

CHAPTER - V

ECONOMIC LIFE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL

Here, in this chapter focus on the Economic life and political participation of the *Nashya Sheikhs* of North Bengal: The economic life and political condition of the *Nashyas* is miserable and deplorable in compared to the other Muslim communities. Gradually under the pressure of a big culture and lack of consciousness their (*Nashyas*) own culture, tradition, beliefs, rituals etc. were pushed to the verge of endangerment rendering them socially, economically, politically, culturally, educationally extremely backward. Their main occupation is cultivation, but cattle farming, small scale business, selling of fish, mutton, chicken etc. are also other sources of their income. *Nashyas* are mostly interested in cow trading. They were always a subject of subjugation and hatred by the higher-class Muslims. The literacy rate among the *Nashyas*, especially among the women is a matter of grave concern. Superstition and lack of consciousness is another impediment to the growth of this community.

I

ECONOMIC LIFE: THE CONTINUITY AND THE CHANGES

A large portion of the converted Muslim community in North Bengal are being victimised in terms of economic stability. They could not think of an alternative source of income within social dieseling.

Agriculture:

Basically, agriculture is the main profession of this community. Till date the bulk of the *Nashya sheikh* population in the above-mentioned districts are mostly dependent on farming and agriculture. However, a shift has been noticed that there is a tendency among the educated *Nashya sheikh* Muslims to lean towards Government Service. In spite of that agriculture is the prime source of income for this community. Nowadays various kinds of factors are responsible for losing their land. Within the economically changing society a pack of people who are called *Nashya Sheikh* Community.

The traditional occupation of the *Nashya* community is agriculture. But now-a-days they depend on various occupational pursuits. In rural areas they are primarily cultivators, a few share-croppers and many are agricultural labourers¹. Once there were many *Nashya Jotedars*. Once there were many rich *Jotedar* from *Nashya Sheikh* Community in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts, such as Meehua Doni, but nowadays for various reasons they have lost their big holdings. For different monetary emergencies the land holding of the big and rich *Nashya Sheikhs* have gradually become fragmented.² A few decades back cultivation was mainly carried out through the conventionally means which meant that it entirely depended on manual skill and organic fertilizer. Naturally the production was less in comparison with the present time. Now the scenario has changed. Today the rich *Nashya Sheikh* cultivator prefers to use tractor, tilling machines, chemical fertilizer, genetically mutated seeds in the farming. Contrary a mediocre and poor farmer even today follows the conventional technique of production. There exist various occupational groups among the *Nashya sheikh* Muslims of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri. In rural areas the *Nashya sheikhs* are primarily cultivators and craftsmen who produce goods and services for the public. Most *Nashya sheikh* peasants are agricultural labour and some are self-cultivators.³ There were few big land lords among the *Nashya sheikh* Muslims of this area before the period of

independence. The *Nashya sheikh* contribution to Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar's agricultural products particularly paddy, jute and tobacco are very significant. Muslims of Dinahata are considered to be the best tobacco cultivators of Cooch Behar district. Beside cultivation, some *Nashya sheikhs* are engaged in making agricultural tools and other materials of domestic use.⁴

The *Nashyas* living in urban areas are engaged in shop-keeping, tailoring, Masoning, rickshaw-pulling and blue-collar services. Women belonging to poor *Nashya* families are engaged in various economic activities. They work as agricultural labourers, construction workers and housemaids. Economically, the *Nashya* of both the rural and the urban areas are poor. Apart from that another interesting feature of their income is their deep engagement in cow and goat trading across North Bengal especially in two districts i.e. Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri⁵.

According to the census in 1911, the Muslim population of undivided Dinajpur district was 8,24,345. Of these, 6,13,412 were members of the Muslim Sheikh community, 3,241 were descendants of Syeds, 3,65 were Pathans and 269 were Maghals. Only 33 names were registered during the census. Many of the Hindus who converted to Islam took the title of Sheikh to identify them as noble. Many of the converted Muslims did not have a clear idea about the division of the Muslim society like Sheikh Syed. In the Hindu society, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, the Muslims who converted to Islam were known as Sheikhs, Syeds, Maghals and Pathans. Uneducated Muslims did not have a clear idea about Hazrat Muhammad, the meaning of the Qur'an, etc. They did not realize the difference between Hinduism and Islam. Even after their conversion, they took part in Durga Puja and consulted Hindu astrologers to fix the dates of weddings and other ceremonies. They also worshiped Shitala and Rakshakali in case of spring or other outbreaks. Raktakali was also worshiped. Believing in the existence of the soul of the dead, they used to light lamps in the

tombs of the dead. After the Wahhabi and Faraji movements, the Muslims of Bengal began to be free from Hindu beliefs and reforms. Again, the Wahhabi and Faraji movements gained anti-imperialist and anti-feudal character from the reform movement of Islam. It is pertinent to note that the ulema community, of course, pressured the sultans to convert the infidels, but the sultans never ruled the state on the advice of the ulema. That is why Hindus also think that Muslim rulers are foreigners. In 1540, Vrindavan Das addressed the Bengali Sultan as a king in his poem Chaitanyamangal. In the Chaitanya Mangalkavya of the Vaishnava poet Jayananda in 1550, he not only called the Muslim ruler a king, but also compared the king to God. "Thus, the Muslim rulers of Bengal were made Bengali. Baliadangi Mouza was inhabited by a type of fakir community during the reign of Shah Sujar. The religion they preached was in fact a combination of Islam and Hindu yagsadhana. They grow long hair on their head ... put on colour cloths, wear a small piece of cloth instead of breeches called Kofri and use shackles of iron and long iron tongs. They sit with sticks placed as a support under their arms. The reviews take touched by other Persons and subsist mainly on unboiled rice, clarified butter and salt. They do not eat fish or meat.

Most of the Muslim community in Dinajpur were farmers. Moreover, Buchanan's account reveals what other occupations the Muslim community was engaged in. In the entire Dinajpur district, 120 Muslim families were engaged in making hand brackets. All Muslim women wore bracelets. All the tailors in the district belonged to the Muslim community. Because Hindus did not know the use of needles. However, the number of tailors was negligible compared to the Muslim population. Because the Hindu and Muslim converts were accustomed to wearing tat. Only those who worked in government offices used to wear Muslim attire. There were about one hundred tailors in the then North Dinajpur district. There was a class of singers in the Muslim society like the Hindu community. These were called *jari*. At the time of his death, the *Jarigans* sang songs in praise of Hazrat Muhammad's

daughter Fatima and Hassan Hasan. The Muslim community was the first to introduce the use of paper in this district. Before the arrival of Muslims, the Hindu community used to write on the bark of trees. However, the paper produced in this district was of low quality. About one hundred Muslims were employed in the paper making industry in the district. However, Hindus were predominant in big business. Most of the big landlords were Hindus. The Muslim community of the district was also lagging behind in terms of education and initiation. In 180 A.D., the Muslim population of Dinajpur district was 59.4 per cent but in 180-71, the number of Muslim students in government aided schools was only 3,399. However, the number of Muslim students studying in the Madrasa Makhtab was not taken into account. People from all communities used to take part in religious ceremonies. The Muslim community used to take part in such *Durga Puja*. Similarly, the *Taziya* Hindu Malakar community of the Muslim community used to prepare. Statues of many Hindu goddesses were found in *Taziya*. There is another community of Muslims called Nawa or Osta. They circumcise or amputate children between the ages of seven and ten.

The Muslim community lagged behind in English education due to various reasons. But even in independent India, the condition of Bengali Muslims has not improved but the socio-economic condition of Muslim society including Dinajpur has deteriorated. According to the Sachar Committee's report on the Muslim community in the district, Muslims make up 25.2 per cent of the population in West Bengal. However, only 2.1 per cent are employed in government jobs. Nine Muslim communities in West Bengal have been listed as OBCs. But OBC's conservation is only 6 per cent. As a result of the *Tana* movement, a large number of Muslims in Islampur sub-division alone have been given OBC identification certificates. The work of issuing OBC certificates in other areas of South and North Dinajpur districts has not started much. According to the 2001 census report, the number of Muslims in Uttar Dinajpur is 115,7503. 47.36 per cent of the population of the district is Muslim. 98.6 per cent

live in rural areas and only 2.12 percent live in urban areas. In South Dinajpur, only 0.43 percent lives in Muslim cities. The number of male landless Muslim farm laborers is second only to Nadia in North Dinajpur district. In all the districts of West Bengal, the number of Muslim farm labourers is higher than that of Hindus. Literacy rate among Muslim males in North Dinajpur district is 64.56% and female literacy rate is 25.50%. Uttar Dinajpur district has 13 government recognized Madrasas like Junior and High Madrasa. Despite promises, the number has not increased.” State universities do not have 2 percent Muslim professors. The Bengali Muslim community has been a backward community since the British period. Even after independence, nothing has changed. Imams' allowance alone does not lead to proper development of Muslim society. It is necessary to implement the recommendations of the Sachar Committee. If the politics of vote Bank is done, not only the Muslim community will be harmed, but also the country in the end.

The Zamindar of Nashya Sheikh Community and their economic role:

The Doors or Duars are the floodplains and foothills of the Eastern Himalayas in North -East Indian around Bhutan. In English Dooars means “Door”. The region forms the gateway to Bhutan from India. There are 18 passages or gateways through which the Bhutanese people can communicate with the people living in plains. This region is divided by the Sankosh River into the Eastern and the Western. Dooars consist of an area of 8800 Sq Km (3400 Sq Miles). The Western Dooars are known as the Bengal Dooars and the eastern Dooars as the Assam Dooars.⁶

The Dooars belonged to the Koch Kingdom and taking advantage of the weakness of the Koch Kingdom in subsequent times, Bhutan took possession of the Dooars. This region was controlled by the kingdom of Bhutan. But British annexed it in 1865 AD (Treaty of Sinchula) after the Bhutan War under the command of Captain Hedayet Ali.⁷ The area was divided into two parts; the Eastern part was merged with Goalpara District in Assam and the

Western part was turned into a new District named western Dooars. Again, in the year of 1869, the name was changed to Jalpaiguri District. After the end of the British Rule in India 1947, the Dooars acceded into the dominion of India and it merged with the Union of India shortly afterwards in 1949.⁸ We would like to discuss only 5 Dooars in the regions. They are Chamurchi, Lakhimpur, Balla, Buxa and Kumar Gram and the role of the selected Jotdars of the region in the spread of socio-cultural activities.

Jotedar class in the western Dooars:

A Jotdar is a person who holds lands directly under Governments. Hill holding is called a Jote. Jotedar has a transferable and saleable right in the land but his rent is liable to be enhanced by the Government whenever a new settlement is made. There were many resident and non-resident *Jotdars* in the Western Dooars. Before the rule of the English there were many *Jotdars* in the region. The British tried to set up new people settlements in the jungle region of the Western Dooars.⁹ Many types of people come into the Western Dooars for their existence. Dooars region was non-regulated area. So, more land came under some groups. Some Marwari businessmen invested money for buying and selling of lands. These groups became able to preserved huge jote land they become known as Landed Gentry. Thus, gradually a new class *jotedars* came in the scene of agricultural stage of the Western Dooars. After the acquisition of Dooars, the English Government settled land in this region in three ways. 1 Land of Tea garden 2 reserved land and 3 Agricultural lands. Total agricultural land has been divided into 5 Tehsils. 3 Tehshils were in the Western Dooars. These Tehshils were divided into small area. Land of this small area had been given Ijara. Those who took these lands as Ijara were called Ijaradars.¹⁰ Subsequently these Ijaradars were terminated as *Jotedars*. *Jotedars* of these regions were Hindus, Muslims, and Tribes etc.¹¹ Now, we would like to highlight the role of some selected *Jotedars* in the spread of socio-cultural activities in the region.

Jotder Rahimuddin:

Rahimuddin was a Jotedar of Helapakri area. Area of his Jote land was approx. 500 acres. He had been able to realize the importance of proper education. He donated Rs. 10,000/ and 7.5 acres of land for setting up a school in a marginal village like Helapakri. He had been immensely helped by Mokshanath Sen, Jogen Datta and local people. Now the name of this school is Padamoti Union Rahimuddin High School which was established in 1946. He developed road communication by making a wooden bridge between Helapakri and Bhotpatti villages. Though he went to East Pakistan for livelihood but left the benevolent touch of socio-cultural activities of the region.¹²

Jotedar Abdul Gani Ahammed:

Jotedar Abdul Gani Ahammed's father Akkali Ahammed was a Primary teacher. He was associated with business also. From the share of his profit, he brought huge land. He had the mind of development of education. Abdul Gani Ahammed had been the owner of his father's land. He had 3500 acres of land. The name of his Jotes was jote of Kunar Bari, Jhanjur Bari, Dinger Bari and Madhor Bari etc. He received two things from his father. One is huge land and another is a mind of benevolent activities. Even today, residents of Jorepakri area remember him for his socio-cultural activities. In his active initiatives a school was established on 4th January in 1946. He gave Rs. 10,000/ and his own house for this school. He got assistance from jotedar late Gurucharan dev, Mahendranath Das, Motilal Roy, Rahimuddin Ahamed and others in this regard. For the establishment of this school many of his contemporaries gave land. According to his great grandson, Manjil Rahaman, Abdul Gani Ahamed helped many poor students.¹³

Residence of Bakali recognized him as a social worker of the region. He was magnificent, pious and a well-wisher of the riots. Every day in the morning after completion

of his religious work he began to solve the problem of his riots. He used to go to look after his Jotes once in a week. He created three types of Granary (Gola). 1. Granary of Jotedar 2. Granary of the benevolent services. 3. Granary of the riots. In his every Jotes both Hindus and Muslims were lived together. There existed communal harmony in the area.¹⁴

Jotedar Khan Bahadur Abdul Karim Prodhan:

Jian Mohammad father of Jotedar Khan Bahadur Abdul karim Prodhan. He was a rich peasant in the respective area. He spent his property not only for his personal interest but for the society. A Madrasah named Islamia Madrasah and a Mosque was built by his positive initiatives in 1883 at Bakali of Western Dooars. Jotedar Khan Bahadur Abdul Karim Prodhan was like his father. He was able to buy the Jotes of the Bakali, Mallik Hat, Kalir Hat, Rajar Hat, Kranti, Malbazar, Batabari, Rajganj, Sukani etc. Total lands of his Jotes were 500 acres approximately. During the period of World War II, there was World economic Depression. In this time British Govt. was in crisis. In this situation Abdul Karim gave 500 Mon (1 Mon =40 kg.) paddy and Rs. 1 lakh to the British Army for their help. For benevolent touch Karim was awarded the title ‘Prodhan’ and on 1st January, 1943 he was titled ‘Khan Bahadur’ by the British Govt.¹⁵

Jotedar Khan Bahadur Abdul Karim Prodhan had completed the unfinished socio-cultural works of his father such as Islamia Madrasah and a Mosque. He took initiatives for the construction of two wells for the people of the area. He gave away 50 bighas of land as Wakaf for smooth running of the Mosque and Madrasah. He left his mark of more consciousness about public health. By his positive initiatives a charitable dispensary was established in the whole Union of Dharampur. He contributed 10 *Bighas* of land for this. In 1899 a Bengali School was set up at Dharampur named Abdul Karim High School. In 1920 this school was converted as a Middle English School. In 1945 this school was renamed Abdul Karim High School for this assistance.¹⁶

Abdul Karim was so much acquainted with the Physical Culture of the region. He gave 10 acres of land for developing the playground. The Football Championship was organized by his initiative. Bakali was advanced in the field of Literature and Culture because of Abdul Karim. Famous poet of the world of folk songs, Abbasuddin Saheb would come to his house regularly. On 3rd June, 1922 he became a member of *Jella* Board. He was a member of many social organizations. By his own initiatives a traditional socio-cultural atmosphere existed in the areas of Bakali, Paharpur Nijambari, Kranti, Dhubguri, Dahagram, Pathgram, Nilkamari, Chilahati, Sukani. A healthy communal harmony existed in the region. But it was a matter of regret that in 1947 when India was being independent, this hero of social work gave his last breath. His family went to West Pakistan now Bangladesh. As a result this region lost its current educational, socio-cultural and other related social works. Even today the people of the region remember him for his benevolent works.¹⁷

Jotdar Khan Saheb Abdul Karim Mian:

Khan Saheb Abdul Karim Mian was a resident of present busy city of Dooars, Dhupguri. He was a famous Jotedar of the region. Total area of his Jote land was 400 Bighas. Karim Mian was enthusiastic about education or the spread of education. He took a great part for the establishment of Dhupguri High School. We have come to know that Dhupguri Middle School was converted to H.S. School in 1946 by the proper guidance of Karim Mian. He took a pivotal role for setting up Dhupguri Madrasha. He was associated with any developmental works in the region. In the time of World War II, he financially assisted to the British Govt. by giving Rs. 50,000. He got the title “Khan Bahadur” in 1944 for this type of assistance and socio-cultural activities. In 1952, Karim Mian with his family went to East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh). But he left the benevolent touch to the people of the area of Dhupguri.¹⁸

Jotedar Penda Mohammad:

Total land of Penda Mohammad was 600 acres. He gave his total land's "Wakaf". His first son Nijamuddin became the owner of 450 acres of land. He followed his father and formed a society named "*Nijamuddin Wakaf*" vide E c No 11332. Now it is undertaken by Kathalguri Mosque. Nijamuddin setup a Madhyamik School in the name of his father "Raja Danga Penda Mohammad" High School. And he donated 900 acres of land for this school. He exercised physical culture. He established a sub public health centre for the treatment of the people of the respective area. He gave 4 acres of land for the development of the health centre. In the time of Famine in 1950, he helped to the affected people.¹⁹

Jotedar Akimuddin Choudhury:

Jotedar Akimuddin Choudhury had 500 acres of land. He donated 100 acres of land for the religious purpose. He took financial liability for smooth running of a Madrasha. He made a guest rest house on the side of the bank of the river Chel for the eyewitness. Palton, a Hindu worker, looks after this rest house. This was built for social service. Basically, he was worshiper of communal harmony. He constructed many religious places for Hindus and Muslims. He gave financial assistance for this. He was associated with socio-cultural activities also.²⁰

Jotedar Mechhua Mahammad:

Jotedar Mechhua Mahammad became a legendary Jotedar of falakata area. His land property was about 3000 Bighas. His annual income was Rs. 137367. Mechhua Mahammad wakafed all of his land before his death. He spent a large amount for religious work. He built a Mosque and donated land for this. He constructed Mosque were Teli Para, Jogi Jhora, Narasinghpur, Prodhan para, Dhupguri etc. He donated 40 acres of land for the Mosque of Dhupguri. Now it was in 24 acres and ploughed by the local ryots or *Adhiars*. To spread

education, he built a primary. This school was converted into “Mechhua Mahammad Board School”.²¹

Industry:

In general, it can be said that there are no big industries owned by the *Nashya Sheikh* community. Few decades ago, most of the people from *Nashya sheikh* has been involved with handicraft industries like *Taki, Kulo, Chera* etc. These handicraft articles are used to lead their daily life. There are so many people who used to lead their life depending on these small native industries. But now a day, the amount of handicraft workers is decreasing day by day. Few years ago, the people of *Nashya Sheikh* Community used *Dheki, Sham, and Gain* as to make rice from paddy. In this context male member of the family helped to do this beside the active participation of their female members. A good number of people were there, who has taken this job as their profession and they had to do this for the rich families. But nowadays, the situation has changed; it is hardly possible to see this technique even in someone's room at the villager. It is happened so because of the development of the modern techniques. Side by side making net to catch fisher is also one of the techniques which few years ago were also present. They had used to make Net for their own. By this handmade net, people of *Nashya sheikh* community led their life keeping this job i.e Pisciculture as their profession. In order to do this job female were also involved with the participation of males.²² Since the time immemorial to till now, most of the people of this community have taken Pisculture as their profession. But the popularity of this profession is getting low for the development of some modern techniques. As result, this profession has lost his prominence and they are compelled to lead out their life works as daily labour.²³

Trade and Commerce:

Most of the people of the *Nashya Sheikh* community have been involved with agriculture. Hence, there are small sections who are involved in trade and commerce. In addition, those who have been with these professions are not strong shareholders rather they had many small businesses. Among these groups, many people were involved with the business of Cow, Mosh and Goat. They did not able to make them profound business because their social framework is depending on agriculture. The businesses of Cow and *Mosh* have very influential among the Muslim communities because of the deep relationship between agricultural sector and Cow and *Mosh*. Because Cow and *Mosh* vastly could use for ploughing the land. In the markets of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri, still we can see severally that most of the people involved with selling Cows and Moshes. Some important markets of the district of Jalpaiguri are Dhupguri market, Nathuahat, Jateshwar and Jaigaon. And on the other hand some front rank markets of Cooch Behar district are Haldibari, Malhabhanga, Sitalkuchi, Tufanganj, Dinhata etc. Apart from these regions these are also some places outside the state of west Bengal such as Bihar, Uttarpradesh, and Jharkhand with who's the native inhabitants of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri district maintained their business.²⁴

Apart from these businesses, the people of *Nashya Sheikh* Community are also attached with some other businesses like paddy, Jute, Potato, Oil, Betel-Nut, Tobacco etc. A good number of people of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar though attached with these professions their amount is low in comparison to other communities. These small businessmen sell their goods to the big *Mahajanas* for their small profit. They are forced to sell their goods not kept in store because they have the luckiness of capital. Hence, the highest profit on these goods comes only from the big *Mahajans*. Because they store the goods and later when the crisis arises, they sell their stored goods to the market. Besides these businesses there is one another business called betel-nut which is quite popular not only among the communities of

Nashya Sheikh but other communities also. In most of the cases through this business, people get huge benefits. The businessman buys the betel-nut and then boils these and at the end they export their goods outside the districts and even outside of west Bengal for the sake to make more benefit. Here also the producers of the betel-nut also make less benefit than the big *Mahajans* (or businessmen). The maximum benefit from this business was obtained by the big Marwaris of Dhupguri region. The people of the villagers apart from doing such business are also involved with some other business-like keeper of small shops, Mudikhana and the shop of different types of vegetables.²⁵

Labours:

Most of the people of the Muslim community are poor and agriculture is their main profession. Till the end of 7th decades of the 20th century, there was no alternative profession than the agriculture among the Muslim communities. During this time most of the people were the daily labour that had worked on land. During the time of the sixth-7th decades, the value of daily labour was one rupee for 1-kilogram rice. It was applicable for both Hindu and the Muslim communities. In the later period, the value of the money decreased but one-kilogram rice as the value for one day labour remained unchanged. The daily labour work was seasonal. The duration of the work was from the sunshine to sunset. Main works that they are used to do are –ploughing land, *Nirani*, *Bona*, *KodalerKaj*, Jute cutting, Paddy cutting, soil digging etc. They were used to wear and share and frequently it was not possible to recognize who are the Hindu and who are the Muslims. Their dress up and language are the same. Without wearing *shaya* (lower long innerwear) and *blouse* (upper innerwear). They were to do their work outside their own house. If someone makes rice from a paddy of 10 Kilogram then he/she has to pay 3 *poya* or 1 Kilogram rice. The female of the Muslim Community also forced to do so service for the share to maintain their economic situation of the family. As they were uneducated, they had no knowledge of the family plan that is why

until and unless they have to give birth to the child. This has made a very horrible situation in the society, although there were no restrictions provided by the authority of the village.²⁶

Most of the people of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts are labourers. During the period of the second half of the 20th century many families had huge amounts of land. But through the passage of time this situation has changed. And most of them lost their stable economic identity. The lack of education and social consciousness played a pivotal role behind this unorganized and static situation. As a result, they migrated from the village to the towns in order to search for work.²⁷ After being jobless they have arrived in different towns and they are forced to take the work of a rickshaw puller, some work as the servant to some rich families and some people are also involved with the small shopkeeper. Thus, the people of this community fulfilled the needs of the increasing demand of labour class. During the recent time, a few numbers of tea garden getting stopped in which generally the tribal people involved. As a result, the tribal people are migrating everywhere outside the tea garden in searching work and people who used to work at different towns or place for the work like house construction etc have become jobless. By this situation they started to migrate outside the state such as Gujrat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh etc. Still many young people from *Nashya sheikh* and Rajbanshi community are migrate to other states. It is not only confined with the district of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar but also some other regions of Assam also. A woman of the *Nashya sheikh* helps men in the work of agriculture.²⁸

Service:

The numbers of the Government service holders among the *Nashya Sheikh* communities are very less in comparison to other communities. Because in the field of Education, the representation of the people of *Nashya Sheikh* Community are very few. The major important factor behind this static situation was they kept their traditional identity as

the farmer and as they involved in the agricultural activities, they had no profound economic condition to take the further studies. It is very shameful to say that still they remain as the believer on some traditional superstition's belief. What will be the benefit of taking higher studies? As they are the sons of the farmer so they have to take agriculture as their profession.²⁹ Even if we look after the modern situation, we can easily find out this situation among the people of *Nashya Sheikh* Community. This situation can be seen not only in the cases in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts but also in other regions. There are very few candidates who got the Government service as the representative of *Nashya Sheikh* Community. For instance , few names of the people of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community who got the Government service are as follow- Abdul Karim of Duramari (Retired serviceman of Governmet Hospital in Group-D), Aminur Rahaman of Deomali (Retired Teacher of Primary School), Jogbar Rahaman of Dhupguri (Retired High School Teacher), Hyder Ali of Deomali(Retired high School), Musaraf Karim of Duramari (Ritired Primary Teacher), Bakkas Rahman of Kalirhat (Retired High School Teacher), Shahinsa Hossain of Saptibari (High School Teacher), Karim Rahman of Nathua Hat(High School Teacher), Raju Rahamn of Nathua Hat (High School Teacher), Maminul Islam of Duramari (Uttar Banga Unnayan Parshad Group-D), Rafik Hossain of Deomali(G.P. Sahayak), Mainul Haque of Deomali (Indian Army), Mumin Islam of Dhupguri (Municipality), Rinku Islam of Nathua Hat (Assam Riffle), Bapi Islam of Duramari (Indian Army), and many others.³⁰

It is hardly possible to find out the woman candidates of *Nashya Sheikh* Community in the sector of Government service. The main reasons are that they usually did not get a good chance to take their education. In this context it is to say that the policies and regulations implemented by the Government authority are not sufficient or adequate to eradicate this static condition. They do not feel comfortable in this sector as their social condition and the consciousness of civil society are not notable. Although there are some

candidates who are able to take higher studies as they live in town or such proper location. But the situation has been different in the case of villages. Here it can be saying from one of the Government field study that, some Muslim women who are involve with as Mahila Sasthya Karmies are as follow- Saphiya Khatun of Nathua Hat, Meherrunnisa of NathuaHat, Merina Begam of Duramari, Shiuli Begam of Dhupguri, Shahanaj Begam of Dhupguri, Anjuma Begam of Dawkimari and many others. Apart from this report some Muslim women School Teachers of Dhupguri Block are Maheda Banu of Deomali, she was the First woman of *Nashya Sheikh* community who got the School service job in 2007 under SSC. In later time after reservation of OBC-A category by the Government of West Bengal, some more *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim women abel to get the job under SSC i.e., School service Commission. Among them some names are Beauti Begam of Dhupguri, Suriya Begam of Dhupguri, Aruti Parvin of Dhupguri, in 2013. In the present situation it is needless to say that after making reservations in the Government services for the OBC-A communities like *Nashya Sheikh* it is quite easier to get Government Service than earlier. Both in the cases of Male and Female of *Nashya Sheikh* community, the present situation in the sector of Government service is being changed.³¹

Most common occupation pursuits of the *Nashya sheikh* living urban areas are; medium or petty businesses, hawking, tailoring, driving, masoning, binding, packing, mechanical works, electrical works, leather and rubber works, bakery, crafts work, riska pulling and low-grade services at organize and unorganised sectors of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.³²

Quite a number of important services are rendered by the *Nashya sheikhs* living in urban and rural areas of these two districts, which are either their traditional or non-traditional occupations. The most famous *Nashya sheikh* Muslims occupational groups in this area are cotton carders, bearing makers, butchers, tailors, mechanics, electricians, mason etc.

The *Nashya sheikhs* have a monopolistic control over the trade of cattle, hide and bone. Garage wining and repairing of motor vehicles is specially monopolized by the Muslims. *Nashya sheikhs* in substantial numbers are seen involved in leather works. The function of the Nashya sheikhs named *Dhunia*(cotton carder) and *Darji* (trailers) deserve special mention. Several specialized items of decoration are also made by Nashya sheikhs who are mostly used in *pujas* and other festivals. *Nashya sheikhs* are considered as experts in mechanical works, electrical works, and masonry and colouring activities.³³

TABLES 5.1

Occupational Condition of Nashya sheikh Muslims in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri Districts

Occupation	Percentage
A) Agricultural labour -	52%
B) Marginal unskilled labour-	26%
C) Bargadar, small farmers-	17%
D) Solvent groups including service-	5%
Total100%	

Source: OccoputionalCondition of Nashya sheikh Muslims as per survey report: Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.).³⁴

A survey was conducted by the *Anagrasor Muslim Sangram Samiti Mancha* and the data were placed before the commissions. The said sample survey was conducted among the Muslims covering a few *maujas* located in Cooch Behar and jalpaiguri districts. Total population cover was 6471. Data revealed that 2.26% of the sample population were employed in government services. Of the total sample population 52% survived as ‘agricultural labourers’ and 26% were ‘marginal farmers. The Bargadar or small Farmers 17% and 5% were Solvent groups including Service.³⁵

According to the West Bengal Commission for Backward classes Report- 8, the economic condition of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri district in general of these classes is not at all satisfactory. Most of them are very poor and 35% of the population lived below the poverty line. It has been submitted that they mostly pursue the lower graded profession as agricultural labour, cultivator, rickshaw puller, mason, unskilled day-labour, craftsmen etc. Their females are also completed to work in the field to assist in the running of their families. As per their submission only 5% of them own land mostly below the ceiling, 20% have their own land below the ceiling and work in others'-land also, 20% are sharecropper and about 50% service as agricultural labourers. Only 5% of them are engaged in businesses; petty family businesses 3% and small traders /businessmen 2%.³⁶

In the field of Government employment, the historically pathetic situation of Muslims did not change much even today. As per a non-Government statistic covering India from 1970 to 1980.

TABLE 5.2

Occupational percentages of Nashya Sheikh Muslims in various sectors:

Occupation -	Percentage of Muslims
Doctor	2.5%
Engineer	2.0%
I.A.S.	2.86%
I.P.S.	2.00%
Income Tax Officer	3.06%
1 st Grade State Level officer	3.3%
Bank	2.18%
Private corporation	4.08%
Project on Low Interest	3.76%
Direct of Government Sponsored	1.8%

Source: Rahaman, Bazlay, *Mondal Kamishaner Report O Uttar Banger Muslim Samaj*, Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha, Uttar Banga, 1996, p. 26.

Additionally, national per head income is 4.147(all India level). The per head income among Muslims is 5% lower than this. Their financial capability is down by 20-25%.³⁷ Due to lack of adequate education among them, their representation 'services are also very few, this is significant'. The percentage with regard to doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, other professionals etc from their class is almost 'Nil'.³⁸

In recent times there has been a considerable change in above set pattern wining to increase of these districts' populations due to ongoing migration of outside people, especially the immigrant population of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The emerging situation has mostly affected the virtual monopoly of the Muslims in those trade and occupations.³⁹

For various reasons, the educated middle class has not been properly developed among the *Nashya sheikhs* of present areas. Since the content of middle class among them each significantly very small the Muslim do not figure in any significant number either in white colour jobs or in political and administrative matters of the Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. There are only a few *Nashya sheikhs* who are known to be higher status service holders. They are least organized and their commitment to their society is very significant. There is no reputed *Nashya sheikh* entrepreneur in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri. It is to be noted here that accepting a very small section, majority of the Muslim are self-employed and they engage in economic activities of marginal nature. A simple survey of rickshaw pullers of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri town revealed that seventy percent of rickshaw-walas of the town were of *Nashya sheikh* community.⁴⁰

The Muslims are the largest Minority Community in India and Bengal they constitute nearly twenty-three percent of the total population of the state. For various reasons Muslims in general are a traditional and Conservative community. The socio-economic backwardness of the Muslims and their problems of modernization and change offer an interesting area of social science research. A study of nature and character of the Muslim social Mechanism of

this community inhabiting various parts of the subcontinent but in the present case it is confined to the Muslims of Koch Behar and Jalpaiguri in West Bengal.⁴¹

However, the *Nashya Sheikh* community here is still backward in terms of education or economy. The illiteracy rate is higher in this community. The number of boys and girls not going to school or dropping out of school is sufficient. The rate of higher education is very low. In the case of women, it is more downward. The *Nashya Sheikh* community did not get the benefits of the conservation system as the *BhumijoRajbangshi* community did. Recently other backward Class communities or OBCs. With enrolment, the field of government facilities is expanding in their various fields. It is hoped that the socio-economic development of the community will be enhanced through government conservation measures and other government assistance projects. However, it is true that large parts of the people of this community are landless and day labourers. A large part of them is associated with construction work. In addition, people from this community are involved in burghers, marginal farmers, small traders, transport workers, tailors, and technicians. Recently, many people from this community have been seen in higher professions like teachers, employees, law practitioners, teaching etc. However, it needs to be discussed that during the Raj, a large part of this community who were involved in higher occupations and were established in the society migrated to East Pakistan during the partition of the country. Only low-income people stay here. However, this community, like other communities, has begun to make progress in democratic management through various development projects of the Central and State Governments. However, religious orthodoxy and the disinterest of some people in the traditional education system are the cause of a major crisis in this community. At the same time, the rise in crime is undoubtedly a matter of concern. The only way to get rid of this is to gain real education and spread religious discipline on character building. The socialists of the *Nashya Sheikh* community must be keeping an eye on the matter.

It can be seen that about 95% of the people in North Bengal, excluding Muslim families, live in rural areas and more than 90% are directly dependent on agriculture. Small farmers, marginal farmers, agricultural labourers have to make a living by physical labour. The surplus agricultural labourers work hard, such as pushing rickshaws and driving vans, taking shelter in rural areas and in the slums of the city. Muslims are the lion's share in these professions. In addition, a section serves as a mason and mason's supplier. Here too their number is the highest. Muslim names are mostly on the list of unskilled workers like transport workers, garage workers, *dao kamala* or *thika kamala*. Their number is also significant in tailors and culverts. The Muslims of North Bengal are not well established in trade and commerce. Very few people do business as an exception, even ordinary and medium business. The number of Muslims in jobs is very negligible. Two to four percent. Naturally, most of the people of the Muslim community have to make a living as agricultural, agricultural and non-agricultural workers. According to a long-standing local custom in rural society, women from farming families help men in rural farming. Shake up Weeping, cut rice, Scrub, Sweep, Weed, grow hungry or make rice, Jute cutting, Roya tobacco, doing various direct work at different stages of mustard and other crops, these images can be seen in any Muslim inhabited village. At present, Muslim women do everything from cutting clay to masonry. Therefore, it can be said that the Muslims of North Bengal are economically backward and backward.

II

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND IDENTITY FORMATION:

This chapter looks into the political participation identity formation of the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim community of North Bengal. The historical backwardness of Muslims in Bengal has generally been attributed to two factors firstly, the origin of Bengali Muslims,

many of whom converted from lower Hindu castes, and secondly the Permanent Settlement of Bengal. This was the political backwardness of the Muslim community of west Bengal as well as North Bengal. According to the census of 1871 and 1901, William Hunter's 1871 book 'The Indian Mussalmans, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar's 'History of Medieval Bengal 1973 and Richard M Eaton's 1993 publication, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier (1204–1760)*, large-scale conversion from Hindu lower castes and outcasts helped Muslims outnumber Hindus in Bengal by 1881. Since these conversions continued even after Muslims lost their rule to the British and prestige to the Hindus, historians have more stress on voluntary conversions due to the Hindu caste system than on the forced conversions during the five centuries of Islamic rule. These converts, who mostly came from the socio-economically weaker sections, made up the vast majority of Bengali Muslims. William Hunter's book pinpointed the Permanent Settlement of 1793 as the decisive blow that ruined Bengal's Muslim aristocracy by reorganising the revenue collection system. "The whole tendency of the Settlement was to acknowledge as the land-holders the subordinate Hindu officers who dealt directly with the husbandmen," he wrote. According to him, it was in lower Bengal among the whole of India where "Muhammadans have suffered most severely under the British rule. "The Permanent Settlement and other reforms subsequently triggered the Muslims' alienation from and disaffection towards the British government and education, and led to the gradual decline of the Muslim society. Muslims found no employment in the Army, had no more roles in the collection of taxes, found too few appointments in government offices, and the end of the Islamic legal system rendered more people jobless. "If ever a people stood in need of a career, it is the Musalman aristocracy of lower Bengal," Hunter wrote, and added, "There is now scarcely a government office in Calcutta in which a Muhammadan can hope for any post of above the rank of porter, messenger, and filler of ink-pots and mender of pens." This socio-economic decline of the Muslims simultaneous to their

increase in numbers eventually led to the birth of Muslim separatism at the turn of the 20th century, which was first reflected in Muslim-dominated eastern Bengal's lukewarm response to the call of Swadeshi movement (1905-1911) against the first Partition of Bengal, and then with the Muslims' demand for a separate electorate in 1909. According to Koushiki Dasgupta, with the Partition of Bengal on religious lines in 1947, a large number of the wealthy Muslims, most of whom were Urdu-speaking traders, went to East Pakistan, leaving West Bengal with mostly a community of peasant Muslims. According to Koushiki Dasgupta, in post-Independence West Bengal, Hindu political parties Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha and Akhil Bharatiya Ram Rajya Parishad contested the elections with little or no success. But no Muslim political party was in the fray at all, until the birth of the short-lived Progressive Muslim League in 1969. Bengal's Muslims preferred either the Congress or the communists. However, despite the Congress's rule of two decades and a half and the Left's uninterrupted 34 years, the socio-economic status of the Muslims did not improve much, as was evident with the publication of the report of Justice Rajinder Sachar Committee in 2006. It revealed, among other aspects, that while Muslims made 25% of the state's population in 2001, Muslim representation in government jobs was a mere 4.2% and they occupied only 5% of the 'key positions' in the judiciary. The publication of the Sachar Committee report along with the Left Front government's land acquisition drive in two areas dominated by Muslims which are Nandigram and Bhangar. According to sociologist Abhijit Dasgupta, a former head of the department of sociology, Delhi School of Economics, Bengal politics witnessed a tectonic shift in 2007-08 when Muslims, for the first time, started asserting themselves as a political block. He said that revelations of the Sachar Committee report were a key factor behind the Muslim assertion of their identity as a political block, even though she has taken some significant steps towards meeting the Sachar Committee recommendations, she has altogether given more lip-services.

Political Participation of Nashya Sheikh Community:

In almost all the Muslim villages or societies in all the districts of North Bengal there is a chief or foreman. Some Muslim communities refer to a village or society as a place that is called Paich⁴². The chief of *Pahich* is called *Girihan* instead of *Moral or Sardar*. At the time of marriage, the custom of feeding and feasting with the recommendation to all the people under *Pahich* is still prevalent today. Samarth is given a drinking basket and a seven- or eight-cubit long cloth *turban or murtha*.⁴³

Each of these social systems was in the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim village. At first, the trial of any minor offense was conducted by the village headman or the head of the society. *Baishi* is run with the heads and people of *Baishi* (Twenty-Two) village. Again, in Hindu-Muslim communities, the problem of girls or other complex issues are resolved in *Chhatrish* (Thirty Six). Here people of all races come and gather. Depending on the problem, the trial lasted seven to ten days. In the past, in some special cases in Muslim rural society, violators of the law were closed, expelled or expelled from the village, although these rules are almost non-existent today.

In the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar; in the field of society, economy and politics *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim community could not play important role and their participation also very few. In the political field of Gram Panchayet, Panchayet Samiti, Zila are very few political representatives.⁴⁴ There is no representative in the Member of Legislative Assembly and Member of Parliament. In the field of politics there is no big generous in the districts of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and the Malda districts of Northern part of West Bengal. In the pre-independence that is during the reign of Koch King there was only centre of politics Projahitosadhini Sabha founded in 1940. It was founded by indigenous praja (both Hindu and Muslim), Khan Amantullah sahib gave identity of his generous by the leadership of Projahitosadhini Sabha

and as a minister of court. During the same period sir Ansar uddin Ahmed of Mathabanga holding an especial leadership position of Hitosadhini Sabha and he became an important minister during king regime. Pre-period of accession Koch Behar to the union of India, National congress or Muslim league there was no leadership. Only in 1949 did the Projamondal party inspired, in the accused league Khan Amantullah Chowdary, Ansar uddin Ahmed, Moulbi Fazlay Rahaman and Mukbul Hossain these four expelled from Cooch Behar.⁴⁵ Later, Ansar uddin Ahmed came back to Koch Behar and assumed the post of Member of Rajya Sabha. As well as Cooch Behar town Mojiruddin Ahmed, was a local leader of Hitosadhini Sabha. In the latter period he was involved in congress and as an efficient organizer he assumed the post of district president of congress and elected M. L. A. in 1952. In the second phase Dr.Fazlay Haque in the long period was an all-India congress committee member within the congress politics. Before 1977 he was also a member of the minister of state. Well speaker, handsome and notable efficient organizer and with popularity till today has been serving an important role in the political platform of Cooch Behar. In the last phase of left rule, as a leftist Politician emerged Tamser Ali. He became elected M. L. A. So, he has a notable political personality. At last we can say, politics is the direct participation of administration, therefore a group or community's political representative approximately fulfil the aspiration- dream, making reliance in the state system and all the above for the building of the country participant himself. So, emerge the political leadership from whatever the political party there is need to be for the minority community.⁴⁶

The contribution of *Nashya Sheikh* or Bhumijo Muslim community in the formation of society in the state-ruled Cooch Behar state or district Cooch Behar is sufficient. This community has many accomplished children who are not only established in their own field, but they have also left a mark of considerable achievement in various fields of society. The best people in this episode are Khan Chowdhury Amanatullah Ahmed, Ansharuddin Ahmed,

Naib Ali (Tipu), Hussain Muhammad Ersad, Firdausi Rahman, Ahmad Hossain Pradhan, Maulvi Fakiruddin Ahmed, Kashimaddin-Mohammad and others. Among them Khan Chowdhury Amanatullah Ahmed has become immortal as the author of the book "History of Cooch Behar (Vol. 1)". Mr. Amanatullah was an important minister in the royal court of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur. During the Raj, the influential landlord Amanatullah Saheb was the president of the local people's organization '*Cooch Behar Hit Sadhani Sabha*' in Cooch Behar. Besides, Ansharuddin Ahmed was well known as an important politician of Raj Amal and District Cooch Behar. He has been the finance minister in the royal court. Later, in 1951, he became the district president of the Cooch Behar district of the National Congress Party and in 1958; he was elected a member of the Rajya Sabha as a candidate nominated by the National Congress.⁴⁷ Another important person of the district was Mojiruddin Ahmed. He was a member nominated by the royal court in Cooch Behar municipality. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1952 and 1957 from Cooch Behar (General) constituency as a Congress candidate. In 1972, he became the district president of the Cooch Behar district of the Indira Gandhi-led Congress party. Another influential person at that time was Maqbool Hossain, a lawyer from Dinhata. His son Hussein Muhammad Ershad later graced the post of army chief and president of neighbouring Bangladesh. Ahmed Hossain Pradhan (Naib Ahilkar or Sub-Divisional Ruler), Maulvi Fakiruddin Ahmed (Naib Ahilkar), Kashimuddin Mohammad (Tufanganj) Municipality Chairman, etc.⁴⁸

Individuals from the *Nashya Sheikh* community who later played or are playing significant roles in politics, education, literature, sports or other areas of society in Cooch Behar district. Among them are Dr. Mohammad Fazle Haque, Ainuddin Miah, Nuruddin Miah (former president of the District Primary Education Parliament), Tamser Ali, Matiar Rahman, Abdul Jalil Ahmed and others. Dr.Fazle Haque was elected MLA from Sitai

Assembly constituency in 1967, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1996 and 2006 respectively. He was the Minister of State in the Home Department of the State Cabinet from 1972-1976. Ainuddin Mian was elected to the district council as a candidate of the Forward Bloc party of the Left Front and held the post of chairman of the Cooch Bihar district council from 1978 to 1983. He later died in a road accident. Tamsar Ali is a prominent leader of the CPI (M). He was elected MLA from Natabari Assembly constituency in 2001 and 2006. Matiar Rahman is a well-known face of left politics. He was associated with the CPI (M) and was the nominee of that party as the President of the District Primary School Parliament. Abdul Jalil Ahmed is a prominent leader of the present ruling party Trinamool Congress and a member of the steering committee of the North Bengal State Transport Corporation. His wife Amina Ahmed is currently the Vice Chairperson of Cooch Behar Municipality.⁴⁹

Awakening of the Downtrodden Muslims to Reservation of Nashya Sheikhs:

As the process of Nation building within the framework of caste and community ridden Indian social structure various compensatory policies are directed to backward communities in India, viz., STs, SCs and OBCs, there is a constitutional support for special policies to STs, SCs and OBCs. By rule SCs cannot be Muslims as it is restricted to Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. Thus, only the category of STs and OBCs seems to be open to the Muslims. But considering the Tribal origin Muslims STs are relatively very few in India. The downtrodden Muslims, therefore, have organised movements to get a position within the OBC category for affirmative.⁵⁰

In 1955 Kaka Kalakar commission Report of Backward classes had for the first time recognized Muslim OBCs at par with the Hindu counterparts. The commission noted the existence of a number of communities amongst the Muslims who have been suffering from social inferiority in their own society and also examined the extent of their backwardness.⁵¹ The commission recommended their eligibility for job reservations. Later in 1980, the

Mandal commission Report has given due recognition to the problems of backwardness including those of the Muslims. The Commission treated 90 percent of India Muslims population as OBCs and proposed reservation in government jobs and educational institutions. The Mandal commission has declared 82 Muslim groups as backward.⁵² According to the data they used, the backward Muslim made 8.2 per cent out of 11.2 per cent of the Indian Muslim population at that time. When the supreme court of India upheld the Mandal quota, the Muslim OBCs had attracted the attention of the State. All these processes have awakened the downtrodden Muslim groups of the country to consult organize movements at local, regional and national level. They have become aware of the need for political power and socio-economic development of the respective groups. The awareness of downtrodden Muslim in India may be considered as a part of larger OBC or Dalit awakening of the country.⁵³

The origin of Muslim OBC initiative was noted in 1980s in Maharashtra. Maharashtra Muslim OBC organization was founded in 1981 with the realization that the real problems of the vast majority of the Indian Muslim population are economic, social and political, rather than religious one. It was the first Muslim movement that focused on educational, economic and political empowerment, instead of focusing on symbolic religious or minority issues. Shabbir Ahmed Ansari, Vilas Sonawara and many others did a lot in Maharashtra to organize backward Muslim groups of the state to benefit from the recommendation of the Mandal Commission. From 1993 the scope of the organization extended to all India levels for building similar organizations at different states, with the objective of empowering the Muslims. A radical movement of such a nature was also noticed in Bihar under the banner of 'Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz' and the leadership of Ali Anwar during 1990. The movement of the Muslims backward groups gradually spread to various other parts of the country, and ultimately formed a national level organization as "All India Muslim OBC Sangathan"

(AIMOBCS). It has made several demands including economic, educational and housing opportunities. But their primary demand is to include all backward communities among Muslims of such a nature adding a new dimension in ethnic scenario of the Country.⁵⁴

The whole India Muslim OBC Sangathan argued that religion has been used in Indian politics to suppress the basic contradiction of the Indian society that is caste and class. Thus, the Sangathan has taken the stand that in a secular country like India class inequalities should be addressed prior to religions identities. According to the Sangathan, affirmative action and reservation should be on OBC issues but not on Muslim or religious issue. The leaders of the Sangathan put emphasis on backwardness rather than Muslim or minority. In fact, their movement is on the ground of socio-economic backwardness of the Muslims. Their demand is for empowerment of the subalterns of the community. There has been a conscious effort to relate Muslim OBCs and Hindu, Buddhist and Christian Dalits to create a bond of solidarity of the subalterns of the country across religious divides and communal politics. Therefore, it is necessary to enquire into the nature of struggle of the backward Muslim groups in India and the role they play in contributing to the larger struggle of the 'oppressed' for equality and social justice within the democratic set up of the Indian nation-state.⁵⁵ In the light of this issue ethnic, social, culture dimensions of the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal have to be examined here as a case study.

Jugalkishore Roy Bir played a significant role in making the Bhumiputra Muslim community of North Bengal aware. He was the first to realize the preservation of Muslims. Under his leadership the backward Muslim community of North Bengal began to unite.⁵⁶ Under the leadership of Samonvay Samiti, a campaign was launched on 23 February 1995 to recognize the mother tongues of different communities in North Bengal (where *Kamatapuri* and *Samil* were included). The students are strongly involved in this. This demand is the reason for the conference in Jateshwar. In the name of Nasya Sheikh and Sher Shah Badia, a

program of movement was taken to demand the inclusion of other backward people (OBCs) of the Muslim nation. For this purpose, North Bengal Backward Muslim Struggle Society was formed. Under the pressure of the movement, the government decided in 1999 to include Nasya Sheikh *Jati* in OBC.⁵⁷

At the Jubilakisha conference, he called for the inclusion of the backward sections of the Muslim community (the nation) in the OBCs and for their preservation in literacy and employment. Then many were surprised. Because most of them thought that there is no caste division among Muslims. But Raybir discussed in detail the old report on the position of the Muslims, the Muslim census, the writings of the intellectuals, the report of the Mandal Commission and the recommendations of the Mandal. Raybir promised to make this claim a success. Abul Hussein, Jamaluddin and a few others were sent to different parts of West Bengal to gather and gather information on which nations could be included in this claim.⁵⁸ He also bought a motorbike so that it would not be difficult to run in different areas. After getting all the information, he appealed to the Mandal Commission and after a few hearings, it became easy to include *Nashya Sheikh Jati* in the OBC. Among the Muslims, Khate, Abdal, Kan (Khalifa) and so on are lagging behind, all of whom can be included in the OBC.

Many Muslim leaders came up with this demand of the Muslim society at the stage of the movement. Among them are Jamaluddin Mia, Khademul Islam, Abul Hussain, Bazle Rahman, Takibar Rahman, Akram Hassan, SaukatAlam and others. To learn about the backward Muslim nation, Raibir met Ali Anwar, a popular Muslim leader from Bihar. After this meeting, it was useful for the backward Muslims to understand that there is a caste system in this community as well.⁵⁹

The main achievement of the movement for the development of backward Muslims today, which took an institutional form in North Bengal and West Bengal, is that of Roy Mahasaya. Today, with the help of Yugalkishore's verdict, the backward Muslims of North

Bengal reached Ramlila Maidan in Delhi from Siliguri Baghayatin Park via Patna's Gandhi Maidan in Bihar. Through him a relationship was formed with Mr. Ali Anwar, the All-India President of All India Pashmanda Muslim Mahaj. As a result, Abul Hossain took the opportunity to participate in a white seminar convened by the Prime Minister in Delhi in September 2005. In this way the movement of backward Muslims started in North Bengal and reached the national level.⁶⁰

A recent report by the Sachar Committee has revealed the plight of Muslims in the state. At this moment, the right direction of the movement of the Muslim society is absolutely necessary. At this crucial moment, the couple's presence was absolutely necessary. At the moment we have nothing more to look forward to than to try to continue the movement on the way to his show. There is no doubt that Jugal Kisha's verdict on environment, country, race and society will make the hero's valuable speeches, thoughts and ideal behavior of his personal life the seat of his hero.

The government of West Bengal so far identified 8 Muslim Group as OBCs on the basis of their occupation and socio-economic condition. These groups are *Jolha (Ansari/Momin)*, *Fakir (Sain)*, *Howari*, *Dhunia*, *Patidar*, *Kasai*, *Nashya Sheikh* and *Pahadia Muslim*. The Muslim OBC movement in West Bengal is slowly but gradually gaining momentum. Although there is no strong state-level organization of OBC Muslim in West Bengal, but the evidence of their activities are very often noticed at a local and regional levels. The most notable among them is *Uttar Bongo Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (UBAMSS)*. This notable organization was first established in 1995 at North Bengal in the state of West Bengal. From the beginning, secretary Md. Abul Hossain and President Mr. Bajlay Rahaman have been serving the same role even today. Representations were received from Md. Abul Hossain, Secretary, Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha (North Bengal), P.O.- Jateswar, Dist. Jalpaiguri for inclusion of the '*Nashya Sekh*' class of people in the list of

Backward Classes of the state of West Bengal. The Commission gave hearing to this class on 24.07.1997 and again on 29.10.1997. The persons who gave evidence before the commission included Mr. Bajlay Rahaman, Vice-President, *Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha*, a high school teacher by profession (who presented the case of their class) and Shri Jugal Kishore Ray, belonging to the *Rajbanshi* class (Scheduled Caste) who supported the claim.⁶¹ The *samiti* is Government Registered Social Organization of OBC Muslim in West Bengal (Reg. No.S-95179).⁶² The community leaders of the *Nashya Sheikh* and many other Muslim groups are now the active members of UBAMSS and through which they raised their own profile. The *samiti* has recently entered into the political scene and has been demanding reservations and other benefits for the Muslim OBCs, especially of North Bengal region. The *Samiti* has developed a strong organizational net-work at micro-and macro-level by constituting the village, block, district and control committee within the region of North Bengal. The activities of the *samiti* are very much enthusiastic in organizing movements to protect the interests of the *Nashyas* and *Sheikhs* and other indigenous backward Muslim groups of the region. The leaders of the *samiti* are ended very successful in scheduling the *Nashya Shaiks* as one of the Muslim OBC group in West Bengal (Notification No. 84-BCW/RC-302/97, dated 1 march 1999).⁶³ The *samiti* is taking much initiative to help the members of the *Nashya Sheikhs* and other Muslim OBC groups (*Ansari, Momin, Pahadia Muslims*) who face several difficulties at the ground level to obtain OBC and other benefits²³. The activities of the *Samiti* have created an atmosphere, which encourages youths of the *Nashya Sheikh* community to strive for economic and educational benefits like reservation of seats in Government jobs, political bodies, and educational institutions. The *Samiti* is very successful in awakening the indigenous and backward Muslim groups of North Bengal.⁶⁴

National movement of Nashya Sheikhs:

After a long satyagraha movement against the apartheid British government in South Africa, Mahen Das Karamchand Gandhi's entry into India in January 1915 led to the formation of an all-out national movement led by India's independence movement. The infamous Rowlatt Act was enacted on 21 February 1919 to suppress all anti-British revolutionary movements. In protest, Gandhiji called for a 'strike day' on April 7. This resulted in a brutal massacre at Jallianwala Bagh on 13 April at the behest of General Dyer, the military chief of Amritsar. Rabindranath's relinquishment of the title of 'Knight', Gandhiji's clear statement in 'Young India' this satanic government cannot be mandated, it must be ended, Gandhiji's direct support to the anti-British Khilafat movement of Muslim leaders in India Regardless, it inspires the people of India in an unprecedented way. Government schools, colleges, government titles, courts of law, legislatures and elections were called for participation in the boycott. Even before the Nagpur session, on August 1, 1920, Gandhiji initiated non-violent non-cooperation by returning the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal given by the British. It is possible to mention only a few here, out of respect for those not mentioned in the discussion of the non-cooperation movement in Malda from within the huge tide created by the combined strength of the countless waves.⁶⁵

Kazi Azharuddin Ahmed:

Dr. Kazi Azharuddin Ahmed, the proverbial homeopathy and social worker of that time, was involved in the non-cooperation and caliphate movement in Malda [18 - 6.2.1945]. He was born in Harshuna village in Kalna subdivision of Burdwan district. After finishing his studies at the Homeopathy College in Kolkata, the descendants of Syed Sadruddin, the famous zamindar of Bihar in Burdwan, sent him to Malda to look after the twenty-two thousand estates of Pandua. The *Matayali* (trustee) of this estate was the zamindar dynasty of Behar.⁶⁶

After coming to Malda on duty in 1894, Azharuddin started practicing medicine and gained fame very quickly. Not only in medicine, but also in spreading education in the Muslim society, he observed difficult vows. Although the unpaid 'Mahakali Pathshala' was established for girls in Malda due to the influence of the national education movement, which was in a state of severe backwardness in education, the interest in women's education in the Muslim community remained unaffected. Why only Muslim society as a whole then women society was internal. Even after the year of its establishment, the number of students in Balo School was forty-two, of which six were Muslim students. In the midst of this adversity, Azharuddin founded the Jalalia Balika Maktab in 1917 under the name of Pir Jalaluddin Brezi. This lifelong Gandhian liberal social worker later played an important role in the Salt Satyagraha movement in the District Congress. Although the Muslim League was formed in 1906, he never abandoned his ideology. Along with his name, he used to write 'Swadesher Hitakankhi'. Even in the midst of the Hindu-Muslim conflict, where the influential part of the Muslim leadership thought that the Congress-led 'Swaraj' was in fact the Swaraj of the majority Hindus, Azharuddin remained steadfast for a lifetime in the midst of sceptical and complex political turmoil.

Under the influence of Khilafah and non-cooperation, Malda Kaliachak came under attack in 1921. The police were expelled there. Dhepa-barber is off. The shopkeeper did not sell the goods to the police. Alcohol was banned in the face of British opposition. A social boycott began against those loyal to the ruler.⁶⁷

Bhupendranath Jha of Bangitola village of Kaliachak police station came forward under his leadership. This honest, simple-minded man eventually came to be known as the wealthy Gandhian Congress leader. Bhupen Jha did not hesitate to associate with Muchi's son, taking Gandhi's anti-untouchability program to heart, though he faced many insults in Hindu society, especially in the conservative Maithil Brahmin group. He also had a free hand

in Muslim society. He was arrested when he came to the English market with Muslim students after holding a large meeting among the Muslims of Kaliachak while breaking the law. Participation in every movement and imprisonment made him a better fighter.

Sheikh Gamiruddin Sarkar:

Sheikh Gamiruddin Sarkar was born in February 1914 in Bella of present-day South Dinajpur district. Father Gaziruddin Sarkar. While studying in school, Jugantar became an active member of the party. His main job was to exchange important information and arms, especially the Muslim youths wearing lungi-pajamas at that time were not suspected by the British police and guards.⁶⁸ Taking advantage of this opportunity, Muslim clergymen like Gamiruddin secretly provided information and weapons inside their clothes. He was responsible for supplying arms to every political robbery in Dinajpur, starting with the Healy robbery. Although he was not present during the Bella robbery, he was also caught as a linkman when the entire gang was caught. He was first sent to Dinajpur Jail and later to Raj Shahi Jail. He was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment. However, even before that he was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment during the 1930-31 lawlessness movement. In various cases, he spent a maximum of 4 years in jail. It is pertinent to note that he was imprisoned in Alipore Jail for a few days after the Andaman Deportation Order and on his return. He breathed his last in March 1997.⁶⁹

Abdul Jabbar Mian:

Abdul Jabbar Mian is one of the unforgettable names of the peasant movement in this district. He was born on 22 February 1893 in a very poor peasant family. Due to financial difficulties, he could not finish his studies. As a child, he was forced to work as a servant in the zamindar's house in Dinajpur. His family identity was not found. However, his previous residence was in Pabna (present day Bangladesh) district. In his career, he was a contractor in

Healy Line.⁷⁰ He married near the village of Bella for the second time after his first wife Death.

His political career began as a Congress worker. Inspired by nationalism, he became a devoted Congress worker and lived in the party office at Congress Para in Balurghat. He was fed from the team. In his spare time, he used to make spinning wheels and use it to make dhoti, sheets and fatwa. He had an active role in the August movement. He was sentenced to nine years in prison for his active participation in the 1942 movement led by Saraj Ranjan Chatterjee. At this time his family has to live in unbearable hardships. After his release from prison, he was inspired by the socialist ideology and came in contact with Dr. Dhiren Banerjee, a prominent socialist leader of the district.⁷¹

He then became an active member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party. Peasants tried to organize a movement. He used to try to highlight different forms of oppression through short stories. He has tried to strengthen the peasant movement by taking charge as the district secretary of the United Kisan Sabha. The post-independence Indian food movement took an active part in the movement against the relocation of the district headquarters from Balurghat to Raiganj, which resulted in his imprisonment. The last life of this honest, unselfish political leader was spent in a very poor condition. He breathed his last on November 13, 1982. Jabbarmina's sacrifice and devotion is a shining example in the current political situation.⁷²

Dhadha Fakir:

To be able to read only Bengali in the name of education. Rural extremely poor families. Mohammad Dhadha Fakir is a perfect example of how life changes when he takes up robbery as a profession to run his own business. He was born in Bhaulaganj village of Debiganj police station in Jalpaiguri district of undivided Bengal.⁷³ One day he was caught by the police while committing robbery. You have to stay in Jalpaiguri and Bahrapur jails.

During his long imprisonment, he came in contact with many people. Thus the country was in turmoil at that time in the anti-English movement. The leaders are imprisoned one after another. At that time, the patriotic Jatindra Mahen Sengupta and prominent freedom fighter Dr. Bhopal Basu were in Jalpaiguri jail. From that time onwards, the touch of change came in the life of Mohammad Dhadhe Fakir. The lesson of politics begins in the life of a prisoner. He was released from prison in 1939. Then he was almost a changed man. Another fight started. In the villages, in the villages, in the streets, day after day, the English also called for an end to the British imperialist rule in the interest of the country. He worked in large areas of Baida, Chilahati, Debiganj, Haldibari and Jalpaiguri. He was arrested in 1942 after the movement outside India. He was released in 1945. While in jail, he was attracted to Netaji Subhash Basu.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, the plan for independence began with the partition of the country. At that time, he was agitating against partition in the ideology of Netaji. The meeting will be held at Haldibari on 9th August 1947. The speaker was Dr. Atin Basu, Professor, Calcutta University. Section 144 is applicable for not allowing the administration to hold active meetings. Ignoring all the obstacles and challenging Section 144, anti-partition processions and meetings were held in Haldibari on that day. And in the whole part of this procession was Mohammad Dhaesdha Fakir.⁷⁵

Although a few days later the country was divided on the basis of religion. Fakir, a freedom fighter, could not accept it. So, he raised the flag on 15th August. There was hope in my mind that the country would be one again. He was martyred by the supporters of the ruling party near Bhaulaganj Hat in 1949 while protesting against communal politics.

Matiyar Rahman:

Matiyar Rahman was born on 8th Kartik 1325 in Kadamtala. He came in contact with politics while a student of Presidency College. Father's name is Fazlar Rahman and mother's name is Manjhn Nesha. Rupmaya was the director of the cinema hall. Swadeshi was one of the founders of 'Bandhab Natya Samaj'. Was a member of the municipality? The anti-Muslim League leader was arrested during the Bialish movement.⁷⁶

Identity Formation:

Judging from their religious affiliation, about 25 per cent of the population living in North Bengal is Muslim. After the Indian Hindus, therefore, the position of the Muslims. As far as we know, India has the second largest population of Muslims living in different parts of the world. In other words, Muslim Indians exist in special places on the map of the world by religious standards. But what is the nature of this existence? The real situation, the information and the truth show that Muslim-Indians are suffering from identity crisis at the moment. Yes, it is true that the crisis of poverty, illiteracy, religious bigotry, birth rate, ill health, malnutrition, and culture has overcome the crisis and now the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim Indians are suffering from the crisis of identity and existence. The whole population seems to be wrapped up in a whole, in disguise. This fact, in the opinion of all Indian-Muslims, is also present in the case of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim Bengalis. On the way, on the bus, on the train, in the office, in the court, in the field, this part of the Indian population has to be heard, it has to be pierced, it has to be injured at the young age of a few accusations. For example, the Gaeta caste is the caste of terrorists. Two, all Muslims are traitors and heirs of Mir Jafar. Three, they are one on the floor and their minds are on Pakistan or Bangladesh. Four, Muslim means extremist, thief, swindler, murderer, rioter. Five, they do not control the birth rate motivated by motives; they want to be the majority in India by raising birds. Six, Muslims have four wives in each house and they divorce by word of mouth.⁷⁷

Let's go into the context of the question? Are all these accusations levelled against *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims true or false? I don't think this one-point accusation is baseless or true. Whether they are responsible or not, the impression of terrorism is spreading on *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims. They have to bear the brunt of the immoral, inhuman, unmodern way of life with the force of some opportunistic religion-orthodox fatwa. At present, although in reality it is almost baseless, the illusion of some customs created in the context of the Middle Ages is being spread on the body of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim-Bengali. On the other hand, the religious orthodoxy of this society, birth rate, backwardness in education and its own culture is keeping the Muslims in a sixfold boundary. The crisis of existence and the problem of self-identity, therefore, is destabilizing the Muslim-Bengalis inside and outside, pushing them into disguise.⁷⁸

Now the question is, are the existence crisis and the problem of self-identification of this nascent *Sheikh Bengali* and this part of the Indian people a recent one? My answer is no. Muslims have been dealing with this problem for many years. What or where is the beginning of Muslims hurting him and putting him in crisis by shooting arrows of suspicion on the basis of Indian Ness? Sometimes it seems that the seeds of crisis were sown from the day Sultan Mamud invaded India, sometimes it seems that the crisis started from the moment of Babar's conquest of India. Sometimes this thought awoke in my mind from the moment when General Mir Zafar Ali Khan was inactive in the desert of Plessey, a real crisis was formed. Once again, it is imagined that Jinnah's demand for Pakistan was bound by the crisis of Muslim Indian existence and identity.⁷⁹

Nashya Sheikh, a Muslim Bengali-Bengali, that is, the beginning of the Muslim-Indian identity crisis, summed up the events that led to a conclusive decision by either side that Muslims were foreigners and traitors. We think that the real crisis of the Muslims started by standing in front of this decision. Because no other religious community has to face such

accusations even after committing almost the same number of incidents. We never think that according to Mamud-Babar, Aryans were also foreigners. We do not think for once that not only Mir Jafar, but also Raydurlav-Jagatshethra played an equal and important role in the conspiracy to cover the Bengali-Indian independence sun. We never want to think that Jinnah's back can be anything. And even if I think so many thoughts, we don't bring any other community to it by inciting Muslims in such a way. Although Mirzafar's castle became a proverb, there was no mention of 'Raydurlav's caste' or 'Jagatsheth's caste'. This inequality of living is the real crisis of the identity of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim Bengali and Indian. So, is there no responsibility of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim on the basis of all these accusations imposed from outside? There is also a crisis that has intensified from the inside out. In diagnosing and analysing the nature of the crisis-problem of the Muslim Bengalis, those causes and signs inside and outside will be clear. In my opinion, there are three stages of the existence crisis and identity problem of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim.

At the religious level, we see that *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims are accused on various levels. At this stage, just as a Muslim is identified as an orthodox, fundamentalist, so is polygamy or divorce. It seems to me that the four-dimensional allegations and denunciations are neither baseless nor completely true. There are good reasons to be accused of orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Because a large part of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim society is still under religious relations. They are bound by the force of the rules and regulations of religion. Many people tremble to say anything that is anti-religious. It is almost impossible to question the existence of God. The way in which anti-Islamic writings are published and the way they react against them has marked this society as orthodox and fundamentalist. In these cases, the rationalists do not listen to the call of the rationalists to go against the rationalist refutation. On the contrary, they do not hesitate to execute the writer and the author. Such behaviour of a section of Muslims is causing a crisis of self-identity for the rational *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims.

Most recently, the same orthodoxy and fundamentalist mentality is being observed in a section of Hindu-Indians. We believe that this is equally threatening the identity of rationalist Hindus. Then comes polygamy and divorce. These two dimensions have long been at the heart of Muslim identity and crisis. Thousands of Muslims have been denounced in Islam for having four marriages and a large number of readily available divorces. Many people have the idea that almost every Muslim man has more than one wife in their house and they divorce them verbally. It diminishes the rights and dignity of women. Any modern, tasteful, conscious person, any human being with a sense of humanity will not really think of playing these two practices. Would rather condemn. When these two accusations against the Muslims and the accusations of disrespect to women in this source go to the devout Muslims, they prove by showing the *Qur'an-Hadith* and theories that these accusations against this society are baseless.

Let's make it a little clearer. First of all, let's talk about polygamy. Although polygamy is recognized in Islam, it is very difficult to do so religiously. Theologians say that religion did not give men the right to polygamy at times. In special cases, in the event of a man-made war or any natural calamity, if the number of men in the society is less than that of women, then men can marry up to four. Moreover, a man can remarry only when his first wife spontaneously agrees to her husband's second marriage. By showing such a provision in the *Qur'an-Hadith*, the theologians say that polygamy is not allowed in this religion. At the same time, the theologians refuted the allegation of polygamy brought against them by showing information and data. In a nutshell, the Sub-Registrar General of the Social Studies Division surveyed a sample of 387 districts and found that the rate and trend of polygamy among Indians was highest among tribal people - 10.07 per cent, then Buddhists - 6.13 per cent, then Hindus. 65.6 per cent, followed by Jains at 4.4 per cent and Muslims at 4.3 percent. In other words, Muslims are in the fifth place in terms of polygamy.

Second, let's talk about divorce. The first argument of theologians in response to the accusation that Muslim women are endangered by the arbitrary use of divorce is: Divorce is a scientifically sound modern system. There is a need for divorce. As it is, the Hindu society which does not have the practice of divorce is also endangering the lives of many young men and women due to complications. For example, in the eighties of the twentieth century, they read about the burning of brides. On the other hand, Islam degrades the status quo by showing proper provisions for divorce. On the other hand, pointing out the proper rules of divorce prevalent in Islam, he said that saying *talaq-talaq-talaq* three times does not mean separation. Divorce takes at least three months. Moreover, Allah has declared divorce to be the most reprehensible and inferior act. Religionists also lament that Islam is such a modern and scientific religion that it has given women the right to divorce. They said that according to the *Ijma-Qayat* law prevalent in Islam, women can also divorce if they make it a condition before marriage. This type of divorce is called *tafauz in talaq*.

In this context, we can read about a very disgusting incident that happened recently. The issue of Imran-Kand in Uttar Pradesh is the subject of much discussion today. Imrana was raped by her father-in-law. This act is a heinous crime. Surprisingly, the theologians have ruled that Imrana's marriage is no longer legal, and that her stay with her husband is illegal. In other words, the raped mother-in-law was punished for her father-in-law's nasty hellish deeds. Many are trying to endanger the existence of Muslims by mentioning the incident. Non-Muslim fundamentalists, as well as tolerant rationalists, are jeopardizing the identity of Muslims. Many are going fishing in *Ghalejal* and demanding equal rights for all. We also condemn the Imrana incident. We also want punishment for the guilty. Surprisingly, the same thing happened in Ahmedabad that did not happen in the case of Subhash Gahil's father-in-law. (Khabar Aajkal: July 12, 2005). On the other hand, when I went to the theologians about Imrana, they quoted the Qur'an-Hadith on polygamy and divorce, saying

that Islam provides for the appropriate punishment for rapists. Fatah in Uttar Pradesh is anti-Islam.

In other words, it is seen that in the case of polygamy-divorce rape, there are accusations of blasphemy and orthodoxy, use of medieval law and insulting women. On the other hand, there is a deadly attempt to refute the allegation by proving the information from the scriptures. Which side is right? - Standing in front of such a question is getting closer. Nasya Sheikh is a real crisis of Muslim-Bengali identity. Because, on the one hand, there are some accurate but many misleading archers of the plaintiffs. On the other hand, there are beautiful rules of religion, but there is a misinterpretation of those rules. In this case, even though there is talk of severe punishment in religion, it is happening in the society. For example, polygamy is not easy, but it is happening at a certain rate, in this case, the wife's permission is being obtained for fear of divorce. Even if such girls have the right to divorce, in reality, perhaps, not a single example can be found. For example, in adultery, the man is often released even though he is promised equal punishment. For example, in the case of rape, there is a provision to give double punishment to the rapist (if the rape is innocent), but according to Imrana, only women are harmed. The crisis of the Muslim is that even though he is not responsible, others are condemning him, but he is silent in the face of misinterpretation and practice of religion. In this case, my suggestion is that in order to get out of such a situation, Muslims have to embark on a two-pronged campaign. First, the baseless allegations made by non-Muslims for political or national gain must be refuted by providing specific information. Second, it must be made clear to theologians that in many cases, despite the clear instructions of religion, they are all. They are for the punishment of the things that are happening without *Tayakka*. Why aren't you talking? Why, arbitrary polygamy and divorce. They are not organizing propaganda or protest movements against misappropriation. Why,

they are not bursting into condemnation of Imran-Kand. We think Nashya Sheikh is stuck in a crisis of Muslim Bengali identity because of the failure of this two-pronged campaign.

On the religious side, the problem of identity and existential crisis of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim, if these are on the outside, then on the inside there is a big dimension. In the face of many in this society, it is easy to say that she is first, Muslim, second, Muslim and so on Third, Bengali as well as Indian. This mantra is for a Muslim child. He grows up listening, but in the next life he will fall into the crisis of self-identity. Muslims, in the sixth case Muslims-Bengalis, have to overcome this dilemma. Religious hack or atheist, I have to tell him that I am first and foremost Bengali i.e. Indian, secondly, Bengali i.e. Indian and thirdly, Muslim. In other words, the mantra of religious narrow-mindedness has to be side-lined firstly Muslim, secondly, Muslim and thirdly Bengali or Indian this mantra has to be reversed. If not, it will be difficult to deal with all the misleading allegations against him.

Analysing the social stage, it can be seen that in this case too, the *Nashya Sheikh* Bengali is in a crisis of self-identity due to two-dimensional accusations and conflicts inside and outside. At this stage we see that most of the people in this society are obsessed with the darkness of illiteracy. As long as Muslims are involved in terrorist activities in the country or abroad, *Nashya Sheikh* Bengali Muslim has to be identified as a breed of terrorism, whether he is responsible or not. And Muslims are being branded as murderers, rioters and robbers whenever they see Muslims being involved in the murders, riots and fights organized in the states and countries. After acknowledging that these allegations against Muslims are not baseless, the tradition of a few thoughts is laid here. That is, one, theft-snatching-murder-robbery is done by Muslims as well as many non-Muslims including Hindus. The truth of this statement will be proved if we read the related news of the daily newspapers in Bengal. In such a context, the question arises that if Muslims are identified as caste for that of robbery-murder, then why not for others? Second, in our country at present, it is behind the militant

attacks that are taking place in different parts of the world, in most cases, Muslims. As a result, Muslims are being branded as 'terrorists' for good reason. In this context, it can be said that once there was a massive terror in Khalistan, a lot of blood was flowing in the mountains including Darjeeling, now the people in Assam-Nagaland-Andhra Pradesh are showing equal militant activity. Extreme terror has recently taken place in Garbeta or Barikul those who caused or are causing these incidents are not Muslims. If so, why isn't the community of militants who caused all this called terrorists? Or why isn't the existence of Bush or Blair's Christian caste, the whole Christian religion, being branded a terrorist for the Iraq-Afghanistan conflict? I think in these cases the religion of the person is thrown away“Unjust. The wrongdoer, he has no religion or caste, these thoughts should be indulged. But not so much, just selectively, he is turning away in arrogance as he blames *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim of North Bengal. Just as his existence has been endangered by his existence, so too his identity has been crushed to death.

Along with these external factors, *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims are facing a crisis of existence in the face of special contradictions in the overall development of education at the social level. If there is no overall development in the field of education, no caste will be developed and beautiful. Does not get consciousness. In this case, religion and its orthodoxy is an obstacle in front of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims. For example, after birth a Muslim student learns to believe in a very natural effort that the creature and the earth were created by God. But when he grew up, science taught him that as a result of evolution, earthly beings have been created. Which student will believe? Naturally, the conflict comes and paves the way for the student. Although there is a clear provision in the religion for teaching music, music and drama in special cases, in reality there is a widespread practice of keeping Muslim students away from it. Interestingly, the education of dance-song-drama is conducive to the overall development of human beings. But in front of the Muslim student there is a conflicting

inferiority complex. This inferiority later led to his self-crisis and self-identity problems. Many people may ask questions here, especially in the case of creationism, students of other religions. In that case, if he is not in conflict, then why should he be a Muslim student? In reply, in this country, the influence of religion is not so strong; as many Muslims as there are. And, under the influence of Benares, other societies have given more importance to mainstream education, bypassing religious theories, which Muslims have not yet been able to overcome. *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim's identity is in crisis because he could not, he is still wrapped up in disguise.

With that comes the matter of culture-consciousness. Yes, in the cultural field, Muslim society is stuck in its own cultureless. This is happening as a result of the lack of overall spread of education. Due to the lack of importance given to the lessons of poetry, literature, philosophy and science and the welfare of the society in spite of the divisive mood of the recent society, the Muslim-Bengali people are in the dark except for a handful of people. I believe that this cult has made the issue of Muslim identity problematic.

Now the question is what is the Bengali nationality? By being a Bengali being, we are trying to become a Bengali as a whole. I am expressing my sincere love for Bengali culture, Bengali heritage, Bengali mentality, Bengali language and Bengali territory. If we can represent ourselves as the representative of so many cultures of Bengalis, then there will be no crisis of Muslim Bengali 'identity'. In this context, a record of how much Muslim Bengali is present in the process of becoming a Bengali can now be calculated. In the case of culture, Muslim Bengali representation is almost non-existent. In recitation, in music, in film, in film, in drama, even if he dies by beating his head, his name cannot be found. There is no representation except one or two who sing in the song. There is no daily paper, no periodicals. Although a fortnightly or weekly search was found, the final papers on religious monopoly were not universally accepted. Only a few names come up in the field of literature

and journalism. In other words, in terms of culture, Muslims are far behind the Bengali culture finale. Muslims Bengalis do not have Satyajit, Mrinal, Ritwik Ghatak, Hemant, Manna or Ajay Chakraborty, Suchitra Sen or Mamata Shankar, Uttam-Soumitra, Shambhu Mitra, Utpal Datta-Vibhas Chakraborty. If the Muslim Bengali can represent him at this stage, then his opponent has to think at least a hundred times before pointing the finger of blame at him. Second, the issue of tradition-consciousness comes up. Probably, in the past, extremist Hinduism or extremist Islamism did not find a place in Bengal, as the Bengali traditional consciousness never indulged in any kind of extremism. This is why the fervour of Brahmanism has never been able to set foot in Bengal. The present Muslims need to be more immersed in the process of reforming and co-ordinating the way in which Rammahan, Vidyasagar, Vivekananda broke Hindu religious traditions or redefined Hindu society from medieval bondage a hundred and fifty years ago. In front of the theologians of this society, a movement has to be formed to demand the application of better and progressive provisions than those given in religion. At the same time, the interpretation of religion and practice must be taken to such a height that it will be helpful to adopt everything in modern education. Thirdly, according to other Bengalis, Muslims need to show a coordinated mentality. It is worth mentioning here that a section of Muslim Bengali has developed such thinking and mentality. But a large part of the uneducated loves to be in the guise of religious disguise. There is a need to change the narrow communal mentality. If this can be done, Muslims will also become part of the mainstream of Bengali life. Others will also know that he does not just create boundaries after boundaries and bind himself in a circle.

Needless to say, the process of oiling themselves as Bengalis has been started anew by the recent generation of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims. Today's Bengalis *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim has become more interested in 'mainstream' education. The representation of girls in education has increased. Increased his representation in employment, teaching, advocacy,

teaching, medicine, and engineering. However, the efforts of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims and Bengalis are problematic in many respects. First of all, it goes without saying that Muslims and Bengalis do not have reading habits. His strong reluctance to study the modernity of art, literature, philosophy and science. But the foundation of the society is laid through the practice of these. Second, the recent advancement is creating obstacles for this society in the face of the tide of bigotry and globalization. This trap was not in front of him when the Renaissance Hindu Bengali was pushing back his Hindu identity and becoming modern Bengali. As a result, the Hindus concentrated on the formation of society at that time. And today, after two hundred years of that process, when the efforts of that effort are starting in the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim Bengali society, it is losing itself in most cases in the shock of globalism or globalization. Even though the present Hindu Bengali is facing this danger, the remnants of the tradition of one and a half to two hundred years are saving him. And this is the rate of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim Bengali. There is no remnant of his tradition. He has to fight completely empty handed. All in all, by fighting against the confusing external accusations, the internal stereotypes and the separatist way of life, one has to make oneself a Bengali and an Indian.

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²⁵Personal interview of *Mahhamad Abas* by the researcher, on 10-11-2015, 10.30 a.m., at Banarhat.

²⁶Umesh, Sharma, *op. cit.*

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Personal interview of *Amjat Hossain, Sahidul Islam* by the researcher, on 29-10-2015, 11 a.m., at Dhupguri, Gadum.

²⁹Personal interview of *Bulbul Rahaman*, (Teacher), by the researcher, on 05-11-2015, 2 p.m., at Shisabari.

³⁰Personal interview of *Aminur Rahaman, Abul Hossain* by the researcher, on 25-10-2015, 12 noon, at Dewmali, Joteswar.

³¹Ibid.

³²Rahim, Mondal, *Dynamics of Muslim Society*, Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1999, p.186.

³³Rahim, Mondal, 'Muslim Minority in Koch Behar: Their History and Culture', P. K. Bhattacharyya (Ed.), *The Kingdom of Kamata Koch Behar in Historical Perspective*, Ratna Prakashan in Association with University of North Bengal, 2000, p.123.

³⁴*Occoputional Condtition of Nashya sheikh Muslims as per survey report: Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.)*.

³⁵*Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.)*, 1998, p.3.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Bazlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Kamishaner Report O Uttar Banger Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali), Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha, Uttar Banga, 1996, p.26.

³⁸*West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Report-8, op. cit.*

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Rahim, Mondal, 'Muslim Minority in Koch Behar: Their History and Culture', P. K. Bhattacharyya (Ed.), *The Kingdom of Kamata Koch Behar in Historical Perspective*, Ratna Prakashan in Association with University of North Bengal, 2000, p.123.

⁴¹Rahim, Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya shaik of North Bengal,' in Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mita,(Ed.),*Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, pp.309-325.

⁴²Riyajul, 'Simante Pachim Dinajpurer Musolman Samaj O Sanskriti', (In Bengali), *Madhuporni*, Poschim Dinajpur Jela Songkha-7, 1399, p. 92.

⁴³Ibid. p. 93.

⁴⁴Jyotimay, Roy, 'Nashya Sheikh Muslim o Lokayat Oitihjo', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Muslim o Samaj Sanskriti*, Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick,Sreejoni Dhara, Sahitya o Sanskriti Bishoyok Patrika, Jalpaiguri, 1913, p.43.

⁴⁵Ibid. p. 45.

⁴⁶Bazlay, Rahaman, 'Koch Behar Zilar Muslim Porichiti', (in Bengali),Hossain, Amjat, (ed.),*Kamrup Theke Kochbehar*,Suhrid publication, Kolkata, 2014, pp.115-116.

⁴⁷Debabrata, Chaki, 'Cooch Beharer Nasya Sekh Sompraday: Ekti Porjabekhan', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Muslim o Samaj Sanskriti*, Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick,Sreejoni Dhara, Sahitya o Sanskriti Bishoyok Patrika, Jalpaiguri, 1913, pp.98-102.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Rahim, Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya shaik of North Bengal,' of Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mita,(Ed.),*Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, pp. 309-325.

⁵¹Government of India report of the Backward Classes Commission, vol-1, Kaka Saheb Kalelkar Commision (Backward Classes Commission), government of India press, New Delhi, 1955. P. 12.

⁵²Bajle, Rahaman, *Mandal Commisioner Report o Uttorbanger Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali), Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha, North Bengal, 1996, p. 5.

⁵³Rahim, Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya Shaik of North Bengal,' of Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mita,(Ed.),*Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, pp. 313-314.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ganga, Prasad, *Samatabadi Jugolkishor Raybir*, (in Bengali), Samata Kendro, Alipurduar, 2020, p.27.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Abul, Hossain, ‘Jugo Nayak Jughal Kishor’, *Samatabadi Jughal Kishor Raybir*, Edited by Ganga Prasad, Samata Kendro, Alipurduar, 2020, p.89.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Rahim, Mondal, ‘Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya shaik of North Bengal,’ of Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mita, (Ed.), *Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, pp. 309-325.

⁶²*West Bengal commission for Backward Classes Report-8, 29th Oct, 1997*, p. 29.

⁶³Rahim, Mondal, *Dynamics of Muslim Society*, Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1999, p. 186.

⁶⁴Report -8, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵Khudiram Smriti Rakha Commettee, (Edited), *Uttorbaner Swadhinata Sangramider Jebanalekha, Part-II, (Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda)*, (in Bengali), Ganadebi Printers and Publishes P.L.T., Kolkata, 2014, p.185.

⁶⁶Ibid. p.286.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Khudira Smriti Rakha Commettee, (Edited), *Uttorbaner Swadhinata Sangramider Jebanalekha, Part-II, (Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda)*, (in Bengali), Ganadebi Printers and Publishes P.L.T., Kolkata, 2014, pp.111-126.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Khudira Smriti Rakha Commettee, (Edited), *Uttorbaner Swadhinata Sangramider Jebanalekha, Part-I, (Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling)*, (in Bengali), Ganadebi Printers and Publishes P.L.T., Kolkata, 2014, pp. 87-215.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Sohabar, Hossain, 'Arthoporichoyer Songkot: Musolman Bangalir Muktir Poth', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Muslim o Samaj Sanskriti*, Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick, Sreejoni Dhara, Sahitya o Sanskriti Bishoyok Patrika, Jalpaiguri, 1913, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.