 911 A.H. 1505 A.D. J.A.S. B. 1873, p. 283. For the mention of salat (prayer) and zakat (poor-rate), see another early sixteenth-century inscription, I.H.O. 1950, p. 183. For the orthodox religious life of the Muslims, as depicted by the Hindu poets, see Vipradas: op. cit, pp. 67-68 and 143; Kavikasikan-chanda, i, pp. 259-60.
orthodox in their religious beliefs and ways of life. It seems that the contemporary sources have put emphasis on the ideals of a strict life to be led obviously in accordance with the rules of Sunni Islam. But a careful study of the literature of the time shows that there prevailed a sort of folk Islam having hardly any connection with the dogmas of religion.

But the popular Islam does not seem to have been free from accretions of an amazing nature. The writers of the Mangal poems tell us that some of the influential Muslims used to worship the snake goddess, Manasa, out of fear for snake-bite.1 It was probably a result of the Hindu influence on the Muslims. Nusrat Shâh constructed a building in order to preserve therein the Qadam Rasûl or the footprint of the Prophet. But veneration of the Prophet's footprint does not find support in orthodox Islam. Originating in Buddhism, this type of fetishism seems to have made its way into Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. So there are the footprints of the Buddha and Viśṇu at Bodh Gayâ and Gayâ respectively and those of Christ and Muḥammad in the Middle Eastern countries. We have shown in the succeeding chapter how the Muslim mystics of the time had brought a wide variety of tantric and yogic ideas and customs to the fold of Islam. Saiyid Sulṭân used to believe in the union of the Lord with the Ādyā-shakti or primordial goddess, to be effected in the physical body2—a principle hardly compatible with the Islamic idea of monotheism. The idea of Ādi-deva or the primordial god and Ādyā-shakti or the primordial goddess, obtaining in most of the mystic cults of medieval Bengal, appears to be a modified version of the Sâmkhya conception of Puruṣa (the unchanging principle of pure consciousness) and Prakṛti (the primordial cosmic substance), who are regarded as the underlying principles of the cosmic evolution.3

1. It is narrated in these sources that two brothers named Ḥasan and Husain worshipped Manasa; Vipradas: op. cit. pp. 84-86; Vijaya Gupta: op. cit. pp. 54-61.
2. Infra. ch. vi.
Saiyid Sultan has accepted the doctrine of the primordial male and the primordial female possibly under the influence of the mystic cults that flourished in Bengal. Even if we reject the popular story that Husain Shâh was responsible for the introduction of the worship of Satyapîr, it seems certain that the period under review witnessed the growth of the cult of Pîr. Bengali poets tell us that the orthodox Muslims regularly paid homage to the shrines of the Muslim saints.

Islamic mysticism, popularly known as Sûfî-ism, greatly influenced the society of medieval Bengal. Some of the Sîrû orders which entered Bengal in the course of several centuries, appear to have influenced the life of the people of the period under consideration. The Chisâhtiya Sîrî, Nûr Quîb-i-Âlam, who died in the first half of the fifteenth century, was held in high esteem by the people. According to Salmâ, Husain who used to pay respectful visits to his tomb at Pîr Qâlî, spent a large amount of money for the maintenance of a rest-house for those who used to

1. *infra*, ch. vi.
2. 'Arîf, possibly an eighteenth-century Bengali poet, says in his Lâlmoner Kechchhâ (the story of Lâlmon), "Husain Shâh took away the beautiful lady named Lâlmon..... When his desires were fulfilled at the end of the night, he offered to Satyapîr confectionaries worth 1½ lac of rupees. Satyapîr, who was at Mecca, came to know this. With his blessings, Husain became a Bâdshâh in the town of Moghâ;" quoted in the *S.P.P.* 1310 B.S. p. 147. It is probably on the basis of these historically unreliable materials that Dinesh Chandra Sen: (*History of Bengali Language and Literature*, p. 797) and following him, some other scholars, have gone to the extent of associating the name of Husain Shâh with the introduction of the cult of Satyapîr in Bengal. Such a contention does not find corroboration in any contemporary or reliable sources. Numerous poems were written on this cult in the eighteenth century, although the cult itself may be of an earlier origin. The earliest poem on Satyapîr is the one composed by Shaikh Fâdullâh who seems to have lived in the sixteenth century A.D.

come there to see the tomb from time to time.¹ His son Nuṣrat built the tomb of Akhī Siraj-ud-din at Sa'dullahpur.² The two Chishtiyya Ṣufis who had some connection with the religious life of this period, are Shaikh Ḥusain-ud-din Mānikpūrī, the chief disciple of Nur Quṭb-i-ʿĀlam³ and Rajī Ḥamīd Shāh, the disciple of Ḥusain-ud-din. They died in 1477 A.D. and 1495 A.D. respectively.⁴ Quṭban, the associate of Ḥusain Shāh Shariqī, who was residing at Kahlgātan, after his defeat by Sīkandar Lūdī,⁵ wrote in 1503 A.D., a romantic poem called Mṛgāvatī which appears to be a symbolical work illustrating the union of the seeker with the Supreme Being.⁶ He informs us that he was the disciple of Shaikh Burhān,⁷ who was, according to Muḥammad Ghauṭī,¹ a Shattāriyya Ṣufī.⁸ The Madāriyya sect, introduced in Bengal in the middle of the fifteenth century, seems to have continued to exist in the period in question. The Shūnaya-Pūrāṇa incidentally refers to the Madāriyya slogan, dan Madār (the breath of Madār).⁹ Kavikaṅkan mentions¹⁰ the wandering Qalandars of late sixteenth century. Maulānā Shāh Daulah (1519), who chose Bāghā, in Rajshahi, as a centre of his activities, became the founder of several generations of Pīrs in that part of Bengal.¹¹ Two of the inscrip-

¹. Riyāḍ, p. 135.
². Ibid. p. 138.
³. Aʾin, iii, p. 412.
⁵. Supra. ch. ii, p. 38.
⁶. Infra. ch. vii.
⁸. Gulzār-i-Abrār, Ms. in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, fol. 98. See also ’Abdul Ḥuq’s Ṭādhhikrah cited in Current Studies, 1955, p. 23.
tions of Ḥusain Shāh dated 911 A.H./1505 A.D. and 912 A.H./1512 A.D. contain references to the saint, Shaikh Jalāl Majarrad bin Muḥammad Turkistānī of Koniyya who was alive in an earlier period. Another Šūfī, venerated by the people of this period, was Ismāʿīl Ghāzī who was executed at the order of Bārbak Shāh in 1474 A.D. The Mandāran inscription of Ḥusain Shāh indicates that a gate was erected in his honour in 1494-95. Shaikh Faiḍullah, the poet of the Gorakṣa-vijaya, who flourished probably in the second part of the sixteenth century, tells us that he wrote a poem called Gāzi-vijaya, recounting the achievements of Ismāʿīl Ghāzī, the Pir of Kāntāduṛ. All these go to show how the Muslim Šūfīs and saints were respected by the people of medieval Bengal. Some of these Šūfīs appear to have brought about a cultural synthesis by adapting yogic and tantric philosophy to Islamic mysticism.

It seems that there was a considerable growth of Shi'ite influences in the period under review. It should be mentioned here that the materials at our disposal are not sufficient to establish this point beyond doubt. One of the inscriptions of Saif-ud-dīn Abūʾl Muḥaffar Fīrūz Shāh (1487-1490) mentions the names of Muḥammad, Ali, Fatima, Ḥasan and Ḥusain to the exclusion of the first three Caliphs of Islam. Thus the inscription seems to refer to the

1. J.A.S.B. 1873, p. 293 and 1922, p. 413, pl. ix.
2. Gulzār-i-Abrār, fol. 41, also quoted in J.A.S.P. 1957, pp. 65 and 67, connects him with the first Muslim conquest of Sylhet which is said to have been effected in 703/1303. See Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain Shāh, J.A.S.B. 1922, pl. ix, p. 413.
3. Appendix C.
5. Satyapir of Faiḍullah, quoted by Enamul Huq: Muslim Vānglā Sūhitya, p. 89. Pir Muḥammad Shâṭṭārī wrote Risālat-ush-Shuhadā narrating the activities of Ismāʿīl in Bengal and Sītāramās, a seventeenth-century Bengali poet, mentions his name with respect; appendix C.
6. Ch. vi, section ii.
Shi'ite tradition of *Panjtan-i-Pāk*, or the Five Holy Personages, which means an auspicious invocation at the beginning of an undertaking. The five epithets appearing in another inscription assigned to the early sixteenth century A.D., seem to be an imitation of the number 5 connected with the Shi'ite tradition mentioned above. The five names are *yā Budduh*, *yā Fattah* (Oh Opener), *yā Allāh* (Oh God), *yā Qudūs* (Oh Holy One) and *yā Subduh* (Oh Praiseworthy One). The word *Budduh* is conspicuous by its absence in Arabic and Persian lexicons. After the twelfth century A.D., it appears in Persian manuscripts dealing with amulets. Doutte, in his *Magie et Religion*, says that the word is used in Magian philosophy, as cure against stomach pain and similar other diseases. One explanation seems plausible here. Islam came in contact with Magianism in Persia where several obscure Shi'ite sects including the Kaisanias and Hashimias rose under the influence of Mago-Zoroastrianism. 'Ubaydullāh al-Mahdi, the first Fatimid ruler and 'Abdullāh Ibn Maymūn, the central figure of the religio-political propaganda scheme of the Shi'ites, are said to have been Magian by descent. The Rawandis founded by Mokanna in the eighth century, who defied the Muslim power in Khorasan, belonged to an Indo-Magian sect. Placed under these circumstances, medieval Islam was probably influenced by Magian ideas. It is also highly probable that the Magian term, *Budduh* gradually made its way into Islam through Shi'ism. Thus a process of Buddhistic accretion on Magianism is indicated. The Indo-Buddhist term, *Buddha* meaning 'the knowing one' appears to have been absorbed in course of time in Islam as a mystic name of God. Hence its presence in Persian manuscripts in the thirteenth century when some sort of compromise must have been effected between Magianism and Shi'ism. If the term *Budduh* of the above mentioned inscription of Bengal

is of Magian origin, its presence may be regarded as an indication of Shi'ite influences in this country.

These epigraphic evidences seem to find indirect corroboration in literary sources. The names of the Muslim heroes who fought unsuccessfully against Manas, were Ḥasan and Ḥusain, the revered Shi'ite Imāms and the place-name of the Muslims is significantly Ḥusainbāji. Mukundarām, while describing the Muslim colony in West Bengal, does not speak of a masjid there, but of Ḥasanbāji as the place of Muslim worship. The reason is not probably far to seek. Bengal had direct maritime connection with the Persian Gulf and Iraq, both areas of Shi'ah predominance. Barbosa, the Portuguese traveller, visiting Bengal towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, found a good number of Persian merchants in the city of 'Bengala'. The process of the growth of Shi'ism in Bengal was accelerated in the seventeenth century by the increase of oceanic communication between this country and Persia and by the large scale immigration of the Persians into Bengal due to the socio-political insecurity they had been feeling under the decaying and tyrannical Safavids.

Shi'ism, with its highly esoteric principles and practices, appears to have influenced only a section of the Muslim population and Shi'ism as a religious institution was yet to come into being. Thus the average Muslim probably adhered to what may be called folk Islām.

II

Chaitanya did not originate Vaiṣṇavism which constituted for many centuries before him, an important element in the religious life of Bengal. The Sena kings with their leanings

2. Kaviṣṭhān-chāṇḍī, 1, p. 258.

22—
towards Vaiṣṇavism, had perhaps produced an atmosphere congenial to the development of the Rādha-Kṛṣṇa cult popularized in the Gīta-govinda of Jayadeva, which has been regarded by the followers of Chaitanya as one of the sources of their religious inspiration. The Shri-Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana of Chandīdās, his melodious padāvalīs and those of Vidyāpati of Mithila, betray the trend of popular Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. In the period under review, Chaitanya gave it a reality which it did not hitherto possess.

Born in 1486 A.D. in a Brahmin family of Navadvīpa, Chaitanya appears to have received elementary education in Sanskrit schools. The death of his father in his infancy and the entire burden of the household falling upon his shoulders, the accidental death of his wife, Lakṣmī, during his absence on a sojourn in East Bengal and his subsequent marriage with a Brahmin girl named Viṣṇupriyā, are some of the incidents connected with his early life. The great change that came over his life is generally attributed to a trip to Gaya that he had undertaken at the age of nearly twenty-two with a view to performing the shraddha ceremony of his father. It was at this celebrated place that Chaitanya was given the Kṛṣṇa-mantra by a spiritual ascetic named Ishvara Purī whose association combined with the sacred surroundings of Gaya, seems to have aroused in his mind strong religious feelings hitherto dormant in his nature. On his return from Purī, he started a new life saturated with love for Kṛṣṇa and characterized by emotional songs

1. Jayadeva was one of the court-poets of Laksmana Sena in whose reign Bengal was attacked by Bakhtiyar Khalji (early thirteenth century). Quite celebrated for its lyrical charm, rhetorical grandeur and pictorial beauty, the Gīta-govinda of Jayadeva which deals with the erotic Rādha-Kṛṣṇa legend, has appeared in India in several editions. It has been translated into English by Sir William Jones, Collected Works, London, 1807. Edwin Arnold has rendered it into English verses in the The Indian Song of Songs, London, 1875.

2. He flourished probably in the early fifteenth century; see Sukumar Sen: Vāngla Sāhityer Itihāsa, 1, p. 80.
and dances and mystic trances which became striking features of his life from this time. He was joined very soon by Nityānanda, Advaita and others who considered him to be devotion personified. The musical worship called kirtana was publicly performed, so much so that it was opposed by a group of conservative Brahmīns of Navadvipa. After his initiation into the monastic order, in 1510 A.D., by Keshava Bhāratī of Kāśi, Chaitanya went on a religious journey covering many parts of southern and western India and including a short visit to Brāndavana. His meeting with Rupa, Sanātana and the king Pratāpa-rudra of Orissa, was of significant importance for the history and philosophy of Chaitanya-ism. He spent the remaining eighteen years of his life at Puri, dancing and singing in a state of ecstatic emotion. He passed away in 1533 A.D.¹

Although the name of Chaitanya has become closely associated with the history of Vaiśnavism, he does not appear to have worked out any theological or philosophical system for the sect, nor has he written any religious work excepting perhaps the shikṣaṇaṭaka or eight teachings which may be translated as follows: “May the recital of the name of Shri-Kṛṣṇa be trium-

1. Materials for the life of Chaitanya are scattered in a number of Sanskrit and Bengali biographical works. Elsewhere, we have given a brief account of the Sanskrit biographies of Chaitanya such as Chaitanya-charitāmṛta of Murāri Gupta, Chaitanya-charitāmṛta of Kaviarkapūra and Chaitanya-chandrodaya-nāṭaka by the latter; infra, ch. vii, section iii(c). The Bengali poems dealing with the life of Chaitanya are Chaitanya-bhūgavat of Brāndavandās, Chaitanya-mahāgala of Lochanadas, Chaitanya-mahāgala of Jaynanda, Chaitanya-charitāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadas Kaviraj and Kāḍachā of Govindadas. We have used these works in this book and mentioned their dates and places of publications in the Bibliography. B. B. Majumdar has given a critical account of the materials for Chaitanya’s life in Shri-Chaitanya-chariter Upādān. For the life of Chaitanya, see also, M. T. Kennedy: The Chaitanya Movement, pp. 13-51; S. K. De: op. cit. pp. 51-76; D. C. Sen: Chaitanya and His Age, pp. 99-265 etc.
phant, which clears the mirror of the mind, extinguishes the
great forest-fire of existence, spreads the rays of the white lily
of welfare, maintains the life of learning which is like nectar,
swells the ocean of happiness, enables the tasting of full bliss
at every step and bathes the whole soul. You created the different
aspects of the name and you put all your powers into that;
there is no time for the regular remembrance of the same.
Such is your mercy, O God; but so very unfortunate am I
that in this life no love for it grew in me. One should recite
the name of Hari by considering oneself lower than the grass,
more patient than the tree, devoid of any sense of prestige,
but always ready to show honour where it is due. O son of
Nanda, I, your servant, have fallen into the troubous waters
of the ocean of life. So kindly consider me equal to the dust
of your lotus-feet. When will my eyes be flowing with constant
tears, my voice choked with overwhelming words and my body
filled with delight at the time of reciting your name? Not
riches, not relations, not a beautiful woman, nor good poetic
faculty do I desire, O God. Let my disinterested devotion flow
towards you who are my God in all my lives. Due to my
separation from Govinda, the moment has become an age,
eyes have become like torrents of rain and the whole world
has become empty. Let him embrace me or trample my poor
self which is engaged in shampooing his feet or let him inflict
great misery on my mind due to my not seeing him. Let that
rogue do whatever he thinks. He and nobody else is the Lord
of my heart'. Besides giving expression to the simple devotional
faith of Chaitanya, characterized by a depth of feeling and a
sense of Vaiṣṇavite humility and indicating the devotee's attitude
of complete self-resignation to the will of the deity, these
verses do not seem to contain any theological meaning. One
may, of course, read into the last verse, the doctrine of the
rāgāmūga mode of devotion adopted by Chaitanya. Love for

1. Kṛṣṇadas Kaviraj: op. cit., anīya, xx, pp. 358-60; Padyāvalī nos.
   22, 31, 32, 71, 93, 94, 324 and 337; cf. Kennedy: op. cit.
   pp. 90-91.
Krṣṇa with an intense emotion, is thus the fundamental principle of the faith of Chaitanya.

The history of the post-Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal is characterized by two distinct religious traditions, one developing at Brndāvana and the other at Navadvīpa. The Brndāvana tradition was represented by the six Gosvāmins some of whom are said to have been instructed by Chaitanya to systematize the doctrines and dogmas of Vaiṣṇavism.¹ Their monumental works in Sanskrit embody the elaborate philosophy, theology and ethics of the Krṣṇa cult, with which the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal were acquainted not before the beginning of the seventeenth century. Their theology and rasashāstra being "a matter of later deliberate development,"² do not come under the purview of our discussion. The life of Chaitanya with its mystic trances, musical worship of the deity and mysterious happenings was the main concern of his direct and immediate followers at Navadvīpa, who have given expression to their simple devotional faith through a good number of biographical works without caring much for the exposition of the doctrinal aspect of Vaiṣṇavism or of the teachings of Shrī-Chaitanya. The religious ideas of Navadvīpa circles of Vaiṣṇavas are preserved in the works of Murāri Guptā, Kavi Karṇapūra, Brndāvanadās, Lochananadās and Jayānanda who do not betray any knowledge of what was happening at Brndāvana at about the same period of time—a position indicating that they stood in a state of complete isolation from the Gosvāmins of Brndāvana.

Chaitanya who was a living reality to his Navadvīpa followers, was regarded as Parama Tattva or the Ultimate Reality and as such the object of direct worship. Murāri Guptā who describes at a considerable length, his Mahāprakāśa and Mahābhīṣeka or Great Manifestation and Consecration as the supreme object

1. For the later development of the sect at Brndāvana and the works of the Gosvāmins like Rūpa, Sanātana, Jīva, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa and Raghunāthadās, See S. K. De: op. cit, chs. III-VI.
2. Ibid. p. 79.
of adoration,\(^1\) pays due respect to Chaitanya, the four-armed Viṣṇu,\(^2\) identifying him with the Bhāgavat\(^3\) and considering him to be the incarnation in the Kali yuga.\(^4\) Kavikarṇapūra depicts his two-armed, four-armed and six-armed forms and believes that he came to the world with a view to saving people from suffering and teaching devotional practices to Hari.\(^5\) He makes a clear distinction between the emotional form of devotion or rāgānuga bhakti and the devotion governed by the scriptural injunctions or baidhi bhakti, preferring the former to the latter.\(^6\) Both Murāri and Kavikarṇapūra maintain that one of the objects of his descent was to refute Advaitavād or monism,\(^7\) probably because it did not make room for the dualistic conception of bhakti which distinguished the devotee from the deity. Brändāvanadās accepts without question Chaitanya’s divinity and his identity with Kṛṣṇa\(^8\) rejecting the Gaura-nāgara doctrine developed by Lochanadās\(^9\) and others who regard Chaitanya as the nāgara or beloved and his devotees as nāgaris or women in love with Chaitanya. The supporters of this doctrine considered the life of Chaitanya at Navadvīpa as a counterpart of Kṛṣṇa’s Brändāvana-līlā. Some of the contemporary pada-writers appear to have ascribed Rādhabhāṣya to Chaitanya considering him to be the incarnation of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

We find a systematized theory of incarnation in the Vaiṣṇava literature of the time. Brändāvanadās gives a long list of

2. Ibid. p. 426.
3. Ibid. p. 426.
4. Ibid. p. 29.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. pp. 175 and 426.
8. Op. cit. adi, i, p. 6, ii, pp. 10, 14, etc.; madhya, ii, p. 133, iii, p. 142, etc.
9. Chaitanya-maṅgala, adi pp. 3, 52, madhya, p. 7 and padas in the appendix, pp. 8, 9, 11, 12, etc.
avatāras: Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Parasurāma, Rāma, Haladhara, Buddha, Kalki, Dhanvantari, Harīsa, Nārada, Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇa and Chaitanya identified with the Bhāgavat, all of whom have been considered to be a manifestation of the same reality which, again, is said to have descended on the earth in the four ages of Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali in white, red, dark and yellow forms respectively. The theory of Brāhmapurāṇa seems to have been influenced by the conception of incarnation found in the Chaitanya-charitāmṛta of Murari Gupta and the Gītā-govinda of Jayadeva. According to Murāri, Shukla, Yajña, Prthu and Chaitanya are the avatāras in four ages respectively and the kāryāvatāras are Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Bhārgava, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalki.

It is interesting to note here that the first ten avatāras of Brāhmapurāṇa’s list appear exactly in the same order in the dashāvatārastotra (the hymn of praise to the ten avatāras) of the Gītā-govinda, which has been accepted in a slightly modified form by Murāri Gupta. The Vaiṣṇava poets of the period under discussion appear to have accepted the conventional list of avatāras with a view to finding in it a place for Chaitanya.

In the Gauragonḍoddeshādīpikā, Kavikarṇapūra admits of a plurality of deities in the Pañcha-tattva doctrine which established Chaitanya, Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadāthara and Shrīvāsa as five objects of worship. A hierarchy of deities has been conceived of by the supporters of this doctrine, for they are willing to regard Chaitanya as Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda and Advaita as Prabhūs. At about the time when Brāhmapurāṇa composed his Chaitanya-bhāgavat, the Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīpa were, perhaps, divided into several groups, each associating itself closely with

4. Kavikarṇapūra has attributed the origin of this doctrine to Svarūpa Dāmodara; B. B. Majumdar: op. cit. pp. 50 and 617.
one of the direct followers of Chaitanya such as Advaita, Nityananda and Gadadhara.3 The stray religious ideas that we come across in the writings of the Vaishnavas of the sixteenth-century Navadvipa, seem to indicate that the Navadvipa tradition did not have for itself any organized system of philosophy.

Whatever might have been the exact nature of the Navadvipa tradition, Chaitanya-ism had far-reaching influence on the society and culture of medieval Bengal. The emotional mode of worship emphasized by Chaitanya gave to Vaishnavism an added interest and made it widely known not only in Bengal and Orissa, but also perhaps in some other parts of India. It produced a rich literature in Bengali and Sanskrita which may be regarded as a storehouse of socio-religious information. Although Chaitanya did not abolish caste system,3 he opened the door of his emotional faith to all people irrespective of caste or religion—a catholic attitude that must have stood in sharp contrast with the conservative spirit of Brahminical orthodoxy, amounting to a significant social revolution in those days.

It is difficult to ascertain what factors contributed to the origin and growth of Chaitanya-ism and the consequent mental loosening of a significant section of Bengali people. It is necessary to understand the movement against its wide socio-

2. For the Bengali and Sanskrit works dealing with Chaitanya-ism, see supra, p. 171, f.n. i and infra, ch. vii sect. iii (c). The religio-philosophical literature produced by the Gosvamins of Brndavana, is the direct product of the Chaitanya movement.
4. Rupa, Sanataana, and Nityananda who were men of doubtful social status and Raghunathadas and Murari Gupta who belonged to the Kasyastha and Vaidya castes respectively, came in close contact with Chaitanya and rendered valuable services to Vaisnavism; Krsnadas Kaviraj : op. cit., anyta, iv, pp. 282-88. It is said by this biographer that ‘‘caste and family do not count in the worship of Krsna’’ ; Ibid. p. 283.
logical background about which the literature of the time gives
a good deal of information. The local cults of Manasī, Chaṇḍī
d and Dharma seem to have stood in direct opposition to the
orthodox order of the Brahmins\(^1\) who wanted to keep them-
selves aloof from the local influence by reviving the old, string-
gent socio-religious regulations as laid down in the ancient and
medieval works on law and religion.\(^2\) The self-centred and
complacent attitude of the Brahmins must have checked the
process of *rapprochement* between the upper grade represen-
ted by the Brahmins and the lower grades of the society.
Dominated politically by the Muslims, the Hindus of Bengal
were being gradually influenced by Muslim ideas and practices.
Elsewhere we have suggested that Islam had sympathy and
understanding for some of the local cults and for the mystic
ideas underlying their philosophical systems. Converts to Islam
under these circumstances must have grown in number. The
discursive faculty of the Brahminical mind which found expre-
sion through the cultivation of a highly abstruse branch of
knowledge called *Navya Nyāya*, seems to have produced an arid
atmosphere of pure intellectualism to which the Vaiṣṇavas re-
acted vehemently.\(^3\) This explains why the path of devotion was
preferred to that of knowledge by Chaitanya and his followers.\(^4\)
Describing the socio-religious conditions of Navadvipa on the eve
of Chaitanya’s birth, Brāṇḍāvanadās regrets that people were
worshipping Shākta-tantrik goddesses like Chaṇḍī, Manasī and
Vāshuli and that even those who cared to read the religious
scriptures like the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavat*, did not attach any
importance to the worship of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu.\(^5\) The writers of the
period believe that Chaitanya descended on the earth with a

1. *Infra.* ch. vi, section iv and ch. vii, section i (a).
2. *Infra.* ch. vii, section iii (a) ; ch. ix, section ii.
3. For the reaction of the Vaiṣṇavas to logicians, see Brāṇḍāvan-
adās : *op. cit.* ādi, vi, p. 36.
*op. cit.* ādi, xvii, pp. 62-63.
view to fully establishing the cult of *bhakti*. Considering the socio-religious conditions of Bengal on the eve of the growth of the Chaitanya movement, it may be maintained that it had originated probably in response to certain social demands, in order to bring about some sort of reconciliation of the different conflicting elements prevailing in the Hindu society of Bengal.

III

Buddhism was no longer a dominant factor in the religious life of Bengal, although its influences could, perhaps, be traced in the mystic philosophy of the different major and minor cults of the time. Contemporary literature contains references to the Buddhists against whom the tirades of the followers of Chaitanya were probably directed. While Kavikarṇapūra deplores in the second act of his drama, *Chaitanya-chandrodaya*, the influences of the Buddhists, Tāntrikas, Māyāvādins, Jainas, Kāpālikas and Pashupatas, Kṛṣṇadās Kāvirāj depicts the Buddhists as being defeated by Chaitanya and accepting the Vaiṣṇava mode of musical worship of Kṛṣṇa. Brāndavānādās goes to the extent of making his master Nityānanda kick the Buddhists in a whimsical fit of anger. All these indicate not only the hostility of the Vaiṣṇavas to the Buddhists, but also possibly the decadent condition of Buddhism in medieval Bengal. But Buddhism did not fail to have its impact on the cultural life of the Hindus of the period in question. While the Sanskrit writings of Rāyamukūṭa Brāhaspati betray Buddhist influences, the Buddha has been regarded as the ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu in standard Vaiṣṇava works of the time. The tendency towards religious


syncretism noticed in the Vaiśṇava writings was probably of a traditional nature, for the process was started as early as the time of Jayadeva.¹

The Buddhist invocation appearing at the beginning of the doubtful Sāhīr inscription ascribed to the end of the fourteenth century,² the copying of the Mahāyāna work Bodhicharyāvatāra at Benugrāma in 1436 A.D., by a Sadhauḍha-karaṇa-kāyasthā-thakkura, named Śrī-Amitābha,³ and Čandaḍās' mention of the trimūrti Buddha incarnation,⁴ probably reminiscent of the tri-ratna or 'three jewels' of Buddhism, are some stray materials which do not help us in forming an accurate idea about the nature of Buddhism obtaining in Muslim Bengal. Passing through the stages of Mantrayāna, Vajrayāna, Kālachakrayāna and Sahajayāna,⁵ Buddhism was gradually putting emphasis on haṭhayogic esoteric practices quite similar in nature to those obtaining in the Tantric philosophy which seems to have absorbed it in the course of several centuries, the process of assimilation being completed sometime after the beginning of the Muslim rule in Bengal. All that remained of Buddhism, must have been its Tantric form which we come across in the Chāryā songs and which slowly transformed itself, by an inevitable historical process, into what came to be known as Sahajiyā Vaiśṇavism,⁶ in the post-Chaitanya period.

1. Supra. p. 175.
5. For the peculiar features of each of these stages of Buddhism, see S. B. Dasgupta: Obscure Religious Cults, p. 9 ff; History of Bengal, vol. i, pp. 419-22; Nihar Ranjan Ray: op. cit. pp. 636-39.
6. The Sahajiyas put emphasis on the element of love, consider Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā to be the male and female aspects of the Absolute Reality and maintain that the highest spiritual realization is possible through the union of the human couple. S. B. Dasgupta: Obscure Religious Cults, p. 120 ff; see also Manindra
The Chaitanya-bhāgavat gives an account of the wanderings and religious activities of Nityānanda, originally a member of the Avadhūta sect which was probably a branch of Tantric Buddhism. As the work under reference does not give us a clear picture about the esoteric practices and inner doctrines of the sect, it is difficult to ascertain how much it owed to Buddhism proper and how much to Tantricism and Shaivism. It seems fairly certain that the followers of this sect used to put emphasis on the nerve, Avadhūti, identified with the Suṣumnā of the Brahminical Tantra, which played an indispensable part in the hāthayogic physical culture. Chāyā songs contain frequent references to the Avadhūtikā which was inseparably connected with the yogic discipline of the Buddhist Sahajiyās. The nerve Avadhūti has been described as that which puts easily an end to the evils of sufferings, as that which does away with the process of thought-construction of existence, which is without beginning, and as that radiant nature which destroys all sins. The Buddhist Sahajiyās believed that the realization of the Absolute or sahaja consisted in the non-dual state of union of Prajñā and Upāya, the female and the male aspects of the Absolute, to be attained by controlling the right and the left nerves and making the female energy Chandaḷī or Avadhūtikā move upward towards the cerebrum region through the middle nerve Avadhūti. The Avadhūta sect, named

1. *Op. cit.* nādi, vm, madhya, m-v and xi-xii. How lightly Nityānanda regarded the caste system, is illustrated by the fact that he admitted lower class Hindus to the fold of Vaiṣṇavism; *ibid.* antya, v, pp. 381 and 383.

2. *Infra.* ch. vi. See also section v of this chapter.

3. *Hążar Vochharer Purāṇa Vaṅglā Bhāṣāya Baudha Gāna O Doha* (Charyacharya-binishchaya) ed. Haraprasad Shastri; commentaries on song no 2 and doha no. 4, pp. 6 and 9.

probably after the middle nerve *Avadhūtikā* or after the female energy of the same name whose counterpart is called *Kuṇḍalini Shakti* in the Hindu *Tantra*, seems to have retained some of the distinctive features of the early Buddhist Sahajiyā philosophy which represented a Tantric form of Buddhism. It seems that the followers of this sect adopted the regressive method of physical culture which formed an integral part of almost all obscure cults of medieval Bengal.

**IV**

The Dharma cult seems to have found a regular place in the religious life of the fifteenth and sixteenth century Bengal. Lurking traces of the cult are available in the *Manasā-vijaya* of Vipradas who has narrated how Gaṅgā turned all white by casting a glance at the white Dharma who had come to visit the house of Shiva during his absence. On his return, Shiva was immensely impressed by the all-white sight of Gaṅgā, then seated on a white bed, and he came to know what had happened during his absence. As a matter of fact, Shiva had been performing, for twelve years, hard penances, on the bank of the Valluks, with a view to having a sight of Dharma. A good number of gods and goddesses including Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī and Indra came to pay respect to Gaṅgā who had been favoured by Dharma, the Ultimate Reality. Though of a legendary nature, the story seems to emphasize the superiority of Dharma to the Hindu Triad, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Shiva—a feature quite prominent in the liturgical texts on the Dharma cult. It is believed that Dharma put Shiva in charge of creation after having created the universe—the idea being an echo of the cosmogonical con-

1. *Infra*, ch. vi, sec. ii; see also sec. v of this chapter.
2. *Infra*, ch. vi.
ception obtaining in the Dharmite mythology.\(^1\) Following the traditional ideas of the Dharmites, Vipradās depicts Dharma as a white god, using a white umbrella, riding on the legendary owl Uluka and carrying a staff and a water-pot in the hands.\(^2\)

With a view to creating an indirect relationship of Manasā with Dharma, the poet says that Shiva was instructed by Dharma to find out Manasā in the lotus garden of Kālidāha.\(^3\)

Haraprasad Shāstri considered the Dharma cult to be an offshoot of Buddhism,\(^4\)—a theory that stands contradicted now a days.\(^5\) Sukumar Sen who regards Dharma as "predominantly the War God of the fighting tribes like the Dom and others," contends that the cult is a very primitive one, possibly of Austric origin, which has absorbed a variety of Aryan and non-Aryan elements including much of the abstractions of Varuṇa, the Vedic sun god, the Iranian sun god, the Puranic incarnation Kalkī, the tortoise incarnation and others. He further holds that the white goat sacrificed to Dharma, is a substitute for a young boy mentioned in the mythology and that the story connected with the account, in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, of the sacrifice of Shunaḥshepa, son of a Brahmin named Ajigarta, in place of Rohitāshva, son of king Harishchandra, is probably a

2. Op. cit. p. 6. For similar description of Dharma, see Rūparam: Dharmamāṇigala, pt. 1, pp. 2, 13, 18 etc.; Shūnya-Purāṇa, 8 ff; Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna, pp. 81, 87, etc.
3. Manasā-vijaya, p. 7. For Dharma’s relationship with Manasā, see section vi of this chapter.
myth of Austric origin which had found a place in Brahminical literature in pre-Buddhist times.¹

V

Nāthism seems to have been one of the important religio-philosophical systems obtaining in Bengal. The Gorakṣa-vijaya contains a versified form of the popular story of Gorakṣanātha and Matsyendranātha that must have had wide circulation among the people of those days. Quṭban, the poet of the Mṛgāvatī has referred to the wanderings of the Gorakṣapāthi monks with such trappings as beads, long matted hair, revolving wheel, ring, rosary, staff, earthen cup, leg clogs, necklace, hide, wire, cow-dung ashes, trident, lyre and wallet.² Muḥsin Fānī, the writer of Dabistān, gives a very peculiar account of the manners, customs, and religious practices of the followers of Gorakṣanātha.³ Literary evidences are available to show that the cult obtained not only in Bengal, but also in Bihār, northern and northwestern India and Mārāṭhā country.⁴

The followers of this Shaiva-tantrik cult used to consider the attainment of immortality to be the highest object of their life. They believed that liberation could be achieved in a ripe body by adopting certain methods of yogic-tantric discipline aimed at bringing about a state of union between Shiva, the principle of rest and Shakti, the principle of phenomenal manifestation. Accordingly, they developed a theory of nerves and

1. Ibid. pp. 669, 672-73; see introduction to the Dharmamañgala of Rūparāma, 2nd ed. pp. 3-18; see also Suniti Kumar Chatterjee: “Buddhist Survivals in Bengal”, B. C. Law Volume 1, p. 78.
2. Extracts from the Mṛgāvatī, op. cit. p. 475.
six circles to be controlled and penetrated by the Nāthpanthī so that he might raise the dormant Kūṇḍalinī Shakti in the Mulādhāra-chakra situated at the lowest part of the spinal chord, give it an upward motion and finally unite it with Shiva in the Sahasrāra in the head. With this regressive process of physical and psychological culture was also connected the recital of the sohāh mantra (or the hymn, 'He is I') and the production of the anāhatanād (or the unrestricted sound) which would come out of the Anāhata-chakra situated in the heart.

The idea of void obtaining in the Nāth and Dharma cults is probably of Austic origin—a suggestion strengthened by its presence in the religious beliefs of the Polynesian people who belong to Austic races. The conception of void obtaining in Buddhism is probably an indication of the influence of the Dharma cult on Tantric Buddhism.

VI

Of several other cults, those of Manasa and Chaṇḍi were quite prominent. We have elsewhere discussed the vernacular literature dealing with the legendary story of Manasa and have referred to the ceremonials and superstitious beliefs connected with the worship of the snake goddess. The cult appears to be of a composite nature, for it contains a number of Vedic, Puranic and non-Aryan elements. We have already suggested

1. For a further elaboration of the yogic theory of nerves and six circles and the regressive process of yogic exercise, see infra, ch. vi, section ii; see S. B. Das Gupta: Obscure Religious Cults, p. 229 ff.; Kalyani Mallik: Nāth Sampradāya Itihāsa etc. pp. 395-98, 433-35 etc. Nāthapantha, pp. 21-24, 27-29 etc.
4. Infra. ch. vii, section i (a).
5. Infra. ch. ix.
that the cult had some connection with the Dharma worship. The suggestion finds support in the Yamayami-sūkta of the Rgveda which refers to the matrimonial relationship between Dharma and Ketaka (Manasa).

The worship of the goddess Chanda is frequently mentioned in the Chaitanya-bhāgavat. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, Mukandarama wrote a long poem recounting the achievements of this goddess. Going back to a slightly earlier period of Bengal history, we find that Danujamardana and Mahendra declared their faith in this cult by calling themselves Shri-Chanda-charayya-paraya or 'devoted to the feet of Chanda'.

Shaivism, which had been flourishing in Bengal from time immemorial, appears to have become quite decadent in the period under review. As indicated in the contemporary literature, it was not only opposed but also possibly over-shadowed by the Shākta-tantrik cults of Manasa and Chanda. The Pashupatas who formed a branch of the Shaivite sect, were probably looked down upon by the Vaiṣṇavas of the period in question. Shaivism under these circumstances was gradually becoming mild and inactive and the Purāṇik Shiva converted into an average Bengali agriculturist.

1. Supra. section iv of this chapter.
4. Infra. ch. vii, section 1 (a).
5. The expression appears on several coins of these rulers, dated 1339 Shaka/1417 A.D. and 1340 Shaka/1418 A.D.; see N. K. Bhattachari: Coins and Chronology, pp. 118-22 and pl. viii.
8. Supra. section iii of the present chapter.
9. The Shānīya-Purāṇa contains a section on Shiva taking to cultivation (pp. 182-94), the theme being elaborated by Rameshvara.
It seems that Brahminism was passing through a precarious state of existence. The Brahmans composed a number of works on smṛti or ritualistic law in order to enforce the rules of ceremonial purity of Brahminism so that it might not come under the influence of lower class and alien hieratic ideas. As the point has been discussed in some of the succeeding chapters of this work,¹ it needs hardly any further elaboration here.

There was a considerable amount of influence of Tantricism on the Hindu society of Bengal. Contemporary works are replete with references to Tantric ideas and practices. Vipradās has tried to depict Chāṇḍī as a corrupt woman² whom morally degraded people used to worship by offering meat and wine at her altar.³ Brāndāvanadās seems to have hinted at Tantric practices in the following lines: “They bring five girls at night after having recited the mantras. Various articles also come as concomitant thereof. These include eatables, scented garlands and different clothes. After taking food they cohabit with the girls variously”.⁴ The protective Brahminical culture had to absorb Tantric influences. Raghunandana has dealt at considerable length with the auspicious times of Tantric initiation. According to him, the months of Chaitra, Jaiśṭha, Āśāṭha, Bhādra and Pauṣa are inauspicious, and Vaishākha, Shrāvana, Āșvina, Kṛrtti, Mārgashaṅsa. Māgha and Phālguna auspicious for initiation. He goes on to speak of the particular week days, the ascendancy of the different asterisms and the nature of the preceptor all of which had to be taken into consideration at the time of Tantric initiation.⁵ Thus Tantric influences seem to have saturated Brahminical religious practices and beliefs.

Chakravarti at a later period of time when the process of the transformation of Shiva into an ordinary agriculturist was probably completed; see Shivyāyana, pp. 68-75.

1. *Infra.* ch. vii, and ch: ix.
5. Extracts from *Malanāsa-tattva* and *Dikṣā-tattva,* given by Bhabatosh
Some of the important Tantric works composed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have elaborately discussed the Tantric rites, practices and philosophy. Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamavāgīśha, who has given an exposition of Tantric doctrines in his celebrated work, Tantrasāra, is regarded as a contemporary of Chaitanya. The Sarvollāśatantra, another Tantric work, is said to have been written in the latter half of the fifteenth century. These together with other sixteenth-century works deal with a number of philosophical problems such as the nature of the soul, the supreme soul, the doctrine of karma or action, the spiritual relation between the devotee and the Absolute, the source of Supreme knowledge and others. These dogmas, embodying a high ideal, were influenced by the Vedānta and the ancient Tantras. On the question of the admissibility of wine in worship, the Tantric worshippers were divided into two rival groups called Pashvārchāra and Kulāchāra. "Besides eschewing wine in worship, the Pashvacharins generally adhered to the Vedic rites and rules of life modified through centuries of change and influence of the Tantra. The Kulacharins, on the other hand, developed a form of mystic culture in which the notorious five 'm's. (pañcha makāra)—wine, women, meat, fish and fried cereals,—featured most prominently." The preceptor, the initiation and the mantra or hymn were considered to be the first three essentials of Tantric worship. The external rites and rituals were meant to aim at a particular end, viz. unity with the Supreme Being after death. The devotees had to perform the mystic-yogic exercise of saṭchakrabheda, which is said to have brought about his freedom from worldly bondages. The Kulāchāra Tantric mystic culture had its culmination in the inner worship connected with yogic physiology and the outer worship


1. Tapan Kumar Ray Choudhury: Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir, p. 237. The rest of the paragraph is summarized from this work, pp. 125-36.
associated with the pañcha ma-kūra in which sex played an important part. In the course of its development, the Pashvī- chūra seems to have been greatly influenced by the Kulāchūra. A careful study of the literature of the time shows that the relation between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Tantrics was quite unfriendly.

We have given above an idea about the general nature of the different religious systems. The constituent elements of these systems seem very often linked with one another and are thus indistinguishable. This is suggestive of a long-drawn process of contact among these religions, although they have also points of conflict.
CHAPTER VI

ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

WE have already noticed that certain socio-religious forces operated in the life of Bengal under the Ḥusain Shāhī rule. As a matter of fact, this period witnessed an important stage in the process of the gradual evolution of Bengali society. As Islām was an important factor in the social life of the country, it is necessary to ascertain its relation with some of the local systems discussed in the preceding chapter.

Throughout the pre-Mughal period, there seems to have been an undefined conflict between Islām and Brahminism. With the decline of Buddhism and its consequent degeneration into Tantricism, the field was open to either Islam or Brahminism to assert itself. In the contest, however, Islām had a natural advantage. Besides the political advantage enjoyed by Islām, its liberalism as against Brahminical caste system, had a natural social appeal to the Bengalis who were coming to the fold of Islām with the expectation of certain political and economic advantages. It has been clearly stated by Barbosa that the Hindus were regularly embracing
Islam in order to receive favour from the ruling class. Thus Islam seems to have held out before the mass of the population, not only the proverbial ideal of socio-religious equality, but also a bright prospect of immediate material gain. Conversion to Islam under these circumstances must have been quite inevitable. The social appeal of Islam must have been greatly minimized when Vaishnavism grew in Bengal, and took the sting out of Brahminism and this saved the country for Hinduism. Thus Islam was one of the most powerful rival forces which Brahminism confronted. In fact, relation between Brahminism and Islam seems to have been one of contact and conflict ending in a temporary compromise in the Husain Shahi period.

In the pre-Muslim period, the Brahmins had enjoyed a monopoly of social and political suremacy to which the foundation of Muslim rule gave a rude shock. They were no longer the political masters of the country. Their social importance was naturally reduced to a great extent. It was at this time that several anti-Brahminic forces were at work in Bengal. We have elsewhere pointed out that the local cults of Manasa, Chand and Dharma appear to have opposed Brahminism to a great extent. These coupled with the advent of Islam created a peculiar situation to which the Brahmins appear to have reacted by trying to revive their lost glory. This Brahminical attitude is exemplified by the foundation of the Navadvipa school of Nyaya, the composition of a number of Smriti texts by Raghunandana and his contemporaries and the general revival of classical culture embodied in the Sanskrit works composed in the Husain Shahi period and the period immediately following it. The attitude of the Brahminical section of population to the Muslim ruling class, seems to have been far from friendly. The Hindu political power had gone down with the Senas; attempts at its revival in the fifteenth century through the short-lived dynasty established by Raja Garesha, had also failed completely. The rise of Raja Garesha to power does

not seem to be an accidental political phenomenon in the history of Bengal isolated from its social background. It may be regarded as an outburst of a force that had been working since the foundation of Muslim rule in this country. It has been stated in the kulaja literature that the Brahmins of Varendra contributed a great deal to the success of Rājā Gaṇeṣha.\(^1\) Although we do not have any direct support for this statement, it cannot be summarily rejected. The period of Bengal’s history occupied by Rājā Gaṇeṣha and his successors, is characterized by a sudden revival of Brahminical culture.\(^2\) Completely bereft of political power, the Brahmins must have felt bitter towards the later pre-Mughal Muslim rulers. Brndāvanādās informs us that the people of Navadvīpa used to believe that the throne of Gaug would be occupied by the Brahmins—an idea also echoed in the Chaitanya-maṅgal of Jayānanda.\(^3\) Rationally interpreted, it means that the Brahmins were not in a position to reconcile themselves to the Muslim rule. To such a group of people, the Muslim rulers could hardly be friendly. This seems


2. Brhaspati Mishra who flourished in the court of Jalal-ud-din Muḥammad Shah, received several honorary titles from the sultan, such as kavi-chakravarti, rāja-pañjīta, pañjīta-sarbahauma, kavi-pañjīta-chuḍāmaṇi, mahāchārya and rāyamukha; Sukumar Sen: \textit{Madhya Yuger Ṭhānā O Ṭhānāli}, p. 10. For the works composed by this kuṭin Brahmin, see \textit{infra.} ch. vii. Brhaspati mentions in some of his works, the names of Rājā Gaṇeṣha and his converted son, Jalal-ud-din. In fact, the progress in Brahminical culture, which this period seems to have attained, would not have been possible, had it not been patronized by the rulers. Brhaspati held an important position in Jalal-ud-din’s court. His sons and other Brahmins seem to have controlled the state affairs and enjoyed various advantages from the rulers; see the Smṛtiratna-hūra, quoted by R. C. Hazra: \textit{I.H.Q.} 1941, p. 447; see also quotations from \textit{Pada Chandrika}, \textit{ibid.} p. 444.

to explain the conflict between the Brahmins and the Muslim ruler, quite elaborately depicted by Jayānanda. The persecution of the Brahmins at Navadvipa by the Muslim sultan narrated by the poet, is an indication of the ruler's attitude to the Brahmins. It is true that several Brahmins were serving under Ḥusain Shāh and his successors. Rūpa, Sanātana, Jagai and Mādhāi are instances in point. This compromise of Brahminism with the Muslim ruling class was quite superficial, for the spirit of reaction was working from beneath the surface of the society. While meeting Shrī-Chaitanya, Rūpa and Sanātana told him that they had lost their mental purity because of their association with the Muslim ruler with whom slaughtering cows and hating Brahmins were quite usual. The Muslim ruling class needed the service of the Brahmins to conduct the administrative machinery and the Brahmins also came in contact with it with a view to earning livelihood. Thus the contact between the two groups, forced as it was by sheer necessity, was not the result of mutual understanding. In the field of administration, however, the Brahmins did not enjoy absolute monopoly, for a good number of Kāyasthas was appointed by the Muslim sultāns. Most of the vernacular poets seem to have come from the Kāyastha stock. Vijaya Gupta, Yashorāj Khaṇ, Shrikara Nandi and Kavindra Parameshvara, were all Kāyasthas. In helping the growth of Bengali literature, the Muslim sultāns helped the Kāyastha class indirectly. It is almost fairly established that the Kāyasthas constituted the landed aristocracy of the country under the Ḥusain Shāh rulers. We have shown that Lashkar Rāmchandra Khaṇ and Hiranāya Majumdār had lucrative estates in south-west Bengal. Abūl Faḍl, writing about the end of the sixteenth century, says that many of the zamīndārs flourishing in the different sarkārs of Bengal, were Kāyasthas. The Muslim rulers had probably direct support behind the growth of this Kāyastha landlord class. Whether they had supported the

1. Kṛppadās Kaviraj: op. cit. madhya, i, p. 76.
2. Á'in, ii, pp. 143 and 145.
Kāyastha poets and landlords with the object of counteracting Brahminical influence in Bengal, is not clearly known; but the growth of the Kāyastha intelligentzia and landlords, must have minimized Brahminical influence in the country.

The ruling class does not seem to have had any sympathy, whatsoever, for the Brahminical culture. Most of the Sanskrit poets and litterateurs, discussed in the succeeding chapter, did not have any connection with the Ḫusain Shāhī court. The Sanskrit works written in and around Navadvīpa, do not have any genuine reason to mention the names of the rulers of Gauda, although Bengali works are replete with references to the Muslim sultāns. This is suggestive of the fact that Sanskrit literature did not receive any patronage from the Muslim rulers of the time.1 Sanskrit was thus being pushed to the background, and Bengali received the recognition of the ruling class. Mahuan, the Chinese traveller mentions that Bengali and Persian were in use in the fifteenth-century Bengal.2 He does not say anything about Sanskrit probably because it had no general acceptance. From whatever evidences can be gathered from the history of Bengali literature, it may be reasonably inferred that the Ḫusain Shāhī rulers were helping the people’s culture in crystallizing itself, by giving patronage to Bengali literature. The growth and development of the culture of the larger non-Brahminical section of the people must have checked the influence of Brahminical culture. Again Ḫusain Shāh is known to have been tolerant to the growing Vaiśṇavism.3 This seems to suggest that the sultan wanted to check the progress of the orthodox Brahminical culture by tacitly supporting the liberal Vaiśṇavism of Shri-Chaitanya. As a matter of fact, contemporary or almost contemporary works clearly state that the Brahmins of Navadvīpa were opposed to the Chaitanya movement,

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1. This point has been discussed in chapter vii of this work.
at least, in the beginning. 1 Husain Shāh's tacit recognition of Chaitanya-ism is thus quite significant.

Now that the Muslim rule had come to stay, the Brahmans could hardly expect anything tangible in the field of politics. All that they could do was to put emphasis on their intellectual superiority by resorting to cultural pursuits. This seems to explain why the life of contemporary Navadvīpa was characterized by intense intellectual activities. Barren and abstruse branches of knowledge like logic, grammar and Smṛti could now easily attract their attention. There was probably a regular process of the filtration of Islamic ideas and practices to the Brahminical society. Jayānanda has deplored Islamic influences on the Brahmans of the time. According to this poet, the Brahmans used to grow beard, put on socks, carry sticks, handle guns and recite the Mathnawī after the Muslim fashion. 2 They must have tried to stop the process of this filtration. They could attain this end by tightening up their own orthodox, socio-legal system. Raghunandana seems to have written his works in response to this social demand of the Brahmans. It appears to have had the result of separating the Brahminical section, not only from the Muslims, but also from all other lower class groups of Hindu population. Thus Brahminism wanted to lead a self-centered existence within the walls of the ancient Dharma Śāstra which it had raised around itself. Within its own limitations, however, it carried on intellectual pursuits and the centre of this Brahminical, orthodox culture was Navadvīpa which was linked up with the Aryan culture of Bihār and North India, by the river Ganges. It was at this place that Raghunātha Shiromani founded the school of Nyāya Nyāya and Raghunandana composed his famous works. It was the city of Navadvīpa that witnessed the renaissance of Hindu culture through the resurgent Vaiṣṇavism of Shri-Chaitanya. Southern and eastern parts of Bengal seem to

have been comparatively free from the impact of this culture. This explains why the local cults of Manasa and Natha could reign supreme in these regions. The followers of these two cults are found even to-day in South and East Bengal. Although Brahmins might have immigrated into this part from time to time, their influence must have been quite limited due to the popularity of the local cults.

But the Brahmins could hardly maintain their isolated existence for long, for contact with the Muslims and lower class Hindus was unavoidable for them. They had ultimately to reconcile their social order to this situation. It appears that the process of this reconciliation has been hinted at in the kulaji literature the genuineness of which is very often doubted. 1 According to the same source, the Kulinism of the

1. Nagendra Nath Basu is probably the first writer to make an exhaustive use of materials from kulaji literature in reconstructing the social history of medieval Bengal. His monumental work called Vânger Jâtiya Itihasa written in several volumes, has preserved the contents of various kulaji texts which are neither readily available nor easily accessible. This work has certain glaring defects, for the author's account of the origin and development of the castes and sects in the medieval Hindu society is not systematic, nor does he have any scientific approach to the sociological problems. Several scholars of Bengal have doubted the historical authenticity of kulaji works without giving any reason in support of their view-point. R. C. Majumdar who has discussed the problem at considerable length, maintains that the kulaji works in general, are historically unreliable. The defects of this literature, as mentioned by him, may be summarized here: (a) the historically unsound story of Âdishûra who is said to have brought five Brahmins from Kanauj, is the pivot around which the whole Kulaji literature revolves; (b) most of the kulaji works including the Gośthikathā of Nulo Pañchanana, the Kularâma of Vâchaspati Mishra, the Kulapradipa of Dhananjaya, the Melaparyāyagayañâ, the Vârendra Kulapâñji, the Kulârva, the Kârikâ of Eco Mishra, the Nirdoṣa-Kulapâñjikâ and the
Brahmins of Bengal was being frequently injured as a result of their association with the Muslims who had become the political master of the country. This led to serious complications in the Brahminical society. Those who had any touch with the Muslims, were being regarded as fallen and low in their own community. They were thus face to face with a critical situation. A social organization called \(Jātimālā kāchhāri\), was established under the presidency of a Brahmin called Datta Khāṣ who was probably one of the chief officers of Nāṣir-ud-dīn Maḥmūd Shāh (death in 1459 A.D.). He organized what was called the fifty-seventh \(ṣamīkaraṇa\) or social conference presumably to solve the problems of the kulin Brahmins.

\(Kārikā\) of Hari Mishra being comparatively modern, cannot give us genuine information about the ancient Hindu society and (c) there have been deliberate interpolation, alteration and omission in the kulaji text. For the views of R. C. Majumdar on kulaji literature, see History of Bengal, i, pp. 623-34, appendix 1; Bhāratvarṣa, 1346 B.S. Kārttik-Phālguna issues. Most of the kulaji works were written in the Muslim period. That the Mahāvani-shāvali was composed in 1407 Shaka=1485/86 A.D. is known from the colophon found in the same work; see the Mahāvani-shāvali, quoted by N. N. Basu: \(Vāṅger Jātiya Itihāsa\), Brahmapa Kānda, vol. i, pt. i, p. 202. The Goṣṭihikātā of Nuvo Pañchānana and the Kularāma of Vāchaspati Mishra, appear to have been written in the sixteenth or seventeenth century A.D. These together with other kulaji works mentioned above, must have given a picture of the Hindu society of the time. The details given by this literature, may or may not correspond to the actual state of things existing in the society; but it seems to bring home to us the various tendencies of the age in which it was produced. R. C. Majumdar and N. R. Ray, who consider Kulaji literature to be unreliable, do not fail to mention that it must have reflected the spirit of the time in which it was brought into being; see History of Bengal, 1, pp. 632 and 633 and Vāṅgalīr Itihāsa, pp. 263 and 265. The kulaji works cited in this section, clearly show that there was the impact of Islam on the kulin Brahmins who had reacted to such a process by reorganizing their own social system.
At a subsequent date, however, Udayanāchārya Bhāduḍī classified the Varendra Brahmins into several pātis or groups. In 1480/81 A.D. Devivara introduced what is called mela system. He is said to have divided the Rāḍhīya Brahmins into 36 melas the names of which are Vallavī, Surāi, Chatṭarāghavī, Bhairavaghaṭakī, Mādhāi, Chāndāi, Vijaya-pāṇḍitī, Shatānandakāhāni, Mālādharkāhāni, Kākusthi, Chandrāpati, Vidyādhārī, Paramānandamishrī, Chayī, Phuliā, Khaḍadāhā, Dehaṭā, Vāṅgāla, Bali, Naḍiyā, Pāṇḍitaratnī, Āchamvītā, Āchāryashekhārī, Chāyī, Parihāla, Shuṅgagaravānandī, Pramodī, Harinajumdārī, etc.¹

The mela system of Devivara seems to have added a new chapter to the history of Bengali Kulinism. The Brahmins who had fallen victim to various dosas or defects, could now regain their social status. If this information is correct, it must be said that the role of Devivara in the history of evolution of the Brahminical society, was quite significant. Devivara was a progressive social reformer in those days of caste rigidity. Realizing the new forces that were at work, he wanted to get the kulin society adjusted to the changing circumstances, with a view to preserving the integrity of the Brahminical section of population. This was probably intended to save Kulinism from an impending danger.

The history of the different melas mentioned above, clearly shows that most of them were created as a result of yavana-dosa touching the Brahmins. Bhairavaghaṭakī, Dehaṭā and and Harinajumdārī melas are instances in point.² The Pīrāḷi Brahmins and Sherkhānī and Shrimantakāhāni melas are said to have belonged to the same category.³ The Brahmins who were classified under these groups, were considered to have lost their social position because of their contact with the Muslims.

This meant a serious threat to the security of Kulinism. Besides yavana-dosa, there were other defects which could touch a kulin Brahmin. These were being childless, going to brothel, marrying within one’s svajana or community, marrying wicked or deformed girls, killing Brahmans, committing adultery or fornication etc.¹ Devīvara who had found the Kulinism of the Brahmans significantly injured by its association with various dosas and the whole social structure standing on the verge of destruction, reorganized it in order to preserve its integrity. Nulo Pāchānāna who did not like the liberal views of Devīvara and Shrī-Chaitanya,² tried to re-establish the old social order in order to retain its orthodox pattern. Thus there seems to have been a conflict between orthodoxy and liberalism in the society. Even if we doubt the accuracy of the details of kulaji literature, we can hardly ignore the general social trends which it reveals. The process of the contact, conflict and compromise of Brahminism with local and alien forces which we have noticed,³ is reflected in kulaji works. Further, the political and religious impact of Islam on the life of Bengal seems to have created a social unrest among the Brahmans who reacted to such a situation by trying to reorganize their own society from within.

II

Though there are clear indications of a socio-political conflict between Islam and Brahminism, the mystic aspect of Islamic religion represented by Ṣūfī-ism, seems to have got itself adjusted to the peculiar nature of the indigenous culture. The fifteenth-century poem Adya Parichaya by Shahīb Zahid and almost all the works of Saiyid Sulṭān, a sixteenth-century Bengali poet,⁴ give expression to this syncretic tendency. The

1. N. N. Basu: op. cit. vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 204.
2. Ibid. p. 270.
3. See the relevant sections of ch. vii.
catholic influence of Ṣufi-ism is noticed in the works like 

Jñāna-pradīpa and Jñāna-chautīṣhā, characterized by an interesting synthesis of Islamic mysticism and Indian yoga philosophy.

The cosmological theories obtaining in Muslim Bengali literature, contain a considerable variety of heterogeneous elements which may be traced back to earlier, religio-philosophical systems, both indigenous and alien. The cosmogony of the Gorakṣa-vijaya¹ which does not differ essentially from that of the Shūnya-Purāṇa, represents the whole creation as proceeding from the union of the male and the female cosmic principles. But the ideas about creation found in the Ādyā Parichaya of Shaikh Zahid, betray certain characteristic features which deserve careful consideration. The poet says:² In the beginning there was nothing—neither water nor earth; nor did the universe manifest itself in the sphere of the infinite vacuum. There was neither the world, nor the heaven, nor the sky, nor the sun, nor the moon. Neither were stars, nor clouds, nor mountains, nor rivers, nor oceans, nor jungles. There was an all-pervading darkness. And there existed God who felt depressed in the state of His absolute loneliness and thought of bringing into being creatures with a view to putting an end to the great vacuity and manifesting Himself in diverse forms. He created from His love or passion (rati) an image of His own self and placed it on the vast ocean. As He talked to His friend who was born of His hūṅkāra or yawning, His mind became full of joy. Then came out the primordial water from His joy, air from His speech and fire from His anger. He took dust from the body of His friend and put it on the ocean so that the earth started expanding itself on the waves. Four elements of nature (obviously earth, water, fire and air) came into existence. From God's omkāra, came out all that was terrible. God created also

2. What follows is a free translation of the section on cosmology in Shaikh Zahid's poem; edited V. R. S. MS. in the possession of E. Huq; cf. appendix for the text.
the living Triad and placed them in charge of different categories of work. Gods and demons whom He had brought into being, engaged themselves in fierce fighting. Ferocious animals and demons continued to exist, but forgot the Creator. God destroyed the deos so that there was no one in the world. Now He made up His mind to create man with the definite object of making him rule over the creation......

The above cosmogony resembles in some respects, the theory of creation detailed in the Shûnya-Purâña. Both accounts start with the description of the Primordial Nihil and refers to the creation of the Triad. We find in the Shûnya-Purâña that the Lord created Niraṅjana who brought into being, in succession, the bird Ulluka, the swan, the tortoise and the cosmic serpent Vasuki. He created earth by putting the dusty substance of His nail on Vasuki's head. But according to the Muslim account cited above, God made earth out of the dust of His friend's body. While the Dharmite text depicts Vasuki as giving instructions to Niraṅjana about creation, the Muslim poem shows that God's conversation with His friend led to His eagerness to create. Thus the general outline of Shaikh Zähid's theory of creation bearing striking resemblance to the cosmological conceptions of the Nāthists and Dharmites, indicates that the poet has been considerably influenced by their religious beliefs with which he has combined several Ṣūfī ideas. The forms of cosmology that we notice in the Nātha and Dharmite literature of medieval Bengal, dominated the whole of Asia. Thus we have, in South-East Asia, the traditional cosmological ideas of the Polynesians² who are of Austric origin and the Ahom cosmogony³ giving us the beliefs of a pagan people.

2. Sukumar Sen : Int. to Rûparāma’s Dharma-maṅgala, p. 3.
3. G. A. Grierson : “An Ahom Cosmogony, with a Translation and a Vocabulary of the Ahom Language.” J.R.A.S. 1904, p. 181 ff. Phātûw-chûng, Khun-thiw-kham, the cosmic crab and the cosmic serpent of the Ahom cosmology, ibid. pp. 198 ff., are the coun-
who belonged to the Tai branch of the Indo-Chinese. West Asia is represented by the Babylonian Poem of the Creation\(^1\) found in a text of the seventh century B.C., but perhaps coming down from “very much older texts” of about 2500 B.C. The Näsadiya-sūkta of the Rgveda\(^2\) gives what may be called the Indian counterpart of the Babylonian Poem. The Aryans appear to have adopted the cosmological beliefs from the non-Aryan (perhaps Austric) people,\(^3\) for these ideas, as already noticed, must have prevailed among the earlier primitive inhabitants of India and South-East Asia.

Broadly speaking, Shaikh Zahid’s cosmology is, at least apparently, an admixture of Jewish-Islamic and Austro-Indian ideas.\(^4\) Theories of creations obtaining in Greco-Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Chinese and South-East Asian literatures are theogonical in the sense that they are dominated by the idea of the creation of gods, in which man, though incidentally referred to, does not significantly count. Coming down to the times of the Hebrew scriptures, we notice two important changes in cosmology. God is no longer the god of a particular tribal society, but a universal God quite capable of originating and protecting entire mankind. Secondly, emphasis has been put on the creation of man, although animal and plant kingdoms and natural elements are included within the

\(^3\) Sukumar Sen: Int. to Rūpārāma’s Dharma-maṅgala, p. 3 and Int. to Gorakṣa-vijaya, ed. Panchanana Mandala.
\(^4\) A similar syncretic tendency is noticed in the cosmological theories of Kabir (cited by Tara Chand: Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, pp. 155-57) and Malik Muḥammad Jaisi who gives Muhammad an important place in the scheme of creation. Padmāvati: tran. by Shirreff, p. 1 ff.
scheme of creation. These two features have been shared by Islam. The monotheistic God of Islam, like the Jewish one, is all-powerful and universal. Although the Qur'an does not have a separate Book of Genesis, it has referred several times to the creation of man out of clay into whom the Divine Spirit was breathed and who was made to rule the universe. Shaikh Zahid's cosmology echoes the Qur'anic or Jewish-Islamic conception of the supremacy of man on the created beings. The poet says: God wanted to make man the king of all living beings and adorn the world within the universe. He would make him wise so that he might worship Him constantly. All other things He had brought into existence, did not please Him. So He would create man...

It seems easy to detect a few Sufi elements in the cosmogony under consideration. It has been said that the first created being was the 'image of God' or the 'friend of God', who played a vital role in the creation ex nihilo. This 'image of God' is perhaps a distant echo of the Perfect Man of Ibn-ul-'Arabi's system: "The Perfect Man (al-Insan al-Kamil), as the image of God and the archetype of Nature, is at once the mediator of divine grace and the cosmic principle by which the world is animated and sustained. And, of course, the perfect man par excellence is Muhammad". We are also told that the image of God was created from the love of God—an idea which rings like a familiar note also in other Sufi writings of Bengal such as the Jnana-pradipa, the Yoga-kalandar, the Jnana-sagara and the Agama.

1. The obvious reference is to the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament.
3. Paraphrased from V.R.S. MS. of the Adya Parichaya; cf. appendix E, for the text.
Shaikh Zahir’s poem exclusively deals with the importance of the human body. A cosmology has been added with a view to indicating the greatness of man but for whose presence God’s creation would have been not only incomplete, but also meaningless. As the poem under discussion anticipates most of the yogic-tantric ideas elaborated by Saiyid Sultan, it is necessary to discuss its contents at considerable length. While describing the human physique, Shaikh Zahir considers it to be a microcosm representing all the attributes of the world. He says: I shall locate in the body, earth, air and fire and the heaven, the world and the underneath world. I shall compare the sun, the moon and the stars of the sky with their counterparts in the body. The rivers, rivulets, the Ganges and the Bhagirathi are always flowing in the physical body... The body is the abode of the four ages of Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. It contains four Vedas and four scriptures (possibly Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament and the Qur’an)... There are mountain-peaks, jungles and animals in it.¹

As will be indicated below, emphasis on the physical organism, dominates all the yogic-tantric systems, including the Buddhist Sahajiyâ, Vaisnavâ Sahajiyâ and Nathism. Although Shaikh Zahir is not clear as to why so much stress should be put on the body, it may be reasonably conjectured that he aims at physical culture or Kayasadhana and Yoga-tantra or principles of yoga which he frequently mentions in the introductory section of the poem. That this physical culture was of a regressive nature, is hinted at in the following lines: “Brahma says that the root of the tree is trembling. But man’s root is a reverse one”. The idea expressed reminds us of the Upanisadic fig-tree with its roots upward and its branches downward.² The poet also refers to somarasa which indicates the process of drinking nectar with the help of khechari mudra resorted to generally by the Nathist. He mentions

1. Adya Parichaya, op. cit.
2. See below.
the name of Gorakṣa Nātha at several places. Thus the poem under discussion reflects Nātha influences which constituted a potential factor in the religious milieu of medieval Bengal.

Great emphasis has been put in the Šūfī-yogic Bengali literature, on the human body described very often as a microcosm of the universe. The Šūfīs believe that the body contains the sum-total of qualities available in the universe. It is considered to be an abode of four Vedas, nine planets, various signs of the Zodiac, seven heavens, seven infernal regions and several mystic realms. Biological phenomena like women’s conception and abortion, the formation of the body of the child in the mother’s womb, sexual intercourse, preservation of semen and location of sexual feelings in the different parts of the body of women at different times, are elaborately discussed in the literature under consideration.

Because of the unlimited importance of the body, the essential principles of Yogic Šūfī-ism as propounded by the Bengali Šūfīs, have been located in the physical system. Following the idea of the Šaṭ-chakra or six nerve-plexuses found in the tantric and yogic texts, these Šūfīs have conceived of the existence of six circles namely Muladhāra-chakra or the sacral plexus, Maṇipura-chakra or the lumbar plexus, Anāhata-chakra or the abode of life possessing twelve petals and the brightness of the morning sun, Svādhiṣṭhāna-chakra or the sacral plexus, Vishuddha-chakra or the laryngeal and pharyngeal plexus with sixteen petals, having the brightness of the moon and Ajñā-chakra having two petals over which there is the thousand-petalled lotus, the abode of Āyā-shaktī or the primordial goddess.

1. Saiyid Sulṭān: Jñāna-pradīpa, D. U. MS. fol. 9b. For Bengali text, see appendix II.
2. Ibid. fols. 3b, 8b, 9a, 9b, etc.
3. Ibid. fols. 6b-8a, 12b etc.
4. Ibid. fols. 9a and 10a-10b.
In the yogic Ṣūfi psycho-physiological process, nerves play an important part. Saiyid Sulṭan has given a theory of nerves in the following lines: "Ingalā and Pingalā are the two nerves running by the two sides of the spinal chord and looking like two creeping plants hanging by the two sides of a tree. The nerve Ingalā in the right may be compared with the sun and the Pingalā in the left resembles the moon. The Ingalā is the flow of the Ganges and the Pingalā that of the Jumna. The nerve running between the god and the demon is called Suṣumnā. These three meet at a point which is regarded by the wise as the confluence of the three sacred rivers." We come across the description of other nerves such as Gandhārī, Kuhū, Hastijhāvā, Alamvūṣā, Shaṅkhini and others together with slight references to the functions of some of them.

It has been said that there are numerous āsanas or sitting postures of which Padmāsana or the ‘Lotus posture’ is quite important. In this posture, the Ṣūfi sits with his left leg placed on the right leg, his hands resting on the legs, his chin touching the chest and his concentration fixed on the nose. Saiyid Sulṭan has tried to simplify the yogic process of physical exercise by accepting the Padmāsana to the exclusion of other postures which are defined in yogic and tantric texts.

The regulation of breath occupies a prominent place in the yogic-Ṣūfi literature under reference. Describing the process, the poet says, “The middle nerve Suṣumnā is the best of all nerves. This is the passage through which the primordial goddess can be worshipped... take air by the left nostril while the right one is closed, the process being similar to

1. Ibid. fol. 10a. For the corresponding Bengali text, see appendix b.
2. Ibid. fols. 9b-10a; see appendix b for the text.
3. Ibid. fol. 9b. The description of the Padmāsana as given by Saiyid Sulṭan slightly differs from that found in the Hāṭhayoga Pradīpikā, tran. by Srinivas Iyanger; ch. 1, verse 46, p. 20.
that by which a piece of thread passes through the eye of a needle... when the air will enter into the body, a peculiar sound will come out. As you will listen to the sound, your mind will be fixed... you are to find out light in that sound so that your mind may be annihilated. This is the path leading to the Lord.”

We find frequent references to purak (inhala
tion of breath by the left nostril), kumbhak (retention of breath), dhyāna (fixed attention), mudrā (posture), and samādhi (ecstatic concentration) although there is no detailed description of these yogic methods.

The different ideas and practices relating to the physical body appear to have been utilized by the Śūfs as a means to a particular end about which there are clear indications in the Śufi literature of Bengal. By resorting to various bodily attitudes combined with inhalations and exhalations of breath and the fixation of the gaze on certain particular points, the Śūfi can attain not only physical perfection and freedom from diseases, but also immortality. As already noticed, this physical culture is also “the path leading to the Lord.”

Yogic and tantric systems of Indian philosophy are characterized by the development of a physiological system of nerves including Iṅgalā, Pingalā and the Suśumnā, six chakras or psychic circles and a secret female energy residing at the lowest part of the spine. Remaining as it does in a coiled condition, it is called Kūṇḍalinī Shaktī or Coiled Energy which, when aroused, can make the circles work. The spinal column is the abode of the nerve Suśumnā which extends from the Mulādhāra-chakra or the basal region of the vertical column to the Sahasrāra situated in the cerebral region. The other five chakras are the Svādhīstānā situated near the root of the penis, Māṇipura in the region of the navel, Anāhata in the heart,

2. Ibid. fols. 11a, 12a, 12b etc.
3. Ibid. fols. 4b and 12a.
Vishuddha at the meeting place of the spinal chord and the medulla oblongata and Ājñā between the eye-brows. To the right of the chief nerve Suṣumnā, there is Piṅgalā and to its left Iṅgalā. These three nerves are known in the yoga literature as the Gaṅga, the Yamuna and the Sarasvati respectively, their meeting point being called the trivenī or the confluence of these three rivers. Iṅgalā and Piṅgalā are also known as the sun and the moon respectively. Of the eight yoḍhāṅgas, the method of ethical preparation as represented by yama (abstention) and niyama (observance), āsana (physical postures), prāṇāyāma (breath control) and pratyāhāra (withdrawal of senses from their normal external functioning) constitute the preparatory state of purgation. Dhyāna (fixed attention) and āṭhārāṇā (contemplation) represent the state of illumination, while samādhi or concentration constitutes that of union. The biological and psychological processes of tantric and haṭhayogic philosophy aim at arousing the Kuṇḍalinī Shakti and giving it an upward flow with a view to uniting it with Shiva in the highest region of Sahasrāra. Shiva being the motionless immortal Being and Shakti the principle of change, union of Shiva with Shakti indicates the suspension of the process of change and activity and the attainment of the changeless state of immortality through a bio-psychological method of retrogression. As the practice is of an upward nature, it is generally known as utṣa sādhanā or the regressive culture resorted to by almost all of the mystic cults including


2. Ibid. ii, p. 357.
Tantricism, Buddhist Sahajiyā, Vaiṣṇavism, Nāthism and Vāulu sect. The germs of the regressive sādhanā can be found in the Upaniṣats, the Bhagavat Gītā and the Vedānta.¹

A comparison of these yogic and tantric ideas and practices with those embodied in the Bengali Ṣūfī literature analyzed above, clearly shows that the Muslim mystics had adopted them from the indigenous systems of yoga and tantra philosophy. The Jñāna-pradīpa is full of indications of the yoga-tantric regressive discipline. Apart from regarding the nerve Suṣumnā as “the passage through which one can worship the primordial goddess,” Saiyid Sulṭān places the Lord or Prabhū in the region of Saharāra.² Thus he appears to have presupposed union between the two, which, as we have already found, is also the ultimate aim of the followers of the yogic-tantric cults of medieval Bengal. At one place, he says, “sins of crores of birth can do no harm to him who takes his bath at the ghāṭ of trivenī”.³ It is at the confluence of the three rivers that the yogic and tantric spiritualists start their mental and physical disciplines by stopping the flows of the Gāṅgā (Pīṅgalā) and the Yamunā (Ingalā) and diverting them along the upward course of the Sarasvati (Suṣumna).⁴ Thus it is highly probable that the regressive spiritual discipline had been accepted by some of the Ṣūfīs of Bengal.

Before considering the possible source of the yogic and tantric ideas of Bengali Ṣūfīsm, we may try to take into account some of the Ṣūfī elements betrayed by the mystical literature under review. After identifying the manzils (stations) of Şarḥat (the Islamic canon law), Ṭarīqat (the Path), Ḥaqiqat (the

1. S. B. Das Gupta: Obscure Religious Cults, p. 92 ff, pp. 98, 229-33 etc.; and Bhardatiya Sādhanā Akya, pp. 4-52; Sukhamaya Bhattacharya: op. cit., p. 49.
2. Jñāna-pradīpa, fol. 10b.
3. Ibid., fol. 10a; cf. appendix $ for the text.
Reality) and Ma'rifat (the Gnosis), with the maqāmāt or Śūfī-istic stages of Nāsūt (humanity), Malakūt (dominion), Jahārūt (almightiness) and Lāhūt (divinity) respectively, Saiyid Sultan goes on prescribing religious duties to be performed by the Śūfī at each of these stations. Prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, cultivation of altruistic virtues and physical purity are meant for the manzil of Sharī'at. Each of the stages being of a preparatory nature, the disciple who has fulfilled his obligations satisfactorily at the station of Sharī'at, can reach the next higher stage of Ṭariqat or the Śūfī Path where he should suppress his sexual desire, anger, temptation and delusion. At the station of Haqiqat or the Reality, he should check hunger, thirst and idleness and possess self-control. Arriving at the station of Ma'rifat or the Gnosis, he is in a position to know himself.¹

The four maqāmāt frequently mentioned by the Śūfīs of Bengal should be distinguished from the maqāmāt or the acquired virtues of the Śūfī as elaborately discussed by Abū Naṣr-us-Sarraj² and 'Alī bin 'Uṣmān-ul-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī.³ Describing maqāmāt, Hujwīrī says, "Station (maqām) denotes anyone’s ‘standing’ in the way of God, and his fulfilment of the obligations thereof. Thus the first ‘station’ is repentance (tawbah), then comes conversion (inābah), then renunciation (zuhd), then trust in God (tawakkul), and so on: it is not permissible that anyone should pretend to conversion without repentance, or to renunciation without conversion, or to trust in God without renunciation".⁴ There is a fundamental difference between a maqām (station) and hāl (state). Hujwīrī further says, “State (hāl), on the other hand, is something that descends from God

¹ Fols. 1a-1b.
² Kitāb-ul-Luma'-fi'-Taṣawwuf: ed. Nicholson. While walking along the mystic path, the Śūfī has to traverse each of the maqāmāt of repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God and satisfaction; ibid. 43-54.
⁴ Ibid. p. 181.
into a man's heart, without his being able to repel it when it comes, or to attract it when it goes, by his own effort. Accordingly, while the term 'station' denotes the way of the seeker, and his progress in the field of exertion, and his rank before God in proportion to his merit, the term 'state' denotes the favour and grace which God bestows upon the heart of His servant, and which are not connected with any mortification on the latter's part. 'Station' belongs to the category of acts, "state" to the category of gifts. Hence the man that has a 'station' stands by his own self-mortification, whereas a man that has a 'state' is dead to 'self' and stands by a 'state' which God creates in him".1 Apart from accepting the tenets as enumerated above, the later Ṣūfīs believe that the gradual ascent of the soul of the Ṣūfī is related to the four magāmāt of Nāsūt, Malakūt, Jabarūt and Lāhūt. Nāsūt is the natural state of humanity possessed by every individual. Malakūt is the sacred state of angels and delicate bodies, whence the Ṣūfī starts the spiritual journey. Here he prays to God, absorbing himself in the divine thought and giving up all actions and evil contemplations. In the state of Jabarūt, the Ṣūfī realizes and acquires divine power. The state of Lāhūt is a pantheistic one where the Ṣūfī finds himself in the nature of God which comprehends everything of the universe. These four states again correspond to Shari'at, Ṭariqat, Ma'rīfat and Ḥaqīqat respectively.2 Allegorically speaking, the Ṣūfī traverses a long 'path' or Ṭariqat consisting of acquired virtues and mystical states, before reaching the higher spiritual planes of the Gnosis or Ma'rīfat and the Truth or Ḥaqīqat where he realizes no distinction between his self and the Reality. "Gnosis is the life of the heart through God, and the turning away of one's inmost thoughts from all that is

1. Ibid. p. 181. The 'states' or aḥwāl are meditation, nearness to God, love, fear, hope, longing, intimacy, tranquillity, contemplation and certainty; Kitāb-ul-Luma', pp. 55-72.

not God”.¹ Ma’rifat or the Gnosis, as distinguished from intellectual and traditional knowledge, may be defined as “knowledge of the attributes of the divine Unity, peculiar to the saints who behold God with their hearts,” and is attainable in a state of ecstasy.² In the Śūfī philosophy, the term Haqiqat or the Truth signifies “a reality which does not admit of abrogation and remains in equal force from the time of Adam to the end of the world” and it also means “a man’s dwelling in the place of union with God, and the standing of his heart in the place of abstraction (tanzih)”.³ Besides including all these Śūfī elements in his philosophical system, Saiyid Sulṭān holds the panentheistic view that the Creator who lives in the eternal void, is the Ultimate Reality and the underlying principle of causation.⁴ Śūfīs like Sarrāj and Hujwīrī hold that ‘Ali possessed a great deal of mystic knowledge.⁵ In the Ḥāna-pradīpa, he is depicted as receiving esoteric knowledge from Muḥammad⁶ whom the Śūfīs call the Perfect Man or Insān-ul-Kāmil,⁷ capable of imparting instructions in mysticism. Saiyid Sulṭān has gone to the extent of identifying the Prophet not only with the creation but also with the Creator.⁸ This is probably an indication of pantheism which occupies a prominent place in the philosophical system under review.

6. The whole book is in the form of a dialogue between ‘Ali and Muḥammad, the former putting some questions about mystic knowledge and the latter answering them.
8. Addressing Muḥammad, ‘Ali says: “Thou art the Creation, the Creator and The Reality”; op. cit. fol. 6b, appendix e. Similar ideas are found in many other passages which need not be quoted here.
The Sufis of Bengal lived, moved and had their being in an atmosphere saturated with the Yogic and Tantric culture which they incorporated in their own religio-philosophical system possibly under the influence of the Nātha cult. As already pointed out, the ideas of the piercing of the six circles, the theory of nerves, the practical regressive culture leading to the union of Shiva with Shakti and the preservation of nectar, are some of the essential features of Nāthism. A significant part of the Nātha text, Gorkṣa-vijaya, is in the form of a dialogue—a traditional pattern followed also in the Jñāna-padipa and Jñāna-sāgara. While imparting esoteric knowledge to his own teacher Mīnanātha, Gorakṣanātha discusses thirty mystic topics. Saiyid Sulṭān holds that there are thirty knots in the spinal column which, when penetrated, bring varying degrees of spiritual success to the Sufi. The Gorakṣa-vijaya enumerates a number of signs of the approach of death, most of which are mentioned also in the Jñāna-pradipa. The tradition of eighty-four Siddhās, though of an unhistorical nature, plays an important part in the Nātha philosophy. Saiyid Sulṭān has vaguely referred to eighty-four exhalations of breath to be performed by the Sufi. Muslim contacts with the Nātha cult of medieval Bengal is evidenced by the fact that the authorship of the famous Gorakṣa-vijaya which recounts the achievements of Gorakṣa Nātha, is very often ascribed to a Muslim poet named Shaikh Faiḍullāh. The system of various control called khemā (literally meaning safety, security or tranquillity) in the Nātha terminology, is described as a vigilant sentinel to be placed in the different centres of the body so that the wealth

2. Ibid. pp. 131-43.
of the body may not be taken away by decay or change. While describing the function of *khemā*, Sayid Sulṭān identifies it with the supreme reality and religion and thinks that it can check mortality. The mouth of the curved duct *Shāṅkhini* which extends from the *Sahasrāra* to the palatal region and which forms the passage through which *somarasa* or nectar passes, is called in Nathism, the tenth door of the body by closing which one can preserve and drink nectar. The *Jñāna-pradīpa* contains references to the tenth door and the *Shāṅkhini* which is described as a nerve having three bent portions, a knowledge of which is supposed to take away the fear for death. The Muslim poet describes the process of drinking nectar as one of turning the tongue backwards into the hollow above with a view to preserving *amṛta* (nectar) so that it may be taken by the Śūfi. In this work, we frequently come across Natha conceptions of *ajapājapa*, *hamsanāda* and void. The presence of so many Natha elements in the Śūfi literature of Bengal, is thus suggestive of the fact that most of the tantric and yogic ideas prevailing among some of the Śūfis, had come through the channel of Nathism.

The Śūfis of the period in question had possibly genuine reasons to accept the regressive physical and spiritual culture which was not totally foreign to their system. The mystical journey from the lowest state of humanity or *Nāsūt* to the highest one of divinity or *Lāḥūt* involves an upward process. In an abstract sense, the devotee tries through this regressive

4. *Op. cit.* fol. 3a; cf. appendix E for the text. This curved nerve is referred to also in the *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, p. 92: “Oh Guru, practice (physical culture) through the curved duct.”
5. *Jñāna-pradīpa*, fols. 2a, 10b and 12a.
practice to give an upward motion to his generally downward tendencies with a view to attaining perfection. As Nicholson puts it, "Hence the upward movement of the Absolute from the sphere of manifestation back to the unmanifested Essence takes place in and through the unitive experience of the soul". The Naqšbandi Ṣūfis of North India developed a theory of six Ṭāṭfās or centres of divine light to be located in the human body. These are qalb or heart, ruh or soul, sīr or secret heart, ḥafiz or secret soul, and nafs or evil self. It seems that the theory of Ṭāṭāf is an imitation of the theory of six circles of the Yoga philosophy. To the list of Ṭāṭāf, the Qādiri Ṣūfis add a few more names such as Dil Muda-wwaru or the circular mind situated in the head, Dil Nilūfur or the mind of blue lotus situated in the middle part of the two groins, Dil Şanawwari or the conical mind situated beneath the left breast and Dil 'Ambari or the mind of amber under the right breast. It is believed that various kinds of divine light descend on these centres when the Ṣūfī performs dhikr.

Thus it seems well-established that some of the Ṣūfis of northern India had developed certain mystic ideas quite akin to those obtaining in the Indian Yoga philosophy. The presence of the tantric and yogic ideas in the religio-philosophical system evolved by some of the Ṣūfis of Bengal, may be satisfactorily explained, if we bear in mind that Ṣūfism, both Indian and Iranian, is a syncretic movement which has absorbed a good deal of elements from a variety of sources such as Christianity, Neo-Platonism, Buddhism and Vedānta philosophy.

1. Studies in Islamic Mysticism, p. 84.
3. Ibid. Explaining the term Ṭāṭāf (Sing. Ṭāṭa), Hüjwiri says that they mean "A symbol (ishārāt), presented to the heart, of subtleties of feelings"; op. cit. p. 385.
In Bengal also, it has adapted itself to the local, philosophical ideas and mystic practices.

The complicated type of yogic-tantric Šūfi-ism discussed above continued to prevail in Bengal also in the succeeding periods. The Yoga-Kālandar (of Saiyid Mortuʻā?) considered to be a seventeenth-century work,¹ and the Jñāna-sāgara² of ʿAlī Riḍā who seems to have been alive in the early nineteenth century, preserve almost whatever we find in the Jñāna-pradīpa and give us a fair idea about the changes that were gradually taking place in the Šūfi pantheon of Bengal.

Besides dealing with the signs of death, the constituent elements of the body, the place of the murid or the spiritual teacher in the Šūfi hagiology and the sources of light such as the sun, the moon and water on which the Šūfī is advised to concentrate his mind at the time of meditation,³ the writer of the Yoga-Kālandar gives a detailed account of the maqāms of Nāsūt, Malakūt, Jabarūt and Lāhūt identifying them not only with the manzils of Ṣarīʿat, Ṭarīqat, Ḥaqīqat and Maʿrifat, but also with the chakras of Muladhāra, Manīpura, Ājāna and Anāhata respectively, locating an angel at each of these regions and considering them to be the abode of seasons like summer, autumn spring and sharat or the period following the rainy season.⁴ The religious duties prescribed for each of these maqāms do not at all differ from those mentioned by Saiyid Sultān.

3. The unpublished composite text of the Yoga-Kālandar in the V. R. S. Museum, ed. by Enamul Huq, pp. 5-8 and 12-16. We have compared this text with a copy of the Yoga-Kālandar in Arabic script, now in Dacca University Library. The latter does not differ materially from Enamul Huq’s edition.
Following the Şūfī custom, the writer of the Yoga-Kūlandar mentions four kinds of mind such as Dil Mudawwari, Dil Şanawwari, Dil 'Ambarī and Dil Nilafari. Muḥammad, the Perfect Man of the Şūfīs, has been placed in the maqām of Lāhūt where the Şūfī may come in contact with his light (nūr).

The Şūfī work under consideration contains a good deal of Nātha-yogic elements. Apart from mentioning some of the chakras or circles, the poet enjoins upon the Şūfī the performance of the ajapājapa of Nāthism, refers to the anāhata sound and considers the thousand-petalled lotus to be the abode of the Lord or Prabhu with whom preliminary contacts can be made at the trivenī or the confluence of the three rivers. There is a description of postures like Padmāsana (lotus posture), Mayārāsana (peacock posture), Garbhāsana (posture resembling that of a child in the mother's womb) and Yogāsana (yogic posture) which have been described in the yogic works like the Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā and the Gorakṣa Saṃhitā. Apart from betraying a general air of Nātha influences, the Yoga-Kūlandar contains a few elements of the Hindu Tantra and Upaniṣat. It has been said that the four maqāms of Nāsūt, Malakūt, Jabarūt, and Lāhūt, identified with the four chakras, are dominated by the four elements of fire, air, water and earth respectively. Instead of placing the abstract sentinel or khemā of the Nāthapanthīs at the various places of the body, he locates the angel 'Azrā'il at Nāsūt or Muladhāra, Isrā'il at Malakūt or Maṅipura, Mikā'il at Jabarūt or Ājñā and Jibrīl at Lāhūt or Anāhata, the four angels having the appearances of a tiger, a snake, an elephant and a peacock respectively putting on red,

1. Ibid. p. 10.
2. Ibid. p. 5.
3. Ibid. pp. 5, 6 and 14.
4. Ibid. p. 11.
5. Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā, ch. 1, verses, 31, 45 etc.; Gorakṣa Saṃhitā ed. Prasanna Kumar Kaviratna, see sls. 8 and 10.
green, white and yellow garments and each riding on a horse of a similar colour. In the Hindu Tantras, the five chakras of Mulādhāra, Svādhīśṭhāna, Maṇiṣṭhā, Anāhata and Vishuddha representing the elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether respectively, are presided over by the five gods, viz., Brahma, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Śiva and Mahādeva. The first three gods have red, blue and vermilion colours and the last two gods are white. The colour scheme of the Śūfis, mentioned above, resembles the tantric one. The angels residing at the different maqāms or chakras seem to be the Islamic counterparts of the gods of the Hindu Tantras. Again the union of the Jīvātmā and the Paramātmā, which has been regarded as one of the spiritual attainments of the Śūfi, is an Upaniṣadic conception. In the Upaniṣad, they have been depicted as two birds living on friendly terms on the same tree. The Jīvātman or the sentient soul can taste the sweet fruit of the material, worldly experience which is scrupulously avoided by the Paramātman or the Supreme Being. Thus Śūfi-ism, as represented in the Yoga-Kālandar, appears to be of a composite nature.

The Jñāna-sāgara of 'Alī Riḍā contains several Nātha or yogic-tantric ideas. Speaking of the six chakras, the poet says: "Inside the body there are six lotuses containing six circles which are the resting-places of six seasons and six rāgas or musical scales". He refers to the ajāpājapa, hānsanāda and the yogic method of breath-control. The regressive process of physical

1. Ibid. pp. 2-4, 7-8 and 10.
3. V.R.S. Museum MS. p. 5: “Know that the Supreme Soul resides with the Sentient Soul.” “The Sentient Soul has been united with the Supreme Soul” etc; Jīvātmā and Paramātmā stand for the human personality and the Divine personality respectively.
5. ‘Alī Riḍā: Jñāna-sāgara, p. 71; see also p. 45.
6. Ibid. pp. 55-56. For these Natha-yogic terms, see supra, ch. V, pp. 184 and 213.
culture finds a regular place in the mystic theory propounded by 'Ali Rıḍā. The poet says that the path of love is a regressive one. One who does not have the knowledge of this reverse process, cannot enjoy real life. Here the forward is the backward and the backward is the forward. The world process is connected with the principle of inversion. The Lord has kept the path of spiritualism concealed and the unreal path open. This is why man and fairies, after their birth in this world, follow the unreal path of material enjoyment. One can achieve spiritual success by walking along the regressive path.¹ The idea of Shūnya or vacuity forms an integral part of the Şūfî philosophy obtaining in Bengali literature. Saiyid Sulṭān says that the contemplation about the unseen vacuity can give us an insight into the nature of the Ultimate Reality.² A distinct echo of this idea is found in the Jñāna-sāgara wherein it is said that the ascetic who is the void personified, recites the name of the void and attains spiritual success with the help of the void. He enjoys love dalliances with vacuity which resides in the void and whose main functions are identical with the void. Vacuity contains the Supreme Reality and gives us the knowledge of reality. The yogic contemplation is an accessory to the acquisition of the knowledge of reality.³ The void is identical with the delicate body. The form of beauty is without any shape. The ocean of the void reveals to the spiritualist the ocean of beauty wherein he finds success.⁴ We have already seen that the idea of the void representing a very primitive element, possibly of Kol or Auciic origin, with subsequent Brahminical accretions, had been accepted by the Dharmite faith, Nāthism and Tantric Buddhism.⁵ The indigenous Şūfî-ism of Bengal seems to have absorbed this idea because of its contact with these local cults. Like the author of the Yoga-Kūlandar, 'Ali Rıḍā also

² Jñāna-pradīpa, D. U. MS. fol. 4b; cf. appendix B for the text.
⁴ Ibid. p. 42.
⁵ Supra. ch. v, p. 184.
puts emphasis on the union of the Jīvātmā and the Paramātmā, which, as already indicated, is an Upaniṣadic conception. It may be mentioned in this connection that 'Alī Riḍā has not hesitated to accept the doctrine of parakiya love. He says: "Love to a svakiya or lawfully married wife is no intense love; but love to a parakiya or woman belonging to another is suitable for a loving mind." The doctrines of svakiya and parakiya may be explained in this context. "Parakiya literally means 'pertaining to another', and hence the culture called Parakiya.......means the observance of mystic practices in the company of women other than one's wedded wife, specially with a married woman whose husband is living." The term svakiya, "when applied to a woman, means a lawfully married wife who is always ready to carry out the wishes of her husband for whom she cherishes unqualified love." The doctrine of parakiya "may properly be regarded as the very foundation whereon rests the mystic edifice of the spiritual culture of the Sahajiyās," who formed one of the branches of post-Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. The parakiya element, in the Sufi philosophy, seems to be a post-Chaitanya accretion.

To these local ideas, 'Alī Riḍā has added several pantheistic conceptions obtaining in Islamic mysticism. His cosmogony is dominated by the love of God. He says, "There is not even a single particle that is created except from His love. The Lord is creating everything out of His love. All objects have their origin in the ocean of love. The living being lives

1. Jñāna-sūgara, p. 49: Jīvātmā paramātmā yogala mishrita. "Jīvātmā or the sentient soul and Paramātmā or the supreme soul are the pair that remain mixed."
5. Ibid. p. 20.
on the strength of love; it dies when it does not have love."¹
Created beings are but His manifestations. This conception compares quite favourably with the idea expressed by the mystic poet Jāmi' in the following lines:

Although He beheld His attributes and qualities as a perfect whole in His own essence,
Yet He desired that they should be displayed to Him in another mirror,
And that each one of His eternal attributes should become manifest accordingly in a diverse form.
Therefore He created the verdant fields of Time and Space and the life-giving garden of the world,
That every branch and leaf and fruit might show forth His various perfections.²

Ḥallāǰ used to believe that God in the state of aloneness could not realize Himself so that He had to bring into being the Divine image personified by the newly created Adam.³ While accepting this panentheistic principle, ‘Alī Riḍā has replaced Adam by Muḥammad, the Perfect Man. He says that the Lord was alone in the beginning. Out of His love, He created a dual who was named Muḥammad. The two represented the original lover and the beloved. In aloneness, no one can enjoy love; so there is the necessity of a pair.⁴ It has also been held by the poet that ‘Alī was given mystic knowledge by the prophet Muḥammad.⁵ Thus the Ṣūfī philosophy of ‘Alī Riḍā is a combination of a number of diverse ideas.

There seem to have been contacts of the Muslim minds with Yogic and Tantric mysticism as early as the beginning of

5. Ibid. pp. 1, 5 etc.
Muslim rule in Bengal. It is said that a yogi of Kãmrãpa named Bhôjar Brãhman, hearing of the spread of Islam in India, reached Lakhnauti in the reign of 'Ali Mardan (1210-1213 A.D.) in search of a Muslim scholar with whom he might discuss spiritual problems. The yogi was introduced to Qâdi Rukn-ud-din Samarqandî. After some discussions, he accepted Islam and subsequently acquired the right of issuing fatwa. He is said to have dedicated to the Qâdi his book Amrta-kunđa or 'the Reservoir of Nectar' which was translated by the Qâdi into Arabic and Persian.¹ At a later period, the work seems to have been repeatedly translated by the Muslim Sûfîs—a fact indicating possibly something more than mere academic interest of the Muslims in such a work. A pupil of Muḥammad Ghaouth Gawâlîrî, the sixteenth century Indian Sûfî, translated this work into Persian under the title Bahr-ul-Ḥayât or 'The Ocean of Life' which was illustrated in the early seventeenth century.²

The Arabic version of the Amrta-kunđa gives an account of the human body viewed as the microcosm, the nature and form of the heart, yogic postures, the nature of the self, the protection of semen, the faculty of imagination, the functions of breath, the signs of the approach of death together with the means of warding them off and the spiritual regions presided over by different goddesses.³

1. Ḥauḍ-ul-Ḥayât or the Arabic version of the Amrta-kunđa has been published by Yousuf Husain in Journal Asiatique, Tom ccxiii, 1928, October-December, pp. 306-44. For the story connected with the yogi's conversion and the rendering of the Amrta-kunđa, see text, op. cit. pp. 311-13.
Without entering into the details of this work, we may try to find out some of its important features. One of its hymns contains the names of Mina or Matsyendranātha and Gorakṣanātha who are inseparably connected with the history, legend and religion of the Nāthists. In the second chapter of the book, the right mostril of the microcosm has been called the sun and the left mostril the moon. It seems to be an echo of the Nātha-yogic theory of the sun and the moon representing the nerves Piṅgalā and Iṅgalā respectively. The introductory section of the work refers to one Ambuānāth upon whose help the translator of the Amṛta-kunḍa had to depend. The name ending with ‘nāth’ indicates that he was a follower of the Nātha cult. Though a few āsanas have been described in the Arabic Ḥauḍ-ul-Ḥayāt and the Persian Bahr-ul-Ḥayāt, it has been stated in both versions that the total number of these yogic postures is eighty-four—a number quite prominent in the Nātha mythology. The illustrated manuscript of Bahr-ul-Ḥayāt contains illustrations and descriptions of twenty-one āsanas including Padmāsana (lotus posture), Simhasana (lion posture), khecharī mudrā and Sabhāsana (posture resembling the one taken in a meeting), which have been duly defined in some of the works on yoga culture. The following

1. Ibid. p. 337.
2. Ibid. pp. 316-17.
5. In the Ḥauḍ-ul-Ḥayāt, only five postures have been described; op. cit. pp. 323-25; but twenty-one postures have been illustrated and described in a MS. of the Bahr-ul-Ḥayāt; see Thomas W. Arnold: A Catalogue of Indian Miniatures, i, pp. 81-82.
7. Ibid. p. 82.
8. Gorakṣa Saṁhitā, verses 8 and 10; Ḥathayoga Pradīpikā, ch. i, verses 46 and 50-51. Turning the tongue into the hole of the
Garbhāsana (from Bahr-ul-Hayāt)
Sabhāsana (from Bahr-ul-Hayāt)
passage of the Arabic translation of the *Amṛta-kuṇḍa* seems to hint at the regressive physical culture: "The microcosm is like a tree reversed. If you like to reverse it, you can reverse but its meaning without affecting it. When its meaning is reverse, it becomes straight. Then it becomes reverse in form and straight in meaning."  The idea seems to correspond to the Upaniṣadic conception. This world is considered to be a perpetual fig tree whose roots are upward and whose branches are downward. The root of this tree has been identified with the white light, the reality and nectar. People are sheltered by it. Nobody can go beyond it. Some of the signs of death mentioned in the *Amṛta-kuṇḍa* are found in the *Gorakṣa-vijaya*. While discussing the Nātha cult together with its yogic ideas and practices, Muḥsin Fani, the writer of the *Dabistān-ul-Madhaihīb* has incidentally mentioned that the *Amṛta-kuṇḍa* is the religious book of the followers of Gorakṣanātha. Thus it seems fairly certain that the book was used, if not written, by the Nathists.

The development that took place in the Śūfī philosophy in Bengal in the period under review, was probably a continuous one in the course of which yogic and tantric ideas had been transmitted to the Muslims through a long process of

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change in their religio-philosophical mentality. The act of borrowing ideas from indigenous sources does not appear to be of a deliberate nature. The mystic philosophy of Saiyid Sultan bears remarkable resemblances to Nāthism. The writers of Yoga-Kālandar and Jñāna-sāgara who may be reasonably regarded as his spiritual successors, have added to his mystic ideas, a few Sahajiyā and Upaniṣadic conceptions without affecting the spirit of his philosophy. While emphasizing the influence of indigenous ideas upon these Muslim mystics, one should not overlook the presence of Sūfīstic conception of pantheism in their works.

The spirit of synthesis obtains also in other works of Saiyid Sultan such as Nāvi Vaṁśha and Ofāte-Rasūl in which the poet has combined history with mythology. While giving an account of the prophets recognized by Islam, he regards the four Vedas as a series of divine revelation. As he finds hardly any difference between an avatāra (incarnation) and a nabi (one who has received revelation), he considers Brahmā, Višṇu, Maheshvara and Kṛṣṇa, the gods of the Hindu mythology and Muḥammad, the prophet of Islam, to be the incarnations of God. He says that the teachings of these four Hindu gods who were given the divine scriptures of Rk, Sāma, Yaju and Atharva Vedas respectively, stood obsolete in course of time so that Adam, Sis, Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, ‘Īsā and Muḥammad appeared gradually on the earth with a view to propagating tawḥīd or monotheism. He has tried to put emphasis on the idea that the advent of the prophet Muḥammad has been prophesied in the four Vedas. Like a Hindu poet, he

1. Ofāte-Rasūl or ‘the Demise of the Prophet’ has been edited by Ali Ahmad and published from Noakhali, 1356 B. S. Several MSS. of Nāvi Vaṁśha are available, one being included in Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharada’s Collection in D. U. Library.
2. Extracts and quotations from Nāvi Vaṁśha, given by Enamul Huq: Muslim Vaṅgla Sahitya, pp. 149-50 and S.P.P. 1341 B. S., 2nd issue, p. 50.
gives a vivid description of the Brndavana-lila of Radha and Krsna. One of his Vaisnava poems depicting the scene of Radha’s union with Krsna, seems to have referred to the union of the sentimental soul with the Supreme Being, the whole poem being thus a symbolical one.

The cultural synthesis, which Saiyid Sultan has thus attempted, may be attributed to the force of the socio-religious circumstances under which the Bengali Muslims lived in those days. He tells us that he was writing on Islamic themes for the Bengali Muslims who were acquainted with local fictions and not with Islamic stories. He was probably conscious of the fact that Islamic ideas, if combined with Hindu elements, would appeal to the minds of the local Musalmans to whom the Hindu mythology was already known. This psychology seems to explain his acceptance of Avatāravād or the doctrine of incarnation and yogic-tantric ideas of sat-chakra as integral parts of his religious philosophy.

III

Vaisnavism, the powerful religious movement initiated by Shrî-Chaitanya, carried every thing before it for a considerable period in the life of Bengal. It is necessary here to discuss its relation with Islam which was also making rapid progress in the country. Attempts have been made to assess the influence of Islamic mysticism on the emotional philosophy of Vaisnavism. Hāl (ecstatic condition), dhikr (recitation of the name of God), and simā (gatherings of the Sūfis for musical performances)

2. Quoted by Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya: Vlaṅglīr Vaisnava Bhāvapanna Musalmān Kavi, no. 94.
3. Ofāre-Rasūl, pp. 7-8 and Shab-i-Mirāj, quoted by Enamul Huq: Muslim Vlaṅglī Sāhitya, p. 144 and S.P.P. 1341 b.s. p. 40, footnote 3 and p. 44.
have been regarded as the possible counterparts of 

Kṛṣṇānāma and kirtana of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.¹ Again the strong pantheistic monotheism of Vaiṣṇavism, its stress on divine love or prema and its attitude to caste system, have also been attributed to Śūfī influences.² But it is very difficult to ascertain whether they indicate any causal connection or accidental similarity between the two systems of philosophy. It is due to these reasons that some scholars have tried to disprove the theory of Šūfīstic influence on Vaiṣṇavism by pointing out the points of difference between the two and suggesting the influence of Buddhism, Jainism, Tantricism and Shiva cult on the Vaiṣṇava literature of the time.³

Without entering into this endless controversy, we may point out certain other facts to throw some light on this point. A careful study of the biographies of Chaitanya shows that he did not live with any Šūfī for a considerable period of time, nor did he come across any Islamic or Šūfī literature. He was born in an orthodox Brahmin family which does not seem to have had any contact with Islamic ideas and practices. Most of the biographies of Shri-Chaitanya show that the lives of his parents were characterized by an excessive amount of religious austerity which did not have any scope for Islamic influences. It is true that the life of Bengal was saturated with Šūfīstic influences. How far Šūfī-ism could make itself felt at Navadwīpa, is undoubtedly a debatable point. As a matter of fact, Navadwīpa, the birth place of Shri-Chaitanya, was still retaining its position as an important centre of Sanskrit learning. It seems that Chaitanya was greatly influenced by the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa

1. Enamul Huq : Vaṅge Svūfī Prabhāv, pp. 165-70; also his unpublished thesis, Šūfīsm in Bengal.
2. Enamul Huq: Vaṅge Svūfī Prabhāv, pp. 171-78; also his unpublished thesis.
which contains prediction to the practice of kīrtana, which was also performed by the Alvar saints of the South. Again the practice of singing and dancing was common with the Mawlawī Ṣūfī order of Jalāl-ud-dīn Rumī which does not appear to have gained any ground in medieval Bengal. The postulation of the influence of the simā of the Mawlawī Ṣūfīs on the kīrtana of the Vaiṣṇavas, seems thus unwarrantable. Equally untenable is probably the view that the Ṣūfīstic ḫāl had influenced the kīrtana of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, for some Indian saints used to attain the state of ecstasy in the course of their religious experiences. Mādhavendra Purī is said to have had occasional fainting fits due to the impact of Kṛṣṇite religion on his mind. The recitation of the name of God was not anything new with the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal. The devotional recital of God's name is mentioned in the Bhāgavat. Thus the dhikr of the Ṣūfīs does not appear to have had any influence on the Vaiṣṇavite religious practice, called Kṛṣṇanāma. The element of love is present in pre-Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism also. God has been regarded as a Beloved in the Bhāgavat. Pantheistic ideas are found so abundantly in the Upaniṣat that we have hardly any reason to trace them in Ṣūfī-ism. Among the points of difference between Ṣūfī-ism and Vaiṣṇavism, the absence of the female intermediary between God and the devotee in Ṣūfī-ism, is one. This intermediary agent is invariably present in Vaiṣṇavism. Monotheism does not appear to be the essential feature of Vaiṣṇavism, although it forms the cornerstone of Ṣūfīstic belief. The Vaiṣṇavas conceive of a hierarchy of gods in which Kṛṣṇa is placed in the first and foremost position. One may very well think that the attitude Chaitanya

3. Chaitanya-bhāgavat, ndi, vui, pp. 54-55.
5. Ibid.
took towards the caste system was probably influenced by Islamic social order. It is true that his religious emotionalism did not attach importance to caste rigidity; but he does not seem to have tried to abolish it, nor did he introduce inter-dining and inter-marriage among the Hindus of various castes. Thus the influence of Sufi-ism on the Vaisnavism of Shri-Chaitanya is a point which is yet to be investigated.

It has been contended that Shri-Chaitanya checked the progress of Islam deliberately by converting a large number of Muslims to his creed.\(^1\) The cases of Haridas, Bijuli Khan and the Muslim officer living at the Orissan frontier, are cited as examples in point. But we should not forget here that most of the Vaisnava works were composed by the followers or devotees of Shri-Chaitanya who must have credited their Lord with the conversion of a number of Muslims. As a matter of fact, a study of the Vaisnava works clearly shows that the achievements of Shri-Chaitanya have been greatly magnified. The great master’s zealous adherents could hardly resist the temptation of showing that Vaisnavism as propounded by Chaitanya was swallowing even a powerful religion like Islam. But large scale conversion of the Muslims could hardly be possible in those days when the Muslims were the political masters of the country. It is stated in the works like Chaitanya-Charitamrta and Chaitanya-bhagavat that the kirtana of Chaitanya had made deep impression on the minds of some of the Muslims who used to utter the name of Hari on seeing the Vaisnavas dancing and singing.\(^2\) Rationally interpreted, it means that the musical performances of the Vaisnavas had evoked emotion in the minds of some of the Muslims who uttered Harinama only for the time being. It can hardly be believed that these Muslims embraced Vaisnavism after having given up Islam for ever. We may mention in this connection the case of the Muslim tailor working at the house of Shrivasa. Seeing

2. Chaitanya-bhagavat, antya, iv, p. 349 and v, p. 381.
the scene of kirtana, he was moved to the point of madness. But this seems to be rather a changing psychological state which had possibly no permanent duration. The life history of Haridās together with his conversion is shrouded in obscurity. Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta and Chaitanya-bhāgavat, earlier works than Advaita-prakāsha, Prema-Vilāsa and Bhakti-ratnākara, nowhere mention that he was a Muslim by birth, subsequently converted to Vaiṣṇavism. How the stigma, yavana, came to be attached to his name, is not clearly known. It is quite likely that Haridās, a Hindu by birth, was brought up by a Muslim and was known as a yavana, as a result of his association with a Muslim family. As a matter of fact, this is what has been hinted at in the Advaita-prakāsha of Īśāna Nāgara. The conversion of Haridās to Vaiṣṇavism does not appear to be identical with that of a Muslim to the Vaiṣṇava faith. Haridās is alleged to have converted numerous Muslims. But the earlier and more reliable works like Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta and Chaitanya-bhāgavat which have described, at considerable length, the achievements of Haridās, are quite silent on this incident. The latter work has depicted him as a great saint with broad and liberal views. Even when cruelly oppressed by the Muslim qādis, he says: “Listen, oh my children, all people have the one and the same God. The Hindus and the Muslims make difference only in His name. The Qurʾān and the Purāṇa aim at one Ultimate Reality. One faultless, indivisible, unending, eternal being fills up everybody’s heart”.

It seems quite unlikely that Haridās who had such broad, pantheistic views had converted Muslims to Vaiṣṇavism. The episodes connected with the conversion of Bijuli Khān and the Orissan frontier officer, already referred to, appear in the Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta and

3. Ibid. p. 35.
have not been mentioned at all by Brndvanadst and other writers earlier than Krsnadst Kaviraj. Although he has mentioned the sources of his information with regard to many incidents connected with the life of Shri-Chaitanya, Krsnadst Kaviraj is silent on the sources of these stories. In the face of these difficulties, it is not at all safe to rely on the episodes of the conversion of Bijuli Khan and the frontier officer, narrated by the zealous Vaisnava writer, Krsnadst. The number of the Muslims converted to Vaisnavism, if there were any, must have been limited. Now, how to explain the conflicts between the Muslims and the Vaisnavas, depicted in the literature of the time? Hari-sanhkirtana performed by the Vaisnavas, seems to have been a new practice at Navadvipa which attracted the attention of the people. There was a Brahminical reaction against it in the beginning. When the Hindus of the place wanted to get it suppressed, with the help of the local Muslim officer, the latter had to comply with their request not only to please them, but also to maintain peace and order in the city. When the kirtana was opposed, the Vaisnavas, in a furious mood of fanaticism, went to the extent of attacking the qadi and burning his house. Thus an analysis of the Muslim-Vaisnava conflict shows that it did not involve any ideological or religious issue. If there is any religious tinge in it, it is simply because of the fact that the officer who had to deal with the situation was a Muslim, although he does not seem to have had any anti-Vaisnava attitude. It must be mentioned that Shri-Chaitanya counteracted the liberal forces of Islam by admitting the people of all sects and castes to the fold of Vaisnavism. The lower class people of the Hindu society whom Chaitanya converted, might have otherwise embraced Islam. Thus Vaisnavism saved Hinduism from Islam.

3. Ibid. madhya, ii, p. 137 and viii, p. 176.
4. Ibid. madhya, xxiii, pp. 274-77.
It is true that Chaitanya-ism let loose certain socio-religious forces which seem to have jeopardized the influence of Islam in this country. As noticed above, the attitude of Shri Chaitanya towards Islam was not probably hostile, nor does he seem to have had any genuine intention to direct his movement against it. But the post-Chaitanya Vaisnavism which had become a militant church with proselytizing zeal, appears to have developed a contemptuous attitude towards Islam. The works of Krisnaadas Kaviraj, Jayananda and Ishana Nagara all of whom flourished in the post-Chaitanya period, breathe a spirit of hostility and opposition to Islam. We may quote here what Krisnaadas Kaviraj has said about Islam: "Cow-slaughterers must have to suffer in eternal hell-fire for the sins they have committed. The maker of your (Muslims') shastra has been misled, for he has enunciated these principles (those of cow-slaughtering and others) without knowing their essence...... As this shastra is modern, it cannot stand the test of logic".1 Such a bitterness against Islam could hardly be found among the Vaisnavas so long as Chaitanya was alive. The same work states that he was converting the Muslims in order to raise them from the depth of degradation into which they had fallen.2 Similar ideas are expressed in the Advaita-prakasha of Ishana Nagara. To quote only one passage: "The shastra of the Muslims is against reason. Those who follow that shastra are known as yavanas. The omnipresent Supreme Being is without any beginning. His body is full of six virtues, pure and satvamaya (or possessing the quality of goodness). The study of the shastra which regards Him as mild and shapeless, leads to the increase of maya (illusion) and moha (delusion)".3 It will be futile to quote similar other passages from the works produced in the post-Chaitanya period. Suffice it to say that

2. Ibid. adi, viii, p. 38 and madhya, i, p. 76.
3. Op. cit. p. 36; see also pp. 15-16, 25-26, 35, 39 and 75 of the same work. The genuineness of the works like Prema-vilasa and Advaita-prakasha are very often doubted; see Sukumar Sen:
Islamic influences on Hindu society have been deplored by almost all Vaiśṇava poets of the time.

Various causes may be attributed to the hostile attitude of the Vaiśṇavas belonging to the post-Chaitanya period. The Ḫusain Shāhī period had already come to an end and the Mughal rule was being established in the country. The Ḫusain Shāhī rule represented the national aspirations of the people not excluding the Hindus and the Vaiśṇavas who seem to have received much religious tolerance from the ruling class. But the Mughal rule appears to have presented a sad contrast in this respect, for it had little connection with the people. This explains why Muslim rule is regarded as the root of all evils in a passage of the Prema-vilāsa.1 Islam which was making rapid progress in the country was taking away a large number of people from the fold of Hinduism. Muslim influences on the Hindu society were quite perceptible. The foreign rule and creed with its manifold impact on the life of Bengal could hardly be tolerated. All these seem to have produced a powerful reaction against Islam.

IV

The Dharma cult seems to have developed passive sympathy for Islam, possibly, under the pressure of the Brahminical persecution it suffered in those days. It is very often maintained that there are palpable Islamic influences on the Dharma cult.2

1. Vaṅglā Sūhityer Itihāsa, l, pp. 276 and 408. Biman Bihari Majumdar: op. cit. pp. 446-58 and 507-14. Some of the details about the life of Chaitanya as found in these works may not find corroboration in the reliable works on the subject and portions of them may even be spurious. But the Vaiśṇava attitude to Islam as depicted in them does not fundamentally differ from that found in the Chaitanya-charitaṃṣa of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviraj.

Such a conclusion may be taken only in a qualified sense. The idea of the shapeless God of Islam is not in any way similar to the Shūnyavād in the Dharmite faith. Shūnyavād is negative in essence but the Islamic idea of Godhead is quite positive. Monotheism is the cardinal point in Islam; but it is not so in the Dharmite cult, recognizing as it does the different gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. In the śṛṣṭi-pattana of the Shūnḍa-Purāṇa, Brahmā, Viśṇu, Shiva and Ādyā Shakti or Pārvatī, have been duly recognized. Thus Islamic theology does not seem to have influenced the philosophy of the Dharmites of Bengal. Muslim influences on the followers of the Dharma cult, if there were any, appear to have been limited to the field of their habits and customs some of which probably became intermingled with Muslim practices. Slaughtering animals according to the Muslim custom and reverence for the western direction are noticed in the Dharma-pājā-vidhāṇa. Sometimes the Dharmites regarded the sultān of Gauḍ as Dharma personified. Some of the Muslim poets have used the Dharmite terminology in their works. Thus the shapeless God of Islam has become identical with the Niraṇjana of the Dharma cult. All these presuppose certain understanding between the Muslims and the followers of the Dharma cult in the social sphere about which detailed information is not available. The latter appears to have turned friendly to the Muslims due to the hostile treatment they received from the Brahmins.

That they were persecuted by the Brahminical section, is borne out by the following passage of the Shūnḍa-Purāṇa: “There are in Jājapura sixteen hundred Vedic Brahmins who are, in reality, tyrannical people, and not Vedic Brahmins. They go out in search of daksinā (sacrificial fees offered to the Brahmins); if they do not get it, they burn the houses of the people by cursing them... Making a common cause against

the Saddharmīs, these powerful people persecute them. Reciting verses from the Vedas, they move about like fire striking terror into the minds of the people. In their utter despair, people pray to Dharma for help. Thus the Brahmans destroy creation doing much injustice to the people. Dharma who is in Heaven becomes aggrieved and surrounds himself with the darkness of mâyā or illusion. Then the poet narrates how Dharma, in the guise of the yavana, destroyed the Brahmans by attacking Jājapura. Stripped of its legendary veil, the story shows how the followers of the Dharma cult were being mercilessly oppressed by the Brahmans. Long afterwards, Māṇik Gaṅguli hesitated to write poems on the Dharma cult lest he should be persecuted. Probably because of the revival of Brahminism, the followers of the Dharma cult had to live in a state of chronic fear and began to adopt certain precautionary measures of self-protection. Whenever anybody went to the temple to worship Dharma, the priest used to put certain intelligent questions to him which were as follows: "Let my hand and feet be as hard as iron. Let the enemy go to hell. Where is your house? Which god do you worship? Which deity do you meditate on? Which god do you adore? Which direction do you say your prayers in? Which Vedas do you read? Where have you got the copper bracelets (that you put on)? Let me know the origin of copper." Answer to these questions were as follows: "I live on the bank of the Vallukā. I adore the shapeless God, meditate on the Shūnya-mūrti (image of the Void), and worship figurate God. I say my prayers facing the west and read the fifth Veda... This copper has

2. Ibid. pp. 233-35. The Muslim attack on Jajaipura in Orissa mentioned in the Niraṅjaner Uṣṇīs in the Shūnya-Purūṇa may be identified with the Orissan expeditions of Ḥusain Shāh in the course of which he is said to have destroyed a number of temples and deities; supra. ch. II, pp. 49-50.
been made by Vishvakarma". When the devotee was thus in a position to satisfy the Dharma priest, by answering his questions properly, the priest could easily take him to be a follower of the Dharma cult. Thus we find that the Dharmites had to resign themselves to an obscure existence possibly under the pressure of Brahminical persecution. Under these circumstances, it was quite natural that they would like to take help from the Muslims. When they found that the Muslims had attacked Jajapura, they regarded it as an outburst of the anger of Dharma against the Brahmins. The advent of the Muslims seems to have given them a sense of relief. Thus the Dharmites had good reasons to recognize tacitly the prophets and religious personalities of Islam. In the Shunya-Purana, Muhammad, Adam, Eve and Fatimah have been identified with Brahma, Shiva, Chandra and Padmavati respectively and Islamic terminology has been used with facility. The Dharmite liturgical text, Dharma-puja-vidhana, contains a section called kalima-jallala, which, besides giving a description of the Muslim attack on Orissa (also narrated in the Shunya-Purana), identifies a Muslim Khandkar with Dharma Thakura who is made to settle Hindu-Muslim disputes. He is depicted as a Muslim judge, dressed in Muslim dress, adopting Muslim customs and taking whatever food is taken by a Muslim. An analysis of the kalima-jallala shows that the Dharmites did not have any aversion to the Muslim society of the time. How the Muslims responded to this attitude of the Dharmites is not clearly known. But the fact that some of the Muslim poets of medieval Bengal used Dharmite terms quite unhesitatingly, goes to indicate Dharmite influences on the Muslims.

We have suggested that the conflict between Shaivism and

1. Ibid. p. 165.
the local cults of Manasā, Chaṇḍi and Dharma, which had been going on for centuries, ultimately ended in a synthesis of Brahminical culture with local, hieratic ideas as a result of which the scope of the Hindu pantheon was broadened. From what we have discussed above, it follows that a regular process of religious blending was going on side by side with conflict between Islām and Brahminism that took place in the period in question. Islām was influenced not only by the Hindu Yoga philosophy, but also by the Tantric physiology of Śaṭchakrabheda or the penetration of the six mystical circles in the body. As a matter of fact, Islamic mysticism, flourishing as it did in an atmosphere saturated with Yogic-tantric ideas, could hardly be immune from the influence of such a body of local ideas. Islām was sympathetic not only to the Dharma cult, but also possibly to the Nātha religion on which Muslims used to sing songs and compose poems in those days. This is illustrated by the fact that the Gorakṣa-vijaya, a famous work on the Nātha cult, is very often ascribed to a Muslim poet named Faiḍullāh. The gulf that existed between the Brahminical culture and local Hinduism, must have retarded the natural growth of the Hindu society. With the introduction of alien rule, a realignment of socio-religious forces, seems to have taken place. The Muslim rulers appear to have brought the culture of the people to the fore-ground by giving patronage to the vernacular language. The local gods and goddesses, which had gone to the background, could now make their influence felt through vernacular literature. As a result of the self-centred nature of the Brahminical group of people and their direct hostility to this local culture, the Dharmites, Buddhists, Nāthapanthis and other groups of so-called non-Aryan people must have sought the protection of the Muslims. That is what seems to have been hinted at in the Niraṇjaner Uṣmā cited above. The orthodox Sunni Islām does not seem to have given recognition to these local ideas; but its mystic aspect represented by liberal Sūfī-ism did

1. *Infra.* ch. vii.
2. For an elaboration of this point, see ch. vii of this work.
not hesitate to reconcile itself to the local hieratic forces. Hence the impact of yogic-tantric philosophy on the writings of the mystic poets like Saiyid Sultan, Ali Riḍā and Faḍullāh. As a matter of fact, Ṣūfī-ism of Bengal had much affinity with these local mystic ideas.

As noticed above, the movement of Shri-Chaitanya appears to have brought about a synthesis of the conflicting forces that were at work in the body of the Hindu society. In doing so, it seems to have affected the progress of Islam to a considerable extent.
CHAPTER VII

LITERATURE AND CULTURE

THE period in question witnessed intense literary activities which were quite unparalleled in those days. The medium was both Sanskrit, the vehicle of Brahminical culture and the vernacular language which appears to have attained a definite form quite capable of giving expression to the religious and secular ideas of the people. Although frowned upon by the Hindus of the higher social strata, Bengali began to enjoy certain advantages which Sanskrit and Persian could not. Since the conquest of Bengal by the Muslims, Sanskrit had been losing its ground because of the decline of Brahminism as a culture. It had eventually to yield a place to the vernacular tongue which had Sanskrit for its grand father and Māgadhī Prākrit for its father. An imperceptible conflict was going on between the Brahminical culture and the local ideology even in pre-Muslim Bengal. The growth of Bengali language and the birth of Bengali literature symbolized the triumph of the native culture over the Brahminical one. The Ḫusain Shāhī period marks the culmination of this sociological process. In the Mughal period, the vernacular language greatly helped Brahminism in transforming itself when it felt the necessity of entertaining the new set of socio-religious ideals bred in the bones of the nation. Persian which was closely
connected with the life of the court, does not seem to have had any direct impact on the ordinary people, nor could it produce literature of any importance in our period.

I

While studying the history of Bengali literature, one should not underestimate the contributions of the Muslim rulers to its growth and development. Literary activities could be hardly possible in the thirteenth century due to the unsettled social and political conditions which followed in the wake of the Muslim conquest. The history of Bengali literature begins with the establishment of the political independence of Bengal under the Ilyās Shāhī rulers who restored peace and prosperity to this country in the middle of the fourteenth century. Chandīdāsa Kṛttivāsa and Mālādhār Vasu, who flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, paved the way for further development in the field of literature by composing poems in Bengali and translating Sanskrit works into it. The process which was already at work continued in the Ḥusain Shāhī period when the vernacular literature received a new lease of life. The rulers of this period took an active interest in the growing indigenous literature by patronizing some of the poets of the time. They seem to have been actuated by political considerations to come in close contact with the people. It was almost impossible for them to build up a good system of administration without knowing the socio-religious ideas and tradition of the people they wanted to govern. So the question of rendering patronage to their language and literature arose. There were other reasons too. Bengal held a politically precarious position in the face of the hostilities of the powers surrounding her, against whom the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers were fighting almost simultaneously. They could hardly expect military success without having won the sympathy and support of the subjects, for internal stability was a necessary pre-requisite of a sound foreign policy or a successful warfare. It should be remembered here that the Ḥusainī rulers, though of Arabian origin, did not have any direct
connection with their homeland. They could not foster any Arabian culture on the soil of Bengal separated by thousands of miles from Arabia. The Arab merchants who used to come to Bengal from time to time, did not stay here permanently to enrich such a culture. Thus the ruling class had to forget its foreign origin and associate itself closely with the local culture. Again the growing influence of the local culture, already noticed by us, greatly accelerated the process of the growth of the vernacular language. Brahminism, which was already shorn of political power, had hardly any reason to be friendly to the Muslim ruling class. It seems that the sultāns wanted to check it by tacitly recognizing the culture which stood in opposition to Brahminism. Contemporary Bengali sources would have us believe that the rulers and governors of the time used to listen to the paurāṇik stories and legends recited by the court poets.¹ Of the Bengali poets of the period, Yashoraj Khan, Kavindra Parameshvara, Shrikara Nandī and Shriddhara received direct court patronage. Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās, both of whom composed verses on the story of the snake-cult, have not failed to admire Ḫusain Shāh, although they do not appear to have received any patronage from the court.² The sultāns who were Bengalicized because of their close association with the people, gave status and dignity to Bengali language which now began to play the role that was played by Sanskrit in pre-Muslim Bengal.

The poetry which was produced in this period had at least five varieties in so far as its themes were concerned. These were (a) the poems dealing with the snake cult, (b) the versified translation of the Mahābhārata, (c) the Vaiṣṇava Padavali, (d) a poem on yoga philosophy and (e) romantic poems represented by the Vidyā-Sundara of Shriddhara. A careful analysis of each of these types is necessary.

¹. We have elaborately discussed this point in a subsequent section of this chapter.
². Infra.
One of the local deities of this period was Manasā who seems to have originated even before the Muslim conquest of Bengal. She was an anti-Brahminic and non-Aryan goddess worshipped by those who belonged to the lower rung of the social ladder, and subsequently recognized by the higher class people. The songs which were composed about her in the remote past and which were in oral circulation among the people, were compiled and given a proper shape by the poets of our period and these poems again began to be sung by the professional singers of the rural society. This is why, the rāgās in which they were to be sung, have been mentioned in these poems. It may be mentioned here that the poets who composed verses on the Manasā cult were simply catering to the needs of the time without being influenced by any literary motive. Dinesh Chandra Sen has tried to assess the influence of Islām on the local cults including Manasā. He says, “The Mahammadans with their vigorous living faith, had by this time come to Bengal. Their Koran which they believed to be inspired, lays it down that the God of Islam helps believers and destroys unbelievers. The strong belief of Islam in a personal God had to be counteracted in this country by forms of religion in which the personal element of divinity predominated. So the Śākta and the Vaiṣṇava religions flourished and the Śaiva religion with its impersonal ideal and mysticism in which man rose to the level of his God in the Advaitabāda was gradually thrown into the background, as the masses did not comprehend its speculative feature”. But such a conclusion seems unwarranted. The cults of Manasā and Chaṇḍi would have grown in power and influence even without the presence of the living God of Islām in this country. The passive, abstract and impersonal God, as represented by Shaivism, could hardly fulfil the hankering of the minds of the people who are generally apt to depend on a personal God capable of

evoking the deepest sentiment in popular minds. The emergence of the personalities of Manasa and Chandi in Bengal is perhaps largely due to this human psychology and not to Islamic influences as contended by the much lamented scholar. This psychology was responsible for the reaction of the local culture against the mystic culture of Brahminism or Shaivism.

The two poets who composed poems on the snake cult are Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās. The story narrated by them may be summarized in the following lines: Manasa, who was born mysteriously, was the daughter of Shiva. The latter kept her concealed, in the beginning, at his own residence, until his wife Chandi, found her out. Manasa was married to a saint named Jagatkaru. Frustrated in his conjugal life, Jagatkaru, however, went away to spend his life in meditation and penance. It was the step-motherly jealousy of Chandi which compelled Shiva to banish his daughter to Jayantinagar where Vishvakarma, the legendary architect, constructed a house for her accommodation. Now Manasa wanted the people to worship her as the goddess of snakes and soon she was recognized and worshipped by the lower classes as such. Her attendant and friend, Netravati or Netai helped her a great deal in spreading her worship among the people. Hasan and Husain who prevented the cow-keepers from worshipping Manasa, were severely penalized by her. The serpent goddess had an altercation with Chandradhara, a famous merchant of Champakanagar, who had refused to worship her. As a result of this, Chand lost everything including his six children. In course of the sea-voyages which he undertook, Chand was reduced to a miserable plight, the calamity being largely the outcome of Manasa's anger. His youngest son, Lakshmindar, who had married Behula, died of snake-bite on the night following the marriage. The grief of Soneka, Chand's wife, knew no bounds. While the husband was a worshipper of Shiva, the wife was a devotee of Manasa. Undaunted, Chand went on, even under these straitened circumstances, refusing to acknowledge her as a goddess. Having passed through a number of ordeals, Behula went to Kailaspuri, enchanted Shiva and Parvati by her wonderful
dance and got back the life of her husband. Chastened by the miseries he had gone through, Chānd began to worship Manasā. By the mercy of the serpent goddess, he got back all his children whom he had lost in the wake of his quarrel with Manasā. Lakṣmīndar, accompanied by Behula, went to heaven. Chānd also followed them.¹

1. The *Manasā-mahgal* of Vijaya Gupta was composed in 1416 Shaka=1494-95, when Ḥusain Shāh was the sultan of Gauḍ. The date mentioned in the *Manasā-mahgal* of Vijaya Gupta edited by Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya is 1407 Shaka=1485 A.D., 3rd ed. p. 4. This is obviously a mistake, for Ḥusain Shāh, eulogized by the poet, was not the ruler of Bengal in that year. The date 1416 Shaka found in a manuscript, which Stapleton came across, seems quite correct; D. C. Sen: *Vaṅga Bhāṣā O Sahitya*, pp. 111-12, f.n. In the introductory section of his work, the poet has mentioned that he lived in the village of Phullashri, the abode of scholars, situated in the *taqsim* of Bāṅgroḍa included in Fatḥabad division of the kingdom of Gauḍ over which Ḥusain Shāh, the *tilak*-mark of kings, was ruling; *Vaṅga Bhāṣā O Sahitya*, pp. 111-12; *Manasā-mahgal*, p 4. This village may be identified with the village, Phullashri of modern Barisal district. A modern scholar has doubted the authenticity of this work on the following grounds: (a) since Vijaya Gupta composed his poems immediately after the accession of Ḥusain to the throne of Gauḍ, the poet could hardly regard him as *nṛpatitilaka* from Vaṅga separated from Gauḍ by a vast distance; (b) secondly, the language of the *Manasā-mahgal* of this poet is comparatively modern and no genuine manuscript containing the date 1416 Shaka which is said to have been the date of its composition, is available. Although the questions raised by the learned scholar appear to be pertinent, they can be easily answered. According to an inscription, Barisal, the district of our poet, formed an integral part of the kingdom of Gauḍ as early at least as 870 A.H./1465-66 A.D. when a mosque was constructed at Mirganj in the same district by one Ajīl Khān. *J.A.S.B.* 1860, p. 407. So it is crystal clear that this district was well-connected with Gauḍ by the time when Vijaya Gupta wrote his *Manasā-mahgal*. Moreover, Ḥusain Khān had already left his impression on the pages
The *Manasa-vijaya* of Vipradas was composed in 1495-96, also in the reign of Ḥusain Shah who has been regarded by of the history of Bengal as the minister of Shāms-ud-din Muẓaffar Shah. In these political circumstances, the news of his accession must have been noise about throughout the different regions of the kingdom of Gauḍ. As to the linguistic aspect of the work, it has undergone much interpolation and alteration at the hands of the different copyists and on the lips of numerous singers. The linguistic adulteration which one comes across in this work speaks of its popularity and wide circulation in East Bengal. The singers, who used it for musical purposes, seem to have changed its language from time to time. But why should we level this charge against the *Manasa-maṅgal* of Vijaya Gupta only? The famous works of Chaṇḍīḍāsa, Kṛṭīvāsa and Bṛndaṇavarāna are not exceptions to this general misfortune. Although the language of this work has undergone considerable change, its theme remains intact, for the story it has embodied, tallies in essential points with that found in the *Manasa-vijaya* of Vipradas whose work is genuine and is one of the earliest works on the snake cult. The charge that the date 1416 Shaka is found in no manuscript is without any real foundation. Stapleton found in the village of Gaila adjacent to Phullahri, an old manuscript containing the following lines: *ṛtu shashi veda shashi parimita shaka, sultan husen sāh nepati-tilaka*; D. C. Sen: *Vaṅga Bhāṣā O Sāhitya*, p. 112, f.n. It has been recently held that Vijaya Gupta wrote his poem in the reign of Jalal-ud-din Fath Shah, for the date 1406 Shaka/1484-85 A.D., found in the printed editions of the poem, falls within the period of that sultan and some of the coins of the ruler bear the expression “Ḥusain Shah” indicating that he had the popular name Ḥusain Shah; S. Mukhopadhyay: *op. cit.* pp. 127-28. It is difficult to believe that the sultan was known by his popular name in the regions far away from his own locality. People of the neighbourhood of Gauḍ could know the ruler’s familiar name so much heard of by the men of distant regions. Moreover, we are told by D. C. Sen that the old manuscripts of the book are all dated in 1416 Shaka/1494-95; *Vaṅgaḥāṣā O Sāhitya*, pp. 111-12. Stapleton’s discovery of the manuscript having the same date, in Gaila, adjacent to the home of Vijaya Gupta, is of more than
the poet as "an auspicious sign in Gauḍ".1

The story narrated in these works shows how the worship of Manasā was spreading among the different sections of the people. Although this cult was opposed in the beginning by the higher class people, they finally had to bend low before it. This is what is symbolized by the Chānd-vene episode. Manasā was most probably a goddess of indigenous origin and it is quite natural that the Brahminical section disliked this vulgar cult as they called it. The whole story gives the picture of conflict between Shaivism and the local cult of Manasā and shows how the former was gradually being overpowered by the latter. Manasā cannot be satisfied until she is worshipped by Chānd Sadāgar, originally a devotee of Shiva. Manasā is all the while active and does not hesitate to adopt even barbarous measures to force Chānd into worshipping her. But Shiva is inactive and inert and does not come forward to save the life of his devotee. The local cults were again contending with one another with a view to establishing their respective supremacy in the Bengali society. This is what is clearly indicated by the scenes of conflict between Chaṇḍī and Manasā depicted so frequently in the poems of the period.

Thus it is evident that the Manasā-maṅgals have preserved certain salient features of the social history of this country. Although the story they tell is of a legendary nature, significant historical information may be gleaned from it. They refer

usual interest. The manuscript found in the village of the poet or in the neighbourhood, is likely to have preserved the original date and composition. A notice of the Gaill manuscript appeared in the Dacca Review, March, 1913, p. 457. So the two lines quoted above indicate that the poem under consideration was composed in 1494-95 A.D. in the reign of Ḥusain Shāh.

1. The Manasā-vijaya has been edited by Sukumar Sen from the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1953. For the references to the date of its composition and to the reign of Ḥusain Shāh, see p. 3 of this edition.
to the various tendencies of the age and bring home to us the
different aspects of the fifteenth or sixteenth-century Bengali life.

Although no work is known to have been composed on
the cults of Chaṇḍi, Dharma and Nātha in the period under
discussion, it must not be inferred that these were absent in
Bengal. In fact, each of these local cults was crystallizing in
pre-Mughal Bengal. It has been stated in the Manasa-vijaya of
Vipradās that Shiva had to meditate on the white Niraṅjana,
Dharma Thākur, for about twelve years, who was regarded by
other gods of the Hindu pantheon as Supreme Being or Parama
Brahma. ¹ Rationally interpreted, it means that people used to
attach much importance to the Dharma cult which superseded
the Shiva cult. Brindavanadhāsa, writing in the third quarter of
the sixteenth century, had sufficient reason to deplore the impact
of the Chaṇḍi cult on the Hindu society of Navadvīpa.² The
Nāthapannyaś were so numerous that they could easily attract
the notice of Qutbān who is said to have composed the Mrgāvat
in Bhāgalpur.³ We have already mentioned that almost all of
these cults opposed Brahminism to a considerable extent. Most
of the Chaṇḍi-maṅgal poems, composed in the sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries, abound in scenes of conflict between
Shaivism and the Chaṇḍi cult.

In these works, Chaṇḍi is depicted as showering her favour
on those who worship her and chastising those into obedience
who refuse to follow her.⁴ It is clearly stated in the con-

3. Infra. p. 254 ff.; see extracts from the Mrgāvat of Qutbān,
4. Kālaketu who worshipped Chaṇḍi was amply rewarded by the
goddess. Through the mercy of Chaṇḍi, he got enough wealth
and the kingdom of Gujiā. Though defeated and imprisoned by
the ruler of Kaliṅga, he was released by the latter as a result of
the intervention of Chaṇḍi. For the story of Kālaketu, see Kavi-
kaśkan-chaṇḍi, pt. i. The story appears in other Maṅgal
temporary sources that Shiva was being regularly worshipped long before the acceptance of Chandī as a goddess by the people. The supremacy of Shiva could hardly be tolerated by Chandī who was now out to assert herself. Manasa and Chandī seem to have been non-Brahminic and non-Aryan goddesses and their victory, as elaborated in the maṅgal poems, may be rightly regarded as the victory of the culture of the non-Aryan people of Bengal who appear to have led an obscure existence under the Brahminical influence in pre-Muslim Bengal. We have no reason to believe that the influence of these local cults was limited to the lower class people. In fact, there was a regular process of filtration of lower class socio-religious ideas to the upper class Brahminical circle. Mukandaram Chakravarti and Madhava Āchārya who composed poems on the Chandī cult, towards the end of the sixteenth century, Maṅik Gaṅguli, Rūparām Chakravartī and Khelārām Chakravarti, who wrote on the Dharma cult in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were Brahmins. Thus in the course of the adaptation of Brahminism to the changing circumstances, the local cults of Manasa, Chandī and Dharma could find suitable places for themselves in the Hindu pantheon. The Aryan god Shiva was now brought down to the level of an average Bengali agriculturist as depicted in the Shivāyana of Rāmeshvara Bhaṭṭāchārya. In the course of this transformation, Brahminism lost much of its original rigidity and received a new meaning. It could thus come very close to the minds of the ordinary people. This socio-religious evolution could take place in the course of several centuries. But we find the beginning of this process in the fifteenth century or even earlier. While Halāyudha Mishra has mentioned the worship of Chandī in his Brāhmaṇa Sarvasva, Govindānanda has described poems as well. While Dhanapati was a devotee of Shiva, his wife Khullana used to worship Chandī whom her husband insulted on the eve of his leaving for Ceylon. He was subjected to much hardship by Chandī and compelled to worship her ultimately; ibid. pt. ii.
bed the rituals of the Manasa cult in his Smrti text. If the Chaitanaya-bhagavat is to be relied upon, some of the Brahmins of Navadvipa had become the priests of Manasa and Chandi with a view to earning a descent livelihood. Thus it seems evident that under the pressure of economic needs, some of the Brahmins were giving recognition to the popular local cults. Bengali literature had its growth and development through the process of sociological conflict and compromise, noticed above.

I (b)

Of the translators of the Mahabharat into Bengali, the names of Kavindra Parameshvara and Shrikara Nandi stand out predominantly. The former was patronized by Paragal Khan, and the latter by his son, Chhuoti Khan, both father and son being the governors of Chittagong under Husain Shah. Both of the poets have profusely eulogized their patrons in the introductory sections of their works.

3. Sometimes Shrikara Nandi's Ashvamedha Parva is attributed to Kavindra Parameshvara. But this is done on a very weak ground. Out of the numerous bha-yita's appearing in the Ashvamedha Parva published from the Vahgiya Sahitya Parisad, only two or three contain the name of Kavindra and the rest uniformly mention Shrikara Nandi: op. cit. pp. 63, 139 and 140. In these two or three bha-yita's also, the name of Kavindra has been mentioned together with that of Paragal Khan. It seems that Shrikara Nandi has thus reasonably referred to his contemporary poet, Kavindra and his patron, Paragal Khan, for he was following the footsteps of Kavindra by translating the Ashvamedha Parva into Bengali. One may confuse Shrikara Nandi with Kavindra; but Chhuoti Khan, the patron of Shrikara Nandi, can hardly be confused with Paragal who was Kavindra's patron. Shrikara Nandi has repeatedly mentioned that Chhuoti Khan was his patron; but he has never said so about Paragal Khan. Thus it seems fairly well-established that Kavindra and Shrikara Nandi
The story of the Mahābhārat which appeared in Bengali language through the Sanskrit version of Jaimini, seems to have enjoyed much popularity among the people of Bengal. When Parāgal Khān and Chhuṭī Khān ordered the epic to be translated into the vernacular language, they simply gave expression to the intellectual demand of the people. Before the composition of poems by Saiyid Sulṭān on the legends of Islam as embodied in the Navi-vahsha, the Mahābhārat of Kavindra had captured the minds of the Muslim population so much so that the former clearly states that he has written on Islamic themes with a view to diverting the Muslim mind from the Bhāratakatha of the latter. Thus the Muslim poet wanted to present his Navi-vahsha to the society as a counterpart of the Parāgal Mahābhārat. Viewed in the light of these circumstances, Abdul Karim Sāhitya Vishārad's conjecture that the celebrated Muslim governor, Parāgal Khān wrote poems on the Mahābhārat theme, deserves proper consideration. The Bengali-cized versions of the Mahābhārat mark, once again, the victory of the laukik culture already referred to by us.

Of the few writers of Vaiṣaṇava padas, belonging to the period in question, Yashorāj Khān who is said to have served as an official of Ḫusain Shāh, has become immortal. A Brajavuli poem of Yashorāj which has appeared in the Rasa-maṇjari of Pitāmvaradās breathes a spirit of tenderness and delicacy of an unapproachable excellence. This may be regarded were two different persons who composed two different works in the reign of Ḫusain Shāh. Had they been identical with each other, the name of Shrikara Nandi would have appeared also in the Parāgal Mahābhārat which was written by Kavindra.

2. Sāhitya Vishārad has quoted a poem on a Mahābhārat theme, containing a bhaṭīta of Parāgal Khān; Vaiṅglū Prāchīn Puthir Viveṇa, pt. 1, vol. 1, pp. 10-12.
as one of the finest examples of the *Brajavuli padas* written in medieval Bengal.

A similar *pada* containing the *bhāniṭā* of Sheikh Kabīr has come down to us. The translation of this poem into any foreign language cannot preserve the softness and elegance of the original. We quote it below with a somewhat free English translation.

1. dhānashī (velavelt) shrīrādhūr rūpa
   aki aparūpa rūpera ramani dhani dhanī!
   chaḷite pekhalā gajarājā gamani dhani dhanī! dhu!
   kaḷjale rāṇjita dhani nayāna dhavala bhāle!
   bhramorā bholala vimala kamala dale!
   gumāna nā kara dhani khina ati mūjakāhī!
   kuchagiri phalera bhāre bhaṅgi paṇīva yauvani!
   sundari chāndanakhi vachana volasi hāsi!
   amītā varīkhe jaichhe shārada pūrāṇa shashī!
   sekha kavīre bhaṅe ahi guṇa pāmare jāne!
   chhulatāna nachhira sāhī bhulichhe kamala vane.

What a wonderful beauty the maiden possesses!
Her movement is as slow as that of an elephant.
Her collyrium-coloured eyes on the white forehead
Look like bees in a beautiful lotus-garden.
She is devoid of pride and her waist is thin.
Her youth will bend down under the pressure of her breast.
The beautiful maiden possessing a moon-like face
speaks smiling.
Like the full autumnal moon, it pours nectar.
Shāiḳh Kabīr says that his humble self appreciates
this goodness
And sūltān Nāṣīr Shāh is wandering in the lotus garden.

See *S.P.P.* 1344 b.s., pp. 22-23, for this Bengali *pada*. For a slightly different reading of the text, cf. *Muslim Kavir Pada-Sāhiṭya*, ed. Ahmad Sharif, p. 46, no. 24. We are in favour of ascribing this poem to the early sixteenth century for reasons more than one. The concluding line of the poem contains the name of Nāṣīr Shāh who is undoubtedly identical with Nāṣīr-ud-dīn Nuṣrat Shāh (1519-32 A.D.). Kavi Shekhara also known as
The name Shaikh Kabir indicates that he was a Muslim poet. Although the details about his life are not known, it seems that he was intimately connected with Sultan Nuṣrat Shāh. Like Yashoraj Khan, he might have been an officer of Nuṣrat Shāh. Thus the Muslims were making contributions to Bengali language and literature. Down to the fifteenth century, their literary activities do not seem to have assumed any significant importance possibly because of the socio-political circumstances under which they were placed. The Muslim foreigners who were settling here were gradually being Bengalized and the native people who were converted to Islam were probably adjusting themselves to the new conditions. This sociological process must have taken a long time during which the Bengali Muslims had tried to reconcile themselves to the changed circumstances. This seems to explain the comparative insignificance of Muslim Bengali literature which we notice down to the end of the fifteenth century.

I(d)

Yoga philosophy is represented by the Ādya Parichaya composed, as its introductory section indicates, in 1420 Shaka.

Chhoja Vidyapati, who was a contemporary of Nuṣrat Shāh, has called the latter Nāṣir Shāh in another pada, quoted by Sukumar Sen: Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa, i, p. 73. Again the different bhāyatās given by Shridhara in his Vidyā-Sundara shows that Nuṣrat was known as Nāṣir Shāh whose son was Firūz Shāh. Thus it is evident that Nuṣrat was very often called by his jāluś name. The padas written by Kavi Shekhara may be "supposed to refer to Nuṣrat's leaning towards Vaiṣṇava-like divine love." History of Bengal, ii, p. 158, f.n. A similar idea is also gleaned from the pada quoted above. The language, metre and idea of this poem do not radically differ from those found in the padas of Yashoraj Khan and Kavi Shekhera. That Shaikh Kabir was a contemporary of Nuṣrat seems fairly well-established. Another Brajavuli poem containing the bhāyatā of Kabir deals with the holi-hitā or spring festival of Shri-Kṛṣṇa; quoted by J. M. Bhattacharya: op. cit. pada, no. 28. It seems that this Kabir is identical with Shaikh Kabir; but see M. Shahidullah, who identifies Shaikh Kabir with Kavi Shekhara; Vāṅglā Sāhityer Kathā, ii, p. 66 ff.
1498-99 A.D.,² by Shaikh Zähid who tells us, at the outset, that he will discuss the question of the formation of the human body; for the poet believes that a full knowledge of the act of parturition together with that of the growth of the embryo, is sure to bring liberation to mankind. After giving a detailed cosmology, which we have already noticed, he goes on describing the different stages through which the embryo is supposed to pass, the necessity of preserving semen, the auspicious and inauspicious moments of birth which decide the destiny of the child and the constituent elements of the physical body with numerous knots and nerves including Ingalā and Pingalā believed to be frequented by Cupid. As to the linguistic aspect of the poem, it preserves a number of old forms of words³ traceable only in the Charyāpadas, the Shrikṛṣṇa-kirtana, the Shriśṇa-vijaya and the Gorakṣa-vijaya whose dates range from the tenth to sixteenth centuries. Also the metrical imperfections, which one notices in the poem, point to its antiquity. If it is established beyond doubt that the date of composition of the work is 1420 Shaka, it can be asserted that the Ādya Parichaya is the earliest Bengali poem (if Charyā songs are excluded) dealing with yogic ideas and that it is the precursor of such poems as the Gorakṣa-vijaya, Jñāna-pradīpa, Yoga-kālandar and Jñāna-sūgara.

I(e)

As already mentioned, the period under review marks the growth of romanticism in Bengali literature. Shrīdhara who wrote the Vidyā-Sundara, received patronage from prince Firūz,² son of Nuṣrat Shāh. A Muslim poet named Sābirid Khān,

1. The verse which contains the date is brahmār ānana jata rāvana rē kare, gunile jata haya sahasra upare.
2. Such as āun> three and one-half; ardha-chaturtha> addhauṭha āhuṭ> āun; cf. Gorakṣa-vijaya, p. 241; janma> janma, kammā> karma, mitta> mitra etc.
3. The poet has mentioned the name of prince Firūz and his father Nuṣrat Shāh; supra, p. 58. The mutilated text of Shrīdhara’s work has been edited and published by Ahmad Sharif in The Sāhitya Patrikā, 1364 n.s. 1, pp. 115-34.
wrote another *Vidyā-Sundara*, the date of the composition of which cannot be properly ascertained, for the bhaṅgītās obtaining in the poem, do not contain any indication thereof. The language of some portions of Saṅbirid’s work resembles that of the *Shṛīkṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. The antiquated forms of the verb-ending and the second case-ending appearing frequently in the poem point to its undoubted antiquity. These linguistic peculiarities can hardly be found in the work of Shṛīdhara which does not seem to be earlier than Saṅbirid’s *Vidyā-Sundara*. The most curious point to be noticed about the two poems is the striking resemblance which their narratives bear to each other. One can easily come across frequent coincidences of narration and also of expression, between the *Vidyā-Sundaras* of the two poets. The narrative in the work of Saṅbirid Khān is considerably long and that of Shṛīdhara’s work, short. The latter does not possess the rich variety of metres and simile which the poem of Saṅbirid abounds in. The limpid lucidity of the style that obtains in Saṅbirid’s work, cannot be had in the work of Shṛīdhara. The various musical modes or rāgas mentioned by Shṛīdhara, are conspicuously absent in the poem of Saṅbirid Khān. Considering these points of resemblance and difference existing between the two poems, it may be reasonably suggested that Shṛīdhara has prepared an abridged version of the work of Saṅbirid Khān and made it suitable for the singers by inserting rāgas in proper places, without acknowledging his indebtedness to Saṅbirid Khān.

The composition of poems on the romantic episode of Vidyā and Sundara, by the poets mentioned above, is a significant event in the history of Bengali literature. As far as it can be ascertained from a careful perusal of the published

1. The incomplete text, edited by Ahmad Sharif, has been published in the *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364 B.S., i, pp. 96-114.
portions of the poems, the religious background of the story hinted at in the opening lines, has not been able to do away with its human interest. The attention of the poet was thus being gradually diverted from the world of gods and goddesses to that of human beings with its sensibilities, sorrows and joys. The works of Shridhara and Sābirid may be regarded as indicating a definite phase of transition from the religious literature to the secular one and from medievalism to modernism. The literary tradition established by these poets, was followed by a powerful eighteenth century poet, Bhārat Chandra. The stylistic description of the beauty of Vidyā, given by Sābirid, has a clear echo in that of Bhārat Chandra’s work. Like Sābirid and Shridhara, Bhārat Chandra has used Sanskrit verses in certain portions of his work, devoted to the conversation between Vidyā and Sundara. The work of Bhārat Chandra is saturated with religious influences, for it has been composed with the avowed object of recounting the greatness of the goddess Chāṇḍī.

To the developments which were thus taking place in the Bengali literature of the time, the cultural milieu of the contemporary Jaunpūr and the regions surrounding it, seems to have made significant contributions. Ḥusain Shāh Sharqī, who was residing at Kahlgāon, after having been defeated by Sikandar Lūdī, had perhaps brought with him a number of Ṣūfīs and poets to Bengal. One of such refugees was Quṭban who composed in 939 A.H./1503 A.D., a romantic poem in Hindi, called Mṛgāvari. The story narrated in the poem is summarized here: Rājkumār, son of Gaṇapat Deo, the Sūryavamshi ruler of

1. Sahitya Patrika, 1364, i, pp. 96-99 and 115-17.
2. Ibid. p. 122.
5. The poet gives nau sai nau (sambat?) or 909 A.H. as the date of the composition of the Mṛgāvari; see Mṛgāvari quoted by Prof. Askari. J.B.R.S. 1955, vol. xl, pt. 4, p. 459.
Chandrāgad, was once on a hunting excursion. Enamoured of a seven-cloured, fleeting deer, he ran seven yojanas or twenty-
croses’, following the mysterious animal till he arrived at the
shore of a lake flowing under a huge tree with green foliage.
The deer disappeared in the lake. The prince also jumped into
it with a view to catching hold of the animal. His attempts
having ended in failure, he started staying on at the shore of
the lake where his father had a seven-storied house constructed
for his dwelling. The elusive deer was Mrgāvatī, the beautiful
daughter of Rūpa Murāra, the king of Kāñchannagar. Mrgāvatī
could assume the garb of a deer whenever she so desired.
Once the prince noticed seven nymph-like ladies sporting and
taking their bath in the lake. The most beautiful one of these
seven women, was Mrgāvatī. When Mrgāvatī came once again
to take her bath in the lake, on an ekādashi day, the prince
could win her by seizing her clothes. But the union was
followed by a painful separation. Taking advantage of the prince’s
absence, Mrgāvatī once fled away. In his longing stupor, the
prince set out in quest of her. On his way, he arrived at a
mountainous sea-shore where he saved one Rukmiṇī, from the
clutches of a demon, after having killed it. At the earnest
entreaties of Rukmiṇī’s father, Rājā Devī Rāy Sindhiā, who
was a Raghuvarmshī Rājput, the prince married her. But the
loving nature of the wedded wife could not banish the thoughts
of the first love from his mind. Encountering a series of
difficulties, he reached Kāñchannagar where the couple had the
long-cherished union. The messengers sent by Gaṇapat Deo,
came to know of Rājkumār’s whereabouts from the love-stricken
Rukmiṇī who was pouring out her heart before a bird in the
form of a vāramāsā. They met the prince at Kāñchannagar
who now returned home together with Mrgāvatī. On their way,
they took Rukmiṇī with them. The story has a tragic end.
While on a hunting expedition, the prince died, falling from a
mad elephant. The two queens became sāri.1

As to the source of the story, the poet says that he has collected materials from the local language in which it was narrated in adhel and āryā metres. The idea of the elusive deer obtains in the story of Mārīchā in the Rāmāyaṇa and also in the Sudhana-Manoharā episode found in the Mahāyāna Baudha Vinayapiṭaka. Whether Quṭban had any access to these sources is not clearly known. There is the role of a deceptive deer at the beginning of the twelfth-century Kitāb Sama-kyar of the Bodleian library of Oxford, although it does not have any necessary connection with the long narrative of the work. The Haft Paikar of Nizāmī, written towards the end of the twelfth century, refers to a mysterious and fleeting, onager following which Bahram Gōr, the Persian prince, arrives at the cave of a mountain. After having killed a dragon, he enters into a mysterious room containing pictures of seven beautiful ladies who represent seven climes. Bahram’s marriage with these seven girls is followed by the construction of a seven-domed building in which he spends seven nights with his wives. Seven stories told by these ladies, constitute the narrative of the Haft Paikar. As already noticed, the Mrgāvatī of Quṭban not only depicts a seven-coloured deer, but also mentions seven yojanas, a seven-storied building and seven ladies taking their bath in the lake. Both Nizāmī and Quṭban appear to have attached mystic importance to the number seven. Quṭban, the poet of the symbolical work, Mrgāvatī, seems to have been influenced, to some extent, by the Haft Paikar which is also considered to be of a symbolical nature. It seems quite

5. Supra. p. 255; see also extracts from Mrgāvatī, J.B.R.S. op. cit. pp. 461-465 and 466.
6. The story of Bahram Gōr as told in the Haft Paikar is regarded as illustrating the progress of the Sūfī through the seven spiritual stages; see Introduction to Haft Paikar, p. xvii.
An illustration from *Mṛgavati*
natural for a Ṣūfī poet like Quṭban to have received inspiration from the work of the Persian Ṣūfī, Niẓāmī. In indicating Persian influences on Quṭban’s poem, it is not, however, asserted that the story of Ṿṛgavati is entirely Persian in character without having any Indian background. As a matter of fact, it contains a good deal of Indian elements which will be noticed below. Moreover, the scenes of the fair damsels sporting and taking their bath in the lake and the prince stealing the clothes of Ṿṛgavati resemble those in the story of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-liṅga which the poet incidentally mentions together with the numerous gopīs or milkmaids. Though allegorical in character, the Ṿṛgavati does not lack in human interests which appear to have added a rare lyrical charm to the poem. Spiritual symbolism of the story seems to have been combined with its essential humanism. Gaṇapat, Rukmini and the prince are all human beings placed in a surrounding of reality.

The medieval Hindi romantic stories such as those of Ṿṛgavati, and Lorak-Chanda or Maṇḍa Sat have a good

1. Extracts from Ṿṛgavati, op. cit., p. 466.
2. The Ṿṛgavati of Quṭban has not been published. Prof. S.H. Askari has given in a long paper, extracts from the Delhi and Maner MSS. (both in the Persian script) with copious quotations (J.B.R.S. 1955, Dec. pt. 4, pp. 452-87) on which the present writer's discussion on the Ṿṛgavati is mainly based. Illustrations in one of the two MSS. in the Kaithi script, now at the Bharatiya Kala Bhavana, Benares, exhibiting angularity in facial expression, staring blank eyes and vigorous drawings of the figures, all of which point to the primitiveness of the art, indicate the popularity of Quṭban’s work even in that early period of the Rājasthani school of painting; see pl. iii, attached hereto; see also The Illustrated Weekly of India, May 18, 1958, p. 20 and Karl Khandalavala: “The Origin and Development of Rajasthani Painting,” Marg, vol. xi, no. 2, 1958, March, p. 19, figs. 1-5 and p. 33, figs. 1-2. Of the various editions of Malik Muḥammad Jaisi’s work, Padamavati, ed. Grierson and Sudhakar Trivedi, in the Bibliotheca Indica series, together with an English translation
number of common elements which may be brought out in bold relief, if a comparative study of these works is undertaken. In each of these stories, the hero wanders about in search of his beloved, encountering a series of difficulties, on the way, including fighting with demons and man-eaters, while the wedded wife whom he has left behind, pours out her heart generally in the form of a traditional vāramāsa, describing the varying nature of her separation throughout the course of

of the same by A. G. Shirreff, Bib. Ind., 1944, may be consulted. The Mainā Sat of Sadhan and the Chanda'ın of Mawlanā Dāwūd are available in mutilated MSS. Agar Chand Nahta has published an edition of the Mainā Sat from Vidyāpītha. Maulana Dāwūd composed Chanda'ın dealing with the story of love between Lurak and Chanda, in the reign of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq, in honour of his wazir, Jūnā Shāh; Badayūnī, *op. cit.*, 1, Bib. Ind. text. p. 250. Quotations from the MSS. of this work, discovered at Maner and Bhupal, refer to this incident together with the date of its composition i.e. 779 A.H./1377-78 A.D. For quotations and extracts from the poem, see S. H. Askari: "Rare Fragments of Chandain and Mrigavati", *Current Studies*, 1955, pp. 6-23; "Chanda'ın az Mullā Dāwūd aur Mainā Sat az Miān Sadhan qadīm Hindi parīm kathā'ın" by the same writer in *Mu'āṣir*, vol. 16, p. 45ff; M.R. Tarafdar: "Vāgīlī Romānīṭī Kāvīyār Hindi-Avadhī Prābhūtī", 2 pts. *Bengali Academy Patrikā*, 1366 B.S. i, p. 5 ff. and 1367 B.S. ii, p. 28ff. Rajasthāni and Apabhraṃśa illustrations of the story of Lurak-Chanda are now preserved in Lahore Museum, Chandigarh Museum and Bārat Kāla Bhavana of Benares; see Basil Gray: *Rajput Painting*, p. 3 and *The Art of India and Pakistan*, colour pl. A, and pl. 82, fig. 399 (b); Karl Khandalavala: "Leaves from Rajasthan" *Marg.*, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 13, fig. 13A; Chaghtai: "A few Hindu Miniature Painters of the 18th and 19th century," *Islamic Culture*, vol. 8, no. 3, pl. 3; Rai Krishnasas: "An Illustrated Avadhi MS. of Laur-Chanda in the Bharat Kala Bhavan," *Lalit Kala*, nos. 1-2, 1955-56, pp. 60-71, pls. 15 and 18, figs. 1-4; M. R. Tarafdar: "Illustrations of the Chandain in the Central Museum Lahore", *J.A.S.P.* 1963, ii, p. 109 ff. and figs. i-xi. Sadhan's Mainā Sat is a long vāramāsa narrating the sorrows of Mainā, forsaken by her husband Lurak who has gone
the twelve months of the year. When he returns to his former wife after having won the hands of his beloved, his eventual death is followed by the incident of the two queens practising satī. Without multiplying the instances of such common elements, we may suggest here that the strange coincidence of events which is noticed in the stories cited above, may be attributed to the fact that all of them have come from some common source, possibly the popular folk-tales which had been in oral circulation in the northern and north-western parts of India from time immemorial. The mention of Lurik dance made by the early fourteenth-century writer, Jayotirishvara Kavishekharaśchārya and the antiquarian nature of the folk-tale of Lurik-malla obtaining in south Bihār, speak of the popularity these romantic episodes enjoyed in early times.

The influence which had been exerted by the Mrgāvati of Quṭbān, on the course of the development of romanticism in Bengali literature, is quite far-reaching. The story of Mrgāvati has been followed by five Bengali poets whose dates range from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. But its indirect impact on the medieval Bengali literature is of significant importance. Malik Muḥammad Jaisi appears to have accepted

out in search of Chāndā, and also showing how contemptuously she is refusing the love of Chhtān, another prince. Comparing this with the vāramāsā portion in Daulat Qaḍī’s Bengali poem, Sati Mainā O Lora-Chandrāni, the present writer has shown that the two works tally in essential points. It seems fairly certain that Daulat Qaḍī’s vāramāsā is based on Sadhan’s Mainā Sat, while the narrative part of the Bengali poem looks like an adaptation from Dāwūd’s Chandā’īn; cf. the Bengali article of the present writer cited above in this footnote.


2. These poets are Dvija Pasupati, Dvija Rāma, Muḥammad Khater, Karim Ullāh and Ibadat Ullāh; Sukumar Sen: Islāmi Vaṁla Sāhitya, pp. 30-40 and 134.
the *Mrgāvatī* as a model for his celebrated *prem-gāthā*, *Padumāvatī* in which he makes a clear reference to the *Mrgāvatī-Rāj-kumār* episode.\(^1\) Besides possessing the common elements noticed above, the two works stand in clear relationship with each other. One can easily notice a predominance of Rājput elements in the work of Quṭban who regards Gaṇapat Deo and Rājā Devī Rāi Sindhiā as belonging to the Rājput tribes of Sūryavarmsha and Raghuvamsha respectively.\(^3\) The place-name, Chandragarh sounds like Chandrāvati,\(^6\) or more properly like Chanderi, the Rājput state in Gwalior.\(^4\) The Rājput ladies of noble birth used to remember at the time of entering into the funeral pyres of their dead husbands, the name of a certain Mrgāvatī of the Bhaṭṭi capital of Derawal, who is supposed to have become a legendary figure by practising *sati*. The Rājput episode resembles the story of Quṭban’s Mrgāvatī who is depicted as performing *sati*.\(^6\) The discovery of the manuscripts of the *Mrgāvatī* in the Kaithi script at Bikaner and Chaukhandha together with the mid-sixteenth century Rājasthānī paintings illustrating one of them, shows how popular the story had become in medieval Rājasthān. The acquaintance of the Rājput mind with similar romantic stories is evidenced by the fact that Kushallābha of Jaisalmer versified in Rājasthānī language, in 1540 A.D., the folk-lore of Dholā-Māravati.\(^7\) All these point to the Rājput background of the *Mrgāvatī* which seems to have been based on materials culled from folk-tales obtaining in Rajputana and the


2. Extracts from *Mrgāvatī*: *op. cit.* pp. 475 and 476. For the legendary history of these Rājput tribes, see Tod: *Annals and Antiquities of Rājasthān*, vol. i, pp. 55 and 247.

3. For the topography and history of Chandravati in Jhalawar, see Tod: *op. cit.* i, 109; iii, 1784-86 and *I.G.I.* vol. xiv, 123-24.

4. Tod: *op. cit.* i, 47-48, f.n. 7 and 180: *I.G.I.* x, 163-64.

5. Tod: *op. cit.* ii, 1030.


countries surrounding her, which Quṭban might have heard from the Ṣufis coming from these regions.

The Rājput colouring seems quite clear in in the Padumāvarī in which the hero Ratna Sen has been presented as the king of Chitor which was attacked by ‘Alā’-ud-dīn Khaljī. Jaisi gives an elaborate picture of Mānasarodaka lake with Padmāvatī and her attendants sporting and taking their bath in it, which seems to be a close copy of the scene of the lake in which Mrgāvatī and the beautiful ladies accompanying her, have their occasional bath. Ratna Sen has his first meeting with Padmāvatī, on a vasanta (spring) pañchami day, in the temple of Mahādeva, whereas Rājkumār is united with Mrgāvatī on an ekādashi day, in the seven-storied temple having beautiful windows and paintings depicting scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. As indicated in one of the opening stanzas of the Mrgāvatī, the story is illustrative of the union of the seeker with the Ultimate Reality. Jaisi brings out the symbolism of his story in the following words: “We make the body Chitaur, the mind the King: we recognise the heart as Singhala, the intellect as the lotus lady. The spiritual guide is the parrot who showed the way: without a spiritual guide who can find the Absolute in the world? Nagmati is the cares of this world: he whose thoughts are bound up therewith does not escape. Raghava the messenger is Satan, and the Sultan Alauddin is illusion. Consider the story in this manner: receive instruction if you are able to receive it.” Such is the probable influence exerted by Quṭban on Jaisi whose work was rendered into Bengali verses by the illustrious poet Ālāul who flourished in

4. Extracts from the Mrgāvatī: op. cit. pp. 466 and 468-472.
7. The Padmāvarī of Ālāul is available in bazar editions. The first
the court of Arakan in the seventeenth century. As already pointed out, the plot of the Mainā Sat of Sadhan which has resemblance to that of the Mṛgāvatī and the Padumāvatī, has made its way into Bengali literature through Daulat Qādī's Saṭī Mainā O Lora Chadrāṇī. Qutbān may thus be regarded as one of the sources from which romanticism has flowed to medieval Bengali literature.

It is very difficult to say if this Hindi-Avadhī background has got any necessary connection with the story of Vidyā-Sundara as told by Shridhara and Sābirid Khān. The incomplete texts of their works give the events up to Sundara's arrival at Kaṇchipur, the capital of Vidyā's father. The fragmentary verses at the end of Shridhara's work refer to the arrest of Sundara by the kotwāl and Vidyā's importunate lamentation following it and about the rest of the story, the reader is left in the dark. As these stories generally follow a stereotyped pattern and a systematic and logical line of development, it may be possible to reconstruct the missing portions of the story by consulting the relevant part of Bharat Chandra's work in which it has been stated that Sundara, while frequenting the bed chamber of Vidyā, through an underground tunnel, is caught hold of by the kotwāls and ordered by the king to the impaled. Vidyā gives vent to her feelings in pathetic words, as she observes from her balcony the kotwāls inflicting inhuman torture on Sundara who can save his life and win the hands of Vidyā after having fervently prayed to the goddess Chaḍālī. The matrimonial ceremony is followed by the return journey of Sundara accompanied by his consort Vidyā. The poet adds a few lyrical touches to this by giving a description of the six seasons.²

Peculiarly enough, all these have their distinct parallels

part of the work has been edited by M. Shahidullah from Dacca in 1950.

1. Sāhitya Patrikā, 1364 b.s. i, pp. 132-34.
in the Simhal episode of the Padumāvatī of Jaisi: Ratna Sen tries to enter into the Simhalgaḍ through an underground passage at the exit of which he is arrested by the watchman of the king who orders him to be impaled. The agony of Padmāvatī who watches from her balcony the kotwāls punishing Ratna Sen, is unbounded. As a result of the interference of Mahādeva and Pārvatī, the king not only saves the life of Ratna Sen, but also gives his daughter, Padmāvatī, in marriage to him. The couple leave for Chitor. Here also we come across a description of the six seasons.¹

The Sanskrit version of the story of Vidyā-Sundara as represented by the work of the fourteenth-century Jain poet, Rājashekhara-Sūri and the Bihlan-Yāminipuranatilaka episode,² is quite different from its Bengali counterpart obtaining in the works of Shrīdīra, Sābirīd and Bhārat Chandra. But the strange coincidence which the Bengali Vidyā-Sundara bears to the Simhal episode of the Padumāvatī, is suggestive of the fact that the story has come to Bengal after having absorbed a good deal of folklore elements from upper India and Bihār. But the contention cannot be pushed further unless more reliable evidence is available. The story seems to have been brought to Bengal by the followers of the Sharqī ruler, Husain Shāh.

The biography of Shrī-Chaitanya occupies an important place in the history of Bengali literature. It is strange that no prominent Bengali biography of this great religious leader was written during his life time. The famous works like the Chaitanya-bhāgavat and the Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta were composed towards the end of the sixteenth century when Chaitanya was no more. The only work ascribed to our period is the Kājāchā of Govindadās who is said to have been a close associate of the Lord. But the problem of the historicity of this work has been a subject of keen controversy among Bengali

1. Padumāvatī, cantos, xxiii-xxix and xxxii.
scholars some of whom have gone to the extent of regarding it as entirely spurious. Rakhal Das Banerji, who seems to have attached much importance to the Kaṭachā has tried to detail the life of Chaitanya on the basis of the information supplied by this work.¹ Dinesh Chandra Sen has laboured much to emphasize the historical value of the Kaṭachā.² But the Vaiṣṇavas do not take it to be contemporaneous at all with the life of Chaitanya. Thus the controversy centering round the book is endless. The language, ideas and expressions found in it, are undoubtedly modern and the work seems spurious.

II

Besides Bengali, the local language, Persian was also in use. Although a foreign language, Persian had become so prominent in pre-Mughal Bengal that it could easily attract the notice of the Chinese traveller, Mahuan³ who visited Bengal in the first part of the fifteenth century. It seems to have enjoyed the status of court language in the period under review. Down to the middle of the fourteenth century, Bengal formed very often a part of the Delhi kingdom where Persian was the official language. The Ilyās Shāhīs who established the independence of Bengal, must have retained Persian for all official purposes. We do not have any convincing proof to show that the Ḥusain Shāhī sultāns replaced it by Arabic. In epigraphic and literary sources, we have such official titles as ṣharābdār, jāmdār, ṣhiqdar, sar-i-lashkār, wazīr-lashkār, lashkār wazīr, sar-i-khail, kār-i-farmān, sar-i-gamuḥtah and dabīr-i-khāṣ,⁴ all of which are Persian terms. It is mentioned in the Chaitanya-

2. Govindadāser Kaṭachā, ed. Dinesh Chandra Sen; see Introduction given by the editor.
4. For these official titles, see the chapter on Administration.
-maṅgal of Jayānanda that Jagāi and Mādhāi were reciting verses from the Mathnawi and that some of the Brahmins were reading Persian literature. This information is valuable, indicating as it does that Jagāi and Mādhāi, two of the officers of Ḥusain Shāh, had to learn Persian. All these tend to support the view that Persian was adopted as official language by the Ḥusain Shāh rulers. The coins of this period bear inscriptions in Arabic language. But this does not lend any support to the conjecture that Arabic was the court language, for coins generally contain the names of the ruling sultāns, their dates, mint towns and kalima and there was little scope for the use of Persian inscriptions on them. We notice the presence of the Persian alphabet gāf, in those coins which have recorded the conquest of Jāfnagar. Of course, there is a predominance of Arabic inscriptions, for majority of the inscriptions are in Arabic, and a few only are in Persian. As the inscriptions were fixed to mosques and tombs, they had necessarily to contain Qur'ānic verses to justify the construction of these religious edifices. Although the scope for the use of Persian on inscriptive tablets was thus limited, we have several bilingual inscriptions. Portions of these inscriptions, which are meant for communicating any information to the public, have been written in Persian. That the Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain which records his victory over the rulers

2. Supra. pp. 46, 48 and 51.
4. See the Satgān inscription of Nuṣrat Shāh, J.A.S.B. 1870, pt. I, no. 4, p. 297; the first part of the inscription contains a Qur'ānic passage, lxii, 9, and a tradition, and the second part, written
of Kamrupa and Orissa, is written in Persian is quite significant.

Although Persian language exerted considerable influence on the life of Bengal, Persian literature does not seem to have flourished in the Husain Shahi period. In fact, no specimen of Persian literature that can be safely ascribed to the pre-Afghan Muslim period, has come down to us. Bengal was politically isolated from northern India and this political isolation led to her cultural isolation. Delhi was receiving fresh waves of immigrants from Persia and other countries that surround her. This is undoubtedly one of the factors leading to the development of a rich Persian literature in pre-Mughal northern India. This was not possible in Bengal, for she does not appear to have had any cultural relation with the Delhi kingdom, nor did she have a permanent bond of friendship with Persia. Barbosa has noticed the presence of the Persian merchants in the cities of Bengal, in the early part of the sixteenth century. These merchants who used to come here direct from Persia, via the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, could not have been as numerous as their Arab partners, nor did they settle here permanently so as to be able to contribute to the growth of Persian literature in Bengal. The state of things remained unchanged till Bengal was conquered and annexed to the Mughal empire.

III

Sanskrit literature was in its hey-day in the Sena period which produced a galaxy of poets and scholars. Then there was a standstill in all spheres of creative activities which may be attributed to the socio-political anomalies that characterized the life of Bengal for more than a century following the Muslim conquest. The whole Muslim rule covering a period of more

in Persian, points out quite clearly the duties of the governors and qadis entrusted with the task of preventing the mullas and zamindars from "defrauding legacies"; cf. Dani: Bibliography, p. 72 and S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, p. 225.
than five centuries, could produce neither a Jayadeva nor a Dhoyî. The reasons are not far to seek. Sanskrit literature depended, for its growth and nourishment, generally on the patronage of the Sena court and the Brahminical culture that the nobility fostered. With the disintegration of the Sena power, it had neither the court nor the nobility to depend upon, nor did the alien Muslim ruling class interest itself in Sanskrit language and Brahminical culture. The political stability which was brought about by the Ilyās Shāhī rulers, must have given a sense of social security to the different classes of people, not excluding the Brahminical section. Moreover, the short-lived Hindu dynasty, established by Rāja Gaṇesha, appears to have given an impetus to Brahminical culture. It was in this socio-cultural milieu that Shulapâni and Rāyamukuta Brhaspati, two of the famous digest-writers of medieval Bengal, flourished. The former was primarily a Smṛti-writer and the latter, a Smṛti-writer as well as a commentator on ancient Sanskrit epics and lexicography. There was little that could be called creative art, for Sanskrit drama and creative poetry remained unrepresented in the Ilyās Shāhī period. The creative faculty of the Hindu mind seems to have been paralyzed. Coming to the Ḥusain Shāhī period, we notice a sudden out-

1. Shulapâni's date cannot be accurately ascertained. Rai Bahadur Mano Mohan Chakravarti has suggested on some reasonable grounds that he “flourished in the beginning of the fifteenth century A.D., if not earlier”, “The History of Smṛti in Bengal and Mithila”; J.A.S.B. 1915, vol. ix, no. 9, p. 342. It is fairly certain that Brhaspati Mishra wrote some of his works in the reign of Jalal-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh (1415-1431), the converted son of Rāja Gaṇesha, both of whom he has mentioned in an introductory verse of the Smṛitiratnakūra, quoted by R. C. Hazra in I.H.Q. xvii, 4, p. 447. The other books written by him are commentaries on the Kumārasambhava, Raghavaṁśa of Kālidāsa, the Shishupālavadha of Māgha and on the famous Sanskrit dictionary, Amarakośa; see Hazra: “Rāyamukuta Brhaspati”, ibid. pp. 442-455; see also D. C. Bhattacharya: “Date and Works of Rāyamukuta”; ibid. pp. 456-71.
burst of literary activities to which the ancient Dharmashastra, the Maithili school of neo-logic and the growing Gauṭiya Vaiśṇavism, appear to have supplied inspiration.

III(a)

So far as Smṛti was concerned, Bengal built up a brilliant tradition in the past. She produced a good number of digest-writers of whom the names and works of Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa, Jīmūtavāhana, Halāyudha Bhaṭṭa, Shūlapāṇi and Bṛhaspati are quite famous.¹ The digest-writers of the period in question must have been greatly influenced by the writings of these scholars. The most illustrious digest-writer of this period is Raghunandana, whose work, Smṛtītattva, was meant to be encyclopaedic in its range of socio-religious regulations. It gives the sum-total of Smṛti-knowledge that the Hindu mind possessed in those days. Also known as Aśṭāviniśhhatītattvāṇi,² this work covers the entire field of Smṛti and deals with a wide variety of subjects connected with the Hindu socio-religious regulations relating to intercalary month, inheritance, partition, sacraments

1. For the dates and works of these nivandhakāras, see Rai Bahadur Mano Mohan Chakravarti: op. cit. pp. 313-342. For Bṛhaspati Rayamukta, see above. All of them were predecessors of Raghunandana; P. V. Kane: History of Dharmaśāstra, vol. 1, pp. 298-306, 318-27 and 393-96; see also S. Bandyopadhyay; op. cit. p. 8 ff.

2. The work is called Aśṭāviniśhhatītattvāṇi, or twenty-eight tattvas, because it is divided into 28 parts known as Malamāṣaratītva, Dīya, Saṁskāra, Shuddhi, Prāyashchitta, Vivaṅga, Tithi, Jñānasamāsa, Durgotsava, Vyāvahāra, Ekādashi, Jālāsayasarga, Chhandogabṛjotsarga, Yajur-bṛjotsarga, Ṛg-brjotsarga, Braja, Devapratīṣṭhā, Mathapratīṣṭhā, Divya, Jyotiṣa, Vāstuvāga, Dikṣā, Ṛṣhika, Krīya, Purusottama, Shrāddha, Yajuḥshrāddha and Shīdrakṛtiya. This list of the tattvas is taken from M.M. Chakravarti's article, J.A.S.B. 1915, p. 363. In arranging the tattvas, Chakravarti has followed the order in which they are mentioned in the Malamāsa of Raghunandana. So the arrangement does not
connected with the birth and marriage of the devout Hindu, purification, expiation, lunar days, Janmāṣṭamī and Durgotsava festivals, law, consecration of idols and temples, the daily duties of a house-holder, the duties and privileges of a Shūdra, pilgrimage, funeral ceremonies and similar other rites. The Śrīti-tattva abounds in quotations from the numerous, ancient and medieval digest-writers of Bengal and different provinces of India and from the Purāṇas, the Bhagavad Gītā, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. The influence of these works on the Śrīti-tattva can hardly be over-estimated. Raghunandana has introduced devotional elements in the Dharmashāstra possibly under the influence of the Gītā which he quotes several times in his writings. Following the same authority, he maintains that one can attain salvation by freeing oneself from attachment to worldly objects and surrendering one’s actions completely to God. While dealing with the questions of inheritance, division, legal procedure and proper times for the performance of religious duties, he frequently quotes the views of Jīmatavāhana, Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa, Sūlapāṇi and other Bengali Śrīti-writers and accepts almost all of them as authoritative. The comprehensive works of Raghunandana gradually superseded those of his contemporary nivandhakāras including Shrīnātha, Rāmobhadra

follow any chronological order. The titles of these tattvas are suggestive of the subjects they discuss. The Śrīti-tattva of Raghunandana has been edited by Jīvananda Vidyārāga, in 2 vols, Calcutta, 1895. There is another edition by Syāmakanta Vidhyābhūṣana, Calcutta, 1941. Parts of the Śrīti-tattva have also been rendered into Bengali.

1. These topics are scattered over the 28 tattvas the titles of which are suggestive of the subject-matter they contain.
3. Ibid. p. 165.
4. Ibid.
and Govindānanda. In fact, Raghunandana who is the life of the Navadvīpa school of Smṛti, seems to have given a final shape to the Dharmashāstra, for his injunctions are found even to-day to govern the socio-religious behaviour of the orthodox Hindus of Bengal. Although he has a galaxy of brilliant predecessors in the field of Smṛti, he remains without a worthy successor in Bengal. The Brahminical mind was now being diverted to writing the biographies of Chaitanya and discussing Vaiṣṇava philosophy. Moreover, the birth of Bengali language seems to have obscured all classical learning which was cultivated through the medium of Sanskrit.

We have seen above that Raghunandana who has tried to codify Hindu socio-religious laws, has largely drawn upon the ancient Smṛtis and the works of a good number of Bengali digest-writers. He not only gives citations from the works like Manusmṛti, Jājñavalkyasmṛti, Nāradasmṛti, Parāsharasmṛti, Agastyasāhasrī and the Purāṇas, but also accepts the views

1. Shrīnātha, the teacher of Raghunandana, wrote several works and commentaries including Daśabhūgasīppanī, Kṛtyatattvāvṛti, Āchāracandrīka, Shrādhadīpīka and Shuddhiviveka, citations from some of which are to be found in the Shuddhi, Āhūnika and other works of Raghunandana. Shrīnātha's son, Rāmabhadra wrote Daśabhūgasīvṛti, and Smṛtitattvavinirṇayā; see M. M. Chakravarti: op. cit. J.A.S.B. 1915, pp. 343-50. Govindānanda wrote Varsakriyā-kumudi, Dāna, Shrāddha and Shuddhi. These have been edited by Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitirtha, in Bibliotheca Indica series, 1902-5. For information about Govindānanda, see M. M. Chakravarti: op. cit. J.A.S.B. 1915, p. 355.; P. V. Kane: op. cit. pp. 414-15.

2. He quotes the Manusmṛti in the Prāyashchittatattvā, Shrāddha, Āhūnika, Shuddhi, Jyotiṣa, Malamāsā, see J.A.S.B. 1953, pp. 169-70. These citations deal with food, professions to be adopted by the Hindus, the religious merit of gifts and similar other topics. For the quotations from the Yajñavalkyasmṛti in Shuddhi, Divya, Saṃskāra, Malamāsā, and Udāña, ibid. p. 171 ff. These citations deal with cremation, legal procedure, marriage, birth
of these authorities as entirely authoritative. This gives us the impression that Bengali socio-religious customs and laws had remained unchanged for thousands of years. But this is an absurd proposition. In fact, important changes were taking place in the Hindu society. As already noticed, lower class socio-religious ideas and practices were gradually finding their way into Brahminical society and non-Brahminical gods and goddesses like Manasā, Chandī and Dharma, were trying to find a suitable place in the Hindu pantheon. Further, there was the impact of Islam on the social life of Bengal. The writings of the famous digest-writer show that he has tried to frame socio-religious regulations quite traditionally, without recognizing the changes that had already taken place. This is undoubtedly an indifference to the realities of life. We have hardly any reason to think that Raghunandana was not conscious of the social and political movements that had far-reaching effects on the life of Bengal. One explanation seems plausible here. Finding that Islamic and local ideas were about to strike at the structure of Brahminism, the smārtā scholar seems to have tightened up the ancient Brahminical socio-legal system, with a view to retaining the religious integrity and social stability of the Brahminical section of the population. Thus he appears to have failed to realize the fact that the different conflicting forces that were at work in the society, needed a liberal synthesis and that the ancient conservative śāstra required accordingly a general overhauling. In fairness to Raghunandana, it must be said that a liberal course could hardly appeal to him in those days of crystallized conservatism which allowed no innovation in socio-religious behaviour, nor could he disobey the dictates of the ancient śāstra. Raghunandana's writings do not have the effect of narrowing the difference that existed between the Brahminical section and the lower class Hindus and the changes which the great digest-writer has introduced in respect of socio-religious regulations, are quite limited in scope.

rites etc. The works like Ekādāshi, Malamāsa, Tīthī, Āhniṃkā, etc., are replete with citations from the Agastyasamhitā and the Pārāsārāsmrī.
It was in Nyāya, a highly speculative branch of knowledge, that the Bengali scholars excelled and surpassed the logicians of other parts of India. The Nyāya Nyāya school of Navadvīpa is inseparably connected with the name of Raghunātha Tārkika Shiromāṇi who may be regarded as its real founder. Flourishing in the first half of the sixteenth century, he wrote a considerable number of works of which the Tattvachintāmaṇi-didhīti and the Padārtha-khandanam, are quite famous. While the former work is a critical commentary on Gaṅgasa’s work, Tattvachintāmaṇi, and a running criticism on the different topics of Nyāya including negative particles, the latter is an extremely controversial criticism of the categories found in the Vaiśeṣika system. Other works of Raghunātha are mostly commentaries and subcommentaries on the writings of his Maithili predecessors. It seems highly probable that the works of Raghunātha had become quite famous in his own life-time, for they are known to have been cited and commented upon by some of his contemporaries including Jānakīnātha Bhaṭṭāchāryya Chūḍāmaṇi, Kaṇḍāda Tarkavāgīśha, and Haridāsa Nyāyaśāṅkāra.¹ The school of Nyāya Nyāya established by Raghunātha in the beginning of the sixteenth century, continued to influence the intellectual life of India down to the eighteenth century. Of the numerous commentators on the writings of Raghunātha, Bhavānanda Siddhāntavāgīśha, Mathurānātha Tarkavāgīśha, Jagadīśa Tarkaśāṅkāra and Gadādhara Bhaṭṭāchārya Chakravarti² living in the


sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were the celebrated logicians who made valuable contributions to the history of the school of neo-logic.

It is fairly certain that the Mithilā school of *Nyāya Nyāya* founded by Gaṅgesha in the tenth century and enriched by some of his prominent successors including Vardhamāna and Jayadeva, greatly stimulated *Nyāya* studies in medieval Bengal. Almost all prominent scholars belonging to the Bengal school of neo-logic, are known to have written commentaries on the works of some of the Maithili scholars¹ mentioned above. That they vigorously criticize the views of the Maithili logicians, indicates that there was a state of rivalry between the two schools. The school of Navadvipa seems to have ultimately overshadowed that of Mithilā which lost its prominence towards the end of the sixteenth century.

When peace returned to Bengal during the Ilyās Shāhī and Husain Shāhī periods, Bengali students, desirous of studying logic, necessarily had to flock to Mithilā, for she was then the only prominent centre of *Nyāya* studies. Immune from Muslim attack for a long time, Mithilā could maintain her seats of learning which received patronage from the rulers of the dynasty of Kāmeshvara (1350–1515). Again the *Nyāya Nyāya* school was established here long before the fourteenth century. Bengal had thus to depend on Mithilā for inspiration. The process of amalgamation of old *Nyāya* with *Vaishešika* system known as *Nyāya Nyāya*, started at Mithilā and found its culmination in Bengal. Hence the impact of Mithilā on the literature and logic of Bengal.

Brindāvanadās informs us that the six systems of Indian philosophy were studied regularly at Navadvipa in the period

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¹ For the names of the works of Gaṅgesha, Udayanāchārya, Vardhamāna and other Maithili scholars, which were commented upon and criticized by Raghunātha and his successors, see the works and articles cited above.
under review. Though the systems of Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Pātañjali, might not have been neglected altogether, no prominent work seems to have been written on any one of them. Madhurādāna Sarasvatī flourishing possibly in the sixteenth century, wrote on Advaitavāda. Of his works, the Advaita-siddhi which tries to establish the soundness of Advaita doctrines, is quite famous. In his other works, he deals with Vedānta philosophy, comments on the Bhagavat Gītā and the works of Śaṅkarāchārya and regards bhakti as a means of attaining salvation.

III (c)

The emotional Vaiṣṇavism of Śrī-Chaitanya and the Rādha-Kṛṣṇa cult with its lyricism fertilized Sanskrit literature to a great extent. Although no biography of Chaitanya was written in Bengali in the period under discussion, a beginning was made in Sanskrit language and the biographers are said to have been the direct associates of Chaitanya. These works could hardly be free from subjective elements; yet they give us valuable information about the life and philosophy of Śrī-Chaitanya. Historical accuracy and authenticity which are very often paralyzed by the poetical fancy and devotional psychology of the writers, are not the main features of these writings. Nevertheless, they give us clear ideas about the growing Vaiṣṇavism as a devotional cult and its impact on the life of the people.

The Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, written by Murāri Gupta, is probably the earliest Sanskrit biography of Chaitanya. Written in the kāvya style, it consists of four prakramas or sections and seventy-eight cantos and covers almost all the facts of Chaitanya’s life from birth to death. The concluding verse

2. Chintaharan Chakravarti: “Bengal’s contribution to philosophical literature”, Indian Antiquary, 1929, pp. 204-05.
gives 1435 Shaka/1513-14 A.D., as the date of its composition, although it narrates events connected with the last part of Chaitanya's life including the Gambhīra-līlā and incidents concerned with Chaitanya's death which took place in 1533 A.D. It has, therefore, been reasonably inferred that the work was composed immediately after the death of Chaitanya. But the date 1435 Shaka/1513-14 A.D., given at the end of the printed text, cannot be satisfactorily explained.¹ The importance of the work lies in the fact that it was consulted and partly utilized by subsequent biographers including Kaviṅkaraṇpūra, Lochanadās and Kṛṣṇadās Kaviṅraj.² Thus it is fairly certain that the poem was regarded as a valuable source of information by the biographers of Chaitanya who came after Murāri Gupta. Abounding in a variety of metres, the work does not appear to have had enough of artistic value.

Dāmodara Svarūpa is said to have written a Kañchā or

1. The presumption that “the concluding verse, which gives its date of composition, originally occurred, as it should, at the end of the second section but was somehow retained even when the supplementary section or sections were added”, (S. K. De: Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement, p. 29), needs re-examination. Should we then suppose that the first two prakramas were written in 1513-14 and the third and fourth ones, after the death of Chaitanya?

2. Lochanadās mentions Murāri's name and the source of his knowledge of Chaitanya's life several times in the different khaṇḍas of the Chaitanya-maṅgal. In fact, he translates some time the account given by Murāri Gupta. He seems to have borrowed the Vibhīṣaṇa episode from Murāri's work. That Kṛṣṇadās Kaviṅraj consulted Murāri's poem is known from clear reference to Murāri Gupta and Dāmodara Svarūpa in the Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, sūrd: ch. xix, p 51. See Biman Bihari Majumdar who has stipulated the influence of the work of Murāri Gupta also on the Bhaktiratnakara, the eighteenth-century biography of Chaitanya, op. cit. pp. 71-72.
biographical work which seems irretrievably lost. Had it survived, we would have probably gleaned from it some ideas about the doctrine of Pañcha-tattva which is said to have been introduced by Dāmodara. Moreover, the value of such a biography is quite evident from the fact of Dāmodara’s being a direct associate of Shri-Chaitanya.

Of other biographical works on Chaitanya which were composed in the years immediately following our period, the Chaitanya--charitāmṛta and the Chaitanya-chandrodaya of Paramānanda Sena, also known as Kavikarṇapūra, are of considerable importance. The former work, a mahākāvya in twenty cantos (sargas), written in 1464 Shaka/1542-43 A.D. deals with the incidents of the forty-seven years of Chaitanya’s life. While writing about the early life of Chaitanya, the author closely follows his predecessor, Murāri Gupta. But cantos from xxi to xx appear to be independent of Murāri’s work. Thus it seems that after canto xi, Kavikarṇapūra depended upon other sources and possibly upon whatever information he could gather from his contemporaries. Although this work shows the poet’s rhetorical capacity, his control over a large number of metres and his power to give beautiful poetical descriptions of scenes and events, it has little poetic merit. Kavikarṇapūra’s Chaitanya-chandrodaya is a ten-act-drama dealing with the life of Chaitanya. It seems to be an abridged, dramatized version of the Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta, the poetical work of the author, with the remarkable difference that the drama depicts elaborately

1. As indicated above, Kṛṣṇadās Kaviraj had the opportunity to consult and draw upon this work.
2. Supra. p. 175.
3. The concluding verse of the Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta, sl. 49, reads : Veda rasāḥ shrutaya indurit-prasiddhe etc. Veda=4, rasa=6, shruti=4, and indu=1. Thus we have 4641=1464 Shaka.
4. For a discussion on the controversy connected with the date of its composition, see Biman Bihari Majumdar, op. cit. pp. 89-94 and S. K. De : op. cit. p. 34, f.n. 1.
the later part of Chaitanya's life which is briefly treated in his poetical work and that the mythical and allegorical elements found in the drama, are significantly absent in the poem.

Besides these biographical works, there were poems and dramas, dealing with the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult. The Dāna-keli-kaumudi, the Lalita-mādhava and the Vidagdha-mādhava are the dramas, composed by Rūpa Gosvāmi, which have the erotic Brndāvana-līlā of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as their commonplace theme. The Haṁsa-dīta and the Uḍḍhavasandesha of Rūpa and the Brhamara-dīta of Rudra Nyāya Vāchaspati, which have the motif of sending love-message, follow the pattern of the Megha-dīta of Kālidāsa, although they are in no way capable of standing comparison with that famous poem. It seems that Bengal had a tradition of imitating the Megha-dīta; for Dhoyi, living in the court of Lakṣmana Sena, modelled his Pavana-dīta on the pattern of the dīta-kāvyas of Kālidāsa.1 The dīta-kāvyas of the period in question have the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend as their theme. The Padyāvalī2 of Rūpa is an anthology containing poems of a number of medieval and ancient poets, the verses being devoted to the Kṛṣṇa-līlā episode. The Sadukti-karṇāmṛta3 of Shrīdharadās, another anthology dated in Sārvat 1127/1205 A.D. seems to have suggested to Rūpa the plan of this compilation, who has, in fact, reproduced a good number of verses from that anthology in the Padyāvalī. The theological works of Brndāvana Gosvāmis, the different champūs which utilize both prose and verses, the kāvyas like the Kṛṣṇāhnikā-kaumudi of KaviKarṇapūra, the Govinda-līlāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, the Sankalpa-kalpadruma and the Mādhava-mahotsava of Jiva, though composed in the third and fourth quarters of the sixteenth century, show the gradual evolution of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult

1. History of Bengal, i, pp. 363-64.
2. Edited by S. K. De; published by the University of Dacca, 1934.
3. Edited by Rāmacatāra Sharma : Published in the Punjab Sanskrit Series, Lahore, 1933.
which process must have started in the days of Jayadeva (who deals with the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa love in his Gīta-govinda) or even earlier.

The works of Murāri Gupta and Kavikarṇapūra clearly show how the Chaitanya cult was crystallizing in the first half of the sixteenth century. We are told that Viṣṇu-priyā made an image of Chaitanya with a view to worshipping it,¹ that he was regarded as an avatāra or incarnation of Kṛṣṇa even before his death and that his divinity was explicitly recognized by his associates.² In fact, Murāri Gupta and Kavikarṇapūra frequently depict Chaitanya as the two-armed, four-armed and six-armed Kṛṣṇa.³ Their works bring home to us the idea that bhakti or devotion is the cardinal point of the Chaitanya cult and that the Lord and his followers were extremely hostile to Advaitavād.⁴ The biographies written by Murāri Gupta, Kavikarṇapūra and Brṇḍāvanadās show that the Vaiṣṇavism of Shri-Chaitanya was a simple, devotional faith, possessing hardly any doctrinal complication. The pattern of the Vaiṣṇava theology and rasashāstra, noticed in the scholarly works of Brṇḍāvana Gosvāmīs, seems to have been woven by them at least a few decades after the death of Chaitanya who seems to have aimed at the realization of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult through bhakti saturated with intense emotionalism. The worship of Chaitanya as inculcated in the earlier biographical writings, such as, those of Murāri Gupta, Kavikarṇapūra and Brṇḍāvanadās, does not appear to have been the essential feature of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy expounded by the Brṇḍāvana school which puts much emphasis on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult by glorifying the Brṇḍāvana-līlā and putting esoteric

interpretation to it. Some of the Bṛndāvana Gosvāmīs acknowledge the divinity of Chaitanya in their namaskṛtyās, although this is not regarded as a theological question.

Thus the list of the Sanskrit works produced in the period under review is quite impressive, although their standard does not deserve any special credit. As most of the poets were great scholars, their writings bear the stamp of their scholarship and laborious artificiality. Whatever elegance and beauty are found in the kāvyas and dramas is undoubtedly the result of the technical skill possessed by the poets concerned. What they produced, is neither original nor novel. This is due, in a large measure, to the fact that they selected the life of Chaitanya and the Kṛṣṇa-līlā as their themes which provided hardly any scope for originality or novelty. The voluminous Śrīti writings and the commentaries and sub-commentaries on the Nyāya texts do not have literary interests at all, nor did those who produced them have any literary end in view. The works on Śrīti seem to have been meant for providing the Hindu society of the time with social and religious laws. Nava Nyāya, which is a highly speculative and abstruse branch of philosophy, does not appear to have had a general appeal. It was probably the result of continuous intellectual exercise undertaken for purely academic reasons. The list of the logicians and digest-writers of this period shows that the cultivation of Naya Nyāya and Śrīti was monopolized by the Brahmins. In the field of

1. Jiva, conscious of the erotic aspect of the Bṛndāvana-līlā, comes forward with a theological apology in his Gopāla-champū, composed towards the end of the sixteenth century. He maintains that the apparently erotic Bṛndāvana-līlā has got an esoteric significance which cannot be realized by ordinary lovers; ibid. 481-82.
2. Ibid. 323-30.
3. Most of the works, cited above, are edited and printed. Our account of Chaitanyaite Sanskrit literature is primarily based on B. B. Majumdar's Shri-Chaitanyakarita Upādāna, chs. iv, v and vi and S. K. De: The Early History, chs. ii and vii.
creative literature, we come across a few non-Brahmins, such as Murāri Gupta, Kavikārnāpūrṇa and Raghunāthadāsa who seem to have received recognition in the world of theologians and litterateurs due to the overwhelming influence of liberal Chaitanyaism on the life of the upper class Hindus.

These non-Bramins appear to have worked as junior partners of the Brahmans in the field of literature where the latter exercised almost a dominating influence. Thus the bulk of the literature of this period comes from the Brahmans. The works on Śmṛti and Nātya Nyāya embody a culture that is essentially Brahminical. These together with the poems and dramas bring home to us aspects of a larger society; but their appeal must have been quite limited. Essentially Brahminical in character, the Sanskrit literature of the time does not seem to have attracted the minds of the ordinary people to whom it was not accessible either. Further, the literature of the time, being the product of the cultivated mind overloaded with the knowledge of poetics, theology, rasashāstra and music, could hardly be understood by the common people. The artificial elegance, the artistic embellishment and a considerable amount of technical skill, which characterize the Sanskrit poetry of the time, are suggestive of the fact that there was the impact of urban civilization on it. If we except the two kāvyas and one drama on the life of Chaitanya, the whole body of Sanskrit literature is replete with erotic sentiments and amorous pictures.¹ The

1. Murāri Gupta and Kavikārnāpūrṇa were Vaidyās by caste, whereas Raghunāthadāsa, a Kāyastha, enjoyed a landed estate in Hooghly. Raghunāthadāsa subsequently became one of the six Gosvāmīs of Bṛndāvana and made remarkable contributions to Vaishnava theology and literature. For information about Murāri, see Chaitanya-bhāgavat, adi, ix, p. 58. For Kavikārnāpūrṇa, see S. K. De: The Early History, p. 32. For Raghunāthadāsa's estates and literary contributions, see Chaitanya-charitāmṛta, anśya. vi, 293-94, and S. K. De: The Early History etc., pp. 89-93.

2. Most of the Sanskrit dramas and poems of this period are made to follow the principles of rasashāstra. The Vītagedha-mādhava
poets dealing with Brndvana-lila, go to the extent of giving detailed description of the sexual union of Radha and Krsna, their erotic gestures, their amorous dalliance and their passionate relationship. It seems that the poets, while dealing with Brndvana-lila, have unconsciously reproduced the picture of the amorous life of the court or the upper class society, which they had in their minds. This seems quite natural in view of the fact that some of the writers of the time such as Rupa, Sanstana and Jiva were closely associated with the court at least in the beginning of their lives. Of course, the works of Jayadeva and Chaqvdasa who also deal with the erotic theme of Radha-Krsna-lila, seem to have influenced their writings to a considerable extent. The works of these two poets, again, seem to reflect the condition of the upper class circle of Sena and post-Sena Bengal. Vaisnava Sanskrit poetry with its urban culture, rigid technique and theological scholarship and the writings on Nyaya and Smrti, with their dry intellectuality, could hardly appeal to the minds of ordinary

of Rupa may be cited as an illustration. The different moods of Radha, as depicted in it, strictly conform to the grammar of rasa. Most of the writers want to display their knowledge and skill in rhetoric. The Govinda-lilamrta of Kesava Kaviraj, (extracts in S. K. De: op. cit. p. 463), does not fail to mention elaborately the technical side of music.

1. Radha is pictured as abhisarika, vasakasajja, ukantihit, vipralabh and khamdita woman in the Vidagdha-madhava. The purvaraga of her rival Chandravali is also described. There is again a vivid description of the union of Krsna with Radha. S.K. De; op. cit. p. 444. For the erotic sports of Krsna at Brndavana, as depicted in the Lalita-madhava, see ibid., p. 445. For Krsna's dalliances with the gopis, his union with Radha and his other erotic activities, see Kavikarapura: Kesava-khumadi, cited by S.K. De: op. cit. p. 455 ff. Similar topics including the sexual enjoyment of Radha and Krsna abound in Kesavas Kaviraj's Govindalilamrta, see S. K. De, p. 460 ff. It is needless to refer to more authorities. The poetical works of Jiva and the champiis are full of similar topics.

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people. The cultivation of Sanskrit literature was thus confined to the highly educated, upper class people and did never become the vehicle of culture of the general mass of population who now picked up the vernacular language with a view to giving expression to their ideas and sentiments. Bengali literature, thus dependent on rural culture for inspiration, was characterized by a vigour and freshness which could hardly be noticed in the highly stylized, urban, Sanskrit literature that was a spent force.

Whatever might have been the nature and scope of the Sanskrit literature of the period in question, the revival of classical literature and culture noticed above, is undoubtedly a significant event in the history of medieval Bengal. Chaitanya movement was directly responsible for the production of Vaiṣṇava works including the biographical writings and the kāvyas, dramas and champūs dealing with the Kṛṣṇa cult. The growth and development of the schools of Nava Nāya and Smṛti seem to have been the result of the working of certain socio-political forces. Conscious of the permanent nature of the Muslim rule, the Brahmans who had lost political power, seem to have tried to assert their intellectual supremacy by reviving the speculative and discursive branches of knowledge through the medium of the obsolete, classical language, Sanskrit. The cultivation of the subjects like Smṛti and Nyāya is thus suggestive of the defeatist mentality of the Brahmans. As the period under discussion was characterized by the consolidation and stabilization of the administrative system, the rulers must have tried to give a code of laws to the people. The Brahmans appear to have apprehended that the basic integrity of their society would be affected as a result of the probable enforcement of the body of laws which might be essentially Islamic. To stop the process of filtration of Chaitanyism and Shākta-tāntrik lower class ideas to the upper Brahminal circle was probably another motive that actuated them to undertake the task of writing Smṛti. A similar process was perhaps at work also in the Sena period which witnessed the composition of a number
of Dharmashāstras intended to enforce the rules of ceremonial purity so that the disruptive forces of Buddhism might not consublimate the Hindu society. Most of the Smṛti writings of the period including the Dānasāgara ascribed to Vālāla Sena, betray avowed hostility to the Buddhists.¹ In the period in question, the Brahmans seem to have reacted to the situation by codifying their own religio-legal system with a view to applying it to the society. This attempt is probably exemplified by the works of Raghunandana. Again the cultivation of Smṛti needed a basic knowledge of Nyāya, for regulated, clear thinking must have been a necessary pre-requisite of the former. This explains why some of the digest-writers were also well-versed in Nyāya.² Raghunandana’s approach to the Dharma-hāstra, is characterized by the Pūrva-mīmāṃsā method of reasoning. Thus Smṛti and Nyāya appear to have been twin sciences. But the Brahmical revivalism did not afford any scope for social progress and expansion.

The Muslim ruling class could hardly be sympathetic to the protective Brahmical culture. It is quite doubtful if the Sanskrit poets and scholars of the period had received even any indirect patronage or encouragement from the Ḥusain Shāhī sultāns who do not seem to have lost sight of the significance of the Brahmical revival. The Sanskrit poets did not have any reason to mention the names of the ruling sultāns, frequently referred to by the vernacular poets. The decadent Brahmimism had ultimately to make room for the growing local culture which was already permeating the different aspects of the life of Bengal. The socio-cultural vacuum which was being created by Brahmimism for years together, was thus filled up by Bengali language and the fresh and vigorous local culture it encouraged and embodied.

1. R.C. Mitra: The Decline of Buddhism in India, pp. 78-79.
2. D.C. Bhattacharya: op. cit. p. 49. Shūlapāṇi, the famous digest-writer, wrote on the Mīmāṃsā system of philosophy; ibid, p. 63.
CHAPTER VIII

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

MAHUAN, the fifteenth century Chinese traveller, found in the cities of Bengal, a good number of professional artists. It is really unfortunate that we have hardly any specimen of the arts and crafts produced by these people. During the period in question, Bengal's contributions to arts other than literature and architecture, were quite insignificant. Still it is worth while to form an idea about some of the branches of arts flourishing in this period. Architecture and calligraphy were largely the product of the court patronage. Similar was the case probably with music, particularly its classical branch which seems to have flourished in the court. We do not know if the rulers of the Husain Shahi period had any direct connection with the local painters living in those days. Nevertheless, the different types of arts seem to have corresponded to the chequered experiences of social life by absorbing various local elements.

The inscriptions in Arabic or Persian language, which have been discovered so far, clearly show that the art of calligraphy had a continuous growth and development in
Muslim Bengal. It seems to have received proper encouragement from the sultāns of the period under review. The numerous inscriptions which were fixed to the mosques and buildings, constructed at the express order of the sultāns and their governors, clearly exhibit the different styles of writing flourishing in those days. The silver and gold coins, which have come to our hands so far, throw much light on the history of calligraphy. Here, as in Mughal India, the rulers used to confer on the scribes working at their court, various honorific titles like zarrīn-dast\(^1\) or 'golden-handed'. This Persian term reminds us of similar terms such as zarrīn-qalam, ḥārīn-qalam and anbarīm qalam that obtain in the history of Mughal painting and calligraphy.\(^2\) A careful study of the Muslim coins and inscriptions of the pre-Ḥusain Shāh period, reveals that the different major and minor styles of writing such as Kufic, Nasḵā, Thulṯī and Tughra\(^3\) were practised here by the calligraphists. The art of writing seems to have attained a considerable degree of perfection in the Ḥusain Shāh period.

1. The title zarrīn-dast was conferred on Ghiyāṭ who is regarded by Blochmann, as the kātib of Sikandar Shāh; see the inscription of Sikandar Shāh, dated 765 A.H./1363 A.D.; *J.A.S.B.* 1872, no. i, p. 105; Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 12.


3. Most of the coins of this period show the Nasḵā style. Only a few coins of Jalal-ud-din Muḥammad Shāh, Nāṣir-ud-din Maḥmūd Shāh and Rukn-ud-din Barbak Shāh contain Tughrā inscriptions. For the Tughrā character of inscriptions on coins, see Lane-Poole: *op. cit.* pl. iv, nos. 81, 83 (Tughrā form only on the reverse), 85 (only the reverse) and 87; H.N. Wright: *Catalogue*, ii, pt. ii Bengal, pl. iii, nos. 106, 110 (see the obverse only), 111 (obverse only) and 125 (obverse only). The upper panel of the Adina mosque inscription shows the Kufic style of writing and the lower one, the Tughrā style; see *Indo-Iranica*, vol. iv, nos. 2-4, fig. 1; see also *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pt. i, pp. 256-57. The Rajshahi inscription of Jalal-ud-din Faṭḥ Shāh dated 887 A.H. exhibits
Some of the styles mentioned above were prevailing in the Ḥusain Shāhī period. A modified form of Nachḥ style is noticed in the Triveni inscription of Ḥusain Shāh in which the shafts are peculiarly elongated. Thus it is evident that it shows the influence of Ṭughrā style. The Thulṭḥ which has been defined by Abu'l Faḍl as consisting of “one-third curved lines, and two-thirds straight lines” is found in the Kalna inscription of Firūz Shāh, dated 939 A. H. The curves are comparatively poor and neglected and shafts, systematically arranged and elongated. To the same category belongs the Ḥaḍrat Bābā Šāleh inscription executed in the reign of Ḥusain Shāh in which the style is of an intricate nature.

Nachḥ style; see V.R.S. Monographs, nos. 6, March, 1935, pl. ii; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, fig. 29. This inscription seems to indicate transition from Nachḥ to Thulṭḥ, for it has slight signs of the latter style. The Biral inscription of Saif-ud-din Firūz dated 880 A.H. shows Thulṭḥ style; ibid., fig. 31. The same style is shown by the Pāṇḍuṅ inscription of Naṣīr-ud-din Maḥmūd Shāh dated 863 A.H. in which the shafts are systematic and curves, disproportionate and neglected; J.A.S.B. 1873, pt. i, pl. v, fig. 4; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, fig. 20. Faṭḥ Shāh’s inscription found at Bandar in Dacca dated 886 A.H. (J.A.S.B. 1873, pl. vii, no. 1) shows the thin type (khaṭlī) of Thulṭḥ, while the Ḥaḍrat Pāṇḍuṅ inscription of Naṣīr-ud-din Maḥmūd Shāh II (ibid., pl. vii, no. 3; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, fig. 33) shows the bold type (fāṭlī) of Thulṭḥ with Ṭughrā characteristics. The Ḥaḍrat Pāṇḍuṅ inscription of Sikandar Shāh dated 770 A.H. is a specimen of Ṭughrā style; J.A.S.B. 1873, pl. v, no. 3; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, fig. 14. Five inscriptions of Barbak Shāh show Nachḥ and Ṭughrā styles; E.I. 1953-54 (Arabic and Persian supplement), pls. vii (a) and viii.

1. Indo-Iranica, vol. iv, nos. 2-4, fig. 7.
2. That is also the precise characteristics of the Nachḥ style of writing; A’in, vol. i, p. 106.
3. J.A.S.B. 1873, pl. vii, no. 2; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, fig. 49.
But the *Thulth* and the *Naskh*, if compared with the *Tughra*, appear to have been minor styles of this period. The *Tughra* is not an independent style, but is a sub-style of ornamental writing containing some sort of artificial arrangement of script in which the alphabets are so inter-woven that they assume a decorative shape difficult to read.¹ In the course of its gradual process of evolution, the *Tughra* style appears to have passed through three distinct stages. At the first stage, the vertical strokes are straightened and arranged in a systematic order in a line of spears and the *Tughra* inscription of this stage is almost similar to the *Thulth* inscription so far as the characteristics are concerned. In the second stage, one may notice in upper portions of the vertical strokes certain slanting signs looking like arrows. In the third and final stage, some letters such as *nīn*, *sīn*, *shīn*, *yāy* and others in which there are curvatures, are written across the body of the shafts in the shape of bows. The elongated shafts are tipped as arrows and the bows are formed by the concave letters mentioned above. The style popularly called Bow and Arrow, is thus an ornamental style of writing in which the concave letters are arranged across the bow-headed ones with the ‘bow and arrow motif’ characterizing the whole form of writing. It is undoubtedly the most prominent calligraphic style of the Ḥusain Shāhī period. A careful examination of the inscriptions of this period shows that the *Tughra* became more and more elegant, flowery and decorative so that it over-shadowed other styles of writing.

Two Santoshpur inscriptions of Nuṣrat Shāh,² dated 938 A.H./1530-31, clearly exhibit the Bow and Arrow type of *Tughra*. In both of the inscriptions, the elongated shafts of the vertical strokes have been given the shape of arrow-heads at the tips and the curvature of the concave letters such as *nīn* and *yāh* drawn horizontally, looks like the strings of a bow. The

Bow and Arrow type is illustrated by a very beautiful inscription of the same ruler dated 930 A.H./1524 A.D. which is now in the Dacca Museum. The curvatures of the letters are carefully drawn and the vertical shafts, nicely elongated. The artistic representation is further effected by a foliaceous decoration inter-woven into the writing so that it is very difficult to separate the letters from decoration. The Gauḍ inscription of Nuṣrat Shah dated 926 A.H./1519-20 seems to illustrate the final stage in the process of the development of the Bow and Arrow type of Tughrā. The arrow-headed shafts are systematically perfect and the curvatures intertwining about them, artistically drawn. Some of the inscriptions of Husain Shah representing this type, are characterized by a considerable degree of artistic elegance. This type of Tughrā seems to have lingered in Bengal down to the third quarter of the sixteenth century. The Rajshahi inscription of Ghayth-ud-din Bahadur Shah Sur, dated 966 A.H./1558-59 clearly exhibits the Bow and Arrow motif. Besides having the regular elongation of the arrow-headed strokes and horizontally drawn curvatures, the inscription possesses certain letters which give rise to interesting animal forms. The word fī occurring in the beginning of the inscription, gives us a perfect form of a hooded serpent. This characteristic is present in the Santoshpur inscriptions of Nuṣrat Shah, discussed above. The Murshidabad Babargram inscription of Husain Shah dated 905 A.H. represents the Organ Pipe type of Tughrā in which the elongated shafts are systematically arranged in rows.

One can notice the absence of the Kufic writing in this period. It was a primitive type of Arabic writing, generally

2. E.I.M. 1911-12, pl. xxxi.
4. V.R.S. Monographs, no. 6, March, 1935, pl. iii; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, fig. 50.
5. J.A.S.B. 1917, pl. iii; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, fig. 38.
used in copying the Qur’ān. In the beginning, it was quite simple; in course of time, it became so artificial and decorative in nature that the inscriptions having this style could not be deciphered by ordinary people. The reaction which started against it seems to have resulted in the complete disappearance of the Kufic style by the thirteenth century A.D. from the whole Muslim world.¹ This explains why the style is almost totally absent at the subsequent stage of Indo-Muslim history, although it is found in some of the inscriptions attached to the buildings and mosques belonging to the early period of the Turko-Afghan rule.² The Ḥusain Shāhī sultāns could hardly feel the necessity of reviving a style which was already obsolete in the contemporary Muslim world. The Nasta’liq style of writing was also absent in Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal due to an obvious reason hinted at by Abū’l Faḍl, according to whom, it was only from the time of Akbar that the style of Nasta’liq began to receive “a new impetus.”³

It should be mentioned here that Bengal did not enjoy absolute monopoly in the cultivation of the Bow and Arrow and Organ Pipe types of Tughrā, for they flourished in other parts of the fifteenth or sixteenth century India. Some of the coins of the Sharqī rulers of Jaunpur bear the Organ Pipe type of Tughrā.⁴ It is quite interesting to note that the inscription on the top slab of Mirzā Muḥammad Amin’s grave at Golconda,⁵ bearing the date 1004 A.H./1596 A.D., contains a beautiful specimen of the Bow and Arrow type of Tughrā. Although the

2. The Kufic inscriptions are found in the Qūwwat-ul-Islām mosque and the Āḏhāʾī din kā Jhonprā mosque at Ajmer and on the tombs of Sultan Ghari and Iltutmīsh; E.I.M. 1911-12, pls. xvi and xxvii.
4. Lane-Poole: op. cit., pl. ix, no. 263 (see the obverse only); H.N. Wright: Catalogue, ii, pt. ii, pl. viii, nos. I & 110 (reverse only).
5. Indo-Iranica, vol. iv, nos. 2-4, p. 18; see also fig. no. 11 in the plate facing p. 16.
process of the filtration of Bengali influences to these regions is not clearly known, it may be reasonably inferred here that the Jaunpūr and Deccani artists had received inspiration from Bengal. As Bengal and Jaunpūr were contiguous, one country could easily influence the cultural life of the other. The sudden appearance of the Bow and Arrow type of Ṭughrā in Golconda, towards the end of the sixteenth century, cannot be satisfactorily explained. We are told by the chroniclers that the Abyssinians who were expelled from Bengal by Ḥusain Shāh, migrated to the Deccan and Gujrāt. It is just possible that they had carried with them the calligraphic tradition of Bengal to the South. The thorough acquaintance of the Abyssinians with the calligraphic art of Bengal is proved beyond doubt, for the Ḥaḍrat Pāṇḍūr inscription of the last Ḥabshi ruler, Muṣaffar Shāh (898 A.H.), clearly shows that the Bow and Arrow type of Ṭughrā had already attained to a considerable degree of perfection. If we take into consideration the circumstances narrated above, the influence of the artistic tradition of Bengal on the calligraphic style of Golconda, seems highly probable. The Bow and Arrow type of Ṭughrā which attained a great degree of perfection in the period in question, had its crude beginning in Gujrāt as early as the first quarter of the fifteenth century. The process of this cultural contact has been discussed elsewhere.

The peculiar Ṭughrā style of our period did not last long, for the Mughal conquest introduced here the different styles practised by the Mughal artists and here, as in northern India,

2. The inscription is one of the finest specimens of the Bow and Arrow type of Ṭughrā: *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pl. vi, fig. no. 2; *Indo-Iranica, op. cit.* fig. vi; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, fig. 35; cf. also fig. 36.
3. M. A.- Chagtaī: *op. cit.* pls. 4-6, nos. viii, xa, xiii, xiv etc.
4. *Supra*, pp. 121-22 and section iii of the present chapter.
Nasta'liq overshadowed other styles as a result of which the highly stylized Tughra of the Husain Shahnis totally disappeared.1

Thus it is evident that the Tughra style of writing reached its highest stage of development under the Husain Shahn rulers of Bengal who had perfected it by adding grace and elegance to the Bow and Arrow type. The calligraphy of this period is characterized by delicacy and grace which we do not find in the art of the contemporary Delhi school which shows a considerable amount of strength and robustness. The intricate Bow and Arrow and the Organ Pipe, almost totally absent in the contemporary Delhi school, may be regarded as a significant and dominating element in the calligraphic art of medieval Bengal.

II

Due to the paucity of materials, it is difficult to form an accurate idea about the arts of music and painting that must have obtained in the country. There was hardly any distinction between poetry and music, for poems were generally composed for musical purposes. Contemporary Bengali poems mention a good number of rāgas or modes in which they were meant to be sung. A careful examination of these rāgas shows the nature of music obtaining in Bengal. Frequent mention of the rāgas like Kedāra, Dhānashri, Shri, Mallāra, Tuḍī, Velāveli and Bhairavi,2 is suggestive of the fact that these

1. Although the Bow and Arrow type of Tughra seems to have disappeared with the Mughal conquest, other forms of Tughra continued to be practised. Official seals and signatures were very often in Tughra character; see the document of Shah Shuja in Bhattacharji's Taifoor Collection, pl. 1-1. The top of the document shows signatures of Shah Jahan and Shuja in Tughra character.
2. Vipradas: op. cit. pp. 6, 46, 54, 57 etc; Vijaya Gupta: op. cit. p. 41; Chapādāsa: Shri-kṛṣṇa-kirtana, pp. 3, 6, 9, 12, 14, 18, 22, 30, 31, 62, 75 etc.; Shridhar: Vidyā Sundara, op. cit. pp. 120-23, 125, 129-30 and 132-33. They are mentioned in other Bengali poems including the Chaitanya-hāgavat of Brndavanadās and the Chaitanya-māṅgal of Lochanadās.
classical airs played an important role in the field of Bengal’s music which seems to have been connected with the tradition of the classical music of northern India, for the rāgas mentioned above, find a regular place in that system. How and when these classical elements made their way into Bengal’s music, is not clearly known. The musical traditions of Sind, the Mrañhā country and other regions of India, appear to have influenced Bengal’s music to a considerable extent. The modes like Sindhura and Mārhati probably indicate that these were originally the local airs of Sind and the Mrañhā country respectively, ultimately finding a suitable place in the Bengali system of music. Of other rāgas that find regular mention in Bengali poems, we may notice here Paṭhamanājari, Barādi Gujjari, Bihāgaṇā, Rāmakeli (Rāmagiri), Shyāma-gauḍā, Āhira, Vaṅgala, Deshākh and others. Although it is not possible to give here an exhaustive list of the different modes which were in circulation in Bengal, it may be quite reasonably inferred that most of them were classical. ‘Ala’-ud-dīn Ḥusain, the last ruler of the Sharqi dynasty of Jaunpūr, gave immense impetus to classical music by introducing new elements and composing several airs. His continued residence at Kahlgon in Bhāgalpur after his defeat by Sikandar Lūḍī in 1494 A.D., was of immense significance to the cultural history of Bengal. A good number of artists and musicians must have immigrated into Bengal immediately after the dissolution of the Sharqi dynasty. How much they contributed to Bengali art is difficult to ascertain. We have already suggested that Bengali literature owed

2. Vijaya Gupta: op. cit. p. 92; Shridhara: Vidyā-Sundara, op. cit. p. 120; Chaṇḍidāsa: op. cit. pp. 70, 71 and 114; on this point, see Nihar Ranjan Ray: op. cit. p. 769.
3. They abound in the works of Chaṇḍidāsa, Brāṇḍāvanadāsa and Lochanadāsa.
much to the romantic elements found in Qu'ban's Mrgāvati and that the Organ Pipe type of Tughrā writing practised by the Bengali calligraphers can be noticed on some of the Sharqi coins. It is thus fairly established that there was an exchange of ideas and forms between the artists of Bengal and those of Jaunpur. Bengal's music must have received inspiration from the musicians of Jaunpur. The celebrated poet Qu'ban, has given in his Mrgāvati, a long list of rāgas and rāginīs including Bhairo, Sandhurā (Sindhurā), Bangla (Vāngala), Todi (Tuḍi), Desākh (Deshākh), Patamanjari (Paṭamaṇjari), Barāri (Barāqi), Dhārusari (Dhārashri), Srīrā (Shhrīrā), Malar (Mallārā) and Gujri (Gujjarī). We have shown above that these modes of music were in vogue in contemporary Bengal. Some of the airs introduced by Ḥusain Shāh Sharqi might have been accepted by the Bengali musicians. The rāga Gauḍishyāmā, said to have been introduced by the Sharqi ruler, is mentioned by Lochanadas as one of the airs obtaining in sixteenth-century Bengal. The rāga Gaurī, included in Qu'ban's list and mentioned as rāga Gauḍā in the Charyācharya-vinishchaya, seems to have been connected with the country of Gaud. The period in question witnessed the beginning of the tradition of kirtana which seems to have crystallized towards the end of the sixteenth century. Classical modes were so predominant in Bengali music that a good number of works were composed on them in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Commonly known as Rāganāmā, these works deal

1. See the extracts from the Mrgāvati op. cit. pp. 486-87. Other rāgas mentioned by Qu'ban are: Madhi Malti, Bairālik, Gunki, Kausik, Gauri, Deokali, Khanbhāvati, Kun kumbh, Hindul, Bairāri, Nari, Sahjagī, Avadi, Deepakad, Kanod, Panch Barangana, Kera (?) Megh, Malsari (Mālashri or Mālsī in Bengali ?), Sārangi, Kandhāri, Hemkali, Bhuyun, Bhalāsī and Khatto (?); ibid.


4. Op. cit. p. 32, song no. 18; see also song nos. 2 and 3.

5. Abdul Karim Sahitya Vishārad has given an account of these
with the origin, growth and history of some of the classical airs. Dance as a corollary of music, both vocal and instrumental, had a highly stylized character. The last canto of the Govinda-lilamrta contains a specimen of the versified dancing tala.\(^1\)

While emphasizing the classical nature of the music of the time, we should not overlook the presence of certain local elements in it. Some of the local rāgas like Pahādiya and Bhūtiyāli\(^2\) seem to have been quite famous. It will not be unreasonable to infer that Vāṅgāla was originally a local mode of Vāṅga or modern East Bengal. How it made a niche for itself in the structure of the classical music of northern India is not clearly known. Songs about the Pāla kings\(^3\) and local gods and goddesses, which had an appeal to the mind of the larger society, must have assumed the nature of folk music. As a matter of fact, some of the Sanskrit poems of the time divide the rāgas into marga or classical and deshi or native ones.\(^4\) Local musicians and dancing girls who must have been innumerable, used to enliven the social gatherings and festive occasions of the wealthy people by their lively native songs and local dances.\(^5\) The Chinese account, Si Yang Cha'ō Kung tien lu, compiled in 1520 A.D., speaks of the local instrumental songs in the following lines: “There is a class of musicians called Ken-siao-su-hu-nai (players on kānsā or bell-metal and sānāi or flute ?). They go to the houses of the wealthy people and


1. Quoted by S. K. De: The Early History of Vaiṣṇava Faith etc., p. 463.
the high officials and always play their musical instruments every morning. One beats a small drum, another a big one, and the third blows a pi-li (flageolet). Their music begins in a low and slow tone but ends swiftly and in a high pitch. When they finish their musical performance the hosts reward them with wine, food and tangka’ (silver coins). The music of the Ḫusain Shāhī period was thus a combination of local and classical elements.

Hardly anything is known about painting in the period in question. We cannot say that this branch of art was totally unrepresented in this period, for we are told that Shri-Chaitanya, on his way from Rāmakeli to Brndāvana, found at the village of Kāṇānītāsālā, a good number of paintings which had Kṛṣṇa-līlā as their theme. Thus it is evident that the paintings of the time had a religious character. This contention finds corroboration in the illustrated manuscript of the Harivaṁśha dated in 1401 Shaka, now preserved in the Asiatic Society of Calcutta. On the cover of this manuscript, different purānic gods and goddesses and scenes from the Brndāvana-līlā of Kṛṣṇa have been depicted. These paintings reflect the emotionalism of the Kṛṣṇa cult which seems to have saturated the entire cultural life of Bengal. The paintings, published by Dinesh Chandra Sena, breathe the spirit of Neo-vaiṣṇavism. They may or may not belong to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to which period they have been ascribed; but they indicate that they could hardly be produced, had Bengal maintained no tradition of painting at an earlier period.

III

When the Ḫusain Shāhī dynasty came into being, Bengal had already developed a tradition of architecture. The ambitiously

1. Ibid. p. 533; Visva-Bhārati Annals, op. cit. p. 124.
4. Brhat Vaṅga, II, see the plates, showing Vaiṣṇava paintings.
planned Adina mosque, the architecturally significant Eklâkhî mausoleum, the imposing Dakhil Darwazah and the beautiful Tantipaâ mosque are some of the representative buildings of the previous period, which mark important stages in the gradual evolution of architecture in Bengal. Although the Hûsain Shâhi architecture is a continuation of its Ilyâs Shâhi or even Abbassian counterpart, it makes at least a partial departure from the art of the preceding period. This will be noticed by us subsequently.

The surviving monuments of this period do not show sufficient richness in variety and constructional peculiarities. Generally rectangular in plan, these buildings have a long and low facade with the usual curvature exhibited by the cornice above and a number of pointed arches below and have an octagonal tower at each of the corners. Neither the exterior having a series of rectangular panels nor the interior divided into several aisles and bays by stone pillars and brick piers supporting the arcades of pointed arches above, can make any deep impression upon the mind. The internal space is either rectangular or square and the carved mihrâbs are very often many on the internal side of the western wall. The walls are very often faced with stones or glazed tiles.

The ground plan of the Lattan mosque appears to have been derived from the Châmkatî mosque, though the former is of a slightly bigger dimension with its square room measuring 34 feet each side and the corridor on the eastern side being 11 feet wide. Measuring externally 72½ feet long by 51 feet wide, the building has a front with three arched doorways and recessed vertical panels, each possessing a niche made of a cusped arch rising from decorated pillars. Each of the six corner turrets, four at four corners of the square room and one each at either end of the verandah, has been divided into three sections having round flutes, by means of decorative mouldings. The projected mihrâb at the back of the western wall is flanked by fluted columns reminding us of similar features in the Firuzian architecture of Delhi. Besides the main dome covering the square hall, there
are three of smaller dimensions roofing the corridor and rising
above the nicely curved cornice and battlements. The central
dome of the corridor resembling some of the domes of the
Choṭa Sona mosque, is shaped on the model of the Bengali chaučhala, possessing as it does four curved parts connected by
bent ridges and having dripping eaves. The main hemispherical
dome, which covers the hall, has a cylindrical basement, including
blind merlons, which is internally a flat vault resting on an
octagonal form, the square being transformed into the octagon
by means of arches springing from black stone pillars.

Cunningham has described at considerable length the deco-
orative features of the mosque which have disappeared at present.
It seems that the rulers and architects who were directly con-
ected with the construction of this mosque were concerned more
with its external ornamentation achieved through glazed-tile-facing¹
than with its organic beauty as a whole. The result is the
littleness of composition which the structure shares with most of
the buildings of the period in question. It produces, no
doubt, the sumptuous effect which the builders seem to have
aimed at; but it lacks the universal appeal characterizing
some of the buildings of the earlier period. Creighton² and
Cunningham³ are in favour of dating it in 880 A.H. in the reign
of Yūsuf Shāh, although there is hardly any evidence in support

¹. Cunningham observes that the surface of the mosque was once
covered with glazed titles in different patterns of green, yellow,
blue and white colours, that the pleasing view of the arch over
the prayer niche "is completely spoiled by narrow horizontal
lines of different colours in the spandrels" and that "the lotus
flowers of blue and white in the middle of the spandrels are rich
and effective, the cornices are all good, and the battlements
round the dome, wherever they have been spared by the weather,
show a bold treatment that is wanting in the designs of the
ture, pp. 113-14.
of such a conclusion. Though the general plan of the mosque is a copy of that of the Chāmkājī mosque, in no other respect, does it represent the Ilyās Snāhī period. The architectural style of the building bears clear impressions of the Hūsain Shāhī period.

The Gumti gate1 is a square single-domed building with an octagonal tower engaged at each of the four corners. Measuring externally 42 feet and 8 inches square, it has a passage leading from the east to the west through an arched doorway 5 feet wide. The entrance is bordered within a rectangular frame whose upper part exhibits tiers of moulding surmounted with small recesses of an ornamental variety. On both sides of the doorways on the east and the west, there are brick columns with sections of flutings separated by bands of moulding. Of the broken corner towers, the base mouldings only exist. The conventionalized curvature of the Bengali chauchālā is imitated in battlements and in the rows of cornice where there is decoration in different patterns and with coloured enamel-bricks. The recesses and projections of the side walls with their panels and carved designs of the stereotyped "bell and chain motif" appear to have been intended to produce the effect of contrast which is wanting in most of the buildings of the period. The inner room, 25 feet square, is roofed over by a hemispherical dome whose weight is conveyed to the ground by stone pillars. The most striking feature of the building is the method employed in achieving the phase of transition from square to circle. It is for the first time that we come across the use of squinch, which, in the context of Bengal architecture, is of utmost historical significance. The location of the building near Shāh Shuja's gate and the method of dome construction employed in it may even create the impression that the Gumti gate was constructed in the Mughal period. But the other characteristic features place it, almost beyond doubt, in Hūsain Shāhī period. It seems

that some north Indian or Jaunpuri architect supervised the construction of this building—an assumption strengthened by the fact of Ḥusain Sharqī’s migration which might have brought in its wake a number of artisans and designers.

The Qadam Rasūl built, according to an inscription fixed on its doorway, by Nuṣrat Shāh in 937 A.H./1531 A.D.,¹ consists of a central hall, 19 feet square with a verandah on three sides, 15 feet wide. The external dimension is 60 feet by 39 feet 6 inches excluding the four corner towers. Apart from the three doorways of the hall, one in front and two at the two sides, the corridor has three arched openings resting on squat, massive and octagonal pillars of stone. Below the horizontal tiers of moulding which form the part of the rectangular frame enclosing the arched doorway, there are lotus bosses at the spandrels. The usual chauchāla curvature is shown by the triple cornice and battlements. A continuous band of moulding interrupted at the openings, divides the entire facade into two equal parts each with rows of panels showing the conventional ‘chain and bell motif’ or what Percy Brown calls “a monotonous diagram of panels, each repeating the same meaningless and stilted motif giving the whole a trite and stylized appearance.”²

Thus the highly decorated facade is different from other sides which are relieved by horizontal mouldings and vertical offsets. Each of the octagonal corner turrets is crowned with a small stone pinnacle which is not found in any other building of the period. The central room is roofed over by a dome with a lotus finial at the top and the corridor by barrel vaults flattened outside. Percy Brown finds in this building “the

1. For this inscription, see Cunningham: op. cit. p. 55; E. G. Glazier: op. cit. p. 108; J.A.S.B. 1872, pt. i, p. 338; Raven-
beginning of the decadence";¹ while Fergusson enthusiastically observes, "The general character of the style will be seen in the example from a mosque (?) called the Qadam-i-Rasūl at the south-east gate of the fort at Gaur, and is by no means devoid of architectural merit. The solidity of the supports go far to redeem the inherent weakness of brick architecture, and by giving the arches a firm base to start from, prevents the smallness of their parts from injuring the general effect. The facade is relieved by horizontal mouldings and panels of moulded brick, whilst string-courses of the same extend its whole length. It also presents, though in a very subdued form, the curvilinear form of the roof, which is so characteristic of the style."² The frequent appearance of stereotyped features and repetition of monotonous panels on the facade have affected the organic beauty of the building. The importance of the Qadam Rasūl can perhaps be realized from the influence of this type on the temple architecture of Bengal.

Most of the scholars call it a mosque³ probably because of the fact that it has a corridor on three sides. But it does not have any mihrāb and pulpit, nor does the inscription on its doorway call it a mosque. The centre of the room containing a small carved pedestal of black stone shows that it was meant to receive the stone representation of the Prophet's footprint which has been respectfully mentioned in the inscription referred to above. Buildings purposely constructed to house the stone representation of the Prophet's footprint are also found at other places such as Ahmedabad in Gujrat and Nabiganj in Dacca.

The Jahāntan mosque, built in 941 A.H/1535 A.D., is an oblong building, 56 feet by 42 feet, with four octagonal corner turrets, each crowned with an elongated stone pinnacle. The entire facade is divided, by slightly curved bands of moulding which runs horizontally below the curved cornice, into four parallel rows of uniform panels showing terracotta decorations. Internally divided into two bays, the mosque has three decorated mihrābs on the western wall corresponding to the three arched openings in front. Each of the six domes covering the roof has been finished with a lotus finial outside.

The buildings which have been described in the foregoing section, were made of bricks which were, of course, profusely used as building materials in the pre-Ḥusain Shāh period. A modern writer has quite reasonably regarded this style as the “brick style of Bengal”. As the period under review was characterized by a revival of stone-cutters’ art, stones were used in some of the buildings constructed possibly at the express orders of the royal patrons of art. This group is represented by the Golden mosques of Gauḍ and many other buildings obtaining in the different parts of the kingdom.

The Choṭa Sonā mosque built in the reign of Ḥusain Shāh, is a five-bayed, multi-domed, rectangular building, 82 feet by 52½ feet, with four octagonal corner towers each of which has bands of shallow moulding. The front of the mosque has five arched entrances, the arches being cusped on the outside

1. This date is given in the inscription fixed over the middle doorway of the mosque, see J.A.S.B. xli, 1872, pt. i, p. 339; Cunningham: op. cit. p. 73; Ravenshaw: op. cit. p. 10, pl. 58, no. 25 and Abid Ali: op. cit. p. 93; S. Ahmed: Inscriptions, p. 238.
and their spandrels having projected bosses. A rectangular frame, which has scroll-work as its decorative feature, encloses each of the doorways and the horizontal bands of moulding and varieties of carving, noticed on the facade, are of a traditionalized nature. The mosque has been faced with stones completely on the outside and partially on the inside. Each of the side walls has three doorways opening into the three longitudinal bays of the building.

The internal measurement of the mosque is 70 feet 4 inches by 40 feet 9 inches. The central aisles which are larger than the side ones, have been covered by three chauchatā domes, each possessing four sloping parts converging upon the middle and representing the curvature of typical Bengali huts. The four aisles are roofed over by twelve hemispherical domes which, together with the pyramidal ones, rise above the gently curved cornice and battlements. At the north-western corner of the mosque, there is a ladies' gallery on the upper story which is supported by a number of stone pillars and to which a flight of steps on the north provides the entrance. Apart from the small niche in the ladies' gallery, there are five ones on the internal side of the western wall, corresponding to the five front arches.

Although the central nave of the building flanked by two side wings, seems to be a copy of the prayer hall of the Adina mosque, the richly decorated Chhoṭa Sonā masjid representing the best type of the stone-cutters' art in the period in question, cannot, however, stand any favourable comparison with the buildings of the earlier period which it blindly imitates in design and decoration. The roofing system of the central nave of the Chhoṭa Sonā is also different from that of the Adina, which had a barrel vault.

Fronted by a quadrangular courtyard on every side of which there is an arched doorway measuring 38½ feet by 13½ feet, the Bāḍa Sona mosque is a large and solid rectangular building 168 feet by 76 feet, with six towers, four at the four corners of the prayer chamber and two at the ends of the verandah. The plain eastern side has eleven arched doorways leading to corridor in front of the prayer chamber entered by a corresponding number of arched entrances. The arched openings of the side walls lead to the three longitudinal bays into which the mosque has been divided by several stone pillars. The three north-western aisles constitute the ladies' gallery access to which is obtained by a flight of steps on the north. Of the forty-four hemispherical domes which originally covered the building, only the remaining eleven ones of the corridor rise above the curved cornice and horizontal line of battlement. The grand corridor of the mosque, its sparing and simple decoration and the massiveness of the entire construction, have added to its impressiveness which is rarely found in the buildings of the period.

During the period under review, many mosques and buildings were constructed outside the cities of Gauḍ and Pāncūr. The walls of the mosque at Sura in Dinajpur district are faced with stones showing panels and different designs which resemble those of the Chhoṭa Sona masjid. From a careful examination of the stylistic feature of the mosque, it appears that it was built in the Ḥusain Shāhī period. Constructed on the model of the Laṭṭān Masjid, the building has a central hall 16 feet square, a corridor in front 17 feet 6 inches long and six octagonal towers at the different angles, four at four corners of the hall and one each at either end of the corridor. The eastern side has three arched entrances and the corridor is covered by three  

1. It is evidenced by an inscription that the mosque was constructed in 932 A.H./1526 A.D., in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh; Creighton: *op. cit.* no. v; Cunningham: *op. cit.* p. 67; Abid Ali: *op. cit.* p. 47; Ravenahaw: *op. cit.* p. 15; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, pp. 217-18.
hemispherical domes rising above the usually curved cornice. The prayer hall has three doorways on the east corresponding to the three mihrabs on the western wall and one entrance in each of the side walls. The square hall is roofed over by a single hemispherical dome supported by pillars. The brick-built mosque of Hemtabad in Dinajpur district (906 A.H./1500 A.D.), follows the general plan of the Chhota Sonar masjid. The mosque of Bagha, said to have been built in 930 A.H./1523 A.D., follows the Tantipada masjid not only in plan but also in dimension. Measuring 75 feet 8 inches by 42 feet 2 inches, it has four corner towers. There are five entrances on the eastern side. The two side openings at each end open into the two bays of the building which was roofed over by ten domes. The north-western corner seems to have been occupied by a ladies' gallery. The Navagrama mosque in Pabna district built in 932 A.H./1526 A.D. is a single-domed square building with octagonal towers at the four corners. It imitates the decoration and design of the Latian mosque and the Gumti gate. The Majlis Aulia mosque of Pathrail in Faridpur and the Saikarpasha mosque of Sylhet, though undated, seem to have been constructed in the Husain Shahi period, for they have the rich embellishment and conventionalized designs which characterize the buildings of this period. Thus the architectural monuments found outside Gaud and Pundia, seem to have followed the plan and design of the buildings of those metropolitan cities. Displaying tasteless and repeated patterns, most of these buildings do not possess adequate sense of movement in carvings and designs.

3. For the details of this building, see Cunningham: op. cit. pp. 61-62; Creighton: op. cit. pl. xii; Abid Ali: op. cit. pp. 70-72; cf. Sarasvati: op. cit. p. 28; Dani: Muslim Architecture, p. 159.
In the absence of concrete examples, it is very difficult to have an idea about the types of temples which might have prevailed in Husain Shāhī Bengal. Recent researches on the extant medieval Hindu buildings have conclusively shown that the ancient rekha type of temples continued to be erected in a modified form in the Muslim period. Each specimen of this type consists of a vimāna, raised generally on a low base, an elongated shikhara showing varieties of carved designs, and a mandapa, the whole structure being surmounted by a huge āmalakashīla. It is not clearly known whether the chauchāla type of temple, which became quite popular with effect from the seventeenth century A.D., had also been constructed in the period under review. Some of the members of this type, built at Viṣṇupur, in the same century, represent the style in its well-developed form and thus one may reasonably think that it has an earlier origin. While the rekha type exhibits unmistakable Orissan influence, the chauchāla type shows a considerable number of constructional and decorative features borrowed from mosque architecture. These features are the arcuate system, a corridor running on three sides of the main room, lavish terracotta decoration on the façade and a specified number of frontal and side entrances which have a particular kind of squat pillars. The second type which is thus

1. One of such temples at Barakar in Burdwan district, is dated in 1382 Shaka/1461 A.D.; see Bhattachari : Iconography of Buddhist and Brahminical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, p. xvii. For this type of temples constructed in Muslim Bengal, see ibid., pl. LXXI (excluding fig. a); S. K. Sarasvati : "The Begunia Group of Temples", J.I.S.O.A. 1, pp. 124-28, pl. xxxvi. Sarasvati mentions several temples which "can hardly be assigned to a period before the 15th century A.D." History of Bengal, 1, p. 502.

2. The liberalism of the Sultanate period has been considered to be a great factor responsible for the growth of this type of temple. M. M. Chakravarti : "Bengali Temples and their General Characteristics", J.A.S.B. 1909, pp. 141-51. For illustrations, ibid. figs. 1-10.
a combination of local chauchāla system and significant Indo-Muslim elements, revolutionized the temple architecture in Bengal by accommodating the arcuate system in preference to the lintel system. As indicated below, this type of temple architecture is anticipated by the Muslim buildings like the Qadam Rasūl. Again, the chauchāla roofing system has been followed in the central nave of the Chhoṭa Sona mosque and its curvature is copied in the cornice and battlements of some of the buildings of the period under review.

It may be pointed out here that some of the architectural features of the Bengal monuments of this period resemble those of the buildings in Gujrat constructed in the fifteenth century A.D. The architraves of the two doorways of the Chhoṭa Sonā mosque¹ are strikingly similar to those used in the mihrāb of the Jami' masjid of Junagarh.² The method of placing additional pillars across each of the corners of the central square room housing the tomb of Shaikh Aḥmad Khattri at Sārkhāj (1441-51 A.D.) is also employed in one of the square-roomed buildings of Gauḍ. The vacant space which is thus created at each of the angular points of the square room of the Gujrat building, looks quite superfluous and is not at all pleasing to the eye. The Bengali architects who were possibly conscious of this technical deficiency, found the necessity of filling up this unnecessary gap with bricks in order to give a pleasant look to the room. The Chhoṭa Sonā and also the earlier Adina mosque with the central nave of each flanked by two side wings and a ladies' gallery at the north-western corner, look more like the mosques of Ahmedabad³ than like their north

1. Percy Brown: op. cit. pl. xxviii, fig. 2: Abid Ali: op. cit. p. 80, fig. 17 and Havell: op. cit. pl. xxxi; pl. 4 attached hereto.
2. Havell: op. cit. pl. xxxii.
3. See Jami' mosque of Ahmedabad with its central nave and the ladies' gallery illustrated in Percy Brown's work: op. cit. pls. xxxiv and xxxv, fig. 1 and Havell: op. cit. pl. xxv; supra. p. 21 ff.
Facade of Chhoṭa Sonā Mosque, Gauḍ
Indian counterparts. The 'palm and parasite motif' with its elaborate foliage decoration appearing in one of the terracotta designs of the Darasbādī mosque of Gauḍā (1479 A.D.), is quite similar to the one depicted on the perforated screen of the Sidi Saiyid mosque of Ahmedabad (1510-15 A.D.). The former does not, however, possess the elegant flow and graceful movement characterizing the art in the screen of the Sidi Saiyid mosque. The Qūb Shāhī mosque of Haḏrat Pāṇḍūr built in 990 A.H./1582 A.D., and possessing some of the characteristic features of the Ḥusain Shāhī buildings such as curved battlements, four corner turrets with usual mouldings on them, the use of stones and the probable existence of gildings in walls,9 has got a square platform in front of the mimbar,9 which is found also inside the mosque near the mausoleum of Shaikh Ḥuḥmad Khattārī (1451 A.D.). All these seem to point to a long process of exchange of artistic ideas and forms between Bengal and Gujrat which might have been facilitated by overseas trade which linked up these two distantly situated countries in those days. Nuṣrat Shāh was about to effect a political alliance with Bahādur Shāh of Gujrat who is said to have had a definite knowledge about the formidable position of Bengal in the field of maritime commerce.4 Similar contacts seem to have been quite usual in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As already pointed out, some of the administrative and epigraphic features of Bengal in the period under review, resembling those of the fifteenth century Gujrat, are suggestive of a cultural relationship between these countries.

The style which was evolved by the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers, seems to have influenced the temple architecture of medieval

1. Percy Brown: op. cit. p. 41, pl. xli, fig. 1; Fergusson: op. cit. no. 394 on p. 237 and Havell: op. cit. pls. lxii and lviii.
3. Ibid. p. 122, fig. 22.
4. João de Barros: op. cit. reproduced in the Book of Duarte Bar-
   bosa, II, p. 246.
Bengal. The facade of the mid-seventeenth century temple at Viṣṇupur resembles that of the Qadam Rasūl building in many respects. Both have arched openings supported by short and squat pillars with curved cornice and battlements above. The facade of the Viṣṇupur temple contains an elaborate ornamentation which is also found on the facade of the Qadam Rasūl, although the latter, being a Muslim building, does not exhibit figures of gods and goddesses on its walls. The cusped design on the arch in the above mentioned Hindu temple is quite similar to that in Muslim buildings including the Chhoṭa Sonā mosque of Gaūḍ. Another example of this type is the Kantanagar temple in Dinajpur. Again the Dimapur gateway with its side turrets, curved battlement and a pointed arch over the entrance seems to be an imitation of the architectural style developed in Bengal. It compares quite favourably with the courtyard gateway of the Baḍa Sonā mosque of Gaūḍ.

The Ilyās Shāhī rulers represented the unsophisticated phase of Bengal architecture which appears to have come to an end with the foundation of the Ḥusain Shāhī rule, favouring artistic grace and elegance. The sultāns of the period in question could no longer produce the type of robust and massive buildings constructed in the earlier period. The Baḍa Sonā mosque, the Chhoṭa Sonā mosque and the Laṭān mosque have each a spirit of ornamentation which most of the earlier structures lack.

In this period, we find a predominance of stone-cutter’s art. The use of epigraphic slabs and stone-pillars was, no doubt, quite common in the pre-Ḥusain Shāhī period; but there was a comparative scarcity of other kinds of stone-work in that period. The stone-style does not possess the vivid

1. See pl. no. 5 attached hereto.
2. S. K. Sarasvati: op. cit. p. 34. See pl. no. 6 attached hereto.
Plate VI

Qadam Rasūl, Gauḍ
impressiveness which we come across in the brick-style of Gauḍ architecture.

Most of the architectural forms and features which the Ilyās Shāhīs developed, were accepted in a modified way, by the builders of the period under review. The old terracotta art, which had its revival in the earlier period of Muslim rule, continued under the Ḥusain Shāhī sultāns. The local elements which find expression in architecture, includes the curvature of cornice and battlements and the copy of chauchala. The curvature of bamboo huts appears, for the first time, in the battlements and cornice of the Eklakhi mausoleum, and then in the buildings of the later Ilyās Shāhī rulers. As already indicated, it survives in the buildings of the Ḥusain Shāhī period. The earliest imitation of the chauchala is found in the Sāt-Gumbad mosque of Bagerhat, built by Khān Jahan who died in 1459. This pyramidal dome is found in the Chhoa Sona mosque and the Lātān mosque both of which belong to our period. The artists of the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers began to imitate terracotta art on stone. But this imitation art could not give the vivid impression of the original art which has characteristics of its own. Thus it seems that the Ḥusain Shāhī period was marked by a deterioration in the art of building. Nevertheless, the architecture of this period clearly reveals local influences and gives frank expression to Bengal’s life and culture. In rich ornamentation Ḥusain Shāhī style stands also in strong contrast with rather austere style of the previous phase.
CHAPTER IX

WAYS OF LIFE

ISLĀM and Hinduism were the two main component elements which constituted the whole socio-religious structure of the country. It is necessary to study each of these societies separately. References to the Muslim society in vernacular literature are meagre and fragmentary. The obvious inference is that there was little contact of the Hindu poets with the upper class or native lower class of the Muslims. What Vijaya Gupta, Vipradās and Kavikaṇkān have said about the Muslims appears to be casual. Strangely enough, the Persian sources which have given some details about the pure political history of this land, are quite silent on its social conditions. Due to these limitations, our study of the Muslim society of Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal is likely to be hypothetical and conjectural; our conclusions in this connection have to be necessarily tentative.

At the top of the society, there was the sultan whose unlimited power, pomp and pageantry could inspire awe and respect in the minds of the people. It is not known if
the ruler had any intention to emphasize his divine rights through the assumption of the title of khalisfatullah. But his subjects had reasons to eulogize him not only as 'the adornment of the world' and 'the tilak-mark of kings', but also as 'the incarnation of Krishna at the age of Kali'. One could conveniently place below the sultan, military governors and revenue farmers. The picture of the Muslim wazir oppressing Rama-chandra, a Hindu revenue-farmer of south-west Bengal, as depicted in the Chaitanya-charitamrita, is suggestive of the fact that the average revenue official's rank was practically inferior to that of the provincial governor. The nobles with pompous titles and distinctions occupied, no doubt, a privileged position in the medieval society. We have elsewhere explained how the nobility went through a process of transformation at the hands of Husain Shagh who sought to promote the Hindus to positions of distinction. The ruler had to depend on the nobles for active support and co-operation and very often he owed his life and throne to the latter. To the common mass, however, political changes at the top level did not matter much. As Babur points out, anybody occupying through whatever means, the throne of Bengal found no difficulty in commanding the complete obedience of the people.

The upper section of the Muslim society was composed of the Saiyids, the Mughals, the Pathans and the Arab and Persian merchants living in large number in towns and cities. According to the Riyad-us-Salatin, some of these Muslim foreigners used to hold important governmental offices in the kingdom of Gauḍa. It is obvious that the Mughals who had not yet become the political masters of India, were beginning to be represented as a social element in the Muslim population of the

country. The term *Maṅgal* has been mentioned in the *Manasā-vijaya* of Vipradās who has associated the *Maṅgals* with the Pathans. It is quite possible that some of the *Maṅgals*, who were allowed by Jalāl-ud-dīn and ‘Alā’-ud-dīn Khaljī to settle around Delhi, had immigrated to Bengal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Since Nuṣrat Shāh had diplomatic relation with Bābur, it is just possible that a number of Mughals had come to settle in Bengal during his reign. The Pathans, of course, were there, though not as yet driven out from upper India or as political masters of Bengal which they soon became. The numerous clans of the Pathans, Subāli, Nehāli, Pani, Kudāni and others, as mentioned by Kavitakākan, possibly existed in the Ḥusain Shāhī period also; otherwise, one is sure to be at a loss to explain their sudden appearance in Bengal in Kavitakākan’s time. Ḥusain Shāh, the contemporary sultan, was of Arab origin and claimed to have descended from Ḥusain. The same factor explains the immigration of a large number of Saiyids, who, on their arrival, secured the patronage of the ruling authority of the country. As already discussed, most of the Arabs and Persians had adopted trade and commerce as their professions. The description of Coromandel and Malabar as given by Barbosa, clearly shows that the Arabs and the Persians were greatly responsible for the spread of Islām along the coastal region of India. At Malabar during the period, the Arabs or the *Mauplers*, as they were called there, had taken to navigation and agriculture, with absolute monopoly in the latter. The immigrant Muslims were taking native wives there and were being absorbed in the population of the country. A similar process seems to have been at work in Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal also. Some of them probably grew into territorial overlords.

The concentration of white men in urban areas, as indicated by the Portuguese traveller, Barbosa, shows the nature of the professions adopted by the Arabs and the Persians. It is fairly certain that there used to be inter-marriages between the Arabs and the Persians and the issues of such union and their descendants used to command much respect and influence in the society. ‘Ala’-ud-din Husain Shâh who was an Arab by birth, seems to have taken a Persian wife. It is said that he gave his daughter, Raushan Akhtâr Bânu, of Persian origin, in marriage to Qutbul Aasheen whose descendants possessed landed estates in the sârkâr of Sonârgâon down to the times of the Mughal rulers.\(^1\)

Barbosa's description of the lives, led by the respectable Muslims, shows that they enjoyed complete economic affluence and spent their lives in a state of luxury and "extravagancy". In towns and cities they lived in brick-built houses which had flat roofs and flights of steps. They had great bathing tanks attached to their houses and partook of sumptuous dishes. They used to put on very thin, white, long garments reaching to their ankles with girdles of clothes beneath them and silk scarves over them. They wore rings studded with jewels, and turbans, and publicly carried daggers in their girdles. According to an earlier Chinese account, their food included smoked and roasted beef and mutton, banana, jack-fruit and pomegranate. After the meals were over, they used to have a course of honey and sweetened rose-water. Drinking wine was common in the upper class circles. Barbosa has incidentally mentioned a kind of wine prepared from the palm and used by respectable ladies. Mahuan who noticed many drinking shops in the towns of Bengal, has maintained that wines could be prepared from cocoanut, rice,

‘tarry’ and ‘kadjang’ and that ardent spirits were sold in the market places.\(^1\) The wealthy Muslims had their occasional social gatherings which were rendered quite lively by music and dance. On such occasions, they invited musicians and dancing girls\(^3\) whose coloured dress and dazzling ornaments added much to the pomp and grandeur of the festivities.

So bewildering was the nature of the luxuries of Bengal that Humayun who came to Gauḍ in 1538 A.D., is said to have been struck with wonder at the sight of her beautiful palaces provided with fountains and gardens having flower-beds and stone channels of water. Chinese tiles were used in the floor and internal walls of the rooms of these palaces which contained valuable furniture and luxurious curtains. The entire environment must have had a fascinating effect on the mind of Humayun.\(^3\)

The luxurious habits of the wealthy Muslims were responsible for the prevalence of several social institutions. Polygamy was widely practised by them and the number of their wives was possibly without any limit. While confining these women to their respective houses, they did not forget to behave well with them, “giving them great store of gold, silver and apparel of fine silk”. The female folk used to meet only at night, the occasions being attended by “great festivities, and rejoicings and superfluity of wines”. They could skilfully play on different musical instruments.\(^4\) Barbosa has mentioned gold, silver and apparel of fine silk which clearly indicate that the ladies of the upper class used to put on gold and silver ornaments and silk clothes. The Chinese account seems to corroborate this view.

Concubinage appears to have been closely associated with

the life of the upper class people. The women of Mahmud Shah III were 10,000 in number, a figure given by de Barros who had every reason to be hostile to the sultan and who might have thus magnified the number of his concubines. But it cannot be denied that his statement contains some grain of truth, for this information is confirmed by Barbosa, according to whom, the respectable Moors used to have “three or four wives or as many as he can maintain.” As strict Islamic regulations do not allow a Muslim to possess more than four wives at a time, the contention of Barbosa can be satisfactorily explained, if we remember that the wealthy Muslims had concubines, besides several married wives. Excessive wealth concentrated in the hands of the upper class people can perhaps explain the growth of such an institution. These wealthy people seem to have utilized the services of eunuchs and slaves. The institutions of polygamy, concubinage and slavery, which prevailed in those days, may be attributed to the overflow of wealth in the upper class of society.

It may be reasonably conjectured here that the description of the life of the rich Muslims including the Mughal grandees, as given in the Baharistan-i-Ghaibi and also in the accounts of the foreign travellers visiting Bengal during the Mughal rule, is possibly true of the Muslim aristocracy of our period also, at least in respect of pomp and grandeur. The regional governors with their courts had developed a culture and civilization of their own, and, unlike the Mughal officers, had direct touch with the people with whose language they were possibly conversant. We are told that the local governors were very often interested in the stories of the Mahabharat which were narrated to them in Bengali verses by the local bards flourishing in their courts.

1. Extracts from Da Asia, given by Blochmann, J.A.S.B. 1873, pt. 1, p. 298.
While the upper class of the Muslim society was thus composed of the Saiyids, Mughals, Pathans and the high government officials, the cultivators, weavers and those who had adopted similar other professions, belonged to the lower strata of the population. The economic position of the Muslim cultivators and weavers has already been discussed. It is quite natural that some of them were converts from Hinduism or the descendants of such converts. Some of the professions were monopolized by the Muslims. Even the Hindus had to depend upon Muslim tailors.\(^1\) The sailor class of Bengal was mostly composed of Muslims. The broad economic divisions of the Muslims including the \textit{pithāri} (cake-seller), \textit{kābāqi} (fish-seller), \textit{kāgazi} (the maker of paper), \textit{raṅgrez} (the cloth-dyer), \textit{hazam} (those whose profession was to circumcise children), \textit{kasāi} (butcher) and \textit{shānākar} (the maker of looms)\(^2\) bear out the truth of the conclusion that the economic structure of the Muslim society had grown almost to its full stature towards the end of the sixteenth century and that the process of this growth was already at work during the period under review.

The lower class people, living in towns and cities, were greatly influenced by the upper class whom they used to imitate in their day-to-day affairs. They put on “short white shifts which come half-way down their thighs, and on their heads little twisted turban of three or four folds”, and also used “well-wrought” and “gilded” sandals and shoes.\(^3\) The pious Muslims used to shave their heads, wear beards, and put on the \textit{ījār}, turban and cap. While meeting one another, they did not forget to exchange \textit{salām}. Lighting up evening lamps at the shrines of the \textit{piṛs}, and offering confectionaries to them, were quite usual with them.\(^4\) In fact, mosques and \textit{maqāms} were the

\(^1\) \textit{Kīrṇḍás Kavīní}, \textit{op. cit.} adi, xvii, p. 67.
\(^2\) \textit{Kaviṅkan-chāṇḍi}, i, pp. 260-61.
\(^3\) Barbosa: \textit{op. cit.} ii, p. 148.
meeting places for them. The picture of the pious Muslims of Bengal, as depicted in the vernacular literature, does not fundamentally differ from that of the religious-minded Muslims residing in other parts of the world. Thus it seems that the poets of the period in question have given an idealistic picture of the Muslim community to which they had hardly any access.

Widow remarriage was a common institution at least among the Muslims of lower classes. It was so repugnant to the Hindu of the orthodox society that the author of the *Manasā-mahal* tried to picture a Musalman woman as marrying three husbands in course of a month and yet longing for another, while the dead body of her husband had not yet been committed to the grave.¹ Little wonder that an orthodox Hindu whose ideal was *sati*, would frown upon the idea of widow remarriage which was nothing but the infidelity of Musalman women, while fidelity to the dead husband is the theme of Behula’s story. The Musalman widows also duly mourned their husbands’ death by abstaining from taking meat or fish for at least a week.² The term *nikā* (*nikāh*) has been frequently used in the vernacular literature of the time to mean the institution of widow remarriage, practised in the Muslim society.³

The general level of education and culture attained by the Muslims can hardly be ascertained. Ḥusain Shāh encouraged the spread of education among his subjects by establishing a number of colleges and educational institutions. The English Bazar inscription of the sultan, dated 907 A.H/1502 A.D., records the construction of a *madrasah*⁴ “for the teaching of the sciences of religion and instruction in those orders which alone are true”. This wording clearly indicates that education was of a

religious nature and that the students were generally instructed in the rules of *fiqh* or jurisprudence and law. The teachers appointed by the rulers were perhaps well-versed in certain subjects including law and enjoyed much prestige in the society. Taqi-ud-din, one of these teachers, whose name is recorded in the Sonargaon inscription\(^1\) of Nuṣrat Shāh, had the high-sounding title of *malik-ul-umara wāl-wazara*\(^2\) and was regarded as the chief of the lawyers and teachers of traditions. The importance attached by the Ḥusain Shāhīs to education is evidenced by the fact that the English Bazar inscription, already referred to, begins with the famous saying of the Prophet, "search after knowledge, and if it were in China". These fragmentary materials can hardly help us to get an idea about the nature of the educational institutions of the time; nothing is known about the types of secondary education and higher education. How far the institutions established by the rulers had been successful in improving the condition of the people is not clearly known.

Because of the gradual spread of Islam in this country, Muslim society was going through a continuous process of expansion. Thus one notices two distinct elements in the Muslim population of the time. These were the foreigners including the Arabs and the Persians who had associated themselves partly with the royal authority and partly with trade and commerce. Another important element was the local converts who had hardly any reason to give up their original ideas, beliefs and professions. By virtue of their being converted to Islam, they were called Muslims; but in reality, they did not differ much from their Hindu brethren. Thus they represented an indigenous culture, while the foreigners stood for what may be called Arabian or Persian culture. But we do not observe any cultural conflict within the Muslim community. This seems to have been due to the catholic attitude of the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers who were interested in the local culture.

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1. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, pp. 337-38; Cunningham; *op. cit.* xv, p. 144;
Hindu society was based on the caste system which was again formed on the basis of different professions taken up by the various sections of the community. Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaidyas were the prominent castes of the Hindu society of the period under discussion. Rājā and Varendra Brahmins who derive their names from Rājā in West Bengal, and Varendra, the small strip of land, east of the Ganges in Rajshāhī, were not absent in Bengal. Kavikāṅkan has mentioned the Varendra Brahmins living in West Bengal towards the end of the sixteenth century. These Varendra Brahmins were classified into several divisions or patis by Udayanāchārya Bhaduḍī of Rajshāhī living in the middle of the fifteenth century. If the Premvilās is to relied upon, marriages between these two sections of Brahmins were quite common in those days. Vedic Brahmins could be largely found in south-east Bengal. Vijaya Gupta who has given the picture of the Hindu society, obtaining in the region, east of the Bhāgirathī, has mentioned that the Brahmins living in that area were chaturvedī Brahmins, or Brahmins who had the knowledge of the four Vedas. From what has been said by Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās, it appears that the Brahmins were traditionally following their religious pursuits and the study and teaching of scriptures. But this statement cannot be taken in an absolute sense, for there were cases of deviations from the duties and functions of the Brahmins as prescribed by the ancient shāstrakāras. Rūpa and Sanātana, though Brahmins, were serving under the Ḫusain Shāhī government. This was not in any way a new development in the medieval Hindu society. Even in ancient Bengal, some of the Brahmins adopted professions other than what was prescribed by the shāstra.

Raghunandana writing about the middle of the sixteenth century, quotes the Manusmṛti to support the view that Brahmmins, if pressed hard with poverty, can adopt any means of livelihood. Thus it is evident that socio-economic changes had already taken place in Hindu society. The caste system of the Ḫusain Shāhī Hindu society did not radically differ from its counterpart in pre-Muslim Bengal. Gandhavanīk (seller of spices, scents and drugs), tantuvāya (weaver), kumbhakāra (potter), karmakāra (blacksmith), tāmbulik (betel-leaf seller), mālākar (flower-seller), shaṁhavanīk (dealer in conch-shells), kāṁsakāra (brazier), jāti (fisherman), nāpit (barber), goālā (milkman), chāmār (tanner), ḍom, chaṇḍāl and the higher castes like Kayastha and Vaidya were traditionally pursuing their respective professions in Ḫusain Shāhī Bengal. A learned scholar has clearly shown that these castes existed in pre-Muslim Bengal and also in the nineteenth-century Bengal. It is fairly certain that almost all the sects and sub-sects mentioned in the Brahmadvaitapurāṇa and the Brahmandaivaivartapurāṇa existed in our period. The Kṣatriyās do not seem to have formed a regular caste in Ḫusain Shāhī society. They are no doubt mentioned by Kavikaṅkan who seems to have associated them with the Rajputa. It must be mentioned here that Kavikaṅkan composed his poems when Mughal rule was going to be established in this country and that it had brought here a new set of officials from northern India. It seems that the Kṣatriyās referred to by Kavikaṅkan came to Bengal in the wake of the Mughal conquest. The rigidity of caste system seems to have prevented inter-marriage and inter-dining. The Shudras could not read the

2. Byndavanadas, op. cit. madhya, i, p. 120, xxiii, pp. 264 and 278; Vijaya Gupta, op. cit. pp. 4; 71-76 and 152-55; Chaṇḍi-maṅgal, i, pp. 266-73.
3. History of Bengal, i, pp. 568-70 and 573-74.
Purāṇas and the Vedas. It is quite recently that the caste system of the Hindus has begun to lose its former rigidity,

Hindus had then, as now, various social ceremonies and institutions connected with their birth, marriage and death. At birth the Hindu baby was washed with Ganges-water and its head smeared with oil. Different musical instruments including conch-shell and flute were played upon on this occasion. Śaśthi, the goddess of children, was worshipped on the sixth day following the birth. Then there followed the ceremony, kośthi-gañāṇa or the calculation of the destiny of the new-born baby by the aspects of the planets at its birth and this could obviously be done by a Brahmin who had some astrological knowledge. After a month was over, the mother used to celebrate vālak-uttihäna-parva by taking a bath in the Ganges and worshipping the river. Possibly in the beginning of the second month, a name was given to the child. When the child became six months old, the first rice-ceremony, known as annaprāshana, was celebrated. On this occasion, Brahmans were invited. At an auspicious moment, the baby’s ears were pierced. The next ceremony was called chūḍākaraṇa or the ceremony of first tonsure. The educational career of the child started quite ceremoniously. It seems that these customs had no uniform character throughout the whole country. This explains why all of them are not commonly mentioned by Brāṇḍāvanadās, Kavi-kaṇkan and Vijaya Gupta who represented different localities. Raghunandana has discussed proper times for the observance of different saṁskāras such as garbhādhāna (impregnation), puhsavāna (the rite to ensure the birth of a male child), simantonnayana (the rite of hair-dressing by using vermillion), shoṣyantarhoma (the rite performed at the time of labour pain), jāta-karman (the rite observed after the birth of the child), nāmakaraṇa (the rite of naming the baby), niṣkramana (the ceremony of

2. Ibid. adi, ii, pp. 16, 18; iii, p. 19; v, p. 31; Vijaya Gupta: op. cit. pp. 150-51.
taking out the child for the first time into open air), *annaprāshaṇa* (the ceremony of giving rice to the child for the first time), *chādākaraṇa* (the ceremony of tonsure), *upanayana* (the ceremony of initiation into educational career) and *samāvartana* (the ceremony of the student's return from the teacher's house). The vernacular sources are silent on many of the sacraments mentioned by Raghunandana. It may be inferred here that Raghunandana was trying to put emphasis on the rites prescribed by the ancient *nivandhakāras*, whereas the Bengali works have simply thrown light on the local nature of these rites. Thus the rites as mentioned in the *Sṛtis* do not seem to have been uniformly practised throughout the country.

The description of marriage customs covers many pages of the Vaiṣṇava and Maṅgala poems. Hindu marriage of the period in question involved a long-drawn process of social performances. From the pompous description of the institution of marriage as given by Vijaya Gupta, it must not be inferred that this was exactly the real picture of the matrimonial ceremonies of the Hindus in general. It simply shows that the marriage of the wealthy persons was attended by an unlimited grandeur and pomp which involved huge expenditure—a fact much deplored by Brāhmandaṇḍas. The poor had necessarily to minimize their matrimonial expenses. In the case of Chaitanya's first marriage, Vallabha Āchārya who was extremely poor, wanted to spare only five myrobalans for his daughter's marriage. It is striking that the common features of medieval Hindu marriage are almost like their modern counterparts.

Marriage played a significant part in the socio-religious life of the Hindu which was based on the caste system and

the four specified orders. Raghunandana deplores the celibacy which does not result from asceticism. Keeping in view the fundamental importance of the sacrament of marriage, the medieval nivandhakāras have discussed at considerable length the proper times of marriage, the fitness of boys and girls for marital life, the sapinda and sagotra relationships of the bride and the bridegroom, the question of dowry and different customs and socio-religious rites^1 connected with the ceremonial aspect of wedding. Raghunandana holds that girls should be married before puberty and that this age-limit does not apply to the girls for whom suitable brides are not easily available. The same smārta scholar approvingly cites the prescription of Samvarta that it is proper for young men to marry after they have completed their educational careers. We do not know if all the marriage regulations as laid down in the Smṛti writings were uniformly followed by the different sections of people. But it is not difficult to understand the mind which was responsible for framing the regulations.

1. Medieval Smṛtis show that the ceremony of marriage began with nāndi-mukha and ended with patyabhivādana or the formal salutation of the bride-groom to the bride. Other rites are mukha-chandrikā in which the bride and the bride-groom look at each other's face, the reception of the bride with such materials as pūdya, arghya, acharaniya water and madhuparka and the ceremonial offering of the girl to the bridegroom followed by pāyīgra haṇa (the taking of the bridegroom's hand by the bride), ashmūro haṇa (the riding by the girl on a piece of stone) lāja-homa (throwing fried grains into fire by the girl), saptapadi-gamana (the girl proceeding seven steps with the assistance of the bride), mūrdhābhiṣeka (sprinkling sacred water on the heads of the couple), mahāvāyūḥti homa, dhrūwārndhati-darshana (the showing of dhrūva or the Pole star and Arundhati to the girl by the bride) and patyabhivādana. For a description of the different smārta marriage rites, see S. C. Bandyopadhyay; op. cit. pp. 47-74 and 82-85. For similar rites in ancient Bengal, cf. History of Bengal, 1, p. 601 ff.
A marriage proposal was generally made to the girl's father through an intermediary who used to be a friend or a relative of the boy's father. A class of professional marriage brokers (ghaṭak) was not only common, but they often played a very important role in matrimonial negotiations. The astrologer was to fix the auspicious hour with reference to the pañji (almanac) and koṭṭi (horoscope) and also to the stars and signs of the Zodiac.¹ Freedom of marriage thus seems to have been restricted to a great extent. Marriage was a colourful ceremony with intermingling of religious rites and social customs which varied from place to place. It began with adhivāsa, a religious rite performed usually on the day preceding the date of marriage. Instrumental and vocal music accompanied it. The next ceremony was that of bṛddhī, when the father of the bride offered sacrifice and prayer in the names of the ancestors. This was followed by colouring the fig-leaf with vermilion, reciting prayers to sixteen divine mothers or ṣoḍasha-mātrikā and worshipping the earth. Nāndimukha, a shrāddha ceremony, celebrated on this occasion, was believed to have added to the pleasure and happiness of the region of the manes.² In the course of the whole ceremony, full jars, lamps, paddy, banana trees and various musical instruments were used possibly to add sanctity to the occasion.

There followed the ceremonial bath to which much importance was attached. It was attended by smearing the body of the bridegroom with paste prepared from sandal, turmeric and myrobalans. All this was done by the ladies who used to play significant parts in marriage affairs. When the bath was completely finished, the bridegroom used to put on fresh clothes and different ornaments including ear-rings, anklets and crown

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and also used perfumes like auger and chua. Then there followed the pompous bridal procession attended by the relatives and friends of the bridegroom, a good number of archers, pāiks and panegyrists. Elephants, cradles and horses were also profusely used on this occasion.  

Maṅgalāchāra or the ceremony of auspicious decoration, celebrated at the bride’s house, presented really a colourful picture. A detailed account of this is unnecessary, for it greatly resembled its modern counterpart. The bride used to put on numerous ornaments the list of which has been given in the literature of the time. Maṅgalāchāra was followed by the reception of the bridegroom by the father of the bride, when the priests recited the vakya, made argument, and celebrated what was known as pādyā, arghya, uchamuna and madhuparka (offer of some specified articles to gods in token of worship). Having walked round the bridegroom seven times, the bride received him with paddy, dubgrass and jute cloth. There was at this time the exchange of garlands between the two which indicated the union of the two lives. The religious formalities attending the ceremony were those of the recital of the hymn from the Vedas, playing on certain musical instruments and lighting up fire. The bride’s father had then to offer her to the bridegroom by placing her hands on those of him and with these the formalities of marriage practically came to an end. The bridegroom used to receive as dowry certain things such as cows, land, bed, servants, water-vessels, clothes and ornaments. The bride was taken to his house where the couple were properly received by his mother accompanied by other invited women. The ceremony of marriage thus marked the starting point of the conjugal life which was very often

2. Ibid. pp. 182-83.
happy and peaceful. After the death of the first wife, one could take a second one. This is illustrated by the life history of Shri-Chaitanya. It is necessary to say a few words about the position of Hindu women in the then society. Since those were peaceful times, women had to perform no outdoor works. The māṅgal poems of our period have given us the picture of an ideal woman who does not seem to have played any active part in the society and whose existence was felt only in the kitchen. But we have got no reason to overlook the importance of the female folk in society. The women of the Hindu society were affectionate mothers and devoted wives. Besides managing the household affairs quite thoroughly, they were helping their husbands in various ways. In the Chaitanya-bhāgavat, we find that Shachi, the mother of Chaitanya was thinking about the future of her son and requesting her husband to continue the education of Chaitanya even after it had been stopped by her husband.¹ One of the Chinese accounts has also thrown some light on the co-operation rendered by the wife to the management of the day-to-day affairs of the husband, which was her absolute monopoly. Cooking was the main concern in their routine-bound daily life. It was quite traditionally that women used to fast, observe ekādashi and perform similar other religious formalities.² The position of the conservative Hindu women has undergone very little change in the course of the few centuries.

The smārta rules and the legal system relating to such material affairs as inheritance, partition and property interests, clearly indicate that the independent position of women was hardly recognized in the society. Women could not participate in a number of religious rites and sacrifices except with the permission of their husbands.³ Their right to property was restricted to a great extent. The Dāyabhāga of Jīmuṭavāhana grants the

3. S. C. Bandyopadhyay; op. cit. p. 97.
widow no right to the sale, mortgage and gift of the property and her right to enjoyment is greatly conditioned by her performance of such religious rites as might bring spiritual benefit to the dead husband. Women were entitled to the possession of a specific kind of property technically called strīdhana.¹

The Smṛti writers of the period in question believe that a woman has neither in this world nor in the world hereafter spiritual existence independent of her husband’s. This attitude seems to have been responsible for attaching sanctity to the institution of Hindu marriage which is an irrevocable, human relationship. Raghunandana approves of divorce only under a few specific conditions including the pregnancy of the wife as a result of cohabitation with a man of lower caste, or with the son or the pupil of the husband.² The institution of kulinnism and polygamy which prevailed in the medieval society, must have done hardship to women folk.

Dress, ornaments and toilets used by women have been traditionally mentioned in the literature of the time. These include jute cloth, cotton cloth, ring, necklace, nose-trinket, golden bracelet, ear-rings, golden tathi, shāṅkhā, pāšali, khaḍu, crown, collyrium, lac, vermilion and musk mixed with sandal. The woman’s hair properly combed and shaped in the form of chignon and pigtail with flowers and peacock feathers attached to them, was perfumed with auger and incense-smoke.³ It should be mentioned in this connection that these ornaments and toilets were generally used on matrimonial occasions and in ordinary life, these must have been as simple as possible.

Widows generally used coarse jute-cloth, golden bracelets and fāg-powder as substitutes for khāni, shāṅkhā and vermilion.⁴

1. Ibid. pp. 181-82 and 190-91; History of Bengal, i, p. 610.
2. S. C. Bandyopadhyay; op. cit. p. 65.
Although the institution of sati has been mentioned in some of the contemporary works, it does not seem to have been universally practised in this country. When Jagannatha Mishra, father of Shri-Chaitanya died, his wife did not die with him. Again, the existence of the widow class occasionally referred to in the contemporary works presupposes that sati was not a regularly or uniformly practised institution. It was, however, religiously practised in other parts of India, both in the North and in the South. In fact, sati was a common practice in upper Indian Hindu society two centuries earlier, notice of which has been made by Ibn Banari. The Mughals had tried to suppress the practice but without much success. Raghunandana’s prescription of severe austerities to be performed by the widow immediately after her husband’s death, clearly shows that the institution had no regular recognition in the shastra. It seems that the institution was absent in many parts of the country, although it might have prevailed in some other parts.

Society was patriarchal and the joint family system was the order of the day. Whatever might have been the legal position and social status of the Hindu woman, the householder could not dispense with the service of the wife. The married life has been traditionally considered to be an essential part of the varnashrama-dharma which formed the basis of the ancient and medieval Hindu society. Raghunandana holds that

2. Advanced History of India, pp. 376, 400, 496 and 568; Vincent A. Smith: Akbar the Great Mughal, pp. 226 and 382. Writing about 1667 A.D. Bernier, (quoted by J. N. Das Gupta: Bengal in the Sixteenth Century A.D. pp. 44-45, f.n.) says that the Muslim rulers did not like to stop sati “for fear of some revolt” and that they used to “hinder it as much as they can.”
there cannot be a house without a housewife. His eagerness to preserve the integrity of the traditional way of life is indicated by the prescription that one who has become a widower after the age of forty-eight, should be considered a ranjä-shrami or widower householder.¹

Vaiśānava poems throw light on the relationship between the husband and the wife, which was one of understanding, love and affection. Without the co-operation of the wife, it was difficult for the husband to manage either ordinary domestic affairs or occasional socio-religious ceremonies. In addition to the husband, the wife and the children, the family included a number of other members such as the grand-father, the grandmother, the manager of the household affairs and servants, both male and female.² Children, in general, reciprocated the instinctive love and affection of the parents. On the occasion of social ceremonies, it became the direct concern of the couple to see that the arrangements and invitations were in keeping with the status and dignity of the family concerned.³ The head of the family had to be sometimes conscious of the sensibility of the neighbour, for the latter, if he was particularly an elderly man, might angrily demonstrate his mental susceptibility born of his pride and caste superiority.⁴ When the religious preceptor or an ascetic came to visit the family, he was received with special obeisance. While the householder prostrated himself before the honoured guest, his wife would wash the latter's feet after placing him on a pidi or wooden seat and spread

2. Cf. for example, the families to which Chaitanya and Nityānanda belonged; Chudamaniś: op. cit. pp. 7-8, 17-18, 24, 33, 60 etc.
3. Ibid. p. 18.
4. Cf. the angry outburst of Ākhaṇḍala Āchārya at the house of Nityānanda; ibid. pp. 79-80.
out a rug for him on the floor of the outer apartment of the house.\footnote{Ibid. pp. 7-8 for the special forms with which Mādhabendra Puri was received by the parents of Nityānanda; see also K. M. Ashraf: \textit{op. cit.} p. 325.}

The rich, both Hindus and Muslims, used to live in brick-built houses and the poor had their houses built of bamboo with straw thattings.\footnote{Āʿin, ii, p. 134.} The ruins of the pre-Mughal architecture scattered over the different places of Bengal clearly show that brick was profusely used for the construction of these edifices. Moreover, the Chinese account, written in the middle of the fifteenth century, mentions that rich people, particularly the kings, were residing in palatial buildings, made of bricks and decorated internally in floral designs and animal patterns. These houses had flights of steps and flat roofs resting on a number of pillars.\footnote{\textit{Viśva-Bhāratī Annals}, \textit{op. cit.} pp. 121, 124, 130-31.} But the bamboo huts were of general use and some of them were "so constructed that the cost of a single one will be five thousand rupees or more and they last a long time."\footnote{Āʿin, ii, p. 134.} \textit{Abūʾl Faḍl} seems to have referred to the bamboo houses which were specially constructed by the rich. The huts of the poor must have been of a poorer nature, for they could hardly spend any extravagant sum on their construction. The \textit{chouchālā} bamboo houses were so famous that they did not fail to influence the brick and stone architecture of Bengal. The house had several well-defined parts such as the bed-room with a courtyard in front of it, the living-room with a raised varandah attached to it, the kitchen and the \textit{chaṇḍi-maṇḍapa} which, apart from housing the family deity, used to serve the purpose of the guest-room\footnote{Chūḍāmānīdās: \textit{op. cit.} pp. 7, 19, 33-34, 47 etc.} particularly on the occasion of social gatherings. Houses having elevated roofs and arranged in systematic rows\footnote{Viprādās: \textit{op. cit.} p. 143 and \textit{Shaikh Faḏqūlīš}: \textit{op. cit.} p. 34.} were considered to be ideal ones. A sense of refinement and taste was sometimes displayed in the disposition of the different
parts of the house. In this connection, we may notice the
description of Chaitanya's house given by Chudamanidas: "The
fine house had a gate on the south and another on the east.
Beyond the eastern gate, there was a courtyard." Inside the
bedroom of the rich, one could find a richly decorated bedstead,
beautiful pillows, different jars and mosquito curtains made of
silk or jute. But the requirement of the poor in this respect
must have been as limited as possible.

Bengali food has not changed materially in the course of
the last few centuries. Rice, as now, was the staple food of
the people. Rice soaked in water (pantabhāt or āmāni) was
the breakfast not only of the poorer class as now, but the
richer section of the community also used to take it with relish.
Śorasha vyāṇjana or sixteen dishes were common in rich Hindu
houses and these included various vegetables, fish, milk, meat,
fruits, curd, butter, cakes and sweetmeats. Ghee, oil, sugar,
salt, chilly and different spices were used in preparing food.
After finishing the meals, people used to take betel-leaves which
were also supplied to the guests on festive occasions. The list
of Bengali eatables given in the maṅgal poems, represents a
picture which is more ideal than real. Bengali food was simple,
palatable and nourishing. Adulteration of food had not yet
started. The culinary art was the exclusive concern of the
women folk who used to attach religious devotion to the task.
In fact, like every institution of Bengali life, the institution of
cooking was also connected with semi-religious ceremonies. Light-
ing of fire in the kitchen had associated with it a number of
elaborate ceremonies which included going round the fire seven
times and prayer to the god of fire.

2. Bhundavanada: op. cit. madhya, vi, pp. 164-65; Kavikaṅkan-chāṇḍi,
   vii, p. 520.
3. Bhundavanada: op. cit. madhya, vi, p. 158, viii, p. 178 and ix,
p. 182; Kavikaṅkan-chāṇḍi vii, pp. 510-13 and 515-16; Vijaya
4. Ibid. p. 96; see also Kavikaṅkan-chāṇḍi, vii, pp. 514-15.
The Hindus had various festivals and social functions one of which was connected with the worship of Durga, celebrated with much pomp and grandeur. It should be mentioned in this connection that Raghunandana has devoted a considerable part of his work, Tithitattava to the description of the festivals of Ramanavami and Durgotsava. Chaṇḍaṇgag, Manasa-ghanḍa and Shaiva songs and the songs recounting the achievements of the Pāla kings of ancient Bengal, were sung by pāḷas by the singers or gāyens who seem to have acquired much proficiency in the art of singing. Theatrical performances gained much popularity among the people. Chaitanya used to take part in some of them. The subjects of these dramatic performances were various paurāṇik stories such as Kṛṣṇa-liṅka and Laṅka-Vijaya, which were attended by the Hindus and the Muslims alike.

Hindus worshipped then, as now, a number of gods and goddesses including Shivalinga, Shiva, Durga, Chaṇḍi, Viṣṇu, Nāgaṇa, Vyāsa, Brahmā, Agni, Shitala Śaṣṭhi and the Gaṅgā. Raghunandana includes among the religious rites to be performed by the orthodox Hindus, worship of Śaṣṭhi, Viṣṇu, Manasa, Kṛṣṇa, Durgā, Yama, Sarasvatī, Sūrya, Bhīṣma, Shiva, Shitala, Rāma and Madana. Manasa was one of the most important and powerful goddesses of the Hindus. The composition of poems on Manasa by Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās towards the end of the fifteenth century, is a clear indication of the importance attached to the worship of the serpent goddess by the people of East and West Bengal who used to believe in her supernatural powers. Certain popular beliefs centred round the worship of Manasa. It was thought that Manasa used to be

3. Ibid. adi, ii, pp. 11, 12, 13; iii, p. 19; iv, p. 21; vii, p. 48; madhya, v, p. 156, vi, p. 160 etc.; Vijaya Gupta: op. cit. pp. 137 and 162.
present at those places where songs were sung about her, to
give boon to her devotees and curse her enemies. According
to the popular belief, she could cure diseased persons, give children
to the childless and liberate the prisoners.\(^1\) She could be wor-
shipped with such materials as incense, lamp, sunned rice, sandal,
different flowers and the sacrifice of buffaloes and goats. The
ceremonies connected with the worship in West Bengal were
probably less pompous than those in East Bengal.\(^2\) The Hindus
who worshipped the river Ganges, held its water to be sacred
and wished to pass their last days and die near this river.
Raghunandana has dwelt at a considerable length, on the reli-
gious efficacy of bathing in the water of the Ganges and wor-
shipping it with devotion.\(^3\)

The customs of Hindu society were intermingled with
prejudices. It was believed that musical performances would lead
to the increase of the price of paddy and create famine in the
country.\(^4\) If the pitcher that used to be kept on the exit-door
(\(\text{yātrāghaṭ}\)) was broken by any accident, or if the head
touched the upper doorframe, the journey was considered to be
inauspicious. There appears to be no end of inauspicious signs.
The chirping of the house lizard on the left side, the move-
ment of the snake on the right and the howling of jackals,
were all considered as indicating that the journey would not
be an auspicious one. The falling of vermilion from women's
head and of bracelets from their hands and the breaking of
\(\text{shānkhās}\) were regarded as inauspicious signs. In the morning
people did not like to look at the face of a childless man
who was believed to be helpless in the next world.\(^5\) Some of

3. Barbosa: \textit{op. cit.} ii, p. 134; de Barros, quoted by M.L. Dames:
\textit{The Book of Duarte Barbosa}, ii. appendix-i, p. 245; \textit{Tirhataśrama},
and 164.
5. Vijaya Gupta: \textit{op. cit.} pp. 98, 100, 122, 162 and 180.
these beliefs are still lingering in a modified form in the society of modern rural Bengal. Vrndavanadās who used to regard Shri-Chaitanya as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, has associated a number of supernatural signs with the childhood of Chaitanya.¹

The superstitious beliefs and ideas of the people seem to have considerably influenced the nivandhakāras of the time who have prescribed remedies for the bad effects of ominous incidents. Raghunandana thinks that the falling of a particular variety of birds or animals on the head or their entry into the house and the untimely appearance of flowers and fruits are unpromising; that one can ward off their impact on human life by worshipping several deities and feeding Brahmins and presenting gold and cows to them and that failure to perform the remedying rites will bring death to the house-holder.² Shrinātha Āchāryachūḍāmāṇi, a contemporary of Raghunandana, has associated superstitious practices with marriage customs. He thinks that seven clods prepared from the earth taken from urvarābhūmi (fertile land), gochāraṇa bhūmi (pasture-land) vedi (raised ground meant for religious sacrifices), vikrayasthāna (bazaar), hrada (lake), uṣaṭa-bhūmi (barren land), chatuspatha (converging point of four roads) and shmashāna (place for cremation) will be quite helpful in testing the internal qualities and deficiencies of the girl for whom marriage proposal has been made.³ The Hindu legal system in which the medieval and ancient Bengali mind was at its best, has provisions for certain divine evidence or divya⁴ which appears, to the modern mind, to be a bundle of superstitions.

The system of education followed in the Hindu society was different in many respects from its modern counterpart.

3. Ibid. pp. 54-55.
4. Raghunandana has devoted the Divyatattva to the discussion of these evidences. For a detailed account, see ibid. p. 165 ff.
Village schools were common in those days. They were attended by a large number of students coming not only from the richer class in the society but also from the poorer section as well. Birth in a low class, such as that of vēne, was no bar to one’s studying śāstras in East Bengal, although this was frowned upon in orthodox Hindu society where the study of the śāstras was an exclusive privilege of the Brahmins.¹ The education of the Hindu boy began with the ceremony called hātekhaṭi and he used to learn the alphabets possibly at his own home.² When this initial stage was over, the boy could go to join one of the neighbouring tols conducted individually by a Brahmin pāṇḍit. Since the pattern of education was thoroughly classical, he had to learn grammar, logic and rhetoric.³ It seems that the Vedas together with their commentaries were taught at a higher stage of the students’ intellectual maturity. The different systems of Indian philosophy such as Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, Pātañjala, Mīmāṃsā and Vaiśeṣika were also studied by the advanced students.⁴ The intellectual glory of Navadvīpa, which was the centre of intense classical learning, is brilliantly reflected in the different pages of the Chaitanya-bhāgavat.⁵ It seems that students from East Bengal used to go to receive education at Navadvīpa, for the eastern region seems to have suffered from cultural bankruptcy at this period. Brahminical culture concentrated itself at Navadvīpa and also possibly at the village of Rāmakeli where Rūpa and Saṅstana brought a number of learned Brahmins from the different parts of Bengal.⁶

2. Ibid. adi, v, p. 31.
3. Ibid. adi, vii, pp. 43-45, 49; x. pp. 66-67 and xi, pp. 78-79.
4. Ibid. adi, xi, p. 80.
5. Ibid. adi, ii, p. 11; vii, pp. 43 and 44; xi, p. 76.
6. Ibid. antya, iv, p. 348; Sukumar Sen: Madhyayugé Vāṅgiā O Vāṅgali, p. 23.
In spite of this higher level of intellect attained by a group of people, moral degradation seems to have set in. While the upper class Muslims had associated themselves very closely with drinking and concubinage, the latter being the main source of their sexual enjoyment, the Hindus had adopted certain practices quite akin to those of the Muslims. The Vaiṣṇava literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has deplored the moral depravity of Jagāi and Mādhāi who were practising all that was against the principles of Hinduism and the rules of morality. Brṇḍāvanadās says that they were always taking wine and beef and committing theft, although they were Brahmans by caste.¹ Lochanadās maintains that these two brothers were enjoying the company of Brahmans and Muslim women and also the women of their superiors and that killing cows, Brahmans and women had become quite usual with them.² It seems that these Brahmans were greatly influenced by the upper class Muslims of Gauḍa. One of the forces undermining the then Hindu society was Tantricism. Brṇḍāvanadās has deplored Tantric practices in the Chaitanya-bhāgavat.³ The standard of morality, specially in the mercantile community, was not high. Prostitution came into vogue, but this was probably absent in the rural society. This particular institution was connected with trade centres where the prostitutes used to have separate quarters allotted to them. Though the institution was absent in rural society, the peaceful lives in the villages were often disturbed by their women folk being kidnapped.⁴

Bengali Hindu society of the period in question was essentially conservative. It could hardly transcend the barriers that were created around it by the ancient śāstrakāras. Our contention is borne out, if we try to get an idea about the

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4. Vijaya Gupta, pp. 72, 80-81 and 153; Chauḍi-mahāgal, 1, p. 273.
Hindu society from the writings of the celebrated nivandhakāra, Raghunandana who composed his works on Smṛti in the first half of the sixteenth century. Like his predecessors, Raghunandana prescribes five mahāyajñas (i.e. teaching, propitiation of the manes, sacrifices, food offerings to animals and hospitality) to be regularly practised by a Brahmin so that he can relieve himself of the sins resulting from the use of the five necessary elements found in his own house. He lays down the rule that no one should take food without offering it to the gods. He has given a long list of persons whose food cannot be partaken of. Shrāddha gifts should be made to the manes in the full-moon tithis of the months of Āṣāṅgh (June-July), Kārttika (October-November) and Māgha (January-February).¹ He says that the non-performance of the daily duties prescribed by him will lead to the downfall of the man concerned.²

The socio-religious rituals which Raghunandana prescribes for the orthodox Hindus, cover almost all the months of the year and include the observance of a number of bratas combined with fasting, gifts, worship of gods and goddesses and several other religious practices and abstentions. These are as follows:³ The devout Hindu will take bath early in the morning in the month of Vaishākha, present water vessels to Brahmins, eat nim-leaves with lentil or masura and wash Viṣṇu with cold water. Those who want to have beautiful children, should worship Śaśthi on the sixth day of the bright half of the month of Jyaiśthia. On the fourteenth day of the same bright half following the full moon of the previous month, women have to perform Sāvitrī-brata in order to avoid widowhood. Holy bathing in the Ganges and other rivers allays ten sins of the body, mind and speech. The chief features

of chāturūṣya rite, which begins in Āṣāṇh and ends in Kārttika, are the worship of Viṣṇu, bathing in the Ganges, cutting hair and nails and abstinence from taking molasses, oil and cooked eatables. Shrāvaṇa is meant for the worship of Manasa. The observance of the birth day of Shri-Kṛṣṇa (janmāṣṭami) on the eighth day of the dark half of Bhaḍra, will have the effect of expiating sins. The worship of Durgā and the festival of kojāgara take place in Āshvina. The ceremonies and festivals of the month of Kārttika include dipānvitā or illumination of houses, dyūta-pratipada in which people play with dice with the object of ascertaining their luck and misfortune and bhrāty-dvitiya in which women worship Yama and entertain their brothers. The festival of navānna or new rice should be celebrated in Agrahāyana. The month of Māgha has raṭanti-chaturdashi or morning bath on the fourteenth day of the dark half, shrīpāñchami for worshipping Sarasvatī, bathing and the worship of the Sun on the Māghi-saptami, bratas on the occasions of vidhūna-saptami and ārogya-saptami and the worship of Bhaṣma. The Shivarātri festival takes place in Phālgunā. Then there are the worship of Shītalā, Vārūṇī festival, ashokāṣṭami, Rāmanavami, and the worship of Madana or Cupid, all in the month of Chaitra.

While some of the rites are either expiatory or propitiatory in nature, others seem to have been observed with the definite object of getting some desires or material aspirations fulfilled. It is not clearly known whether the numerous rites and ceremonies were uniformly performed by the Hindus of Bengal; but their inclusion in the smārta socio-religious code is quite significant. As a matter of fact, the Smṛti writings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries give clear indications about the attitude of the Smārta scholars to the society in which they were living. The nivandhakāras wanted to regulate every detail of social behaviour strictly in accordance with a fixed body of religious principles dominated by a sort of rigid formalism. The rigidity of the religious rites which the individual Smṛti-writer insists upon, is perhaps explained by his general adhe-
rence to the earlier socio-religious regulations which he could not change at his sweet will. That the uncompromising nature of the earlier smārta laws had led to the growth of certain social problems, seems clear from the writings of Raghunandana who tends to relax the regulations relating to the proper age-limit of the marriageable girl, the Brahmin’s contact with the Shudra and the place of the widower of an advanced age within the fold of Brahminical āshramas.

The picture of the Hindu society which we get in the Smṛti writings may be partly idealistic; but they reveal the tendency of the age in which the Smṛti literature was produced. The conservatism characterizing the Hindu community may be attributed to caste rigidity and the tendency of the people to put extraordinary emphasis on the orthodox regulations embodied in the ancient śāstras. Again the Brahmans seem to have been actuated by self-interest in framing socio-religious regulations with a view to retaining their privileged position in the society. While detailing the religious duties and privileges of a Shudra, Raghunandana points out that he can enjoy the fruits of dharma by worshipping gods and Brahmans.¹ Brahmins are thus placed on an equal level with gods. While discussing the conservative nature of the Hindu society, we should not overlook the noble virtues it cultivated. Putting much emphasis on the religious efficacy of gifts and penances and dealing with the efficacy of selfless actions,² the Smṛti-kāras seem to have placed an ideal before the people. As already pointed out, Raghunandana quotes socio-religious regulations from ancient Smṛtis, Epics, Purāṇas and Nivandhas in support of his own prescriptions which are intended to preserve the purity and integrity of the Brahminical society. But the presence of Tantric elements and non-Aryan deities within the fold of Brahminism, indicates that it

2. Ibid. p. 165. So far as these ideas are concerned, Raghunandana seems to have been influenced by the Bhāgavat which he quotes frequently.
was not easy to achieve the desired object. As mentioned elsewhere, Raghunandana provides for Tantric initiation and the worship of Shitalā and Manasā. The process of non-Aryan impact on Brahminism must have started in an earlier period. It is quite interesting to note that Jīmutavāhana prescribes in his Kalaviveka, the worship of the serpent goddess Manasā.1 We have already discussed how the impact of Islam had led to the regrouping of the Brahminical population.

There is hardly any reason to believe that the elaborate Brahminical regulations that we find in Smṛti writings were followed by the people belonging to the lower grades of Hindu society. The common mass who remained outside the pale of Brahminical culture, had, in all probability, simple primitive beliefs and practices, tribal gods and goddesses, unsophisticated institutions and all that combined to build up their folk culture.

III

Social contact between the Hindus and the Muslims of the period in question is not without interest to a student of history. Though possibly the catholic influence of Sufi-ism made Hindu pantheism less repugnant to the Muslims, clash between the two sections of population was not totally absent. In fact, almost all the writers of Manasā-maṅgal poems have devoted a chapter to the conflict between the two communities. Touchy and conservative as the Hindus were about their castes, the Muslim administrator took the easiest way of inflicting the severest injury to them by desecrating their castes, although this was neither encouraged nor supported by the sulṭāns whose attitude towards the non-Muslims in general appears to have been one of sympathy and understanding. In the Manasā-maṅgal of Vijaya Gupta, the Muslim qāḍī who was the local administrator in a village called Ḫusaināṭi, had no objection to the Hindu practices being observed; but the mullā or the Musalman

1. History of Bengal, 1, p. 606.
priest, whose care it was to see Islam well-established, admonished the qādī for his slackness in not preventing the worship of the earthen vessel dedicated to the serpent goddess. Religious fanaticism once roused, played its usual havoc. Whoever then was found with tulsi-leaves was taken before the qādī and mercilessly beaten. Brahmins had to lose their paitā or holy thread. They, therefore, made it a point to live always quite away from the Muslims of that particular locality. The story given by Vipradās, does not differ much from Vijaya Gupta's version. It appears from a careful study of these works that the personal whim and religious fanaticism of some of the Muslim officers were responsible for these communal conflicts. Again, there were cases of communal disturbances because of purely political reasons.

The Brahmins seem to have constituted a small minority group in the general mass of the population, the majority of which must have been lower class Hindus. The conflicts between the Muslims and the Brahmins, discussed in a previous chapter were due to certain socio-political reasons which did not probably influence the social relationship between the Muslims and the lower class Hindus. Furthermore, we have hardly any reason to magnify the incidental cases of religious riots which we come across in the vernacular literature of the time, for these do not appear to have influenced the whole course of sociological evolution. The Hindus and the Muslims, many of whom were possibly born of Hindu mothers or their descendants, lived together and both co-operated in the different aspects of national life. It has already been conclusively shown that many of the Hindus were holding important governmental offices under the Ḥusain Shāh rulers who must have prepared a congenial atmosphere for rapprochement between the two major communities. The attitude of the ruling class to its non-Muslim subjects is clearly revealed through the patronage they rendered to the cause of Hindu culture by encouraging the translation of the Mahābhārata and

the composition of the Vidyā-Sundara, which has some indirect relation with the worship of Kāli. Had the Hindus and the Muslims been always fighting, the Hindu poets of the period would not have eulogized the Muslim rulers.

The Hindus and the Muslims influenced one another's life. There was a considerable number of Muslims with local nomenclature. In the rural areas they lived quite peacefully and there was happy relationship among them. The qāḍī of Navadvīpa, even when attacked by Shri-Chaitanya and his followers, did not forget this. Addressing Chaitanya, he said: "So far as village relationship is concerned, Chakravarti is my uncle. Village relationship is purer than blood relationship. Nilambara Chakravarti is your maternal grandfather. So you are my nephew." The common Musalman joined the social ceremonies of the Hindus and even the bridal procession of a rich Hindu would not be complete without their presence. It is mentioned in the Vaiśāvīva literature that the Muslims also enjoyed the saṅkīrtana performed by the Vaiśāvās. The relation between the Hindus and the Muslims was thus cordial and the scenes of fanaticism were rare.

1. See the text of Vidyā-Sundara in Sāhitya Patrikā, 1364 B.S., i, pp. 115-17.
2. Two of the inscriptions of this period record the name of one Bibi Malati who constructed a mosque in the reign of Mahmūd Shah III and a shed for drinking water in the reign of Nusrat Shah; see the old Maldah inscription dated 938/1531; J.A.S.B. 1874, p. 308 and Gauḍ inscription dated 941/1535; J.A.S.B. 1872, p. 339. The lady was possibly a Muslim. This is evidenced by the construction of a mosque by her. She could hardly be a Hindu lady, for the construction of a mosque is not at all usual with a Hindu. The name Malati is obviously a local term which indicates Hindu influence on Muslim society. The name of the Muslim weaver as given in Vijaya Gupta's work was Suvodhan; op. cit. p. 59. It is a Hindu name.
In the field of culture, there was understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims. We have already suggested that the Hindu officials had to learn Persian which was the court language. The knowledge of this language seems to have developed in the minds of some of the upper class Hindus, a genuine sympathy for Persian culture. This explains why they were reading *Mathnawi*, the famous poetical work of the Persian poet Jalal-ud-din Rumi. The Hindu poets of the age did not hesitate to use in their works loan words from Arabic and Persian. The language of the poem is Sanskritized Bengali with a rare use of Arabic or Persian words. Sābirid Khan’s knowledge of Hindu mythological stories is proved beyond doubt, for, in the opening section of the poem, he does not fail to mention certain incidents connected with the lives of legendary kings like Dīlīpa and Daśaratha. The poet does not hesitate to tell us that the origin of the story narrated in his work is connected with the worship of Pārvatī. Thus we can glean from Sābirid’s work, some ideas as to the poet’s attitude to the Hindu culture. We have discussed in a previous chapter how Islamic mysticism had absorbed yogic and tantric ideas and practices.

1. The terms like *kalīmā*, *nikāḥ*, *ruzāh*, *darbīsh*, *kitāb*, *Qur’ān*, *salām*, *ghulām* and *masjīd* are used by Vipradas: *op. cit.* pp. 63-70; it is interesting to note that the Persian term, *Sar-ī-khāīl*, which is, as already seen, an official title, became a synonym for the manager of household affairs in some of the conservative Hindu families; cf. Chūḍāmanidas: *op. cit.* p. 24.


IV

The Portuguese had not yet become a social class in Bengal. They were connected with trade and piracy and their stay in this country was circumscribed due to the hostility of the ruling class and the Arab and Persian merchants. It was only in the beginning of the seventeenth century that they began to lead a regular social life in their settlements. Of course, they were given the custom houses of Sātgaon and Chittagong and were allowed to collect revenues from the people of the adjoining localities. Unfortunately nothing is known about the relation of these Portuguese farmers with the local people. But this seems to have been far from friendly, for their hostility to the sultāns of Bengal and Arab merchants is proved beyond doubt.¹ Their activities in the period in question had both religious and commercial aspects. Following the expulsion of the Arabs from the Andalusian peninsula, they seem to have declared Crusades against the Muslims wherever they could be found.² But the economic side of the question cannot be ignored. The Portuguese came to the East in search of wealth. Finding that the field of maritime commerce in Bengal was occupied by the Arabs, they turned hostile to them.

Varthema found in the city of ‘Banghella’ a few Nestorian Christians who were dealers in silk stuffs, aloe-wood, benzoin and musk. They had come from the city of Sarnau and were subject to the ‘great Khan’ of Cathai. They put on red caps and folded jerkins having sleeves quilted with cotton. Although they did not use shoes, they had “breeches made of silk, similar to those worn by mariners, which breeches are all full of jewels.” They took meals at tables and ate “every kind of

² While visiting Malabar, the Portuguese traveller Barbosa, describes the ‘Moors’ as the followers of “the abominable Mafamede”, op. cit. ii, p. 3.
flesh.” Following the practice of the Armenians, they used to write from right to left. About their religious practices and beliefs, Varthema tells us that they believed in the Trinity, twelve Apostles and four Evangelists and had baptism with water. As orthodox Christians, they would “keep the Nativity and the Passion of Christ, and observe our Lent and other Vigils in the course of the year.” It seems that these Christian merchants were but occasional visitors and not permanent settlers in this country.

V

One could notice points of difference between the social customs and dialects of East Bengal and those of West Bengal. The people of the western part of the country had a chronic dislike for East Bengal dialect and the people who spoke it and regarded them, then as now, as Vaiśāgala. Chaitanya used to speak tauntingly of the Vaiśgadeshī people residing at Navadvipa, whereas Kavikañkan and Ketakādās Kśemānanda have sneered at this peculiar local language which they have jokingly imitated in their renowned works. But these differences did not stand in the way of the development of cultural relations between the two parts of the country. Chaitanya’s tour over East Bengal which took place in the early part of his life, had, no doubt, some cultural and educational significance. Vaiśpavism had also claimed subsequently a good number of followers in Sylhet and Chittagong. Moreover, the educational centres of Navadvipa and Shāntipur used to attract students from this part.

2. Ibid. p. 213.
4. Kavikañkan-chāṇḍi, i, p. 655; Manasā-maṅgal of Ketakādās Kśemānanda, i, p. 211. The two works have preserved the specimens of medieval East Bengal dialect only in a corrupt form, for the poets composing them, had no direct knowledge about it.
6. Ibid. Śādi, ii, p. 10 and ix, p. 62. See also Shrīchaitānya-pūrīṣadajamasthāna-nirūpaṇa, S.P.P. 1317 B.S., 4th issue, p. 223.
The life of Bengal with many of its customs and institutions was thus a chequered one. The ancient territorial divisions such as Rādh, Varendra and Vaṅga had not yet disappeared. But they were welded together into a greater geographical unit roughly corresponding to the territorial extent of modern Bengal. The term Bengala or Bengal, which had already evolved, was now being applied to the whole tract of land extending from Chittagong to Mandāran and from the Bay of Bengal to the hills of Assam. What is of more importance is that Bengal had by then developed a language of her own which could be uniformly followed by the poets of the time. The Bengalis had thus several factors common in their lives. These were a single contiguous territory to live in, a common literary language and a common political power to govern them. These served as powerful bonds of union and gave an integrity to their character. This was no mean achievement to which the ruling power must have made direct contribution. The Ḥusain Shāhī period seems to have marked a definite stage in the growth of the Bengali nation over which the waves of Afghān conquest and the subsequent Mughal imperialism seem to have thrown cold water. The ruling authority was surrounded on all sides by a number of actively hostile countries on whom it was persistently trying to put a check. In doing so, it had to concern itself with the internal peace and integrity of the country which it could attain by promoting the cause of local culture and looking to the interest of the people. Thus the subjects were drawn closer to the ruling power with whom they had genuine reason to sympathize. Thus sympathy with a common ruling power seems to have generated a sense of unity among the people.

1. The Ḥusain Shāhī kingdom has been called the kingdom of Bengal or Bengala by Barbosa, op. cit. i, p. 135, by Babur : op. cit. ii, p. 482 and also by de Barros.
2. The language of the Parāgali Mahābhārat and the Ashvamedha Parva written in East Bengal, does not differ much from the language used by Vipradas, the West Bengal poet of the period under review.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ḥusain Shāh rule in Bengal was characterized by the territorial expansion of the country, stabilization of administration, and, certain significant developments in respect of religion, literature, arts and economy. The military success of the first two rulers of the period under discussion was, in a large measure, due to their diplomatic skill and the decline of the Lūdis, the Sharqīs and the Khens. It resulted in the inclusion, within the political boundaries of Bengal, of the countries up to the confluence of the Ghogra and the Ganges in the west, Chittagong in the east and Kamrupa in the north. Ḥusain Shāh’s defeat in upper Brahmaputra valley appears to have been considerably compensated by his hold on these regions possessing either strategic or commercial importance. The political conflict which had been going on between the Sultānate of Delhi and the kingdom of Bengal, found its culmination in the extension of the frontier of the latter across the regions beyond Bhāgalpur and in the assumption of the title of khalīfatullah by Ḥusain Shāh—a diplomatic move reminding us of the course of historical orientation followed by Charlemagne who set himself up against the emperor of Constantinople by taking the title of Roman Emperor
and Augustus. Though merely a fiction, the title of khalifatullah was expected to command wide respect with the Sunni Muslims whose sentiment the Bengal ruler appears to have utilized to suit his political ends. Consideration shown to the last Sharqāl sultan who was allowed to establish a sort of a refugee government in Bhāgalpur with the right to issue coins, immediately after he had lost his kingdom, was perhaps closely linked up with the deliberate policy of detaching Bengal from North Indian imperialism. The shadow of Sharqāl monarchy lingering at Bhāgalpur must have held out a threat to the Lūḍi rulers, for the erstwhile rival of Delhi power, though kept in cold storage, was yet to give up his claims to sovereignty over Jāunpur.

The plan of extensive conquests and defence measures against Delhi rulers, adopted by the rulers of the period in question, needed the introduction of secular principles in administration. The military governors of foreign origin whose names and titles abound in epigraphic records, continued, no doubt, to carry on routine work of administration. They formed the outer crust of the administrators’ circle. The local Hindus of Brahmānic and Kāyastha castes who constituted the core of the society and who formed the link between the ruler and the lower grades of population, had to be given due recognition. Such a secular policy was inherent in the logic of Bengal history. Knowing as they did the physical configuration of the country and the mind of the people, the local administrators were allowed to hold key positions in the structure of the state. And as such they could help the Muslim rulers, to a great extent, in bringing about the political consolidation which the latter were aiming at.

Now that her isolation from North India had reached its culminating point, Bengal could discover her cultural identity and find herself on her own. The literary renaissance which characterized the period in question, was but a flowering of

the local genius which had remained repressed in the earlier period of Bengal history. It was a spontaneous movement arising out of the aspirations of the people to give expression to their ideas in accordance with their own natural tendencies. The factors which contributed to its origin were popular interests in epic and *paurāṇik* stories, the growth of local cults, the recognition given by the rulers to Bengali language and also Brahminical revival and the birth of Chaitanyism, if Sanskrit literature is taken into consideration. Alien languages like Arabic or Persian could hardly accommodate the spirit of this movement so that local languages, particularly Bengali, became naturally the medium of expression. The early Sanskrit biographies of Chaitanya appear to have facilitated the process of transition from Sanskrit to vernacular culture, for they formed the basis of the Bengali biographies of the Vaiṣṇava leader which appeared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A significant element in the total volume of poetry was the growth of romanticism marking the starting point of humanism in the field of a literature that could be otherwise called predominantly religious in content. The flush of this literary-cultural enthusiasm had its effects perhaps on the subsequent phase of the literary history of Bengal. Äśāul and Daulat Qāḏī seem to have inherited the tradition of this romantic poetry along with its Sanskritic elements and sophisticated expression.

Sanskrit culture with its Brahminical contents, though lacking in the court patronage, continued to flourish in south-west Bengal. Raghunātha Shiromāṇi, Raghunandana and Chaitanya are the three great men who have left permanent marks on the pages of the history of this country. The foundation of the school of *Navya Nyāya* at Navadvīpa had the effect of overshadowing its Maithili counterpart. The logicians who lived after Raghunātha were but gleaners in the chosen field of that great logician. Raghunandana's socio-religious code is similarly a permanent asset to the conservative Hindu society. Chaitanya
not only gave a lease of life to the cult of bhakti, but also formed the nucleus of a great literary movement that remarkably enriched the cultural life of Bengal.

Bengal in the period in question did not witness the emergence of any new forms of art. The surviving specimens of fine arts and architecture are characterized by a considerable amount of embellishment which, apart from indicating an advanced stage of civilization attained by the country, seems to reflect the prosperity of the period. Generally speaking, the tradition of arts under the Ḥusain Shāhīs was but a continuation of that established in the preceding periods. No significant experiment was made in any branch of art. The attempt at executing terracotta art on stone, though an experiment hitherto unknown, does not appear to have been successful so far as its artistic depth and representation are concerned. It is true that the highly ornamental style of writing represented by the Bow and Arrow type of Ťughrā is a notable element in the history of arts. But the later Ilyās Shāhī period found its beginning, although it arrived at its culmination and perfection under the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers. There was a renaissance in the field of literature. But no such revivalism can be noticed in the history of pure arts and architecture of the period.

From whatever indications are available in the literary records, it is difficult to resist the inference that the rulers had tried to identify themselves with local aspirations after having put off their external cloak of foreign origin and that the development of Muslim mind was, more or less, along the line of indigenous culture. Legendary ideas and Tantric practices became, in all probability, a common heritage to some sections of the Muslims and the Hindus alike.

It was this period which witnessed the beginning of significant forces deeply affecting the political and economic history of Bengal. Between the dates of the first advent of the Europeans and the starting of the Mughal rule, one may specifically
fix the period of the historical processes which were destined to shape the life of the country for centuries to come. It is true that Mughal rule touched only the outer fringe of Bengal politics and that European trade and commerce were yet to have a proper beginning. But the period in question showed the signs of a new Bengal to be brought into existence through the working of those forces.

 Hvusain Shší rule represents thus a formative period of Bengal history.
Appendix A

Chronology

The Chronology of the Ḥusain Shāhī sultāns is as follows:¹

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>A.H.</th>
<th>A.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥusain Shāh</td>
<td>899-925</td>
<td>1494-1519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuṣrat Shāh</td>
<td>925-938</td>
<td>1519-1532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firuz Shāh</td>
<td>938-939</td>
<td>1532-1533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmūd Shāh</td>
<td>939-944</td>
<td>1533-1538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The catalogues of coins used in preparing this table have already been referred to in connection with the reigns of Ḥusain, Nuṣrat and Firuz. Supra, pp. 37, 63, 81-82 etc. with relevant footnotes may be consulted for these references. For the coins of Mahmūd, bearing the date 944 A.H., see S. Ahmed: Supplement, p. 71 and A.W. Botham: op. cit. pp. 174-75. It has very often been maintained that Ḥusain occupied the throne of Gauḍ in 1493 A.D. corresponding to 899 A.H. History of Bengal, ii, pp. 142 and 143; Abid Ali: op. cit. p. 190. But the view may be slightly modified. Ḥusain’s predecessor Muẓaffar Shāh seems to have ascended the throne in the early part of 1491 A.D., for the latest inscription of Muẓaffar’s predecessor Naṣir-ud-dīn Mahmūd, is dated 2nd Muḥarram, 896 A.H./15th November, 1490 A.D. and a gold coin of Muẓaffar, obviously issued as a souvenir signaling his accession, is clearly dated 896 A.H. Again the latest recorded date of Muẓaffar as evidenced by the Haqrat Pāpqūa inscription, J.A.S.B. 1873, pp. 290-91; Abid Ali: op. cit. pp. 114-15, Cunningham: op. cit. p. 84; Ravenshaw: op. cit. p. 77) is 17th Ramadān, 898/2nd July, 1493 and not 10th Rabī‘-ul-Awwal, 898/31st December, 1492, as maintained in History of Bengal, vol. ii, p. 141, on the basis of the Malda inscription bearing the latter date; see E.I.M. 1929-30, p. 13, pl. viii (a); P.A.S.B. 1890, p. 242 and A. H. Dani: Bibliography, p. 43. Thus coins and inscriptions allow to Muẓaffar, a period of nearly 2½ years. But Niẓām-ud-dīn: op. cit., iii, p. 270 and Salīm: op. cit. p. 129, hold that the sultan ruled for three years and five months. So he must have been alive not only in the later
Certain obscure points of Ḥusain Shāhi coins may be discussed in this connection. As already stated, Nuṣrat issued coins in his own name in 922/1516 and 923/1517 from Ḥusainābād and Ḥusainābād mints. Both of these dates clearly show that he was exercising the right of issuing coins when his father ‘Alā'ud-din Ḥusain Shāh was alive. Maḥmūd also issued coins in 933/1527, 934/1528, 935/1529 and 938/1532 from Nuṣratābād, Muḥammadābād, Faṭḥābād and Ḥusainābād. Nuṣrat reigned from 923/1519 to 938/1532. So it is fairly certain that Maḥmūd issued these coins during the lifetime of his predecessor, Nuṣrat Shāh.

Blochmann who was the first scholar to notice the irregular issue of coins by Nuṣrat, remarks, “They either indicate an extraordinary delegation of power or point to a successful rebellion.” On the basis of the irregular coins of Maḥmūd, a modern scholar has contended that “he set up an independent government even in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh in a particular

part of 1493, but also in the early months of 1494 A.D. The earliest recorded date of Ḥusain is 10th Dhi'l Qa'dah, 899 A.H./13th August, 1494. See the Maldah inscription of Ḥusain, Ravenshaw; op. cit. p. 78, pl. 50, no. 10; J.A.S.B. 1874, p. 302 and Abid Ali; op. cit. pp. 152-53. Some of his coins are also dated 899 A.H. Thus 1494 A.D. is probably the first regnal year of Ḥusain Shāh. The Arabic year 898 comes to an end towards the end of September, 1493, and the last quarter of 1493 falls within 899 A.H. But there is nothing to show that Ḥusain occupied the throne towards the end of 1493. On the other hand, epigraphic and literary evidences cited above, tend to suggest that his reign commenced from 1494 A.D.

1. Supra. p. 68.
2. H.N. Wright: Catalogue, ii, p. 179; Lane-Poole; op. cit. pp. 54-55, pl. vii, nos. 147 and 149. S. Ahmed: Supplement, pp. 70-71. The Sadullahpur inscription shows that he was using royal insignia in 933/1527; J.A.S.B. 1895, pp. 214-15.
3. J.A.S.B. 1873, p. 297; see also p. 227 of the same journal where Blochmann has said that Nuṣrat struck coins in opposition to his father.
part of the kingdom of Gauḍ" and that "the rebel Maḥmūd continued his rule simultaneously with Firūz in the territories that he had formerly acquired." These scholars are in favour of propounding a theory of simultaneous governments as illustrated in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The names of the rulers</th>
<th>The period of simultaneous rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥusain Shāh</td>
<td>922/1516 to 923/1517.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuṣrat Shāh</td>
<td>923/1527 to 935/1529 and in 938/1532.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuṣrat Shāh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maḥmūd Shāh</td>
<td>938/1532 to 939/1533.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firūz Shāh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that there was a rebellion in the reign of each of the sultāns of the period in question. This is an absurd proposition for which we find no support in the sources at our disposal. 'Alī'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh was too powerful a ruler to allow any rebel to flourish within his kingdom. The four mint towns from which Maḥmūd issued coins in the lifetime of Nuṣrat, must have covered an extensive territory. It would have been impossible for him to rule over so vast a region without being opposed by his more powerful brother, Nuṣrat. But history does not preserve records of any civil war between the two brothers. If there had been repeated rebellions in this period, the progress which we notice in the military, economic and cultural life of Bengal, would have been impossible. The coinage of a particular ruler is, not doubt, the indication of the exercise of sovereign rights by him. But a peculiar custom seems to have prevailed in

1. V.R.S. Monograph, no. 6, p. 18.
APPENDIX A

pre-Mughal Bengal. Some of the sultāns appear to have allowed the crown-princes to issue coins in their own names presumably to demonstrate to the people that the princes exercising that prerogative were going to inherit the kingdom. It was almost certain that Nuṣrat who was the eldest and probably the ablest of the eighteen children of ‘Alā’-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh, would succeed his father. The issuing of coins by Nuṣrat during the life-time of his father, may be regarded as actually signaling his nomination by his father for succession. Maḥmūd who was the second son of ‘Alā’-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh, seems to have been nominated by Nuṣrat for succession and the privilege of issuing coins, which he enjoyed, appears to be an actual confirmation of that nomination. Why Nuṣrat nominated Maḥmūd in preference to Firūz, is not clearly known. Probably he considered Firūz too young to conduct the governmental affairs.

Appendix B

The early life of Husain

The history of the early life of Ḥusain has given rise to an endless controversy among the scholars of our time. Krishnadas Kaviraj tells us that Saiyid Ḥusain Khan who was serving under a revenue officer of Gauḍ, named Suvuddhi Rāya, was once severely whipped for a fault of his own, by the latter, during the excavation of a tank. When he became the ruler of Gauḍ, he did not fail to show favour to his former master. But the sultan’s wife, finding the clear marks of whipping on his body, requested him to put the Rāya to death. Although the sultan did not comply with this bad advice, he finally desecrated the caste of Subudhi Rāya who, however, left for Benares.1 It is difficult to ascertain if the story contains any historical truth at all. While the poet on his own admission followed previous writers, Murāri Gupta, Dāmodara Svarūpa and Brndāvanadās, in matters of other details of the subject of his work, he is silent about the source of this story. Whatever might have been the source, the details of the early life of Ḥusain tally in essential points with other known versions of it.

João de Barros maintains that there landed at Chittagong, an Arab merchant of noble birth, of Aden, accompanied by a number of soldiers with whose help the sultan of Gauḍ conquered Orissa and that the merchant ultimately became the ruler of Gauḍ, having killed the sultan.2 Depending on

2. Faria y Souza, a late writer, who seems to have drawn mainly upon de Barros, says, “About fifty years before the Portuguese discovered India, came to Gauro an Arabian Mahometan, who growing rich and powerful, obtained the then King of Bengal, a victory over the King of Orixa. The King besides other
this statement, Blochmann has inferred that the Arab merchant mentioned by de Barros, is Saiyid Ḥusain Sharif Makkī. According to Buchanan-Hamilton, Ḥusain was a native of Rangpur district. The Pàqduš manuscript used by Buchanan-Hamilton, contains the following information: "......The Sultan Ibrahīm, grandfather of Hoseyn, was deprived of his life and throne by a converted Hindu, who assumed the name of Jalal-uddin; and Hoseyn did not recover the government until a rapid succession of murders and insurrections, had weakened the authority of the Hindu and of his successors. During a long period of 76 Muhammedan years, the son of Ibrahīm, and his family seemed to have found refuge in the dominions of the Komoteswori, whose government afterwards Hoseyn overthrew." Presuming that there was a gap of 76 years between Ḥusain and his so-called grandfather Ibrahīm, we may place the latter in the beginning of the fifteenth century. But no ruler of that name is known to have ruled in Bengal. But who was this sultān Rewards made him Captain of his Guard, and he ingratiately killed the King, usurped the Kingdom, and left the inheritance thereof to Moors that succeeded"; op. cit. vol. i, p. 417. From a careful analysis of whatever has been said by Faria y Souza about the political condition and geographical position of the early sixteenth century Bengal (op. cit. pp. 96-97, 108, 220, 273, 314-15 and 415-22), it appears that he has relied upon de Barros and perhaps other Portuguese writers.

3. The last ruler of the first Ilyās Shāhī dynasty was 'Alī-ud-din Firūz whose coins are dated 817 A.H./1414 A.D.; see Bhattachari: Coins and Chronology, pp. 107-08, pl. vii, nos. 1-a and 1-b; S. Ahmed: Supplement, pp. 58-59, pl. iii, no. 133. He was succeeded by Jalal-ud-din Muḥammad Shāh, the converted son of Rājā Gaṇesa. The house of Rājā Gaṇesa seems to have controlled the destiny of Bengal till 1432 A.D., after which date Naṣir-ud-din Maḥmūd restored the Ilyās Shāhī dynasty. A careful study of the history of Bengal shows that none of the sultāns belonging to the House of Rājā Gaṇesa and the Ilyās Shāhī dynasty was named Ibrahīm.
Ibrāhīm? Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī of Jaunpūr who was the contemporary of Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad, had no connection with 'Alla'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shah of Gauḍ. The grandson of Ibrāhīm was 'Alla'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh who ruled in Jaunpūr. It appears that this Ḥusain has been confused by the Paqūd manuscript with his Gauḍīya namesake. The story of the early life of 'Alla'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh, supplied by this source, is thus without any historical foundation.

The above views on the early life of Ḥusain Shāh have little connection with Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj's statement that he had served a Hindu official before he became the ruler of Gauḍ. According to a popular tradition found in the district of Murshidabad, Ḥusain served in his boyhood as a cow-keeper in the house of a Brahmin of Chāndpāḍā, a village in Murshidabad, to whom he showed, on becoming the king of Gauḍ, much gratitude by offering him the village of Chāndpāḍā on a nominal rent of one anna, so that the Brahmin's zamindāri became known as Ekāni Chāndpāḍā. It is said that the wife of Ḥusain Shāh, bent on desecrating his caste, compelled the Brahmin to take beef so that he had to become a convert to Vaiṣṇavism. The story is almost the same as that mentioned by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. It may be conjectured here that the poet, while writing the Chaitanya-charitāmṛta towards the end of the sixteenth century, probably found this tradition in wide circulation in Rājāh whence he might have drawn the material for this story. But no historian can safely rely on a traditional story like this unless it is corroborated by other known facts. Of course, the tradition current in Rājāh towards the end of the sixteenth century had possibly some connection with the events which took place in that part of the country at the end of the fifteenth century A.D. Salīm says that Ḥusain, son of one Āshraf Ḥusainī, who was a Shāriʿī of Makka, and an inhabitant of Tirmidh (a town in Turkestan)

came accidentally to Bengal, stayed in the house of a qaḍī of Chāṇḍpāḍa, a village in Rāḍh, who gave him education and also the hand of his daughter, because of his noble pedigree, and eventually became the vizier of Muḥaffar Shah. It seems that Salīm has depended for his information partially on the account given by Firīṣṭah who also calls Ḥusain, an inhabitant of Mecca.¹ Blochmann is in favour of identifying Chāṇḍpāḍa with a village of the same name in Jessore district.² But this identification of the locale of Ḥusain does not seem to be satisfactory. When Salīm has clearly stated that the Chāṇḍpāḍa in question was situated in Rāḍh or West Bengal, we have got hardly any reason to locate it in Jessore which was not then included in Rāḍh. Moreover, this Chāṇḍpāḍ does not abound in traditional stories about the early life of Ḥusain Shah which we find in Chāṇḍpāḍa of Murshidabad district.³ Not a single inscription of Ḥusain Shah has so far been discovered in the village of Chāṇḍpāḍa in Jessore district. It seems that Chāṇḍpāḍa, also known as Ekāni Chāṇḍpāḍa (probably because of the reason already mentioned) which is at present a village in Murshidabad district, is the place referred to by Salīm. Although the above statement of Salīm does not corroborate the story told by Kṛṣṇadās Kāvirāj, it indicates the association of Ḥusain Shah’s early life with that part of Murshidabad—a fact clearly proved by the discovery of a number of inscriptions of the early reign of Ḥusain Shah in the villages around Chāṇḍpāḍa.⁴ If the association of the sultan’s early life with Murshidabad seems so much well-established, the fact of his serving under a Hindu revenue official there before he became the ruler of Gaṇḍa, is also highly probable. Both Firīṣṭah and Salīm call him a Saiyīd⁵ and thus indicate that Ḥusain was an Arab by birth. His Arab

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3. For these stories, see *J.A.S.B.* 1917, pp. 143-47.
lineage is numismatically and epigraphically established. The expression “Sultān Ḥusain Shāh, son of Saiyid Aṣḥāf-ul-Ḥusaini” frequently appears on his coins. Thus there may be some truth in Salīm’s statement that Ḥusain was the son of Saiyid Aṣḥāf-ul-Ḥusaini who was originally an inhabitant of Mecca and who ultimately settled in Tirmidh. Ḥusain’s father was the ṣharīf of Mecca. The ṣharīfs enjoyed much respect in the society. The naqīb-ul-ṣahīf or Keeper of the register of the descendants of the Prophet, who might have been the sole administrator of the city over which he was placed, was sometimes appointed from amongst the members of the Ḥusainī house. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah tells the story of a ṣharīf who came to India in the reign of sultān Ghiyāsh-ud-dīn Tughluq and died after having enjoyed a suitable revenue assignment. Later sources, however, indicate that the ṣharīf was the care-taker of the Ka‘ba the recent example being ṣharīf Husain of Mecca. As members of the Ḥusainī family, the ṣharīfs had Shi‘ite inclination.

2. Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūtah, Gibb, i, p. 258 ff.
Appendix C

Isma'il Ghazi

It is necessary here to say a few words about Isma'il Ghazi whom the scholars want to associate with the reign of Ḥusain Shāh. Facts and fiction have so inextricably mixed around the name of Isma'il Ghazi that almost all writers appear to have accepted the current story about him without any question. Our present knowledge about Isma'il Ghazi has been aptly summarized by Blochmann in the following words: 1 "If we strip the legend of the headless rider of the wonderful, we have the plain story that Isma'il, Ganj-i-Lashkar, a general of Ḥusain Shāh, invaded Orissa from Bengal in the beginning of the 16th century, gained a signal victory over the Orissans at Katak, and then returned to Madarān, where he built a fort within the walls of which he lies buried. Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the historical value of legends in general, it strikes me that the Madarān legend confirms and completes in a most unexpected manner, the Uria accounts from which Stirling has extracted the above mentioned details of the Muhammadan invasion of Orissa." Detailing the story, Rajani Kanta Chakrabarti 2 says that Isma'il Ghazi who attacked Orissa in 1510 A.D., was put to death by Ḥusain Shāh, for he suspected that Isma'il was trying to revolt against the sultān after having constructed a fort at Madarān frontier. The headless body of Isma'il, riding on a horse, proceeded from Gauḍ, in the direction of Madarān, while the severed head followed it hovering high up in the air. Arriving at the gate of Madarān fort, Isma'il wanted

1. P.A.S.B. 1870, p. 120.
2. Op. cit. ii, pp. 120-21; The history of this "headless rider", of Mandarān has also been told by Blochmann, P.A.S.B. 1870, pp. 217-20.

46—
some betel-leaf from the guards who were waiting there. When they refused to comply with the request of the dead, the trunkless head went back to Gauḍ and the body was buried at Mandarān. Rakhal Das Banerji also repeats the same story when he says that Ismā’īl Ghāzi, a general of the Nawab of Bengal (Huṣain Shāh), destroyed the city of Puri. Buchanan Hamilton who associates Ismā’īl with Huṣain’s Kamrupa expeditions, maintains that the saint was alive in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh.

It thus appears that the whole basis of Ismā’īl Ghāzi being regarded as a contemporary and officer of Huṣain Shāh, is the story said to have been found in the Mādla Pañji, referred to by Rakhal Das Banerji and Stirling, the latter being the source of Blochmann’s observation. These historians have been influenced by the legend of Ismā’īl Ghāzi which is still in wide circulation in south-west Bengal. The legendary story mentioned by Rajani Kanta Chakrabarti and Blochmann, is a strange admixture of historical facts and popular imagination.

Initially, however, the reference to the Mādla Pañji appears to be incorrect for the simple reason that the Pañji speaks of an attack on Orissa in 1509 A.D. by the surasthāna. The term surasthāna seems to be a corruption of the Arabic term sultān. The Pañji never names Ismā’īl Ghāzi. The term surasthāna in the Pañji suggests that the attack on Orissa was led by the sultān himself assisted by his officers. That the sultān personally took part in some of the campaigns against Orissa is evidenced by the Sylhet inscription of Huṣain Shāh dated 1512 A.D. and also by Bengali and Orissan sources. The term surasthāna which can thus be easily explained should not

1. Vāṅgalār Itihāsa, ii, pp. 245-46.
5. Supra, p. 50.
be understood to have stood for Ismā‘īl Ghāzi.

The association of Ismā‘īl with Ḥusain Shāh’s attacks does not, therefore, bear scrutiny. It is true that one Ismā‘īl Ghāzi, had once attacked Orissa from Bengal. It is also true that Ismā‘īl was executed at the order of his sultan. That Ḥusain Shāh attacked Orissa is as much beyond doubt as that Ismā‘īl was buried in Mandāran the building of the fortification of which place is associated with his name. Ismā‘īl Ghāzi who actually attacked Orissa did so under a previous regime, i.e. in the reign of sultan Bārbak Shāh. He died under the order of this sultan in 878 A.H./1474 A.D.1 Bārbak Shāh’s attack on Orissa confused with the similar incident of Ḥusain Shāh’s reign together with the unfortunate fact of Ismā‘īl being beheaded by the sultan’s order mixed up in popular legends that grew up in the name of Ismā‘īl who is almost worshipped as a great saint by both Hindus and Muslims of south-west Bengal.2 In clearing the jumble the Risālat-ugh-Shuhadā comes to our rescue. It was written in 1042 A.H./1633 A.D.3 What the Risāla says regarding the historical personality of Ismā‘īl may be summarized in the following lines:4 Bhandāsi Rāya, the commandant of Ghorāghāt, requested Ismā‘īl to allow him to build up a fort in the frontier region. Ismā‘īl complied with the request. But the Rāya poisoned the mind of the sultan against Ismā‘īl telling him that Ismā‘īl had entered into a friendly alliance with the king of Kāmrūpa. Determined to bring about the ruin

2. Paying tribute to him, Sītaramdās, a seventeenth century poet of Bengal, says: “I adore pīr Ismā‘īl at Gaḍ Mandāran. (It is due to his spiritual influence that) tigers and buffaloes live together in the forest. The embankment, which Ismā‘īl has constructed, exists at Gaḍ Mandāran. He built up seventy-two strongholds within the fortification of Mandāran. Bowing down on the ground, I adore his feet.” Text quoted by Sukumar Sen: Madhya Yuger Vāngla O Vāngāli, p. 41.
of Ismā'īl, the sultan sent his soldiers against Ismā'īl who repulsed them quite successfully. He wrote a letter to Ismā'īl asking him to appear at the court immediately. Ismā'īl yielded to the decree of his fate by responding to his call. He was executed at the order of the sultan on Friday, 14th Sha'ban, 845 A.H. (4th January, 1474 A.D.). His property was confiscated by the royal authority. When the sultan came to know the role played by the Rāya, he burst into tears. Accompanied by the queen, he went to Mandaran and Kāntāduar in order to show respect to the departed soul.¹

The evidence of the Risāla gets partial confirmation from an inscription² dated 900 A.H./1494-95 fixed up on the tomb of Ismā'īl at Mandaran in so far as putting Ismā'īl in a period earlier than 1494-95. Ismā'īl could not have been alive in 1509 when Husain Shāh's attacks on Orissa took place.

The evidence of the Risālat-ugh-Shahāda together with the Mandaran inscription possibly sets at rest the confusion that so long existed about Ismā'īl, unless one is prepared to presume the existence of two Ismā'īls, one killed in 1474 A.D., and another

1. The Risālat-ugh-shahāda also informs us that the saint came to Bengal with a view to propagating Islam in the East. Barbak Shāh helped him by recruiting him as one of his military officers and also by entrusting to him the task of attacking the non-Muslim rulers of Kamrūpa and Orissa. Ismā'īl Ghāzi seems to have been successful in subduing these rulers. (See the Risāla in J.A.S.B. 1874, pp. 226-35 and History of Bengal, vol. II, pp. 133-34). The terrible fate which was awaiting him has already been described. The Risāla seems to be the earliest work to narrate the incidents connected with Ismā'īl's life. Although we lamentably lack in materials to verify the biographical account gleaned from the Risāla, it may be inferred here that the work is based on historical truth. That the political relation of Bengal with Kamrūpa and Orissa was far from friendly, is a well-established fact.
leading attack on Orissa in 1509 A.D. both being buried at Mandaran and equally venerated by the local Hindus and Muslims. The presumption would be too far-fetched.

Ḥusain Shāh’s attack on Orissa had nothing to do with Ismā‘īl Ghāzi who flourished in the earlier period i.e. the reign of Bārbak Shāh.¹

Appendix D

Texts from the Haud-ul-Hayat

The texts together with a translation of the Persian passages contained in pls. i and ii attached to this work, are given below. They describe the garbhāsana (or the posture resembling that of a child in the mother's womb) and the sabhāsana (or the posture looking like the one taken in a meeting), illustrated in pls. i and ii respectively.

Plate—1

چون طالبی خواهد که باین شغل مشغولی نیاپد باید که
جلسة گریه آس پیش گیرید، گریه آس آترا گویید که جوانچه پچه
در شکم مادر می پاسده، در باید یای چپ بر پایی راست
نهاده دو سرین بر دو پایی داشته و سر میان دو زانو برداشته
و دو آرنج بردو ثوگه نهاده و دو دست بردو گوش کرده
ناف را به بست رساند از ناف رویی که بیداست آترا لرنگین
میگویند عبارت از... است دم را حبس کند.

When anybody likes to engage himself with this particular exercise, he should adopt the garbhāsana. This is called garbhāsana, as it is like the form of a baby in the womb of the mother. He should put the left foot on the right foot keeping the two buttocks on the two feet and the head in between the two knees kept upward, while keeping the two elbows in the abdomen and the two palms on the two ears. The navel should be pressed towards the back. The position appearing from the navel is called nirañjana meaning...stopping the breath as much as possible.
Plate—II

Whoever likes to perform (the dhikr of) kumbbak, should take care of what his organs have borne (hardship) gradually up to the origin of brain due to pūrak, lest his organs should suffer from breakage. When he reaches the centre of the brain, he should moisten the eyes and the tongue with wine and should let the breath come out from the nostrils slowly. Then he should begin with the exercise of pūrak. When he inhales, it is called pūrak; when he exhales, it is called kumbbak and when he discharges (air), it is called rechak. Description of sabhāsana is meant for strengthening the nose, the veins of the neck and the back, and digestion of food and drying of the internal organs which are the servants of the body. The right foot with the leg be placed on the left thigh and the left foot with the leg on the right thigh, gently and slowly till he gets accustomed. To begin with, it is difficult.
Appendix E

Texts from the Adya-Parichaya and the Juana-sagara

I

Texts from the Adya-Parichaya of Shaikh Zahir translated or paraphrased in ch. vi, sec. ii. Pages mentioned at several places are those of the present work containing translation or paraphrase of the texts concerned:

nā chhila khitijala                  i mahimaṇḍala
shūnya madhye nā chhila prakāsha,
svarga marta pāṭāla              sava chhila adhakāra
āur nā chhila ākāsha.
chandra sujjo tārā               nā chhila abhiparā
nā chhila navina jaladhara,
vūu varaṇa ānala                  prthivi rasātala
nā chhila parvata shikhara.
nadanadi shūnyākāra               nā chhila jhoḍajhaṅkāra
nā chhila sāgara tīthasthāna,
saṁsāre nā chhila kichhu          sava haila tāra pichhu
save mātra chhila bhagavāna.
ekā chhila nijarūpa             kichhu nā pālla sukha
bhāvila prabhu āpana shartre,
shūnyākāra ghuchāi deṣṭa          rachilāta nānā srṣṭa
eka khelā khelāva saṁsāre,
āpanāra diyā rati                 nīje laye eka mūrti
rākhila gosāṇi alaṅghya sāgare,
mitta saṅge āḷāpane              kautuka vāḍila mane
nirmāṇaṁ ekaṁ hunkāre.
sṛjana karīyā mitta              hariṣa vāḍila chitta
jalera utpatti haila saṁsāre,
shīghra kahte vachana               tāhāte janmilā pavana
āṇala jannila krodha halte.
mittera aṅgera mali         nīja kare tāhā tuli
yogāila jalera upare
mittlkā vāḍaye jale

dine dine haya prāsare.

jammila chārirata

sradhāe sṛjila gosāñi,

sāivasrete jamme

sava haya kreme kreme

oha vahi anya kichhu nāñi.
yata chhila bhayaṅkara

sava haila prachāra

ōṅkāre karila nirmanā,
rachila tina jiva

tāhāte diyā shiva

sainya mukhya kaila sthāne sthāne.

jammila deva asura

vāhuvala nā chine anyathā,
niravadhi kare raṇa

nājāne marāṇa

kāho sane nāhika mamatā.
ghoḍā hasti prakhara

rāksasa bhayaṅkara

rājatva kare chirakāla,
bhuṅjila āpna mane

vividha vidhāne nā chine

kevā sṛjila sāyāla.

prabhu karila mane

āmā keho nāhi chine

ki ki kāraye karilun prakāsha,
krodha halīya deo

sava karivā khao

ye ke ke kaila vaishnānāsha.
nirāmāla kariyā deo

sāivasreto nāñi keo

emana gela katho divasa,
punarvāra karila mane

manuṣya sṛjone bhuvane

tāhā halte pāimu harīṣa.

Supra. pp. 199-200.

tāhaka karimu rājā

śīvere karimu prajā

pethvā sūjiya diva mahītale,
karimu pravīna

puje jena rātridina

teyāgiyā sakala jaṅjāle.
ūra katha sṛjila

kāhāta sukha nā pūla

manuṣya karimu sṛjana,
āpanāra ānga chhila

ūra katha nirāmāla

ekemāe haya manuṣya ākāra.


vāta varuyā unāla vaise jēi jēi khāne,

erga marita pātāla kahimu sthāne sthāne.
What follows is texts from the Jñāna-pradīpa of Saiyid Sulṭān translated or paraphrased in ch. vi, sec. ii, of this work. We have mentioned below the texts, folio nos, of the Dacca University MS. and the pages of this book which contain either translation or paraphrase of the texts concerned; texts from D.U. MSS. have been slightly edited with the help of quotations in Sahitya Vishārad's Catalogue and Enamul Huq's Muslim Vāhgalā Sahitya. In spelling or correcting the names of nerves, yoga literature has been used.

brahmānde ye guṇa vaise se guṇa sharīre.
fol. 9b; supra. p. 204.

merudaṇḍe tāgilā piṅgilā dui nāḍī,
yena bṛksa dui pūshe latā uchhe veļi.
dakṣiṇe piṅgilā nāḍī yena divākara,
vāma pūshe tāgilā nāḍī yena shashadhara.
tāgilāta vaise gaṅgā piṅgilā javunā,
surāsura madhye vaise nāmeta susumnā.
tin nāḍī eka hai uchhe bhuruvāt,
Jñāni save vales eit tripinīra ghūṭ.
fol. 10a; supra. p. 205.
APPENDIX E

Tāgīla pīṅgīla nāḍī dui ye pradhāna,
gūndhārī kuhū hastijihā pūṣā yasaṃvini,
payasvinī alaṃvāṣa trīguṇā shaṅkhini.

fol. 9b-10a; supra. p. 205.

madhyeta suṣumṇā nāḍī sarvva madhye sār,
ādyāśakti sūdhivār sei ye duār.

... ... pūrake pūriyā vāyu karīve bhakṣoṇa,
sūchī mukhe sutā yena kare pravesana.

... ... sandhi pāśi sei vāyu karīve pravesha,
ūṭhite ūṭhite dhvani karīve vishṛṣṭa.
shunite shunite dhvani sthira have mana,

... ... ... ... sei dhvani madhye jyoti chiniyā laiva.
tave ei jyoti madhye mana niyojīva.
tave sei jyotite manerā have lāya,
sei se prabhura pantha jānīlo nishchaya.

fol. 10a; supra. pp. 205-06.

jānī save vale ei tripinīra ghāṣ.
el ghāṣe yei jana sināna ye kare,
koṭi koṭi janmera pāpe tūre ki karite pāre.

fol. 10a; supra. p. 208.

tummi seṣṭi tummi karīta tummi ye svarūpa,

fol. 6b; supra. p. 211.

trīguṇā nāḍīra kathā tīna thāṇi veṅka,
tūḥāke jānile nare mṛtyu nāhi shaṅka.

fol. 3a; supra. p. 213.

dekhite nā pūrī yāre tūre vali shūnāya,
yūḥāre chintile dekhi puruṣera dhanya.

fol. 4b; supra. p. 218.
Appendix F

A. Bibliographical Notes

In reviewing the history of the period in question, materials from a number of sources have been used. As it is difficult to give an exhaustive survey of all of them, the present writer has selected only the important ones for the present purpose.

A critical use of some of the evidences supplied by Persian sources can help us in reconstructing the political history of the period under review. Persian chronicles like the Ţabaqt-i-Akbari, the Tāriḵ-i-Firīštah, the Riyād-us-Salāṭīn and the English version of Buchanan-Hamilton's Pāṇḍūr manuscript, give but an incomplete idea about some of the sultāns of the Ḥusain Shāhī dynasty without touching at all on the socio-cultural aspects of life in the country. Though Niẓām-ud-dīn and Firishtah briefly narrate the events of the reigns of Ḥusain and Nuṣrat, they remain silent on the reign of Firuz and refer to Maḥmūd, particularly in connection with Sher Shāh’s attacks on Bengal, thus giving the impression to the reader that they did not know that Maḥmūd belonged to the Ḥusain Shāhī dynasty. Ghulām Ḥusain Salīm’s Riyād-us-Salāṭīn is inadequate in as much as the author vaguely refers to Ḥusain’s conquest of Orissa and Kamrupa and does not at all mention his Tippera expeditions and occupation of Chittagong. Dates and sequence of events as given by these writers, are not only confusing, but also misleading. These Persian sources, if corroborated and supplemented by numismatic, epigraphic and local literary sources, can, of course, give a bare skeleton of political history of the period in question. The ‘Ālamgīr Nāmah and the Faṭḥiyah-i-‘ibriyah contain an account of Ḥusain Shāh’s expedition against Assam which seems to have been closely copied by the writer of the Riyād-us-Salāṭīn. Todar Mall’s Rent Roll as found in the A’in-i-Akbarī, helps the students of history in understanding the nature of
the territorial divisions and administrative units that obtained in Bengal, particularly towards the end of the sixteenth century. Badayuni's Muntahab-ut-Tawariikh is useful in so far as it gives information about Ḥusain Shāh's relation with Sikandar Lūdī and Ḥusain Sharqī of Jaunpūr. While the Memoirs of Bābūr throw considerable light on Bengal's relation with the Mughals, Afghan sources like the Tārikh-i-Salāṭīn-i-Afghānah of Aḥmad Yāsīdar and the Tārikh-i-Sher Shāhī of 'Abbās Sarwānī give us a connected account of events leading to Sher Shāh's occupation of Gauḍī in 1538 A.D. Sources like the Tārikh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī, the Tārikh-i-Mubārak Shāhī, the Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣīrī, the Humāyūn Nāmah and the TahākMAT-ul-Waqī'at, though referred to wherever necessary in this work, do not have sufficient positive value for the present purpose. The Risālat-ul-Shuhadā is useful for correcting the date of Ismā'īl Ghāzi and ascertaining his political relationship with Bārbak Shāh.

Contemporary Bengali poems constitute an indispensable source for the study of the socio-cultural history of Bengal. Works like the Manasa-maṅgal of Vijaya Gupta and the Manasa-vijaya of Viprādas not only show the growth of the Manasa cult, but also throw sufficient side-lights on various aspects of Bengali life. Bengali biographies of Chaitanya including the Chaitanya-bhāgavat of Brndāvanadās, the Chaitanya-charitāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadās Kavitāj, the Chaitanya-maṅgal of Lochanadās and the Chaitanya-maṅgal of Jayānanda, are mines of information, indicating as they do the gradual evolution of Chaitanyism, particularly its Navadvīpa tradition. The Chaitanya-charitāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadās Kavitāj, may be used quite cautiously for writing the history of the early phase of Chaitanyism, for it is based on materials and inspiration received from the works of the Brndāvana Gosvāmins who had hardly any connection with the Navadvīpa tradition of Vaiṣṇavism. The Shab-i-Mi'rāj and the Jnāna-pradīpa of Saiyid Sulṭān together with such later works as the Yoga Kālandar and the Jnāna-sāgara of 'All Riḍā, give us a clear idea about the process of transformation which Muslim culture was going through in those days. These works, with
the exception of the *Shab-i-Mi'raj*, betray a strange inter-mingling of yogic practices with Islamic mysticism. Arabic and Persian translations or adaptations of the Sanskrit *Amrīta-kūṇḍa*, help us a great deal, in ascertaining the nature of this process. The poems composed by Shridhara and Sābirid on the love story of Vidyā and Sundra, represent the earliest tradition of romanticism in Bengali literature which can be properly understood, if its Hindi-Avadhī background as constituted by the *Mrgāvati* of Qutbān and the *Padumāvat* of Jaisi, is borne in mind. The *Parāgalī Mahābhūrat* and the *Ashvamedha Parva*, apart from indicating the process of translating Sanskrit legendary works into Bengali, give some stray information about Ḥusain's conquests of Chittagong and Tippera, which may be corroborated by the later Bengali chronicle *Rājamālā*. Different versions of the Assam *Buraṅjī*, though full of traditions, give details about the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers' expeditions against the Ahom kingdom. The *Shunya-Purāṇa*, the *Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna*, the *Gorakṣa-vijaya* and the *Chaṇḍīmaṅgala* of Kavikaṇḍa, supply certain data invaluable for the history of the Dharma, Nātha and Chaṇḍī cults and for many other aspects of life as well.

Sanskrit biographies of Chaitanya corresponding to the Bengali ones mentioned above, throw light on the Navadvīpa school of Vaiṣṇavism in its simple, original form. These include the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Murāri Gupta and the *Chaitanya-\-charitāmṛta* and the *Chaitanya-chandodya* of Kavikaṇḍapūra, a brief survey of which will be found in the seventh chapter of this work. The *Smṛtitattva* of Raghunandana which reveals the Brahminical attitude towards the Hindu life and the different dramas and *champūs*, give us a fair idea about the socio-cultural *milieu* that influenced the country for a considerable period of time.

The importance of the foreign travellers' accounts cannot be overestimated. Varthema and Barbosa who came to Bengal in the early sixteenth century, give valuable information about the trade, industry and people of this country. The account of
Joao de Barros is important, particularly for Bengal's political and geographical conditions relating to the period under discussion. The *Portuguese Asia* of Faria y Souza, a seventeenth-century writer, contains an account of Bengal substantially similar to the one found in the work of de Barros. The Chinese annals written in the fifteenth century and the *Rehla* of Ibn Battutah belonging to an earlier period have also been drawn upon, for they contain certain materials useful for the history of our period.

Coins and inscriptions which throw light on the history of Husain Shâh of Bengal, have been used probably not without profit. These have helped the present writer in fixing or correcting certain important dates and gleaning many other peculiarities of the socio-political life of Bengal such as the nature of sovereignty and peculiarity of the function of the provincial governors and other officials.
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