THE NASHYA SHEIKH COMMUNITY OF NORTH BENGAL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

A Thesis submitted to the University of North Bengal

For the Award of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

HISTORY

BY

MD. NABIUL ISLAM

GUIDE

PROF. BIJOY KUMAR SARKAR

Department of History

University of North Bengal

March , 2021

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "THE NASHYA SHEIKH COMMUNITY OF NORTH BENGAL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS" has been prepared by me under the guidance of DR. BIJOY KUMAR SARKAR, Professor of History, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

Md Nabiul Islam

MD. NABIUL ISLAM
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
DIST: DARJEELING
WEST BENGAL

DATE: 26/02/2021

CERTIFICATE

I certify that MD. NABIUL ISLAM has prepared the thesis entitled "THE NASHYA SHEIKH COMMUNITY OF NORTH BENGAL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS" for the award of PhD degree of the University of North Bengal, under my guidance. He has carried out the work at the Department of History, University of North Bengal.

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar
Professor
Department of History
University of North Bengal

DR. BIJOY KUMAR SARKAR,
PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

DATE: 26/02/2021

URKUND

Urkund Analysis Result

Analysed Document:	Md. Nabiul Islam_History.pdf (D94710757)
Submitted:	2/5/2021 12:25:00 PM
Submitted By:	nbuplg@nbu.ac.in
Significance:	5 %

Sources included in the report:

4252f089-a2eb-45a6-a2d4-a227c6a73806
2717d4f9-c0a3-41de-81fb-b94dca0ddd81
6dbc1816-c601-49da-b2e0-871d203c38a0
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nashya_Shaikh
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengali_Muslims
https://amp.en.google-info.org/29568389/1/nashya-shaikh.html
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_India
http://ir.amu.ac.in/1748/1/T%206939.pdf
http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/2342/1/U615290.pdf
http://www.bmri.org.uk/articles/Urbanization-and-Growth.pdf
https://zenodo.org/record/806875/files/79.pdf
https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/144521229.pdf
http://ir.nbu.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/1886/22/KAMTAPUR%20MOVEMENT%20IN%20NORTH%20BENGAL%20GEO.pdf
https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/RHSS/article/download/3378/3405
http://14.139.211.59/bitstream/123456789/173/10/10_CHAPTER_04.pdf
http://14.139.211.59/bitstream/123456789/173/13/13_CHAPTER_07.pdf
https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft067n99v9;chunk.id=0;doc.view=print
https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/the-partition-and-the-muslim-minorities-of-west-bengal-1947-1967.94915/
http://14.139.211.59/bitstream/123456789/1213/9/09_chapter_04.pdf
http://ir.nbu.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/1502/7/07_chapter_03.pdf
http://14.139.211.59/bitstream/123456789/2775/17/17_chapter%206.pdf
https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.119471/2015.119471.Social-History-Of-The-Tamils-1707-1947_djvu.txt
https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/35272719.pdf
https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.69208/2015.69208.Indian-Society-A-Textbook-On-Sociology_djvu.txt
http://lsi.gov.in:8081/jspui/bitstream/123456789/5106/1/41834_1951_TRI.pdf
https://bangladeshresults.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/9-10-28_history-of-bd-eng.pdf

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar

26/02/2021

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar
Professor
Department of History
University of North Bengal

URKUND

Instances where selected sources appear:

155

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar

26/02/2021

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar
Professor
Department of History
University of North Bengal

ABSTRACT

THE NASHYA SHEIKH COMMUNITY OF NORTH BENGAL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The spread of Islam and the development of Muslims in India were a multi-layered phenomenon and followed different patterns in different regions of the country. The bulk of the Muslims in India have been drawn from the diverse segments of the Indian population. It was spread by other means rather by the sword and the conversion to the faith (Islam) was not a sudden switchover of faith. It was a process of two ways. In one way, Islam itself undergoes a change in the process of converting the Hindus or others and on the other the former may change to suit the latter. The building up of Muslim society in Bengal was a long process of gradual growth. The composition of the society quite naturally differed from century to century with the immigration of foreign Muslim and the conversion of local people.

This thesis begins with an explanation on the Growth and development of Muslim society in Bengal. Following this, *Nashya Sheikhs* community of North Bengal in historical perspectives is vividly described. The trunk of the discussion consists of how Islam in popular culture is practised by *Nashya sheikh* of North Bengal along with the socio economic as well as the changes and continuities with special focus on political participation identity formation and *Nashya sheikh* and others communities a comparative study is conversed.

This thesis looks into the formation of *Nashya sheikh* Bengali Muslim identity in North Bengal in the 20th century, who was a numerically dominant Muslim group resided in the sub-Himalayan North Bengal mainly distributed over the northern districts of West Bengal, particularly in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South

Dinajpur districts. Some of them are also found in Chachol and Gajol as well as in Malda district and all-over North Bengal. This community in general were local converts of Rajbangsi, Polia, Koch, Mech community etc. They are also designated as *Babe Musalman* or Rajbangsi Muslim.

The *Nashya* community is endogamous in character. The community is further subdivided on the lineage which is reflected by the use of their surnames. The most popular surnames among the *Nashya* are Rahaman, Ahmed, Uddin, Bapari, Pramanik, Sarkar, Sardar, etc. The socio-economic 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, culturally, educationally extremely backward. 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. Other dogmas of this community are *purdah* system (veil), child marriage etc. The marriage between *Nashya Sheikh* and another upper-caste Muslim group is prohibited and strictly followed. The *Nashya Sheikh* use *kamtapuri or Rajbangsi* language and use Rajbangsi customs and manners. They like to carry on their life as same as Rajbangsi use to only different *Roza* (Fasting), *Namaz* (Prayer) and later on there have been introduction of Urdu word such as *Abba, Amma, Chacha, Gosul* etc.

In any society the system of education plays an important role in training, development and allocation of its manpower resources. The average educational standard of the *Nashya Sheikh* class is also very low. The materials on record and field work performed indicates that their participation in the field of education is not up to the mark; about 10% read up to primary stage, 8% up to secondary level, and 3% up to Higher secondary level,

percentage of Higher secondary Education among them is quite negligible, (Graduation-2%, Law-o.5% and post Graduate-0.5%). The spread of education among the female is extremely low; primary -6%, secondary -4% and Higher secondary -1%. One percent only reached up to Graduation level. Due to poor socio-economic conditions the percentage of dropouts at different stages of education is quite high. It is 50% at the stage of primary level, 80% at the secondary stage, 90% at higher secondary level, 95% at the Graduation level and 99% percent at the post Graduate level.

Their political participation in mainstream politics is minimal. *Nashya sheikhs* are under-represented in the parliament and state legislature. Their participation in the political process did not increase to the extent that it should have since the inception of the first general election. Their political participation is also less in proportion with their population share in the state. Democracy has no meaning if minorities are not secure and also do not get proper share in economic, social and political development in proportion to their population. However, it needs to be pointed out that without political empowerment, socio-economic development of Muslims will be a utopian approach and vice versa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work could not have been possible without the co-operation of a good number of people from various fields. At first, I thank the Department of History, University of North Bengal for helping me to get admission for the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in History and other facilities to do research in an ideal academic environment. The thesis titled **"THE NASHYA SHEIKH COMMUNITY OF NORTH BENGAL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS"** is outcome of profound guidance of Professor Dr. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar, Department of History, University of North Bengal, gave me the idea for writing this thesis and was kind enough to provide valuable books and other source related to my thesis. He promotes new ideas and thinking for writing this. I would like to thank Professor Dr. Sk. Rahim Mandal, Department of Himalayan Studies; he encouraged me for this particular work and gave many important materials in this regard. I would like to thank Dr Varun Kumar Roy of Department of History, for constantly giving me his valuable guidance. I also thank Dr. Sankar Kumar Das (Associate Professor of Bankura University) who helped me in many ways for my work. The other respected Teachers, such as – Associate Professor Dr. Sudash Lama (Head, Department of History, University of North Bengal) Professor Dr. Anita Bagchi, (Former Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal), Associate Professor Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya and Professor Dr. Ichhimuddin Sarkar, (Former Department of History, University of North Bengal), Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, (Retired Professor Department of History, University of North Bengal) also gave me valuable suggestions in preparing this Work. I also thanks to Assistant Professor, Dr. Amrita Mondal, Dr. Tahiti Sarkar, Dr. Deepshikha Acharjee, Dr. Priyadarshini Verma. Friends like Pranay Rajak, Biswajit Das, Asin Mahammad Ansari, Dr. Sudip Khashnabis, Sudip Bhattacharya, Dipankar Sarkar, Madhusudhan Paul, Tushar Kanti Barman, John Biswas, Mampi Barman,

Chandan Singha, Badal Roy, Mahmidul Hossain, Pintu Majumdar, Ripom Paul, Vibekananda Roy, Sujit Mandal, Golam Nabi Azad (Young Leader of Nashya Sheikh Community) and many others have supported me for the task. Especially, Vivekananda Roy who supported me with his expert hand during the last phase of my thesis compilation. I express my sense of gratitude to the staff of Central Library of the North Bengal University, Departmental Seminar Library of History Department, and North Bengal University, for helping me lot by giving the valuable data related to my Thesis. Also, I am very grateful to Md. Abul Hossain, Secretary of Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti, who provided me lots of valuable data for my dissertation and Bazlay Rahaman, President, Anagrasar Sangram Samity (President Kamatapuri Bhasa Academy), who provided me lots of valuable records and also, I am thankful to all of the members of this Community; without them my Thesis would not have been possible. Also, thanks to all the persons who help me to do this work. Finally, I am thankful to God (Allah) that my family who supported me in all way possible and encouraged me in all my ventures.

PREFACE

The research ventures the History of specific and inherent under-currents of **The Nashya Sheikh Community of North Bengal in the Twentieth century: A Study of the Socio-Economic and political Transformations .**An attempt has been made to outline the processes of multifaceted factors and forces that the *Nashya Sheikhs* Community of North Bengal had to experience in their Social, Economic and Political life. A sincere exercise has been attempted to reconstruct the event of on the basis of Historical documents as well as Political, Socio-Economic, Ethnographic and to explain their need to reconstruct at the present time scale. This incisive study of a region and its people both marginally placed and lulled in the lap of Himalayas largely silenced through a lack of visibility in academic research, is an outcome of the efforts by the researcher for the last Six years. To be perceived, the objective of the present study claims to be a part of academic exercise of Social History hitherto Un-attempted by the scholars of the field.

The present study is comprised of Six Chapters excluding Introduction and Conclusion. Each Chapter are intrinsically linked with each other and also are inconsonance with the broad design of the study. First chapter is the Growth and Development of Muslims Society in Bengal to the study which initiates how the Muslims came to India as well as West Bengal, how conversion takes place among the non-Muslim locals, various Sub-Communities under the Muslim Community in West Bengal in particular and in India in general and also the Socio-Economic, Political, and Educational conditions of the Muslims in Historical perspectives of Bengal. Second Chapter deals with the *Nashya Sheikhs* Community of North Bengal in Historical Perspectives to the study how the *Nashya Sheikh* community originated and grew in North Bengal and also describe how the Community development of North Bengal in Historical Perspectives. Third chapter deals with the Islam as practiced by *Nashya*

Sheikhs of North Bengal. How the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims of North Bengal followed certain customs and practices of Islamic culture. Fourth chapter deals with the social life of the *Nashya Sheikhs* of North Bengal: past and present. Which described the Social Structure of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal in their past and present condition? Fifth chapter deals with the Economic Life and Political participation of the Nashya Shekhs. This chapter divided into two sections, first section elaborates the continuity and changes the economic life of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal. Second section intricate the political participation and identity formation of the *Nashya Sheikh* community. Six chapter deals with *Nashya Sheikh* and other Communities: A Comparative study and lastly conclusion deals with the major findings of the study, suggestions and recommendations of the Researcher.

The study under reference has been a maiden attempt to identify the factors and forces, and events and issues involved in the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal in the Twentieth century: A Study of the Socio-Economic and political Transformations. While doing so, the researcher had to gather information and documents from different sources. Such relevant documents in the form of Reports, Leaflets, Official Notes and Circulations, News Papers, Articles, Published Books, Gazetteers and Letters etc. had been gathers from, Jalpaiguri D.M. office, Dhupguri Block Development Office, Cooch Behar D.M. Office, Central Library of North Bengal University, Seminar Library of Department of History, University of North Bengal as well as interviews of inhabitants of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda Districts, taken by the researcher.

CONTENTS

	PAGE NO.
Abstract	i-iii
Acknowledgement	iv-v
Preface	vi-vii
List contents	viii
List of Tables and Maps	ix-x
List of Appendices	xi
List of Glossary of Terms	xii-xiv
INTRODUCTION	1-17
CHAPTER- I: THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM IN BENGAL	18-83
CHAPTER- II: NASHYA SHEIKH COMMUNITY OF NORTH BENGAL IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES	84-147
CHAPTER- III: ISLAM AS PRACTISED BY NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL	148-205
CHAPTER- IV: SOCIAL LIFE OF NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL: PAST AND PRESENT	206-286
CHAPTER-V: ECONOMIC LIFE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL: I: ECONOMIC LIFE - CONTINUITY AND CHANGES II: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND IDENTITY FORMATION	287-340
CHAPTER-VI: NASHYA SHEIKH AND OTHER COMMUNITIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY	341-368
CONCLUSION	369-382
Selected Bibliography	383-397
Appendices-I	398-425
Appendices-II (Photographs)	426-439
Index	440-450

LIST OF TABLES AND MAPS

		Page No.
1.	TABLE 1.1: Showing the Ethnographic test result of H. Risely. (Source: H. H.Risely, *Tribes and Castes in Bengal*, Vol- 1, 1891, p. 91)	31
2.	TABLE 1.2: Growth of Muslim population in 1872-1941. (Source: Mohammad Saduzzaman, 'Bangalar Samajik O Sangskritik Itihas'-Vol-1, (Bengali Translation of "Social and Cultural History of Bengal" By Dr. M. A., Rahim.) Bangla Academy Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1995, pp. 41.)	33-34
3.	TABLE 1.3: Establishment of Pre- Resident. (Source: Mohammad Saduzzaman, Bangalar Samajik O Sangskritik Itihas'- Vol-1, (Bengali Translation of "Social and Cultural History of Bengal" By Dr. M. A., Rahim.) Bangla Academy Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1995, pp44.)	37
4.	TABLE 1.4: Trends of Muslim Population in West Bengal (in percentage). (Source: Census of India)	67
5.	TABLE 1.5: Concentration of Muslim Population, West Bengal 2001. (Source: Census of India, 2001, West Bengal.)	69
6.	TABLE 1.6: Muslim Literacy Rate in Comparison to Other Religious Communities in West Bengal. (Source: Census of India 2001, West Bengal.)	70
7.	TABLE 1.7: District wise Literacy Rate of West Bengal 2001. (Source: Literacy Rate of West Bengal, Census 2001, and West Bengal.)	71-72
8.	TABLE 1.8: Muslim Educational Backwardness in West Bengal, 2001 Region. (Source: West Bengal Government (2004): West Bengal Human Development, Report p.03.)	74
9.	TABLE 3.1: Religious calendar of the Nashya Sheikh. (source: prepared by the scholar)	156
10.	TABLE 4.1 - At a glance the population and literacy rate of the districts of North Bengal. (Source: Census of India 2001, Final Population, W.B.)	214
11.	TABLE 4.2: At a glance the population of the districts of North Bengal, Muslim Percentage of population and Muslim population. (Source: Census of India 2001, Final Population, W.B.)	217
12.	TABLE 4.3: At a glance the overall and Muslim literacy rate of the districts of North Bengal. (Source: Census of India 2001, Final Population, W.B.)	219
13.	TABLE 4.4 : West Bengal has a higher literacy rate than any other Community. (Source: Census of India 2001, Final Population, W.B.)	220

14. TABLE 4.5: District Wise Madrasash. (Sources: West Bengal Madrasha Service Commission 2011.) 271

15. TABLE 4.6: Educational survey of Nashya Sheikh Community of some area of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. (Sources: Educational Survey of Nashya Sheikh Communityof Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar: Anagrashar Muslim Sangram Samiti U.B.) 273-274

16. TABLE 4.7: Drop-out Statement of Nashya Skheikh Students (Primary Education) Uttar Banga Muslim Sangrm Samiti. (Sources: Drop out Statement 0f Nashya Sheikh Students (primary Education), Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti U.B.) 276

17. TABLE 5.1: Occupational Condition of Nashya sheikh Muslims in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri Districts. (Source: Occoputional Condtition of Nashya sheikh Muslims as per survey report: Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti U.B.) 304

18. TABLE 5.2: Occupational percentages of Nashya Sheikh Muslims in various sectors. (Source: Rahaman, Bazlay, Mondal Kamishaner Report O Uttar Banger Muslim Samaj, Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha, Uttar Banga, 1996, p. 26.) 305

19. TABLE 6.1: Population (Religion wise) in the District of Jalpaiguri in 1961 and 1971. (Source: Census of India, 1961, 1971) 345

20. TABLE 6.2: Population (Religion wise) in the District of Jalpaiguri in 1981 and 1991. (Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991.) 346

21. TABLE 6.3: Population (Religion wise) in the District of Jalpaiguri in 2001. (Source: Census of India, 2001.) 347

22. TABLE 6.4: Population (Religion wise) in the District of Cooch Behar in 1991 and 2001. (Source: Census of India, 1991, 2001.) 348

23. TABLE 6.5: The percentage of the various communities in advantage of various sections. (Source: Rahaman, Bazlay, Mondal Kamishaner Report O Uttar Banger Muslim Samaj, Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha, Uttar Banga, 1996, p. 27.) 365

Map

1. 1.1 Pattern of Muslim Educational Backwardness in West Bengal. 75

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDICE-1: LIST OF DOCUMENTS PAGE: 398-425

APPENDICE-2: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS PAGE: 426-439

LIST OF GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adibasi	Tribal People.
Ajalf	A traditional Muslim status or class category. The term used for the converted Muslim groups, especially from middle or lower castes Hindus. Ajalfs are the indigenous Muslims of India. They enjoy a low status in Muslim society.
Ajan	Call for prayer.
Amir	A rich man or head of the group.
Aqiqa	A religious ritual observed by sacrificing the cattle for seeking God's blessings for long life and good health of child.
Asraf	A traditional Muslim status or class category. The term use to identify Muslim claiming descendants from any of the four groups of foreign taking out or origin, namely- Sayyad, Shaik, Mughal and Pathan. They enjoyed a higher status in Muslim society.
Astamangala	The newly married husband comes to live with his wife in her natal home for a day after marriage.
Atar	Smear scented oil
Atrap	Non-elite Peasant
BachharPahela	First day of every new Bengali year
Bahas	Religious debates.
Bapdai Deoa	Establish father as a relation.
Barjatri	Marriage party i.e., the bridegroom's procession.
Bhadrolok	Educated Bengali Hindus
Bhatia	People from downstream (Bhati), migrants from South Bengal.
Bibi	Lady or woman.
Borkha	Loose garment generally of Black colour covering the entire body with veiled opening for the eyes, worn by Muslim women. The use of Borkha among the Women of Bengal Muslim community is very uncommon.
ChailanBati	Giving blessings with lamp.
Chaitra Sankranti	Last day of Chaitra month.

Chapkan	A long shirt.
Cheka	One kind of dish made of dryfish
Darga	The Muslim Shrine and also to mean the abode of a Saint or Pir.
Dhai	Untrained professional midwife who help at the time of delivery at home.
Dostipata	Making new friends.
Fetra	Part of the meat from sacrificed animals in *Korbani*.
Ghee	Purified Butter
Git Gaoa	Singing of Marriage songs.
Gosalpana	When new seeds of Paddy are showing
Hadish	Tradition i.e., the recorded sayings of the Prophet.
Haji	The person who have performed Hajj at Mecca.
Hajj	Pilgrimage to Mecca.
Halal	Permissible in Islam. Also, to mean ritual purification.
Halud Makha	Using turmeric on face and body at the day of Marriage.
Imam	Religious leader and also to mean the Religious specialists (Heads) of the congregational prayer.
Jin	Spirits.
Jumma	Friday congregation prayer, which is considered as auspicious by the Muslims.
Kalema	A pillar of Islam which believes in one God and Muhammad as its last Prophet.
Kazi	The Muslim Judge. Also, to mean the Muslim Marriage Register.
Khatna	Circumcision rites for the male child, properly known as Musalmani.
Lungi	Lower dress of the male.
Majlis	Social or religious gathering of the people.
Mannat Kara	Wish to God or Allah during bad times.

Masjid	Mosque i.e., the house of Prayer.
Mazar	Abode or Tomb of Muslim Saint or Pir.
Moulavi	Traditional Muslim religious specialist or Muslim Law scholar, also called as molla i.e., the Muslim priest and teacher
Mukhe Bhat	Ceremony of putting rice into a child's mouth for the first time.
Munshi	The incharge of village council. The term is also mean the Teacher of Maktab or Madrasha.
Nashyas	Converted of recent past, they also known as Nao-Musalman, i.e., the new Muslims (Rajbangsi Muslims).
Nasihatnamas	Manuals of religious instructions.
Nasto	Fallen or degraded in society.
Nayabhat	When new paddy taking at home.
Nosb	A drinker.
Pahariya	People from the Hills (Nepali).
Pasa Khela	Playing Pasa.
Pir	Muslim saint. Also called as Safi or Murshid.
Pusna	Cake made of rice meal.
Qurbani	Sacrifice.
Rajbangsi	A local Hindu caste group (Majorly found in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri).
Roza	Fasting.
Salam	The Islamic way of greeting by bowing down, with the right hand raised to the forehead as a mark of respect.
Samandha	Negotiation for Marriage.
Shamiana	Marquee.
Shariyat	The sacred laws of Islam.
Shidal	One kind of dish made of Dry fish.

Sona Kapar	During marriage gifts of Gold Ornaments and saris.
Swad Khaoano	Giving foods of woman's choice during pregnancy.
Talaq	Divorce.
Wazmahfils	Gatherings to hear religious sermons.
Wuju	Ritual purification of body prior to prayer i.e.,Namaj.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Indian population is composed of groups of diverse backgrounds. Some of these groups are large enough and are well known, while some others are comparatively small or lesser known and living in segregation or relatively separation. From the very ancient period the rich society, economy and culture of India attracted restless tribes, conquerors, merchants and travellers of different creeds who did much to shape India's turbulent history. India is known for its different religious minorities among them Muslims are very significant one. Being a principal minority and lesser-known community, the Muslims of India deserve social and scientific research but unfortunately research studies on them are quite scanty.

The spread of Islam and the development of Muslims in India were a multi-layered phenomenon and followed different patterns in different regions of the country[1]. The bulk of the Muslims in India have been drawn from the miscellaneous segments of the Indian population. It was spread by other means rather by the sword and the conversion to the faith (Islam) was not a sudden switchover of faith. It was a process of two ways. In one way, Islam itself undergoes a change in the process of converting the Hindus or others and on the other the former may change to suit the latter[2]. India, from the ancient periods with its hard shaped peninsula is compassed by two great natural barriers, the mountain wall of Himalayas and the sea. But these could not keep her completely isolated from the rest of the world. The Khyber and the other mountain pass in the north-west and sea routes in the south have come, the armed conquerors, restless tribes, merchants and travellers who did much to shape India's turbulent history. Long before the coming of the Muslims, there were the Aryans from Central Asia, Greek, Scythians, Parthians, Kushan, Huns and others who not only invaded

India but also merged themselves with the people with their rich cultural heritage and from the composite structure variations.

During the early times Muslims entered into the gigantic triangle of India by three main entrances. First, there is the sea and by this open door only peaceful penetration of Islam was done by the Arab merchants from Hadramawt and Iraq. Secondly, there is the land entrance from Mesopotamia and south Persia through Baluchistan, south of the mountains of Makran and Sindh. Arab armies only once succeed in effecting a successful entry by it into India. And the third entrance is through the Khyber Pass on the north-west frontier through which thousands of groups from various origins and backgrounds have passed down[3].

Muhammad Bin Qassim was considered the first Muslim invader of India but the real credit for establishing a Muslim rule in India goes to Muhammad Ghori, who invaded India in 1191. There followed a succession of dynasties extending to the end of the Mughal era in 1857, a span of nearly 666 years[4].However, Muslim interaction with India had begun much earlier. According to some of the historians, Muslim expeditions were sent to the west coast of India during the caliphate of Umar (A.D. 634-644). It is also said that the governor of Oman, Ath-Thaquafi, sent a naval expedition to Thane near present day Mumbai in the year 637 A.D. According to Al-Baladhuri, Uthman was the first Caliph who planned to invade India as the early caliphs considered such an invasion a solemn religious duty[5]. However, it is not an actual truth that Islam was spread in India by the sword or military occupation. The spread of Islam was multi-layered phenomenon and followed different patterns in different regions of the country. We should also consider the peaceful penetration of Islam in India by the Arab traders, religious devotees, preachers and Sufi saints. With the strong appeal of the democratic social system of Islam, the downtrodden people of the depressed caste of Hinduism gradually accepted the new faith. And it is to be believed that the Muslim

population of India are the result of the methods of peaceful penetration and constant efforts from religious missionaries[6].

Many of the present-day historians believed that Islam first came into India in the western coast of Kerala during the lifetime of Prophet Mohammed himself. And Prophet Mohammed is said to have sent messengers to the Roman (Byzantine) Emperor, the Persian Emperors and to the kings of China and Kerala. In this phase of history of Islam, it was still a missionary religion. And the *Jehad* or the religious obligation to converts was started off a few decades later[7].Islam was introduced to some parts of western coast of India and Sind by the Arab traders because trade relations between Arabia and Indian sub-continent were very ancient. The Arabs were the people who, in these regions long before the advent of Islam and in the wake of an Arabians invasion of Sind led by Mahammad Bin Qassim in 711 A. D. maintained the commercial routes between India and Europe. Many of these early Muslim Arabian traders married the local women and their offspring spread in different parts of that area. A number of local peoples living in the coastal areas of Kerala were moved by the principles of Islam and got converted. These traders had a great influence in the establishment of Muslim settlements and spread of the new faith on the western coast of India[8].

However, the peaceful spread of Islam was suddenly changed when the *Jehad* started off and the army of Islam secured victory after victory over all the prominent empires of those days. The Arab occupation of Sind started in the year A.D. 711, only seventy-nine years after the death of Prophet Mahammad. Hijjaj bin Yasuf, the governor of Basarah sends his armies under the leadership of a young Umayyad general Imaduddin Muhammad Bin Qassim for occupation of Sind. He captured the whole of the lower Indus valley and established a powerful kingdom which became the eastern most prominence of Umayyad caliphate. In the second half of the tenth century, a series of strong attacks was launched by

the Mahammad of Ghazni (971-1031), who swept across northern India down to Gujrat. Mahammad throughout these successive attacks between c.1001-c.1031 A.D., only ransacked and plundered the country and forcibly converted the people into Islam. After the death of the Ghazni, Muhammad Ghori succeeded him. Nearly after a gap of 160 years, Ghori invaded India with a massive army. His occupation is significant as it was the beginning of the continuous Muslim rule in India on a durable basis. He extended his reign up to Bengal. He appointed a Turk slave Qutub-uddin-Aibak as the governor of his newly captured Indian territory and established first Muslim dynasty in India[9]. This eventually led to the establishments of the Delhi Sultanate. The Sultanate was in constant flux as five dynasties rose and fell namely Mamluk or Slave (c.1206-90), Khalji (c.1290-1320), Tughluq (c.1320-1413), Sayyed (c.1414-51) and Lodi (c.1451-1526). Thus, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, there was the emergence of Muslim community in India. By the end of the 16th century, the Delhi Sultanate was replaced by the Mughal. Since then, until the coming of the British, India remained a Muslim kingdom.

All the above historical facts clearly revealed that the Muslim rulers in India adopted both the militant method and peaceful proselytising method for conversion of the people to the Muslim faith[10]. During the total period of Islamic rule, thousands of Muslim immigrants settled all over the India and their numbers were swelled by local converts. Trade served as an important passage for the spread of Islam in Indian peninsula as much before the era of Muslim rules west Asia merchants came to Malabar and other Indian coastal parts to purchase spice and aromatic woods. They were not only enterprising merchants but also devoted preachers to spread the message of Islam in India[11]. However, the movement that did play an important role in spreading of Islam was Sufism. It is neither a separate religion nor a sect. It is particular and distinctive Muslim way or life born of the human heart against the ritualism or the Muslim orthodoxy[12]. The Sufi movement also attracted followers from the

artisan and untouchable communities of India. They played a crucial role in bridging the distance between Islam and the indigenous traditions.

The building up of Muslim society in Bengal was a long process of gradual growth. Islam entered in Bengal both by land and water. By the land Turkish conquerors come with their religion and culture, while the Arab traders come through the waterway. About the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century, Bakhtiyar Khilji, a Turkish general of the Delhi Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak, marched into Bihar and Bengal. He defeated Lakshman Sen of the Sen Dynasty and conquered large parts of Bengal. His military exploits in the east resulted in conversions to Islam. With the military occupation of Delhi by the Mughals, a fresh wave of Muslim migration into Bengal started[13]. These stream of Muslim invaders from various corners led expeditions and converted the common masses as well some Hindu Rajas respectively. These newly converted Muslim rulers and other officials played one of the most vital roles to propagate Islam and to constitute Muslim society in Bengal either by establishing alliances or by the mass conversions of the indigenous peoples[14].At the initial period, the propagation of Islam was not strictly guided by the principles of Islamic rules in Bengal and some wrong interpretations influenced the socio-religious life of the Muslim to a great extent. The general unawareness of Islam and pre-Islamic cultural traditions constituted a complex cultural pattern among the Muslim of Bengal and moreover, the traditions of the immigrant Muslim groups enriched the Muslim society of Bengal during the course of time[15].

Islam, which came in the wake of the Turkish conquest, changed the socio-religious pattern of Bengal. Politically, it sowed the needs of Muslim rule, but socially it planted a Muslim society, opening the gate of Bengal to numerous immigrants from the then Muslim world. The Muslim rulers and officials played a great role to propagate Islam and to constitute the Muslim society either by establishing marriage alliances with local people or by mass conversion of the indigenous communities[16]. At the time of the Muslim conquest,

Bengal was pre-dominantly a Hindu-Buddhist country. The proportion of Hindus and Buddhist cannot be ascertained, but it is a fact that Buddhist ruled Bengal for several centuries. Moreover, non-Aryan elements were always present in Bengal, particularly outside the urban centres and Buddhism which was up routed from land of its birth had been a great competitor of Hinduism on the eve of the Muslim conquest. The non-Aryan elements had somehow identified themselves with the Buddhists and these when Hindu-Buddhist rivalry was very much present in the society. Islam came as a relieving force, in which many found an opening salvation and success. This probably led to the conversion of local people to Islam.

The portion of West Bengal, which stretches from Ganges on the south and the Himalayas on the North, is physically known as North Bengal. The region covers the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan areas as well as the plains stretching over 21332 sq.km and surrounded by Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan to the North; Bihar to West; Assam to East and Bangladesh and rest of the West Bengal to south. It consists of six districts viz. Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Behar[17]. Due to lack of research studies and historical documents, the historical backgrounds of the Muslims of North Bengal are unknown. However, the only available information is from the reviews of some early works done by the scholars. Muslim occupation into this region was dated back much earlier[18]. Bakhtiyar Khalji's invasion to *Kamrup* had initiated the penetration of Muslim political forces into this region. During the year 1661 with the help of Vishnunarayan, the eldest son of Prananarayan who had embraced Islam, Mir Jumla occupied the then Cooch Behar and changed the name into Alamgir Nagar. The political intrusion of these early Muslim invaders and leaders brought many Muslims in these areas to domicile. Establishment of political relations with the local kings had also facilitated many Muslim officials, intellectuals, army personnel, traders, artisans and various occupational groups to

immigrate into these regions. Many Muslim saints and Sufi's had also come to these regions and established their Khanqahs or Mazars to preach their religious and spiritual teachings. These Sufi saints had played a great role to proselytize the local peoples into Islam. Some converted influential local people later influenced many others to embrace Islam. Ali Mech and Kalapahar were the most famous among them. Their roles in propagation and expansion of Islam were very significant[19].

Statement of the Problem:

The building up of Muslim society in Bengal was a long process of gradual growth. The composition of the society quite naturally differed from century to century with the immigration of foreign Muslim and the conversion of local people. At the initial period, the propagation of Islam was not strictly guided by the principles of Islamic rules in Bengal and some wrong interpretations influenced the socio-religious life of the Muslim to a great extent. The general ignorance of Islam and pre-Islamic cultural traditions constituted a complex cultural pattern among the Muslim of Bengal and moreover, the traditions of the immigrant Muslim groups enriched the Muslim society of Bengal during the course of time. Muslims constitute the second largest group in India (13.4%) and thus the largest religious minority according to the 2001 census. India's Muslims population is amongst the largest in the world, exceeded only by Indonesia's numerically, the majority of the Muslim's in India are living in four state's Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Maharashtra which had at least ten million Muslim's each. Uttar Pradesh has the largest population in India with 22% of India's Muslim's living there according to the 2001 census and the state west Bengal has a Muslim population of about 25.2% according to 2001 census. They are not only a minority in numerical strength but also in terms of their socio-economic and political status. They are a backward community in terms of their education and participation in political and public affairs.

Looking into the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal, it has been discovered that the great number of Muslims of North Bengal was *Nashya Sheikh*. The *Nashya Sheikhs*, a numerically dominant Muslim Community resided in the sub-Himalayan North Bengal. It has synonymous names like *Nashya or Rajbansi Musalman*. They are mainly distributed over the northern districts of West Bengal, Particularly in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. Some of them are also found in North and South Dinajpur as well as in Malda. This community in general were local converts of Rajbangsi, Polia, Koch, Mech community etc. Originally the Rajbangshi muslims were converted from Hindu society and they entitle *Nashya Sheikh.* In this regard we have to mention the eminent writer's view about *Nashya Sheikh*. Panchanan Barma, an eminent Rajbangsi leader in colonial North Bengal noticed the conversion of Rajbanshi's into *Nashya Sheikh* in large numbers, since the heydays of his career as an advocate. It was only a few decades before the Independence that the *Nashyas* were in masse exposed to and influenced by the process of Islamization. As a result, in recent times, they are integrated with the structural framework of Muslim society in Bengal. But they still retain many elements of their pre-Islamic past (tradition) which gave them a unique identity. Considering their ethnic origin, social history, cultural attributes and retention of many elements of pre-Islamic traditions the *Nashya Sheikh* Community are not favourably looked upon by other Muslims (Asraf or Khas) of the region. It may once again be emphasized that socio-economic backwardness and political alienation have given rise to some important questions as far as this minority community is concerned. After six decades of independence, *Nashya Sheikhs* Community in West Bengal is lagging behind other communities in terms of socio-economic condition and political representation. Being a rural community in the context of West Bengal, they are bound to be socio-economically deprived. Their political participation in mainstream politics is minimal. *Nashya Sheikhs* are under-represented in the parliament and state legislature. Their participation in the political process

did not increase to the extent that it should have since the inception of the first general election. Their political involvement is also less in proportion with their population share in the state. Democracy has no meaning if minorities are not secure and also do not get proper share in economic, social and political development in proportion to their population. However, it needs to be pointed out that without political empowerment, socio-economic development of Muslims will be a utopian approach and vice versa.

Overview of Literature:

It has been mentioned in the above statement of the problem that there are no plenty of books or research work done on the topic. However, some works related to the Muslim community in Bengal and North Bengal in particular are discussed below.

Sukumar Baraiby his work on *Local History of North Bengal*, attempts to highlight some aspects of North Bengal relating to the study of Socio-Cultural and Political arena of the area. North Bengal is the virgin land of research work. In this work, readers will taste some interesting research papers on Socio-Cultural and Political fields of North Bengal. The readers will be able to understand that in spite of their oppressiveness, the local Zamindars left their contributions in the different fields of social activities. The book expects to evolve many undisguised and unknown aspects of socio-Cultural and Political phenomenon of the area of North Bengal which has been analysed in the historical perspective going through local sources and extensive field work without any biases and prejudices.

Amzad Hossain, *Kamrup Theke Kochbehar*, *(in Bengali*), (Ed.), the Book of North Bengal, is a compendium of 23 articles which mentions the history of Kamrup to Cooch Behar (North Bengal) and East Bengal (Presently Bangladesh). In this article, the history of the Koch dynasty during the period of the 16th century id discusses and also analyses polity, culture and socio-economic conditions of the peoples. There is also indication the Royal

family of the Koch kingdom, the Princely state of Cooch Behar is the foothills and foothills of the Eastern Himalayas in North-East India. In the change of time today Cooch Behar is a district of West Bengal in India. This palace has a long History but the author do not discuss the history of *Nashya Sheikh*.

Pasarul Alam, *Uttarbanger Anagrasar Muslim Somaj* (in Bengali), is an excellent attempt on the study of the Muslims of North Bengal. The author has meticulously discussed the area with stimulus data. The author also discussed about the various Muslim groups of the Bengal. He also mentioned the origin of Muslims of North Bengal and socio-economic, political, education and cultural life of the Muslims of North Bengal. The book briefly mentions the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims of North Bengal but he did not properly write the historical way.

Sailen Debnath, *Essay on Cultural History of North Bengal*, adequately reflects together the important cultural aspects and profile of people's culture of North Bengal in the stream changes in the duration of the course of history from the remote past to the present, but the author did not mention *Nashya Sheikh* Community.

Seikh Rahim Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal,' in Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mira (Ed.), *Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity* mentions about the *Nashya Sheikh* community of sub-Himalayan North Bengal specially of the three districts, such as Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling Districts of West Bengal. He tried to show the origin and development of the *Nashya Shaikh* community to the rest of the people of North Bengal. The author also had mentioned the Ethnicity and Identity of *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal in Sociological perspective. But he didn't try to show the issue of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community from a historical point of view.

M.K.A. Siddique, (Ed,) the book *Marginal Muslim Communities in India,* has given detail information about 40 marginal Muslim communities. This book is a result of project work that was undertaken in 1999. According to the author recent survey of India under the project "peoples of India" shows that there are 150-200 Marginal Muslim communities existing in India. These communities are spread all over India and they varied socio-cultural, linguistic and ethnic background.

P.K. Bhattacharyya, (Ed.), *The Kingdom of Kamata Koch Behar in Historical Perspective,* Ratna Prakashan in Association with University of North Bengal, is a compendium of 18 papers presented at a national seminar organized in 1996 under the auspices of North Bengal University. The papers covered are broadly socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic perspectives of Kamata Koch Bihar (modern day Cooch Behar). The papers, well-researched and documented, throw a great deal of light on the history of Kamata Koch Behar from accounts of foreign travellers, role of the princely state, role of commissioners as British agents, cultural imperialism in British India, role of religious evolution in Koch Behar including the contributions of the Brahmo religion and Satyapir in cementing Hindu-Muslim unity. The cultural efflorescence brought about by the royal family was duly taken note of innovative steps like introduction of lottery for developmental purposes, use of temple and religious endowments, changing agrarian system - all point to the concern for the people. The efforts at Hinduization of tribes with particular reference to Rajbanshi's have also been dwelt on. But he did not mention the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims of North Bengal.

Sekh Rahim Mondal, in another book, *Educational Status of Muslims, Problems, Prospects, and Priorities* has described the educational condition of the Muslim of West Bengal. The author has conducted study in six villages of West Bengal and tried to trace the reasons of Muslims ' educational backwardness. He has described the relevance of education in Islam. He is of the view that education is the key to the progress of any community.

According to the 1991 census the overall literacy rate of West Bengal is 52.11%, male literacy rate is 63.66% and female literacy rate is 39.42%. Muslims literacy rate is 34%. The enrolment ratio is low and the dropout rate is very high among Muslims. The author has found during his study of West Bengal that educational status of Muslims is very depressing poverty and ignorance are the main reason of educational backwardness of Muslim community in India. Muslim community is lagging behind to the Hindus in the field of Education.

Seikh Rahim Mondal, his other book of Muslim society of West Bengal is *Dynamics of Muslim Society*. The author of 'Dynamics of Muslim Society' has divided the main theme of his book into two parts. The first part discussed about social structure and organization of Muslim Community of west Bengal, where he explains about social structure of Muslims and Islamic social organization patterns. And in the second part, he analysed the social dynamics structure of Muslim society of west Bengal and tried to comparative studies with the other Communities of that time. But he didn't specify about the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal, as well as West Bengal.

Ranajit Dasgupta, *Economy, Society and Politics of Bengal: Jalpaiguri (1869-1947)* is a famous book of North Bengal. This book highlights nicely the society, economy, culture and politics of Jalpaiguri district (in North Bengal) since its formation till the partition of India, this work is one more addition to the burgeoning literature on regional-local history in India. He also mentions the Muslims of North Bengal but did not mention *Nashya Sheikhs* of Jalpaiguri.

Charu Chandra Sanyal, in his monumental work of North Bengal, *The Rajbangsi's of North Bengal*, is an important and significant work historically and anthropologically the culture, politics, society, custom, occupation are everything described here. Music and Musical instruments used by different tribe groups are described by the author. But he did not mention the *Nashya Sheikh* people.

Objective of the Study:

The main objectives of the thesis are to discuss the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal in historical perspectives. However, to traverse the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal brief discussion of the Muslims in Bengal is apparent. The thesis also examines the nature of Islam as practised by the *Nashya Sheikh* with special reference to the concept of *Pirism* and *Mullaism.* It also discusses the course of population trends in North Bengal and West Bengal with specific reference to the *Nashya Sheikh* community of North Bengal. To converse the socio-economic life of the *Nashya Shiekh* with special reference to language, profession, Diet and Dress are also a part of the research in this thesis. The gender relations and position of Women in the *Nashya Sheikh* society in North Bengal is explored through the various discourses on the political and identity transformations of *Nashya Sheikh*. The thesis objective is also to make comparative study of the *Nashya Sheikh* community of different districts of North Bengal and the role of print and globalisation in developing an incipient awareness within the *Nashya Sheikh* community in Independent India.

Research Questions:

Some of the research questions posed in this research work are-

What was the socio-political force at work responsible for growth of Muslim society in Bengal in the colonial and post-colonial India? What was the historicity of *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal with special reference to its origin and development? What were the new characteristic features of Islam as practised by the *Nashya Sheikh* in North Bengal? What was the socio-economic life of the *Nashya Sheikh* and how it was different from other communities within Islam in North Bengal? What was the gender relations and position of Women in the *Nashya Sheikh* society? What has been the course of population trends in North Bengal and West Bengal with specific reference to the *Nashya Sheikh* community of North Bengal? What were the various discourses on the political and identity transformations of *Nashya Sheikh* in post-independent India? What was the impact of globalisation on the

Nashya Sheikh community of North Bengal? What is the role of print in developing an incipient awareness within the community in Independent India? What was the role of the State in bringing the marginalised *Nashya Sheikh* community in the mainstream of the Society?

Hypothesis:

The spread of Islam and the development of Muslims in Bengal were a multi-layered phenomenon and was a long process of gradual growth and the composition of the society quite naturally differed from century to century with the immigration of foreign Muslim and the conversion of local people. The Muslims from the six districts in North Bengal that is Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar constitute 25% of the total population of North Bengal and are the most important minority religious group in this region. The Muslims of North Bengal are closely correlated with each other in terms of religious belief, but there are scores of differences with regard to their language, culture, tradition, occupation etc. *Nashya Sheikh*, an indigenous Muslim community of North Bengal entered into the fold of Islam from the depressed section of the indigenous society and their entry was not through direct inducement but a self-propelled imitative action. The socio-economic condition of the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims is miserable and deplorable when compared to the other Muslim communities and under the pressure of dominant cultures of the region and lack of consciousness this community is on the verge of jeopardize, portraying them socially, economically, culturally, educationally backward. The position of women in the *Nashya Sheikh* community is miserable because women are kept in oblivion and are devoid of any education. Girls were mostly married at a very early age, immediately after puberty and unilateral from of divorce and polygamy etc. are freely practised within this community. There is no social differentiation amongst the *Nashya Sheikh* community though they are grouped on the line of their lineages which is reflected in their surname. The age old

traditional political councils of *Nashya Sheikhs* known as *paich* or *Jamat* have lost their characteristic features due to modern politics and Panchayati system.

Research Methodology:

Research methodology is the process by which historians gather evidence and formulate ideas about the past. It is the framework through which an account of the proposed research is constructed. The prime objective of this research is to collect reliable data relevant to the research topic. The methodology used for this study is a "Mixed Methodology" which combines both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed method has been used to analyse both the primary and secondary data in order to gain an understanding of the study. The present research: The *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal in the Twentieth Century: A Study of the Socio-Economic and Political Transformations has been formulated on the basis of the nature of the study. The research methodology for the above proposal includes an extensive study of relevant literature, research method, and exemplars in the selected field of study. We also use the Qualities and Quantities data both primary and secondary. Important sources of information will be collected from the original sources available in various library of North Bengal, National library, interpretation of primary sources i.e., government records, non-government records, unpublished government and non-government records, journals, papers, and magazines will be done to substantiate the research hypothesis and questions.

Chapter Composition:

The present study is comprised of Six Chapters excluding Introduction and Conclusion. Each Chapter are intrinsically linked with each other and also are inconsonance with the broad design of the study.

First chapter deals with the growth and development of Muslim Society in Bengal. The study initiates how the Muslims came to India as well as West Bengal, how conversion takes place among the non-Muslim locals, various Sub-Communities under the Muslim Community in

West Bengal in particular and in India in general. The whole argument is substantiated with the socio-economic, political, and educational conditions of the Muslims of Bengal in Historical perspectives.

Second Chapter deals with the *Nashya Sheikh*s Community of North Bengal in historical perspectives. The core argument emphases on how the *Nashya Sheikh* community originated and grew in North Bengal and also describe how the Ethnic identity of *Nashya Sheikh* community developed in North Bengal.

Third chapter deals with the Islam as practiced by *Nashya Sheikh*s of North Bengal. The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims certain customs and local practices are discussed at length and breadth and establish the argument how this particular community practiced popular Islam.

Fourth chapter deals with the social life of the *Nashya Sheikh*s of North Bengal: Past and Present. This chapter discusses the Social Structure of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal and makes a comparative study of their past and present condition.

Fifth chapter deals with the Economic Life and Political participation of the Nashya Shekhs. This chapter divided into two sections, first section discusses the continuity and changes in the economic life of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal. Second section intricate the political participation and identity formation of the *Nashya Sheikh* community.

Six chapter deals with *Nashya Sheikh* and other Communities: A Comparative study between *Nashya Sheikh* and other community of North Bengal is discussed to examine the present condition of the community.

And lastly Conclusion deals with the major findings of the study, suggestions and recommendations of the Researcher.

Notes & References:

[1]Murray, T Titus, *Islam in India: A Religious History of Islam in India and Pakistan*, YMCA Publishing House, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 25-35.

[2]Richard, M Eaton, *Essay on Islam and Indian History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, pp.40-55.

[3]Murray, T Titus, *op. cit*., pp.40-60.

[4]S.S. Gill, *Islam and the Muslims of India-Exploring History, Faith and Dogma*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2008, pp.122-129.

[5]Murray, T Titus, *op. cit*., pp.130-140.

[6]Ibid. p.141.

[7]G. Minault, 'Some Reflection on Islamic Revivalism vs Assimilation among Muslims in India,' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 18, 1984, pp.301-305.

[8]Murray, T Titus, *op. cit*., pp.160-165.

[9]Richard, M Eaton, *op. cit*., pp.56-67.

[10]G. Minault, *op. cit*., p.107.

[11]S.S. Gill, *op. cit*., pp. 130-136.

[12]S. K. Ghosh, *Muslims in Indian Democracy*, Ashes Publishing House, New Delhi, pp.116-127.

[13]Rahim, Mondal. 'Muslims of Nepal: 'Aspects of their Economy, Society and Culture' in *Relation to Habit in Islam and the Modern Age*, Vol. Xxviii No 3, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, 1997, pp.198-217.

[14]Ibid. pp.198-217.

[15]Ibid.p.127.

[16]Ibid. p.128.

[17]Rajib, Chatterjee, *Muslims of Darjeeling Himalaya: Aspects of their Economy, Society, Culture and Identity*, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Department of Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, West Bengal, pp.25-35.

[18]Ibid.p.36.

[19]Rahim, Mondal, *Dynamic of Muslim Society*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1994, pp.146-184.

CHAPTER - I

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM SOCIETY IN BENGAL

CHAPTER - I

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM SOCIETY IN BENGAL

This chapter looks into the Growth and Development of Muslim society in Bengal. After the conquest of Muslims, Bengal has become a healthy, brave and individual nation. The conquest of Bengal by the Muslims was more important than military victory. The political establishments that emerged as an outcome of new victory upheld the ideals of peace, discipline, equality in religious, cultural and social life. Thus, as a matter of fact, they did not only come as a warrior tribe but also brought some new ideologies in this nation. For this new ideology, a great revolution emerged in Hindu society and it was the renaissance era in Bengal history. Hindus and Muslims were the predominant presence in terms of population in this era. During that time Hindu population was in majority. Although a great number of Buddhists and low caste Hindus have been converted into Islam, Muslim population was less in number than Hindu population. But in the time of British emperor, we can see that the Muslims were in the majority in Bengal. Census report of 1872 reveals that the number of Muslims was 1crore 70 lakhs. In the census report of 1881, Muslim population rose dramatically and it surpassed the Hindu population by 5lakhs. They emerged as a major community. Muslim people were modest, educated and powerful in political aspects from the very beginning.[1]

Two main communities, apart from some Buddhists and Jains, there were Persians also. Two main Communities had come to Bengal in the sixteenth century. Bengali Muslims were made from both foreign and converted Muslims. Foreign Muslims came from the

present-day Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran and Arabian Peninsula. But there were some Osmanian Turks, Abyssinian and so on. Many Muslims were highly sophisticated and embellished for their great virtues. Spirited and brave Turkish had incredible military and administrative abilities. The Afghans hailed from powerful, brave and combative stocks. They priced individuality above everything else. Enthusiastic Mughals were famous for their organised education and cultural abilities. Iranians also had the same ability in sword fighting and intellect. They had a great interest in literature and were given to intellectual and refined pursuits. There was preference for Arabians in the ideologies of religious view as well as business and sea voyage. Abyssinians were well known for their immense patience and perseverance. Migrated Muslims infused new spirit in Bengal. And then toneless Bengalis gained a toned life and prosperity.[2]

Advent of Arabians in Bengal:

In 1203, after the conquest of Bengal in the hand of Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar khalji, Muslim locality had started to consolidate itself gradually. Some scholars say that many years ago before the conquest of Laxmanabati in the hands of a famous Turkish assemble; there were some Arabian merchants who settled their colonies in Bengal. But they do not have any strong evidence to prove this argument and that is why their thesis has been subject to criticism. Before discussing on the matter of Muslim population in Bengal, let us focus on the establishment of Arabian colony in Chattygram.[3]Arabians were famous in the whole world for their sea-voyaging and trade; these Arabians travelled many lands of Eastern and Western countries through seaways. In 712 A.D., Sind and Multan were conquered by the Arabians. The route which the Arabs used during this time became so popular that the name of the Indian Ocean and the north-eastern Indian Ocean became transformed into Arabian water reservoirs. There is some evidence that Arabian voyagers followed the Bengal shore line and made trade relationships with the porting areas of this

country. And they used to give high premiums for this merchandise.[4]According to traditional Geographers, Arabian markets survived 'Samandar','Ornasin','Abina'(Barma) during their sea voyages in eastern countries. One of Arabian geographer's conferred "if we examine the description of the port of then there is no doubt that it is the area of Bengal shoreline.[5]"Ibnekhurdaba (912) wrote "Rice and Aloevera was produced at Samandar and imported from Kamrup to other locality within 15 or 16 days through river ways."Aal-Edrisi (late 11th c) also said " '*Samandar'* is a fort and wealthy large city. There are great profits. This porting area depends on the king of Kaunoj. *Samandar* situated beside '*khoar'* floated from Kashmir ". He said that this land was popular for producing Aloevera within 15days by river way. He also said that the trade city was situated on the bank of a vast river in Musala. The writer of 'Book of Marvels' remarks this Musal River as an aromatic river.[6] Aal-Edrisi never travelled this subcontinent. That's why the geographical knowledge which he had was mere delusion. But there is absolute equality in the description of Aal-Edrisi with Ibne Khurdaba. According to these two geographers- distance between 'kamrut' and 'kamrun' and the sea port was about 15 or 20 days far through river way. Aal-Edrisi called this place as 'Kamrut' Ibnekhurdaba called it *'kamrun'* but they both claimed that a large amount of Aloevera was imported from there.[7] The mountainous area of Shrihatta (Sylhet) was expanded to Kamrup and Assam. Now Kamrup is popular for producing Aloevera. The name and the description of producing Alovera proved that *'kamrut'* and 'kamrun' is actually nothing but Kamrup. Kamrup attached with sea line and porting areas of Bramhaputra-Meghna floated in Bengal. Kamrup is a landlocked province in North Bengal. There is no way except sea way to enter here. So, if there were no policies between the port area and Bramhaputra-Meghna then it would have been impossible to export Aloevera from Kamrup. The process took around 15days long.

Aforesaid opinions are approved by Arabian geographers. They wrote, *'Samandar'* was situated the bank of a river and it was attached with Musala river. Then Bramhaputra River floated into Kamrup and met with Meghna from south sonogram and fell into the North-eastern Sea near Serendib. The port Samandar was situated beside the estuaries of the entire river near Serendib. Aal-Edrisi said that the king of Kaunaj was the owner of the port *Samandar*. Maybe he did that to make Gaur Sultan.[8]

There are more proofs that Serendib was a port at that time. Arabian merchants often came to travel these porting areas during their trades with orient countries. Aal-Edrisi wrote, "away from this *Samandar* Port there was a large overpopulated Island where all the merchants came to travel. It took around four days to get there from Serendib (Ceylon)." Meghna River from Serendib took four days long. To prove this opinion Aal-Edrisi as Serendib, Portuguese people gave their approval. In the description of Portuguese, Serendib was a very popular trade sphere.[9] In the first 16th century, it was a very busy trade town.

The description of Arabian geographers absolutely proved that Arabian merchants were extremely familiar with Bengal and they called it as '*Rahmi'* or *'Ruhami'*. Ibn-e-Khurdaba said that *Rahmi* state was situated at the sea side and the medium of connection was only ship. The next state of *Rahmi* is named *Kamrun*(Kamrup). Masudi wrote *Rahma* was expanded both by sea and land. This was named Kamrup (Kamrun). Soleiman Banik (851) said that the king of *Rahmi* was very powerful. He had 50000 companions of elephants and 15000 soldiers. He fought with Balhoraha and Yuraj. Suleiman describes, to save the autarchy of Kaunaj; the king had accepted political diplomacy with the king of Dharmapal. Thus, the state of pal king was also named as '*Rahmi'*. The border of *Rahmi* state as described by Arabians was very similar to the geographical border of Bengal. Suleiman said about Aloevera, cowries and a kind of fine and pure cotton clothes. Khurdaba also said about all these things. In the book *'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea'*, they claimed about a muslin cloth;

it was produced in the Ganges area of Bengal.[10]All the aforementioned discussions proved that *Rahmi* and Bengal were the same country.

Origin of the word *'Ramu'* is '*Rahmir*'. *Ramu* was situated at Kaki Market in south Chattogram. Ralfe Pitch travelled through Bengal in 1585-86 and talked about Chatigaon, Rekan (Arakan) and Raame (Ramu). When this British traveller arrived, the above three kingdoms were governed by the Rekan king. This reveals that the place between Chattyogran and Arakan is called *Ramu.* Ramu was very famous among the Arabian merchants because it was situated at shorelines. However, the place between sea and Kamrup was popular by the same name. The Pal dynasty claimed that they are the kings of Gaur. Thus, they were not familiar with the words like *'Banga','Bangadaha'*. It was also unknown to Arabian merchants. In conclusion it is to be said that Arabian merchants came to kakxmarket through Meghna.[11]

After Muslim conquest Arabians established their habitation at Chattyogram. According to an Arabian chronology- after the ruin of an Arabian ship at Arakan coasted area, they established their colony here with the help of Ma-Ba-Toying-Da-Yaar (788-810).Dr.Enamul Hoque has also approved of this. From this chronology we know that the Arabian king Su-La-Toying-Saan-Tha-Yaa (951- 957) had attacked Bengal and won over *Tu-Ra-Tan*. Then he made a monument as a symbol of his victory at Sett-Ta-Goying (Chatgaon or Chattogram). Later in life he left war because the meaning of his word setr-ta-goying is 'warfare is unfair. Approximately said Chattyogram was called by the same name.[12]

According to Dr. Enamul Hoque Tu-Ra-Tan is the decomposition of sultan. From this statement he reveals that there was an Arabian kingdom in chattagram and the rulers of that place used the title sultan with their name. This proves that Arabian merchants travelled in *Samandar* and Serendib port and made a trade relationship with Bengal. It also reveals they began living here permanently since that time. In this way they established their habitation in Malabar, Singhal, Java, Sumatra, Malloy and so on. There is no doubt that they have attacked

the glorious things of the place and have started to live here forever. It is noted in 15th century that the inshore areas of Bengal, Hatia and Sarendib were not survived by Muslims. Despite that, when Barthema and Barbosa have come to travel near North-eastern Sea in the city *'Banga'*, they saw many houses of Arabian Iranian Abyssinian merchants and some Muslims too. How did Muslim people come here? This proves that they came here for merchandising and made their houses. The origin of the name of Chattyogram reveals that there was a bonding from many days ago. Ibne Batuta, Chinese writer and Abul Fazal described that Chattyogram was situated near the estuary of Ganga River. Arabian merchants named Chattyogram as 'shat-aal-ganga' (delta or extreme boundary) because it was in delta areas of Ganga River. Soon it becomes changed into 'Chatgaon or Chattogram'. Depending on a chronology, some scholar's say the name Chattogram was shat-ta-going or warfare is unfair, the word of Arakan king. But this opinion is not acceptable. Because the king seized the territory by war and established a monument for his victory. But it is to be noted that when he travelled there, he introduced the name of *'shat-aal-Ganga'*. Then he left warfare forever. In this manner, Chattogram is very similar to the Arabian 'Shat-aal-Ganga'. Since the 10th century Arabians made a relation with Chattogram and from that time the word *Shat-aal-Ganga* was there. It was a very safe porting area. Arabian merchants popularized this port in Bangladesh. It had become a trade zone. Some traders started to live in Chattagram to supply merchandise from here to their country. These traders were famous for their education, culture and wealth. They also had a leader named Thu-Ra-Tan. Arakan king 'Su-La-Toying' Saan-Tha-Yaa (951-57) claimed that he had defeated that person. Dr. Enamul Hoque's word Thu-Ra-Tan cannot to be ignored as mere imagination. There are no relations with any words of Hindus, Buddhists, Arakans. It is absolutely a coincidence that the word 'sultan' word is pronounced as '*Surtan'* in Hindi. However, Sultan was the leader of those Arabian traders, but he was not the ruler of Chattagram and Noakhali. Except for many areas

of Bengal, Chattogram and Noakhali were very much connected with Arab. Thus, the people of this area got closer to the Arabians. If they had not come into touch with the local people then they would not able to reveal signs of Arabian culture on them. In the first half of the 13th century, Muslims won north Bengal and other areas. After sometime, the conquered lands including Chattyogram had come into Muslim reign. On the other hand, Chattogram was won in the reign of Farukhuddin Mubarak shah in Sonargaon, some times before the 14th century. This proves that a long time after the conquest of North Bengal and other areas, Chattogram was won by the Muslims. If it is true, then Arabians should have their influence not on Chattogram. In reign of Muslim rulers, Islamic education and culture had already spread in many places except Chattyogram.[13]Lastly, we can say Arabian were there about 200 years ago before the Muslim occupation.

According to grammarians of Bengali literature they have an immixture of words, accent and language in Chattagram and Noakhali. Even many Bengali poets also used Arabian words in their poetry. Many Arabian names are there since then and many Arabian traditions are there till now. In 13th century, explanation of Muslim reign reflects on Bengali literature in *Purbabanga*. Many Kulin Brahmin escaped from here to west Bengal, because they were afraid of cultural contact with those Muslims. According to Krittibas Ojha the writer of Ramayana in Bengali, an immense fear depressed some Kulin Brahmin; thus, they left the luxurious life and came to west Bengal. The fear that Krittibas talked about was a reference to the expanding population of Muslims. If Sonargaon was under Muslim rulers at time then it was won by them absolutely. Now the question is how Muslim people increased their population much more than Kulin Brahmins who were forced to escape from there. There is no doubt that many years ago before the victory of Muslims, Islamism was there. It may have been possible that it emerged with the arrival of the Arabian merchants. Moreover, there are also many evidences which claimed that Muslims had come to Bengal before the

victory of Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji. A Coin was found at a ruined Buddhist temple in Rajshahi, which was from khalifa Harun-Aal-Rashid in 172 *Hijri* (788). Some Coins were also found at the ruined Maynamati in Comilla. What is the explanation of that coin in Bengal? Rough answer is any preacher or any Arabian merchant brought it with them in the 8th or 9th century. The writers of Tabakat-E-Nasiri have motioned, the Muslims had some kind of trade relations with the Hindus.[14] Minhaj said, when khalji came with his 18000 troops of horse (his main soldiers were behind it), people thought them horse traders. People didn't know that they had come to occupy the city. Now the conceptualization is that Muslim people were there before the Muslim invasion. Reportedly, some Muslim fakir lived there permanently and spread Islamism at the time of Hindu rulers. These fakirs are Baba Adan Shahid (Bikrampur of Dhaka), Shah Sultan Rumi (Netrakona district at Mymensingh), Shah Sultan Mahisawar (Bagura), Makhdum Sahdaula Shahid (Pabna), Makhdum Shah Gajnaki (Mangalkat in Burdwan) and so on.[15] All the above discussion is going through the statement that those fakirs spread Islamism in Bengal before the victory of Khalji and made 'khanqah'.

Muslim Settlement after Muslim victory:

The door opened for external Muslims in 1203 with the victory of Khalji. Muslims came to Bengal as ruler, Soldier, Marshal, Preacher, Teacher, Traders. Arabian Muslims also came with those external Muslims. Mainly they were Sufi, preachers and traders. Each fakir came with their 120 followers to spread Islam. Sheikh Shah Jalal came with his 360 followers[16] and they started to stay in Bengal. Barthema, Barbosa. Ceasar Frederick, Ralfe Fitch and Portuguese described that a large number of Arabian Muslim traders lived in in Sonargaon and Hooghly.[17] In the 15th century Arabians emerged as a powerful community and thus Arabians got a chance to make their kingdom with the throne of Saiyed Alauddin

Hossain Shah (1493-1517). It was a wealthy state till the defeat of Saiyed by Shershah Suri in 1538. Obviously, this kingdom lured other Arabians from many countries to live in Bengal.

Most of the Bengali family Residents had originated from Arabian hereditary. Chistia Shekh Akhi Sirajuddin Ushman of Bangladesh was from the Koresh dynasty. Famous fakir Sheikh Alaul Hoque and Hajarat Noor Kutbul Alam were also from Arab.[18] We can know about Arab patronymic from Bengali literature. One of Muslim poets Muhammad Khan (1646) claimed that he is the heir of a Sufi family named Mahisawar at the time of Badar Shah. BadarShah was a commander; Sultan Fakiruddin Mubarak and Muslim victor of Chattyogram and Kajal khan Gajnabi respected him. Mahi Sawdar married a Brahmin girl and gave birth to a son whose name was Hatem. Hatem's son was Sadik and Sadik's son was Rasti Khan who was the ruler of Chattagram under Sultan Barbak Shah (1459-1474) and he made 'Alaul Masjid' (*874hijri/*1473). Risti khan's son Mina khan known as Paragal Khan was the ruler of Chattagram at the time of Sultan Hossain shah. Some say that Mina Khan's son Gabun khan and Chuti khan marshal of Tripura and Assam victor Husain Shah is the same person. Gabur Khan's son Hamza khan was Amirja khan as described by Portuguese. He was the leader of Chattyogram at the time of Sultan Muhammad Shah. Poet Muhammad Khan's father Mubarik Khan was the grand-grand-son of Hamja Khan. Many people in Bengal explore their dynasty connected with Arabian merchants and fakirs. This reflects the image of Arabian colony after Muslim victory in Bengal. In the Abbas Khalifa, Persian Arabia language speaking people was also voyagers and traders like Arabians. They also made trade relations with Orient. Rationally we can say that some Iranians were also there in Chattagram with Muslims. Many Iranian teachers, traders, preachers, saint, came to Bengal and started to live there. Muslim historian Minhaj first described about Iranians. Minhaj wrote, one Impahani merchant from Laxmanawati have lost all of his wealth at the time of Aladdin Ali Murdan khalji. Then he asks for help to khalji.[19] It proved that the Iranian traders existed at

the time of Muslim rulers. According to Barthema and Barbosa, many Iranian merchants lived at the port areas. Persia is the origin of Sufism. Many Sufis had come from there to Bengal. Famous Sufi Sekh Jalaluddin Tabriji was Iranian. He spread Islamism in north Bengal. According to a letter of Hajarat Meer Sayad Ashraf Jahangir Simnamee, many followers of Shekh Jalaluddin Tabriji and Shekh Sihauddin Soharaowadeer made Bengal a holy land. Hazrat Sharfuddin Abu Tawama was a famous Iranian Sufi. He lived in Sonargaon with his whole family. Many Iranian lived there as royal servants. In the words of Minhaj, Baba kotwal was a Nagar Kotwal under Muhammad Bin Bakhtier Khalji.[20] When Mongols attacked Persia, many Iranians came to Bengal. When Shah Suja was Subahdar many Iranian had worked as royal servants under him. Meer Jumla, Sayesta Khan who ruled over Bengal was also an Iranian. That's why they showed much more favour to their countrymen. Nadir Shah attacked India and north Bengal was suffering from immense disaster. Many Iranians floated like rivers in Bengal. After the death of Nadir Shah, Persia was suffering from indiscipline and again so many Iranians came to Bengal. Contemporary history described many Iranians Muhajir. Ali-Bin-Tufayel, the writer of Tarikh-E-Mansoori was also an Iranian; he wrote Nawab Sujauddin gave shelter to many Iranians. Hakeem Meer Muhammad Hadi, a medical fractioned under Nawab Sujauddin was also an Iranian. He left a famous medical team in Bengal. Golam Husain gave a list of Iranian doctors, teachers, and scholars of Nawab Alibardi Khan. They are Muhammad Aal-Modobed Ali, Shah Muhammad Hasan, Saiyed Muhammad Ali, Haji Badruddin, Meer Muhammad Ali Fajal, Naki Ali Khan, Meer Muhammad Alim, Mulabi Muhammad Arif, Meer Rustam Ali, Shah Muhammad Amin, Shah Adam, Haibat Beg, Shah Khajar, Saiyad Meer Muhammad Sajjar, Saiyed Alim Ullah, Shah Haidary, Meer Muhammad Ali, Jayer Hossain Khan, TokeeKuli Khan, Haji Abdullah, Ali Ibrahim and Haji Ibrahim Muhammad Khan.[21]

History writer Yusuf Ali, Golam Hossein Tabatabai, Karam Ali and so on were Iranian. Thus, we can see the people who had come from Iran were not a few numbers are the time of Nawab. Habbysians came here as servants. Once upon a time 8000 Hubbsy served under Barbak Shah. The Sultan was highly pleased by their jobs and gave some of them high positions of royal service. Islamism does not allow the difference between master and servant. Thus, Abyssinian servants took high positions by their ability. Day by day they became popular and established their kingdom. Later they were excluded by Sultan Hossain Shah for their violent nature. But some of them started to live here with Muslim people.[22]

Many Turks Muslim came to Bengal. Successor Muhammad-Bin Bakhtier Khalji brought a troop of soldiers at the time of Laxman Sen. Minhaj said Muhammad-Bin Bakhtier Khalji leads his 10,000 horse-troop at the time of Tibet mission. However, the soldiers, who came with Khalji, also came with his family. In the description of Minhaj, many turkey soldiers died in Tibet mission. For that, wives of all the soldiers blamed on Muhammad Bin Khalji. According to *Tabakat-E-Nasiri,* Muhammad Bin Bakhtier Khalji's companion GiasuddinKhalji (first Hushamuddin Awaj) had come with his family.[23]

Turks Muslim came to Bengal with every new ruler. Many Ilbari Turkeys came with Mugisuddin Tugril, ruler of Balban. To rule over Bengal and to attract or self-preserve, they needed too much solder. And thus, three thousand soldiers came with Sultan Giyasuddin Balban.[24] After defeating Turgil, sultan made her younger son Bugra Khan the ruler of Bengal. Bugra Khan had his own troop but his father also supplied him soldiers for emergencies. Many other Ilbari Turkeys came into Bengal with the successor Balban dynasty, Khalji. At the time of Tughluk Sultan in Delhi, a gang of korona Turkey came into Bengal. Farukhuddin Mubarak Shah, the independent sultan and Haji Shamsuddin Elios Shah independent sultanate needed more corps to rebel with Delhi authority. Authority transferred their capital from Daulatabad to Delhi. Thus, Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq city and other area

were suffering from great disasters. Then the sultan sent his people to Bengal because at that time Bengal was able to provide food.[25]

Afganians were salaried servant under Turkish ruler. Habbsy sultan had thousand Afganian soldiers. Sultan Hossain shah also had Afganian soldiers. Sultan Ibrahim Lodi's brother Mahmud Lodi and his family and Husain Shah's son and his heir took shelter under sultan Nusrat Shah. Nusrat Shah married the daughter of sultan Ibrahim Lodi. After defeating Bengal and ruining Kororani rulers in Bihar and Lohani rulers in Odisha. Many Afganian established their colony. Reportedly, last Kororani Afgan ruler Daud had 40,000 horse troops, 14,000 sultan, 3699 companions of elephant 20000 cannons and hundred warships.[26] Sultan Hossain Sharqi was exiled from Jaunapur by sultan Sikandar Sheikh. Then he took shelter under Alauddin Hossain Shah. He took responsibility to feed all the new sheltered.

Mughal royal servants were employed in Bengal to serve their jobs. According to Badayuni, Akbar exiled many Ulemas into Bengal. It was very difficult for Mughal to reign in Bengal because of Zamindar. Beside that Mughal seized Hindu states like Cooch Behar, Kamrup, Kachar, Jayantiya, and Tripura. Thus, they send a large troop into Bengal. *'Bahabistan-E-Gayebee'* and *'Subaha-E-Sadik'* revealed that including three generations of that soldier was dedicated to serve royal duties and lived there. Mirza Nathan said that some servants and he too made houses at Jessore. According to *Akbarnama*, Emperor Akbar gave Jahangir freely to his royal employer and soldier Abul Fazal said that Akbar granted more than hundred jaghirs. Mirza Nathan said, Jahangir also gave Jaghir to his man. Mirza Nathan's father Ihatiman Khan got jagir at Sonabaju distributed among his servants. Tukmak Khan had a jagir in Sahajadpur. We can see in the description of Mirza Nathan, when Jahangir was on the throne, all the Mughal servants had their own Jaghir in Bengal. This Mughal soldier described chronologically in a book, "it was heavy raining and it was difficult to maintain the assemblage in Alap Singha. Thus, they return their Jahangir at the order of

Islam Khan." They all lived there for many years. Shah Suja had a huge number of followers among all the Mughals. Those followers never returned to their own place and started to live here together with the people of Bengal.[27] In this way so many Iranian, Muslims, Arabians, Mughals, Afganians, Habbsynians came to Bengal and established their habitation or villages to live here.

Expansion of Muslims Settlement:

It is needed to investigate about the outsider and converted Muslims and solves the riddle what scholars and *pandits* intertwine in their minds. These questions are how did Muslims become a major community in Bengal whereas Bengal was the last state won by the Muslim rulers? What are the origins of Bengali Muslims? It was absolutely a surprising matter to census authority. They revealed that Delhi, Agra and North Bengal was the centre of rulers and traditions for many years but few Muslims lived there. Although Bengal was the last state, it was an inhabitation centre of Muslim people and in 1901 they raised around 41% among total population.[28] H. Riley comments "the largest number of people lived in Punjab and Sindhu because those areas are in that place through which Afghans and Mughals came into India. But at the first stage they are not sure about their population in Bengal". According to census report in 1941, Muslim people were 55% of total population and in Bengal it was 66% of total population. When regular census started in 1872, British rulers became surprised to see the majority of Muslim people. The problem was solved with an illogical comment by H. Beverly and H. H. Risley. They thought all Bengali Muslims were converted from low caste Hindu. It effects on British rulers and writers. Beverly wrote, "but May Muslim majority was in delta areas, low caste people like Chandal, Rajbangsi of this area been converted into Islam.[29] To prove this statement he said, there are similarities in personality, culture and traditions in between low caste Hindus and converted Muslims. After an anthropological test of the noses of 185 low caste poisoning Muslims, H. Risley said,

Bengali Muslim been converted from Chandal, Koch, Rajbangsi.[30] It is remarkable that he examined the noses of low caste Hindu people too.

TABLE-1.1

Ethnographic test result of H. Risely:

Tribes	Average Height of Nose	Average Length of Nose
Brahmin	497	35
Muslim	494	383
Kayasthas	502	353
Bagdi	467	367
Chandal	962	367
Goyala(Milkman)	49	364
Kaivarta	48	366
Maali(Gardener)	43.9	41.5
Muchi(Shoemaker)	49.1	41
Podda	49.1	36.8
Rajbanshi	48.9	37.5
Sadgop	45.6	377

Source: H. H.Risely, *Tribes and Castes in Bengal*, Vol- 1, 1891, p. 91.

It would be wrong to make a prejudice about the physical personality of all Muslims people only became of some low caste prisoning Muslim.[31] It can be said through research that some Muslims have more handsome, slim and neb nose than high caste Hindu. Fazle Rabbi was true that Mr. Risely was trying to insult Bengali Muslim. Non-anthropological statement cannot define the physical beauty of Muslim. Rather history cans enlighten the castes. According to census report in 1872 at the time of British ruler revealed a truth that Muslim population raised in much number at that time. C.J.O. Denel said in 1891 of a census

reports, 'In 1872 Muslim people were less in 5 lakhs than Hindu. Now, (1891) they have overcome, with 15 lakhs more than Hindu'.[32] He also wrote 'according to statistics, from 1872, Muslim people turn into large number among 10,000. In north Bengal 10 people, East Bengal 262 people and in West Bengal 101, total 157 Muslims are excess. 'Mr. Denel said "The raises of Muslim people are pure and massive. "If it is going on, then within 650 years, the religion of Muhammad becomes a universal religion and in East Bengal it will be similar within 600 years."[33]

Above discussions are absolutely meaningful. It reflects that the number of Muslim people rose because of their growth rate of high birth. "From 1872 to 1881 in undivided Bengal, Hindu people growth rate was less than 1% and Muslim people growth rate was more than 7%. From 1881to 1891, Muslim people growth rate was 9.6% and Hindu people growth rate was 4.7%." According to next census report, again Muslim people growth rate was higher; thus, their growth rate was recorded 10% in 1901 and 10.4% in 1911. It is to be said that the growth rate was higher in East Bengal, 123% from 1891 to 1901.[34] Hindu people growth rate was 4.8% and 3.9% in 1901 and 1911. In 1872 there was only Hindu majority. But in 1911 Hindu people growth rate was 45.2% and Muslim people growth rate was 52.30.[35]In 1872 Bengali Muslim people were 16,370,967; in 1901 they turned into 24,237,228 people and in 1941 it became 3 crore 70 lakhs. However, at this same time Hindu majority turned into 3crore 10 lakhs from 1crore 7 lakhs.

Above discretion proved that Muslim people growth rate was higher in number than Hindu people; especially in East Bengal. This growth rate during 70 years astonished census authority; nothing but immense birth rate was the main cause of this majority. In 1891, census report author says "it is sure that physical relation is the main cause than ideology for the growth of Muslim people.[36]" Mr. J.A vas said in the census report in 1901, "Muslim people growth rate was higher than Hindu people. It was not for mere conversion. Because

this kind of people are less recorded. Multimarriage (polygamy), remarriage of widows, difference between the age of husband and wife are the causes of this kind of high birth rate."[37]

There are not any other causes for this kind of Muslim population at the time of British rulers. It was a situation when there were no converted Muslims and also migrations of foreign Muslims did not happen at that time. No doubt Polygamy, nutrient food and so on are the causes of high birth rate of Muslims in Bengal in the time of British rulers.

TABLE-1.2

Growth of Muslim population in 1872-1941

Census Report	Total Population in India	Total Muslim Population in India	Total Population in Bengal	Muslim Population in Bengal	Hindu Population in Bengal	Comments
1872	25 corer, 50 lakhs	-	36,769,735	16,370,967	18,102,348 (1 crore 63 lakhs are appropriate)	Many non-religions counted as Hindu. Pure Hindu people were 10 crore 68 lakhs
1881	-	4 crore, 99.5 lakhs 19.97% in total population	35,607,628	1,86,411	17,254,120	Population reduced after attaching Sylhet with Assam

Census Report	Total Population in India	Total Muslim Population in India	Total Population in Bengal	Muslim Population in Bengal	Hindu Population in Bengal	Comments
1891	287,223,431		38,277,338	19,582,481	18,068,655	
1901	-	-	-	21,907,980	20,150,541	The Growth rate in 10 years of Muslim 10% Hindu 4.8%
1911	-	-	-	24,237,228	20,945,379	The Growth rate in 10 years of Muslim 10.4% and Hindu 3.9%
1641	38 crore, 89 lakhs	9 crore, 5lakhs 24.28% in total population	Roughly 7 crore	3 crore, 70 lakhs	3 crore 10 lakhs	Influence by political issues Hindu Muslim both grew their population

Source: Mohammad Saduzzaman, *'BangalarSamajik O SangskritikItihas'*-Vol-1, (BengaliTranslation of "Social and Cultural History of Bengal" By Dr. M. A., Rahim.) Bangla Academy Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1995, pp. 41.

In 70 years 9(1872-1941) Indian population growth rate is 52%. In 60 years (1881-1941) Indian Muslim population grew double 4 Crore 99.5 lakhs to 9 Crore 44.5 lakhs. In 70 years, 1872-1941 Bengal Muslim population grew in double 1Crore 60 lakhs to 30 crore 70 lakhs, growth rate is 131.2%. In years 1872 Muslim population was less then Hindu population average 5 lakhs, but in 1861 they overcome Hindu population by 15 lakhs. In 70 years 1872 -1941 Hindu population growth rate was 1 crore 8 lakhs to 3 crore 10 lakhs; 1 crore 40 lakhs, 82.3%. East Bengal Muslim population was highest in number.[38]

Muslim majority effects on Bengali literature too. Poet Mukundaram said 'Hajjams are won't be able to take rest for so many khatna (circumcision) of Muslim children". Polygamy was a very common social custom. Rulers and rich people marry numberless women and feed them. Poet Bipraprasad said about farmer Hasan in Hasanhati that Hasan spends his days with his hundred wives happily." Bipraprasad said this in his poetic language. Because, any Muslim couldn't marry more than four wives. Somehow Hasan had four wives and other women were maids of their harem. Portuguese visitor Barbosa also said about this polygamy custom in '*Bagala'* city. He said "each rich Muslims have their four wives." Poet Bipraprasad said " Hasanhati Muslims marry again and again and live their life with so many women." Hindu community did not allow the marriage of widows but on the other hand Muslims did. Difference between the age of husband and wife is the fact of so many widows. 10- or 12-years old girls were forced to marry 50- or 60-years old men. We can find so many examples in Bengali literature. These are the facts of being a minority of Hindu population. In 70 years (1872) in Bengal Muslim people growth rate was 131.2%. In 1941 both Muslim and Hindu people were bulging out for political reasons.[39] Thus it would be proper to depend on census reports from 1972 to 1911. In forty years, Muslim population revised with 50% (1crore 60 lakhs to 2crore 40 lakhs) and Hindu population raised with 23.5% (1crore 70lakhs to 2crore 10 lakhs). So, in hundred years, Muslim and Hindu population decorously raised

with 125%and 60%. According to census report there were no converted Muslim people in the time of British rulers. So many Muslims came from North India for Government services making trade relations. This is the cause of 25%growth of them. So, they raised their population 100%in 100 years. According to this poll the number of Muslim people was 82lakhs in 1772. In a review of the population of Bengal, before 1772, the great Disaster in 1770 is the cause of the death of 1/4 people. Before thus great disaster Muslim and Hindu people were gradually 1crore 9lakhs and 1crore 41lakhs, total 2crore 50lakhs. However, there were also other communities. Recently we have discussed that many other communities had established their habitation in Bengal.[40]

Recently it is to be said that 1,000 Arabians had come into Bengal in 1220 and 14th and 15th century, at the time of the reign of Elias Shah and Hussain Shah, there were 2000 Arabian residents. Bengal victor Muhammad-Bin-Bakhtiar-Khilji; brought so many soldiers with him. Reportedly, he commanded 10,000 soldiers in the mission Tibet and at the same time he also took responsibility to protect them. Many Khalji, Turkish came with their wives or whole families. In view of this situation, we can know that 40,000 khalji Turkish had come with their wives and children in between 40 years. At the time of Nasuruddin Bugra khan, son of Balban, 15000 Ilbari turks including women, men, children as residential people in Bengal. In the way about 5000 korona Turkish had come to Bengal at the time of Tughluk Sultan in Delhi. About 8000 Abyssinians were there at the time of Barbak Shah in mid-15th century. At the time of Afghan rulers, there were not less than 2, 00,000 Afghanians. At the time of Emperor Jahangir, total number of Mughals, soldiers, women and others were15000. Muslim incoming was prohibited at the time of emperor Alamgir.[41] So there were not a few newcomers. Here comes the following chart:

TABLE-1.3

Establishment of Pre- Resident:

Arabian	1770 1220 1400-1500	1,000 people within 5 centuries 2,000 people within 3 centuries	48.000 16.000
Iranian	1220 1576-1756	1000 people within 5 centuries 50,000 people within 1 century	48,000 1,50,000
Khalji Turks	1220	40,000 people within 5 centuries	16,00,000
Ilbari Turks	1330	15,000 people 4 centuries	4,20,000
Karona Turks	1320	5000 people within 4 centuries	1,20,000
Abyssinian	1450	8000 people 3 centuries	32,000
Afghan	1570	2,00,000 people 2 centuries	8,00,000
Mughals	1620	15,000 people 1 centuries	37,500

Source: Mohammad Saduzzaman, *BangalarSamajik O SangskritikItihas'*- Vol-1, (BengaliTranslation of "Social and Cultural History of Bengal" ByDr. M. A., Rahim.) Bangla Academy Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1995, pp44.

Before the terrible famine in 1770, the total number of Bengali Muslim were 1crore 6lakhs and 30 lakhs 27 thousand were external Muslims, 70 lakhs 33 thousand were converted Muslims. If we count the growth of birth rate as 100% then we can see that before 2 centuries, the external and converted Muslims were 8lakhs and Hindus were 41 lakhs. That time in Bengal, the total population was 68lakhs and Buddhist and others were 70 lakhs.

There were 39.6% Muslims in this state. 29.6% external Muslims and 70.40% converted Muslims were in Bengal.[42]

Conversion of Buddhists and higher-class Hindus:

A number of Muslims had been converted from higher class Hindu people. There is much evidence that many Brahmins and kayastha girls married into Ruling class Muslim family. This time, rulers or rich Muslims did not want to make any relationship with lower caste Hindus. Only high cultured and educated Brahmins or kayestha got the opportunity to make relations with Muslims. Marriage was a method to make a bonding between two communities. Reputedly, Sultan Shamsuddin Elias Shah married a Brahmin widow and named her Fulmati Begam who gave birth to the children of Sultan.[43] Poet Muhammad khan said, his grand-grand-father Mahi Sawar married a Brahmin girl. For this marriage, Mahi Sawar had a famous family of brave rulers at the time of Elias Shahi and Hussain Shahi.[44] A Hindu poet named Vijay Gupta in the 15th century described a marriage of a higher caste Hindu woman with a kaji who was a scholar of Hindu sastra. This woman gave birth to kaji's son. Legend Isha khan, the leader of *'Masnad-E-Ala'* of Barbhnuiyan, married Sonamoyee, the nephew of famous Brahmin Zamindar Kedar Ray at Sripur. Sonamoyee gave birth to Isha Khan's two sons named Adam Khan and Bairam Khan. Some said that these two men also married two daughters of Kedar Ray.[45]Shamser Ghaji described in his book that he himself married a Brahmin girl.[46] At the end we can say that Muslims people married higher caste Hindu women. If we do not consider local reports, still there we can see the tradition of marriage between Muslims and higher caste Hindu women. We have given only a few examples. It is not true that all converted Muslims are come from low caste Hindu people. There are so many educated Hindu people were attracted by Islamism and been converted into Islam. Brahmins and Kayesthas were highly educated and traditional. They got the respected position at the durbar of Muslim rulers. These Hindu people who were royal

servants, neighbour and powerful got the opportunity to make a connection between Muslim tradition and them. Muslim people also got the opportunity to study Hindu culture. Some Hindus attracted by Sumahan ideology in Islam and took shelter under it. According to a Sanskrit ancient book named *Amritakhanda,* we can know that one of Vedanta Brahmins came from vow in Laxmanabati at the time of Muslim rulers. He discussed philosophy with kaji Rukunuddin and took to Islamism. This same book also said about one more sadhu named Amvanath of Kamrup who also converted into Islam.[47] There is no doubt that son of king Kans, Yadu also took Islam. He was a powerful and higher-class Brahmin child. After conversion he named as Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah. He was the founder of a royal family in Bengal.[48] The marshal of Solayem and Daud Khan, Kalapahar was a converted Muslim from kayestha custom. He became famous after winning Odisha at the time of SolayemKararani. In 1576, Kalapahar was injured in the war of Rajmahal.[49] Maybe there he died. We can gather much information from contemporary historians. Isha Khan's father Kalidas Gajdani was a Rajput kshatriya under the royal authority of Hussain Shahi Sultan. He took Islamism and was named as Solayman. He married a girl of the family of Hussain Shahi and gave birth of Islam Khan and Isha Khan.[50] Khan Jahan's vizier Muhammad Tahir of Bagerhat was a Brahmin. He is named as *'Pir Ali'*. According to Mirza Nathan Raghu, the son of ZaminderRajarai at Sahajadpur in Pabna district, took Islamism at the time of Islam Khan Subadar. Murshid Quli Khan, the Nawab of Bengal was also a southern Hindu Brahmin. Similarly, there are so many examples that Hindus took shelter under Islamism for peace of mind. Zamindar of Singhatia, Kamaluddin and Jalaluddin were Brahmins. They disgraced socially to make relation with Muslims rulers. That's why they took Islamism from Pir Ali. Many people like them who molested by their own communities converted into Islam. Sher khani, Sreemanta khani classes came from those Brahmins and kayestha.[51] Many Travellers and poets said about those conversions and no matter whether the causes are social or

religious. Poet Brindaban Das also said in Chaitanya Bhagwat that "Hindu Brahmins willingly took Islamism." Portuguese merchant came into Bengal in 1581 and wrote "king is a moor; he is a great and wealthy ruler. He rules over Hindu kingdom. Many Hindus getting converted into Islam to get the favour of king." If we look at the contemporary Bengali literature, then we can see whenever any Brahmin took Islam, he had tried to include his family too. There are descriptions of 3bramhins in the book of "*Victory of Rasal*" by Shekh Chand who took Islam and included their whole family too. Many times, when Brahmins defeated by Muslim Ulema in the religion or political debate, they forced to make their conversion. At the court of Shekh Jalaluddin and king Laxman, many Hindu pundits defeated at religious debate and converted into Islam; however, there is not any pure evidence. Moreover, we can say that many Brahmins made their conversion for their defeat. Above discussion proved that many Brahmins and kayestha came into Muslim community; thus, Bengali Muslim was the leader of those converted Muslims whose ancestries were higher class Hindus. In this way, those Buddhists and tortured Hindus also are counted as Muslim who came under the shelter of Islamism. Most Buddhists were kshatriya or kayestha. We already know that Buddhism and Jainism emerged by the torture of Brahmins. These people were belonging to second class Hindu people.[52] So, after their conversion many people came into Muslim society. Now we can say that more than 70% converted Muslims came from Buddhism and higher-class Hindu people and 30% from lower class Hindu people.[53] Thus, it is mere false statement that all converted Bengali Muslim are from lower class Hindu people. According to the census report there are two reasons for the conversion of non-Muslims. These are either forcefully or through a caste system. Boverly said, Muslims were always ready to make their victory approved by using weapons as well as Koran. Some say, Sultan Jalaluddin(yadu) wanted to finish all Hindu people at that time. Moreover, Islamism was a liberal religion. That's why Hindus of lower class and tortured one are attracted to Islamism.

They did not get any respect from their own religion.[54] It is not true that they only forcefully converted. From census reports of 1891 and 1901, we can know that at this time there were few converted people in Bengal. It is remarkable, at the time of British rulers, although Muslim people was suffering from social and political absences, so many people been converted into Islam willingly rather forcefully. On this ground we can say the information which proved that Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah wanted to finish Hindu communities is mere false statement. He didn't torture Hindus but favour them. He was a great supporter of Sanskrit *pandits*. He has a court where he used to invite Hindu *kavi* (poets), *pandit* and intellectual people. He titled Sanskrit pandit Brihaspati with 'Rai Mukut' and other five titles. He also gave him wealth and so many precious stones. Maybe he was angry with the Brahmins who organized the '*Suddhi'*(purification) ceremony to purify Hindus. After all the ceremonies and rituals still, those people counted as outcaste. If Muslim rulers forced them, they would not able to dwell there for five hundred years long. Muslim rulers were tolerant and liberal. Only for these Muslim rulers Vaishynava dharma has been emerged as a powerful class. Great inherent ideology is the cause of expanded Islamism what attracted educated and intellectual people in Bengal. Islamism brought a relief warrant to tortured Buddhists. Brahmins tortured Buddhists very badly. We get information from a table of Nalanda that the Barman king burned more than half Buddha Bihar at Sombihar.[55] Tibetan Buddhist saints came into Bengali in the 16th century and described that Buddhists were tortured by Brahmins so brutal. These people welcomed by Muslim community and they helped Muhammad-Bin-Bakhtiar Khalji to win Bengal.[56] In the first era of Bengali literature, we can get the description how Brahmins tortured upon Buddhist and forced to go under the tree of Islam. Poet of 14th century, Ramai Pandit said– "sixteen hundred families are there in Jajpur. They travelled many places to collect their bounty. They nab too much money as tax from the people of Maldah. Fraudulence is their nature. They become very powerful. All the

time they are cursing people here and there. Common people getting and afraid with them. They believe that they can destroy nature with Veda mantras. Common people prayed to religion itself to save them. One man came with black scurf and took bow and arrow as Yaban (unknown Muslim). They called one god– who is shapeless. All devtas (gods) came together. Brahma as Muhammad; Vishnu as Paygambar; Shiva as Adam; Ganesha as Gaji; Kartika as Kaji; Hindu saints as Muni; Shekhs as Muslim saints; Indra as Maulana; Chandra, Surya as Hawabibi; Padmabati as Bibi Noor. All came into Jajpur and destroyed temples and murtis and killed every culprit." Poet Ramai Pandit described a dark side of Brahmins in this way. Thus, tortured people wanted a spiritual peace and Islamism gave them this opportunity. Poet also said that God was also unhappy with those Brahmins and took avatar as Muslim saints to defeat them.[57]

The role of Sufi saints in the spread of Muslim society in Bengal:

Every region of the Indian subcontinent was the abode of the Sufis and the scene of their spiritual activities. Everywhere they have left an impact on their character and work. Bangladesh was once blessed with the presence of a large number of saints and their influence in this region is much deeper and more lasting than anywhere else. The majority of Muslims in Bengal and the mystical nature of the Bengali inhabitants bear bright evidence of this. Bengali saints served Islam and society in many ways and they made a long-lasting contribution to the betterment of Muslim society even beyond the Muslim conquerors, generals and rulers.

Hundreds of Sufi saints and their followers came to Bengal at different times and spread to different towns and villages and even to the secluded corners of the province. Their objective was to promote religion and propagate mysticism and heavenly love. In this way they helped in the moral and mental improvement of the people at large. Their exemplary moral character and their deep sympathy and service to the society and to the downtrodden

drew the non-Muslim masses to them as well. Added to this was the generosity and cultural supremacy of Islam that the Sufi men presented to the followers of idealism and also the oppressed and degraded people of the society. So, the preaching of all these ideal men attracted equally the Buddhists, the non-Muslims and the Hindus of all classes under the cordial and gentle shelter of Islam.[58] As a result of the efforts of Sheikh Jalal ud-Din Tabrizi and his followers, significant descriptions of the districts of Maldah and Dinajpur in North Bengal show that they were baptized and tread the path of spirituality. A contemporary account of this Sufi ascetic reveals that upon their arrival in Pandua, a large crowd gathered around him and embraced Islam at his hands. Many people of North Bengal were baptized in the religion of Islam by renowned Chishtia Sufi men like Ankhi Siraj, Alaul Haque and Nur Qutb Alam. According to Ibn Battuta, the people of Sylhet were attracted to Sheikh Jalal's (Shah Jalal) religious preaching and were converted to Islam. Local literature too supports the views of this Moorish traveller. There is a mention in a folk music that, "There were millions of Hindus in Sylhet but no Muslims. Shah Jalal was the first to raise the call of Azan and preach Islam at that place."[59]

Islam spread in the region of Khulna Jashohar through the efforts of Mujahid Darvesh Khan Jahan Ali. The Chittagong-Noakhali region was conquered by the Muslims in the middle of the fourteenth century. Hence, there was a large Muslim majority predominant in the region. How was this possible? In fact, it was the immortal glory of the Muslim Sufi saints; they entered this non-Muslim region and with great patience and perseverance spread the religion of Islam and its faith among the masses. The fame of the Sufi saints became popular among the locals. Many of these legends may be difficult to accept in the absence of accurate historical evidence, but they do reflect the extensive missionary work of Sufi saints in different parts of Bengal.

Bengali literature reveals that the Muslims of East Bengal had considerable influence in the late thirteenth century. According to the poet Krittibas, the Muslim influence increased so much that the Brahmins of East Bengal had to leave their ancestral home in fear of amalgamation with the Muslims. The poet writes that his ancestor Narsingh, who was a member of the court of Danuj Mardan Dev of Sonargaon, (in the late thirteenth century), had left East Bengal at that time and moved to West Bengal. Sonargaon had not been conquered by the Muslims before in the second half of the thirteenth century. So how did the number of Muslims in that area increase so much at that time. This indicates that there were many Muslims in the Sonargaon area before it came under Muslim occupation. Sheikh Sharfud-Din Abu Tawama established *'Khanqah'* and Islamic Education Centre in Sonargaon in the 70s of the 13th centuries. The establishment of an Islamic educational institution for the education of Muslims in the area reinforced the idea that before Sheikh Tawama reached Sonargaon, there were Muslim residents there beforehand. The existence of a Muslim population in Sonargaon before it was conquered by the Muslims was the result of the propaganda activities of the Sufi saints.[60]

Expansion and solidarity of the Muslim state:

In addition to the spread of Islam, Muslim Sufi saints played a significant role in the expansion of the Muslim state of Bangladesh and in the constitution of the Muslim state. Sometimes they themselves, in collaboration with the Muslim generals, established Muslim rights to the last frontier of the province. Local legends mention the jihad of some Sufi men against Hindu kings for religion, such as Baba Adam Shaheed, Shah Sultan Mahi-sawar, Makhdum Shah Daulla and others. Some of the saints joined Muslim rulers and generals to expand the religious boundaries in Bengal and to alleviate the miseries of the Muslim subjects living in the areas of small Hindu kings and zamindars. The presence of Sufi saints

in the Muslim army had given rise to a huge moral and spiritual force and upliftment among the soldiers. In this way the Muslim soldiers became victorious over the non-Muslim soldiers.

Mujahid Darvesh Jafar Khan Ghazi and Shah Safi-ud-Din fought against the Hindu king of Sat Gai and included the region in the Muslim kingdom of Bangladesh. Shah Jalal and his disciples collaborated with Sikandar Ghazi's Muslim army in the war against the Hindu king of Sylhet and established Muslim dominance there. Although based on folk lore, it is true that Sufi Mujahid Khan Jahan Ali conducted regular expeditions to the remote areas of Khulna Jashor and turned it under Muslim rule. Ismail Gazi's contribution to the expansion of Sultan Barbak Shah's kingdom is well known. He successfully fought against the Hindu kingdom of Orissa and conquered the area of Mandaran. According to a popular legend, Sufi saint Shah Mahmud Ghaznabi established Muslim rule in Mangalkot of Burdwan district by fighting against a Hindu zamindar. There are many more such hearsays about the contribution of Sufi saints in the spread of Muslim rights in different parts of Bengal.

The contribution of Sufi saints in the consolidation of Muslim rule in Bengal was also significant. In fact, in addition to the military and geographical conquests of Muslim generals, the Sufi-saints added moral victory to Islam by recruiting disciples and disciples, thus providing a source of responsibility and power for the Muslim state in a non-Muslim country. Without the silent pursuit of the saints, it became a problem for the Muslim rulers to dominate a large number of people of different religions, relying on only a small number of troops.

These saints had saved the Muslim state and society during the times of danger and crisis. There are many stories of folklore that Sufi saints came to the Muslims and guided them as their guardians on the day of their misfortune and calamity. The Hindu kings and zamindars have stopped the oppression of Muslims by their outstanding spiritual and moral power; they have stopped the oppression of the Muslims in the hands of the Hindu kings and

zamindars. If moral strength was not effective enough in defending the Muslims, they had also taken up arms. Hayyat Nur QutbAlam saved the Muslim state and society of Bangladesh from destruction. As a result of the liberal rule of Ilyas Shah Sultan, the Hindus occupied the high, dignified posts of the kingdom and the Hindu servant Raja Kansa was established the head of state. King Kansa tortured and persecuted the saints and waged a religious war against the Muslims and as a result, the Muslims of Bengal had to face a calamity. Nur QutbAlam devoted himself to spiritual pursuits; he could not remain indifferent to the fate of the Muslim community and the state in that moment of crisis. He devoted himself to uniting the Muslims by overcoming their differences. He sought the help of Ibrahim Saki to save the Muslims of Bengal. The Muslim state and society were saved from a catastrophe and became stronger because he came to the aid of the Muslims in this calamity. In this way, Nur Qutb Alam was the savior of Muslim Bengal. As a result of his work force, Muslims were established in harmony and a new force of state and society was produced. In reality, his contribution to the progress of the Bangladesh Muslim community was very important.

The Sufi saints and *Darvesh* were proponents of Islamic principles in the system of governance of the Muslim state of Bangladesh. Usually, they did not interfere in the affairs of the state. But they never remained indifferent in the days of danger to the Muslim state and society. The Sultans of Bengal like Ilyas Shahi adopted a policy of recruiting more Hindus in their system of governance and placed them in positions of responsibility in the state. Following such a national policy, they felt the need for the cooperation of the majority Hindus in defending their sultanate against the imperialists of Northern India and wished to build the source of their power on the patriotism of the Bengali people. But at that time, the *Darvesh* and *Ulema* considered it inappropriate to appoint Hindus to responsible positions in the state. Sheikh AlaulHaq realized that pursuing such a policy had the potential to endanger the Bengali Muslims. That is why Sheikh Alaul Haq warned Sultan Sikandar Shah about this.

But the Sultan did not listen to him; and moreover, fearing the Sheikh's great influence on the people of Pandua, he exiled him to Sonargaon. Subsequent events have shown that Sheikh Alaul was completely wrong in his review of politics. If Sultan Sikandar had taken the advice of Shah Sheikh, then the sufferings of the Muslims due to the establishment of Hindu supremacy through Raja Kansa and the dangers that the Muslim state and society faced during the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah could have been avoided from the outset.

Even, Hazrat Maulana, Muzaffar Shams Balkhi had informed Sikandar Shah and his successor Ghiyasud-Din Azam Shah about the impropriety of appointing a large number of Hindus to high positions in the Muslim state of Bangladesh. The Sheikh then in his letter referred to the Bengali Sultan the *Quranic* prohibition on intimacy with unbelievers, "Those of you who believe, do not give your inwardness, to those who are in the outer row." He also quoted the words of the Muslim religious leaders. They say that a believer should never accept non-Muslim or strangers as trustworthy, intimate or spell case. Sheikh argues that the reason for making Hindu friends is not rational and justifiable. He quotes from the Quran to show that such a policy would bring misery and sedition to the Muslim state. The non-believers will never back down from destroying the Muslim rulers and lead them astray. An unbelieving infidel may be given a job but he should not be appointed as a ruler or a manager; in short, he cannot be given the responsibility to rule over the Muslims. Allah has said, "The believers will not accept friends and help from the disbelievers, nor will they neglect Allah. If anyone does that, they will not be helped by Allah in anything. You will only be warned so that you can protect yourself from them (the non-believers)." Sheikh also says that, "There are warnings in the Qur'an, *Hadith* and historical books against those who have given authority to the unbelievers over the believers. Allah bestows wealth and provisions on people from unexpected sources, and He delivers them from their hands." Human resources have a promise of victory and prosperity. The defeated unbelievers hang

their heads down and wield power and authority and rule the country under them. But in the land of Islam, they have also been appointed as royal counterpart and they now had authority over Muslims. Such incidents should not be allowed to happen.[61]

During the reign of Ilyas Shahi Sultan in Bengal, the letter of Hazrat Maulana Muzaffar Shams Balkhi revealed the great influence of Hindu employees in the Muslim state. This was an indication of the future danger of Muslim rule and society. Sheikh considered it his moral duty to advise Sultan Ghiyasud-Din against the stupidity of appointing Hindus to important positions of responsibility in the state. But the Sultan did not accept his advice. Disobeying this rational advice caused great suffering to his heirs and put the Muslim state in great danger. The illustrious intervention of Hazrat Nur QutbAlam freed the Muslim state from this danger.

Contribution of Sufism to Education and Culture:

Most of the Sufi saints were scholars. The lives of Maulana Sharfud-Din Abu Tawama, Makhdum Sharfud-Din Ehia Maneri, Hazrat Nizam ud-Din Auliya, Sheikh Alaul Haque, Hazrat Nur Qutb Alam and other Sufis is a perfect example of this. In fact, the origin of religious knowledge and its depth was vital for the Sufi saints of the first period of Muslim rule in Bengal and the subcontinent. Akhi Siraj ud-Din Usman's statement about accepting discipleship was supported by Nizam ud-Din Auliya. We see that many of the Sufi saints were great scholars of the era and their established monasteries were centres of learning and knowledge. These learning centres had attracted students from all over. We can mention the names of a number of Islamic learning centres which were built in the *khanqah* of the Sufi saints and their scattered enlightenment illuminated Bengal and North India.

Sheikh Sharfud-Din Abu Tawama was one of the famous scholars of the second half of the thirteenth century. He had great depth in Islamic teachings and other sciences. He

established a Madrasa in Sonargaon. Students from different parts of Bengal and even from Northern India gathered here. *Makhdum Sharfud-Din Ehia Maneri* was his most famous student at Sonargaon Academy. Sheikh Saifud-Din Abu Tawama Tasauf wrote a valuable book named *'Makamat'* on '*Tasawwuf*' or Islamic mystics. There was a widespread popularity of '*Makamat*' among the educated circles throughout the subcontinent. There is evidence that the demand for this book was in remote areas like Lahore. Written in the form of Persian poems named '*Fikah'*- Sheikh Abu Tawama was credited with writing a book based on this. Even if this book was not written by him, then it must have been one of the disciples who compiled it based on his teachings.[62]

Makhdum Sharfud-Din Ehia Maneri, one of India's most accomplished men, was indeed a deserving student of his great teacher. He gained a reputation as a Sufi man and scholar. His bibliography bears the imprint of his profound erudition and Sufi knowledge. Few of the names of the bibliographies of Makhdum Sharfud-Din Maneri can be mentioned here. *Aajiba,* the book on mysticism written for his disciples in the form of questions and answers. An essay book about *Fawaid-e-Rukni-Haji* by Ruknuddin, *Irshadul Talebin* of the book discussion by to help the truth seekers, *Irshadul Salekin* by the Essay book on pantheism. *Risallah Al Makkiya* book written on self-philosophy. *Ma'dan Al-Mani* Essay book on Sufism compiled by the Jainbadr Arabs between 1348 and 1350 A.D. *Lutf-al-Ma'ni*- Short speech by Ma'dan Al Ma'ni. Mukh Al Ma'ni- Collected by Shihab ud-Din Halifi. *Tuhfa-e-Gayebi*- Compiled by Jain Badr Arari. *Khayan-e-pur Niyamat*- Compiled by Jain Badr Arari. *Sharah-e-Adab Al-Muridin*- Written notes on Jiya ud-Din Najib Sohrawadir's 'Adab Al-Muridin' by *Makhdum Sharfud- Din Maneri* in 765-65 AH. *Aka'id Arshafi* to discuss Sufism.

Sharfud-Din Maneri had written a large number of letters, all of which contain his profound knowledge of mysticism and Islamic theology. So far, all his letters that have been

discovered are classified under the following names: *Maktubat-e-Sadi*- Hundred letters written by Kazi Shamsuddin, the ruler of Jusar. *Maktubad-e-Dusadi* One and a half hundred letters written to various Sheikh, Qazis and Sultans. *Bishatwa Hasat* by the Letters written to Maulana Muzaffar ud-Din.

Sheikh Ali Siraj, Sheikh Alaul Haque and Hazrat Nur QutbAlam were all famous for their scholarly knowledge and skills. They were equally interested not only in the spread of spiritual knowledge but also in the spread of general education. Nur QutbAlam had established a Madrasa and later, Sultan Hussain Shah donated generously to the institution. The fame of these renowned Sufi men and scholars attracted disciples and students from all over North India and Bengal. Mir Syed Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, Sheikh Nasir ud-Din Manikpuri, Sheikh Hossain Jukkar Posh and many others from North India received spiritual knowledge and Islamic education from Sheikh Alaul Haque at his Pandua Educational Centre. The few letters found by Husamud-Din Manikpuri, Sheikh Kako and others from Hazrat Nur Alam show his deep knowledge of Islamic mysticism. Some of these letters were written to saints, *Ulema* and disciples.[63]Hazrat Hamid Danishmand Khanka College of Education, better known as 'Hawda' Mia, was upgraded in Bagha, Rajshahi. It was noticed by Abdul Latif, a Mughal traveller from Emperor Jahangir's Alam.

In short, the khanqah of the Bengali Sufi saints was the great center of religious and intellectual life. These centers gave birth to saints and scholars not only for Bengal but for the whole of India. Sharfud-Din Maneri, Jahangir Simnani, Nasir ud-Din Manikpuri, Sheikh Hossain Jukkar Posh, Husamud-Din, Manikpuri, Sheikh Kaku and a few others were eminent students of the spiritual and intellectual life of Bengal in North India. In this way, the saints have made important contributions to the educational advancement of the Bengali Muslims.[64]

Public welfare activities by the Sufis:

The *khanqahs* of the Sufi saints turned out to be huge philanthropic institutions for the masses. This is where they began their search for the Creator and found their peace of mind and satisfied their spiritual aspirations. The *khanqah* were both hospitals and shelters where the deranged, insane and sick people sought shelter and also directly benefited. They provided medical care and sincere care to the Sheikh and his disciples. Each *khanqah* had an anchorage or a system of providing free meals to the poor and unfed people. Subject property was also donated for the maintenance of such *'langar'* or anchorages. The institutions of Sheikh Jalal ud-Din Tabreji and the famous Sufi saints of Pandua had huge stretches of revenue-free land. In this way, the *khanqah* anchorages of the saints opened a door of spiritual salvation and liberation for the distressed and calamitous people. By providing free food and shelter, the saints were able to come in contact with the poor and common people of the country and understand their feelings, hopes and aspirations.

During the Muslim period, Bangladesh was the scene of the activities of hundreds of Sufi saints. As a result, the Bengali Muslims came under their closest and direct influence. These wise saints also exemplified spiritualism and generosity in their lives. They properly dedicated themselves to the realm of spirituality and demonstrated indifference towards all the worldly pleasures and affairs and gave liberal explanations of religion.

Bengali Muslims embraced the spiritualism and generosity of all these great religious teachers. This spirituality is so deeply ingrained in the minds of the people that even today the character of Bengali Muslims has the inspiration of mysticism on one hand and aversion to the world on the other. Bengali literature, especially local folk music, is a beautiful expression of their mystical feelings.

These *khanqahs* were the meeting place of people of all faiths, Hindus and Muslims alike. These centres also became unobstructed institutions and platforms for open discussions. In this way, these institutions created a liberal and conducive environment for building understanding between the two communities. As a result, people from both classes came closer to each other and understood each other's opinions. This liberal environment gave rise to the worship of '*Satyapir'*, a common cultural doctrine, and accelerated the development of Bengali literature. The liberal climate created by the Sufi saints in the country made possible a liberal reform movement in the Hindu society of Bengal and its full development took place in the Vaishnavism of Sri Chaitanya in Nabadwip.

The honesty and personality of the saints, their friendly behaviour, humanity and generosity of service attracted all classes of Hindus, both educated and uneducated. Many of them converted to Islam at the hands of the saints, while others defended their own past and religious beliefs. Yet they became ardent admirers of the Sufi saints and recognized their miraculous powers. They started worshiping the Pir and sought the blessings of the Pir in the spirit of fulfilling their inner desires. Even Hindus for centuries have been paying homage to the memory of Sufi saints with devotion and visiting the shrine in the hope of receiving their blessings. This reverence of the Hindus towards the Muslim saints and *Darvesh* is reflected in the descriptions of the Hindu poets and Bengali literature.

The author of the Sanskrit books 'Sheikh Shubhodaya', Halayudha Mishra, mentions the deep respect of Hindus towards Sheikh Jalal ud-Din. They sought his help in the hope of deliverance from misery, and in his holy name they offered half of their property.

The poet further wrote that people prayed for his grace in the hope of healing, bearing children and good fortune. The seventeenth century Hindu poet Kshemananda is seen paying homage to the thirteenth and fourteenth century Muslim saints. The poet in the introduction of his poetry *'Manasa Mangal'* has praised many other saints apart from Senior Khan Ghazi

and Suba Khan. Another eighteenth century Hindu poet Vidyapati had paid homage to the sacred memory of the great Tapas Khwaja Moinud-Din Chishti, Zafar Khan Ghazi, Senior Khan Ghazi and Ismail Ghazi. The poet says that he composed his poem *'Satyapir's Panchali'* on the orders of the Muslim saint Satyapir. Poet Krishna Hari Das has introduced himself as a disciple of the saint named Tahir Mahmud in his poem. Muslim saints have left a deep and lasting impression on the minds of the Hindu people with their great spiritual personalities and philanthropic deeds.[65]

These are just a few of the many examples. In reality, the Muslim heroic saints were rightly the symbol of the spiritual and cultural heritage of Bengal.

Marginalization of Muslim society in colonial and post-colonial Bengal:

This looks into Bengali Muslim identity in colonial Bengal and post-colonial Bengal focusing on the period from 1870 to 1920 The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1918, which finally took the form of Government of India Act, 1919, had a deep impact in the politicization of community identity and hardening of religious boundaries. The reforms proposed more Indian representatives in the services, territorial representation, and the introduction of diarchy in the provinces. The fluid terrain of Bengali Muslim identity took a decisive turn in the wake of new constitutional reforms in the 1920s.[66] Under the reforms, provincial legislatures constituted at the end of 1920 were responsible for local governance and answerable to a substantially enlarged electorate. Increased elected representatives in government offices provided a new structural definition of Muslim community. A "bureaucratically fixed frame for Muslim community definition"[67] emerged and this seemed to be in sharp contrast to the public debates on Bengali culture and language that appeared in print before 1920). The colonial reforms resulted in creating the "image of a common Muslim identity, fixed by state definition,"[68]

In the context of South Asia, the case of Bengal has assumed especial salience with regard to the question of Muslim identity formation. In 1871, the colonial census revealed that in the province of Bengal, Muslims were a numerical majority.

Subsequently, scholars have studied how and why a dense and numerically large Muslim population emerged at the frontiers of the Mughal Empire (i.e. Bengal and Punjab) where, paradoxically, the Mughal state's investment in "converting" the local population was the least. Scholars have argued that the Mughal state was not only indifferent to proselytizing in Bengal, but often actively discouraged programs of Islamization.[69]

Scholars like Rafiuddin Ahmed and SufiaUddin who have investigated the question of Muslim identity formation in colonial Bengal have repeatedly focused on the chasm between this rural, peasant *atrap* (non-elite) majority that comprised the bulk of the Muslim population in the province and the Urdu-speaking *ashraf* (elite) who traced their descent from Persia or Arabia or to the Mughal centre of power in North India. According to this body of scholarship, the Bengali Muslim identity that emerged was a predominantly non-elite, peasant-based identity whose site of formation was the Bengal countryside.[70] As Sufia Ahmed's work shows, acting as a critical link between the Urdu speaking *ashraf* and the non-Urdu speaking *atrap* was the Bengal Muslim literati whose emergence can be traced to the first two decades of the twentieth century.[71]

The existing scholarship on the emergence of the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia is somewhat fragmentary and unsystematic. What was distinctive about the Bengali Muslim middle class intelligentsia is that unlike the Urdu-speaking *ashraf* they did not disown the Bengali language as part of their Islamic heritage. But as Anindita Ghosh's work shows, the Bengali that was emerging in the haloed portals of the Fort William College in the early nineteenth century, as well as the late nineteenth century nationalist attempts to forge Bengali

as a modern vernacular was way too Sanskritized (and Hinduized) to become the basis for a Bengali Muslim identity.[72]

Rafiuddin Ahmad made a major contribution to understanding the formation of Bengali Muslim identity. According to Ahmad, such tracts began circulating in the Bengal countryside in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Alongside the dialogic debate-oriented practices of the *bahas* (religious debates) and the monologue *wazmahfils* (gatherings to hear religious sermons), the tracts on reform that often appeared in the form of manuals or *nasihatnamas* (manuals of religious instructions) contributed to the formation of distinct and unified Muslim identity at the grass roots level.[73]

In Ahmed's reading, the Muslim identity in Bengal was essentially a class-based identity that transmuted into the self-consciousness of being Muslim through the waves of reformist Islamic movements that swept across the Bengal countryside in the mid nineteenth century (Faraizi Movement) and the late nineteenth century (which focused on social reform). Ahmed, however, fails to explain why peasants responded so eagerly to the proselytization campaigns of the reformist mullahs in the villages.[74]

P K Datta, in his more recent study, focuses on peasant improvement themes in vernacular tracts produced in the early twentieth century.[75] Instead of jumping to the easy association of equating reform/revivalism with fundamentalism, Datta shows how a specific ideology of Islamic reform could be harnessed to speak for multiple identity claims. Like Rafiuddin Ahmed's study of the nineteenth century sources, Datta reads the vernacular tracts directed to village audiences in the early twentieth century, especially the 1920s which saw the emergence of a new 'peasant improvement theme' in these tracts. The articulation of this 'improvement' ideology was sometimes along exclusivist lines (e.g.: the need to stay away from the Hindu moneylenders).[76]

Mohammad Shah in a recent article has traced the evolution of Bengali Muslim identity in the colonial period in three phases.[77] In the first phase lasting till 1911, he suggests, "Muslim leaders devoted the greatest part of their energies upon the protection of their *communal* interests and by remaining loyal to the British government."[78] He then reads a very short-lived inter-communal union in the second decade of the twentieth century.

In the third phase beginning in the 1920s and characterized by electoral reforms, Mohammad Shah sees the hardening of Muslim attitude towards the Hindus, and concludes, "Hence in the 1930s and 1940s Muslim separatism became a reality."[79] Muslim separatism for him is not only the articulation of Muslim politicians or British policies; rather "it was also based on his [Bengali Muslims] separate communal identity."[80] According to him, "if the Muslims as a community did not feel separate from the Hindus, India would not have been divided on the basis of the two-nation theory, or at least Bengal and Punjab would have remained undivided."[81] Historians, like Shah, by focusing their lens on separatism foresee the transfer of power to colonial subjects in the 1920s, a good two decades before Partition became a reality.[82] He fails to read the social, political, and economic contexts that lead to Partition. The assumption here is that Muslims and Hindus belong to separate cultural spheres, which cannot be reconciled. This kind of an understanding spills over in theorizing Bengali Muslim identity, for they see a deep chasm between being a Bengali and a Muslim simultaneously. Joya Chatterji explores the ways in which a historicization of Islam in Bengal in the pre-modern period could be productively brought to bear upon the question of the Bengali Muslims in the modern period in order to dispel certain binaries like *ashraf / atrap*, Muslim/Bengali and so on that continue to plague a large body of otherwise painstaking and excellent scholarship on the issue of Islam in Bengal. Instead of assuming these binaries as given, a rigorous historicization of how these binaries came into being could be a very fruitful exercise. For instance, she reads Richard Eaton to show how the *ashraf* emerged from social

and political contingencies very specific to Bengal in the Sultanate period. So *ashrafism* is as Bengali as the popular sorts of Islam that emerged at a later date.[83]Chatterji also adds an important corrective to the historiography of Muslim separatism. She provides for a communal reading of *bhadrolok* (educated Bengali Hindus) culture, which plays a significant role in them demanding the separation of Hindu majority provinces from the Muslim majority ones. In the process Chatterji argues that the demand for a separation was not the preserve of the Muslims, rather the *bhadralok* discourse on national consciousness through the idiom of culture was equally culpable of it.[84]

Between the poles of Muslim and Hindu separatism, Sana Aiyar by focusing on the particularities of Muslim majority Bengal challenges the "assumption that Muslim identity was constructed as a linear progression towards a highly communal, exclusive and oppositional politics at an all-India level."[85] Her central argument is that the provincial government of Bengal in the early 1940s provided a 'third alternative' that attempted to "reconcile religious and regional identification within a political discourse that was not exclusionary."[86] Her study focuses on the coalition government in Bengal, which was formed on the basis of cross-communal alliance and emphasized regional solidarity, without claiming to be secular in nature. Political mobilization for the government was done in communal terms, yet it was not based in opposing the communal other, rather it called for the "recognition and reconciliation of different religious identities."[87] She refers to a section of Bengali Muslim leaders who were against Partition and voiced their opinion for an independent Bengal. The movement for an independent Bengal was based on a "cultural and regional solidarity among Bengali Muslims, who wanted to preserve their particular identity," and claimed to be culturally different from Muslims in other parts of colonial India.[88] Sana Aiyar's 'third alternative' that focuses on culture, religion, and region in defining Bengali Muslim identity, comes to its logical conclusion in 1971 with the formation of Bangladesh. It

is here that such nuanced scholarship runs into problems of falling into the trope of separatism. Just like Muslim separatism has been cited as the reason for the formation of Pakistan, Aiyar's 'third alternative' is guilty of foreshadowing the emergence of Bangladesh, twenty-five years before the new nation comes into existence.[89] Also, if it was true that Bengali was the cementing factor after 1971; the Bangladeshis should have become part of unified Bengal. Rather their claim to a separate national identity became their main characteristic.

The British classified people by religious belief and in the manner of response and debate, the idea of being a Hindu or Muslim became central to community identity. The colonial censuses of Bengal were instrumental in creating new identities for the Bengali Muslims.29 I would argue that due to categories invented by the colonial censuses for defining people, the Bengali Muslims in response to categorization developed a new narrative of themselves in which their Muslim-ness became central to their identity. This was a break from pre-colonial Bengali Muslim identity, where religion was not the only boundary for the purpose of self-definition. The colonial project of categorizing people heightened religious awareness in contrast to other cultural commonalities between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. The Bengali Muslims increasingly started identifying with Islam only, foregoing other cultural markers as part of the Bengali Muslim identity. The opposition between Bengali and Islam, I will argue, was to a large extent a fall out of the operations of colonial census, which set the limits of the discourse of defining Bengali and Muslim identities. The tension between Bengali and Muslim as projected in the census had to be addressed, which in turn led to new definitions of what it meant to have a Bengali Muslim identity. Edward Said argued that the colonialist project is "absolutely anatomical and enumerative: to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into manageable

parts."[90] In this chapter my effort is to situate how the 'imagined communities' of Hindus and Muslims in the colonial *imaginative* became "enumerated communities." [91]

In order to understand what changed during the colonial period it is important to know the nature of Bengali Muslim society during pre-colonial times. The advent of Muslim rule in Bengal has been traced to the late fifteenth century with the establishment of the Husain Shah dynasty in Bengal. The Husain Shahi period of the independent Bengal Sultanate, which lasted for two hundred years, saw the emergence of Islam in Bengal. M R Tarafdar's important study of this period reveals that "the foreign rulers who had come in the wake of Muslim conquest were yet to settle down here, and the local converts who seem to have originally belonged to the lower grades of the Hindu society had hardly any sociological reasons to spring suddenly into a stable group of enlightened people." [92]

Tarafdar argues since Brahmanical orthodoxy looked down upon low-caste Hindus, the Muslim missionaries faced no difficulty in converting people to the new faith, but "Islam sat quite lightly on the heart of this region," till orthodoxy swept the region during the colonial period.[93] Islam in its simple and austere form did not appear to characterize the life of the people. The literature of the period shows some form of folk Islam among the Muslim masses, who were hardly connected with the dogmas of religion. Popular Islam was not free from accretions and deeply influenced by Hindu customs. Popular or folk Islam assimilated a variety of beliefs and practices that were present in Bengal's pre-colonial religious environment. Apart from the veneration of pirs (holy men and saints), Muslim converts had faith in Hindu divinities.[94] This was partly because of the efforts of Muslim Sufi saints who "appear to have brought about a cultural synthesis by adapting yogic and tantric philosophy to Islamic mysticism."[95]

Historians have argued "Islam in traditional Bengal was…marked by its tendency towards convergence with and assimilation to the local cultural milieu."[96] The authors of the

early Bengali Muslim literature were 'instrumental in casting Islamic tradition in a syncretic mould'. They reconstructed Islam according to the specific needs and demands of the social and cultural milieus.[97] The popular worship of Satyanarayan by the Hindus was borrowed from the Muslim tradition of *Satya Pir*. Popularized by Hussain Shah, the tradition idealized the 'symbol of Hindu-Muslim syncretism'.[98] Further evidence of a syncretic culture was a significant Muslim population having Hindu names. The Bengali Muslim "masses, particularly those at the poor levels of society, had a tendency to retain local names and appellations, such as Mandal, Pramanik and Sarkar family names, occupational in their origin, to be found among the Hindus as well."[99]

The nature of Bengali Muslim identity took a new turn in late-nineteenth century colonial Bengal. Historians of colonial Bengal have argued the importance of reform movements in purging syncretic tendencies and articulating a Bengali Muslim identity exclusively cantered on religion.[100]

Bernard Cohn's seminal essay "The Census and Objectification in South Asia" shows how the colonial census was not a passive instrument of data gathering but an active process that created new identity for Indians. According to Cohn "the census was one of the situations in which Indians were confronted with the question of who they are and what their social and cultural systems were."[101] Unlike the census in Britain, which was a "secular institution in the collection and presentation of data," census taking in colonial India had a different purpose altogether.[102]

In India the question on religion, caste and race was introduced since the census began in 1872, and religion was used as a fundamental category in census tabulation. The point is illustrated in the 1872 census: "In the forms provided by the Government of India for exhibiting the results of the census, the population is supposed to be divided into five religious classes, namely, Hindus, Muhammadans, Christians, Buddhists, and Others." [103]

Prior to the census, the British had started revenue surveys. Accurate information on village lands was gathered, which later formed the geographical unit to conduct the census.[104] The village became the 'dominant site of social life' where a caste relation was one of the determinants of social position. A society based on caste was different from Western society "for caste was opposed to the basic premises of individualism" and it evens "actively resisted the modern state."[105] Following James Stuart Mill's History the British were engaged in identifying features of India that would be objects for "rational policies of social reform."[106] Under the British caste and religion became categories that would be "capable of systematizing India's diverse forms of social identity, community and organization."[107] Since the Indians loosely defined religion, the British sought to impose a formal definition in order to 'systematize' the population. The new definition of religion reinforced the British understanding of communities in terms of their religious identity. The colonial administrators did not understand the social structure, but they formulated new definitions that stimulated the process of altering the identities of Hindus and Muslims.[108]

The Bengali Muslim identity was constructed with religion as the locus of the community. New definitions of Muslims emerged in response to census enumeration, and how the debates and responses these descriptions generated altered the people's understanding of community identity. It has been argued by Cohn that "through the asking of questions and compiling of information in categories which the British rulers could utilize for governance, the census provided an arena for Indians to ask questions about themselves."[109]

The presence of a large Muslim population in colonial Bengal as reported in the first census of Bengal in 1872 came as a surprise to the colonial administrators. The census report of 1872, emphasized lower-caste conversion as the primary cause for this large presence. But the administrators were not certain whether they could be called 'Muslims' because their practices did not adhere to orthodox Islam. Beverley, the Census Commissioner of Bengal

``doubt[ed] much whether such conversions have been advantageous to the proselytes. They call indeed upon Allah and the Prophet; but still I doubt much if they have been weaned from any of their superstitions. The higher ranks of Moslems here in general abstain from making offerings to the pagan gods, but the multitudes in all distresses have recourse to the idols, and even make offerings at many holy days."[110]

According to Beverly, "not the least interesting of the facts brought out by the late census is the large number of Muhammadans found in Bengal. The total number of Muhammadans in these provinces exceeds twenty and a half million (20,664,775). The vast majority of them, namely seventeen and a half million are found in Lower Bengal."[111]

The preponderance of the Muslim population in Bengal was a new discovery for the colonialists, which the census report attributes to conversion: But that conversion was very largely carried on in Bengal, appears, not only probable, but is the only explanation of the large numbers of Muhammadans found here in the present day who occupy the same social position as their Hindu … "The existence of Muhammadans in Bengal is not due so much to the introduction of Mughal blood into the country as to the conversion of the former inhabitants for whom a rigid system of caste discipline rendered Hinduism intolerable.[112]

The question of conversion has been a subject of debate in historiography, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.[113] My point here is the issue of a large presence of Muslim population in Bengal, as pointed out in the 1872 census, generated a particular kind of response from the Bengali Muslim community, which was instrumental in forging an Islamized identity among the masses, that was projected as the other of Bengali culture and language.

The 1901 Census of Bengal describes the storm of protest from the educated Muslims refuting the local origin theory of Muslims. E. A. Gait in his report of the 1901 census writes, "a Muhammadan gentleman has recently published a book in which he attempts to contradict

the statement made by Mr. Beverley in the Census Report for 1872."[114] The reference here is Khondkar, Fuzli Rubee's *The Origin of the Muhammadans of Bengal* published in 1895.[115]Rubee refuted Beverly's thesis and argued that the Muslims descended from religious teachers, officers and soldiers who came there from the Muslim world during five and a half centuries of Muslim rule in Bengal. Another cause was the influx of political refugees from northern India. The 1901 census also mentions one "Abu A Ghaznavi, a leading gentleman of Mymensingh, who has prepared an excellent account of the Muhammadans of that district, and who is a strong supporter of the theory of foreign origin." Ghaznavi argues that "roughly speaking 20 percent of the present Muhammadans are lineal descendants of foreign settlers, 50 percent of them have an admixture of foreign blood and the remaining 30 percent are probably descended from Hindu and other converts."[116]

These responses to the theory of Beverley resulted in a new trend among the masses to belong to any one of the four respectable social groups Syed, Sheikh, Mughal, and Pathan. This preoccupation is gauged from the census report of 1901: Amongst the earlier converts, and especially in the functional groups, Hindu names and titles are still very common. Names such as Kali Shekh, Kalachand Shekh, BrajaShekh or Gopal Mandal are constantly met with. When a Mullah affects a conversion at the present day, he usually gives the neophyte a new name, but it is often chosen in such a way as to give some indication of the old one; Rajani for example becomes Riaz-uddin.

This reminds one of the ways in which a Muhammadan of low social position gradually assumes a more high-sounding designation as he rises in life.[117]In 1872, the number of claimants to these respectable social orders for Bengal was 266, 378-of this 232, 189 were returned as Sheikhs, 9, 858 as Syeds, and 2, 205 as Pathans-out of a total Muslim population of 17, 609, 135. [118] By 1901 the numbers claiming Sheikhs had increased to 19, 527, 221, in a total Muslim population of over twenty-one and a half million.[119]

O' Malley in the census report of 1911 mentions that the government issued orders, "in the case of Jolahas, Kulus, etc., if a person returns himself as such, the name of the caste should be entered. If, however, he does not do so return him, even though the enumerator considers him to be Jolaha, Kulu, etc., the entry should be Sheikh, Pathan, etc., as in the case of other Muhammadans."[120]

Kenneth Jones has argued that the census was a catalyst for change as it both described and altered the environment. He notes, "Describing meant providing order to that which is described, and at the same time stimulating forces which would alter that order."[121] Jones' formulation that 'categories necessitate definition and definitions impose order' is useful in understanding how religion became the central marker for Bengali Muslims. I delineate the process through a specific example from the 1872 census return.

Some scholars have characterized this distinction that 'Hindus were Bengalis and Muslims were only Muslims,' as a response to the effects of cheaply printed vernacular reformist literature whose thrust was toward the Islamization of society.[122] Jones' formulation that 'categories necessitate definition and definitions impose order' is useful in understanding how religion became the central marker for Bengali Muslims. I delineate the process through a specific example from the 1872 census return.

A sample return of the 1872 census in village Tribeni in Hooghly district showed all Hindus returning as Bengalis under the heading 'Race or Tribe' and the Muslims returning as Syeds, Sheikhs and Pathans.[123] Since these appellations fit the bill of a normative Islam, the masses showed a tendency to be identified with such names. In a way the census contributed toward the development of a normative Muslim identity, reflected in the trend among Muslim masses in villages to adopt titles associated with *ashrafs* to define their Muslim-ness in contradistinction to Bengali-ness.

Some scholars have characterized this distinction that 'Hindus were Bengali and Muslims were only Muslims,' as a response to the effects of cheaply printed vernacular reformist literature whose thrust was toward the Islamization of society. They argue, "the multifaceted efforts at Islamization at first confused the masses. More and more, they were made to feel that as Muslims they were different from their Hindu neighbours. The constant harping on extraterritorial links created in their minds a vague, yet persistent, notion that perhaps most, if not all, Muslims were aliens in Bengal."[124] Not undermining the role played by such literature, I argue here that the category of religion in the questionnaire prepared the initial ground for the ways in which the Bengali Muslim community defined themselves.

As mentioned earlier, for the British caste and religion were central to the understanding of Indian society. Religion and caste played a central role in colonial imagination because it provided fertile grounds for production of colonial knowledge based on objective science. The privileging of religion in the census questionnaires consciously underplayed other social differences and similarities that existed between the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. Most importantly was the fact that the non-*ashrafs* were organized into separate endogamous societies that 'paralleled the organization of Hindu society.'[125] Apart from this the majority of Bengali Muslims belonged to the Sunni sect, with a minor population of Shias mostly found in cities and erstwhile seats of Muslim power.[126] In the sample return of Tribeni, it is interesting to note that both language and sect were not used as enumerative categories. It is my consideration that the use of these as enumerative categories would not have reinforced religion as the site of identity for the Bengali Muslim community. Since both the Hindus and the Muslim masses spoke Bengali, it would have been difficult for the British to project the communities as different from each other.

The 1872 census of Bengal had originally intended to collect data on the basis of sects, but Beverly mentioned, "The column was on further consideration omitted" because "the scanty particulars that have been recorded on this head in some of the returns are only calculated to mislead."[127] He gives the example of only 92 persons returning themselves as Brahmos a monotheist Hindu sect which opposed ritual practices), though the number was thought to be far more by him. The same paragraph also mentions Sunnis and Shias but does not provide information on their numbers. The colonial administrators presumed it to be 'misleading' for it did not have the potential to create the essential zing of difference between Hindus and Muslims, which was a central concern of Orientalist discourse.[128]In the context of colonialism, census was an attempt to get "precise information regarding the numbers of people," because without it the British "felt a serious inconvenience in the administration of Bengal."[129]

In West Bengal, there are several groups of people belonging to various races, religions, languages, and cultures and they ruled Bengal for several hundred years. Muslim rule influenced profoundly socio-religious structure of the Bengali people. The British came to Bengal in 1690 for trade, but gradually their increased influence resulted in conflicts with *Nawab* in Bengal and with diplomatic efforts and series of conspiracies captured power in Bengal. In 1905 the British for the first-time partitioned Bengal on the basis of religion into West Bengal and East Bengal. Again, in 1947 at the time of independence, the province had been divided into two halves between India and Pakistan on the basis of the same religious considerations. The Hindu-majority West Bengal became a part of Indian union and Muslim-majority East Bengal became a part Pakistan named as East Pakistan which later emerged as an independent country as Bangladesh in 1971.

TABLE-1.4

Trends of Muslim Population in West Bengal (in percentage):

1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
19.85%	20.00%	20.46%	21.52%	23.61%	25.25%	26.86%

Source: Census of India.

In West Bengal Hindus are the majority with 72.47 per cent (58 million), while Muslims constitute as the largest minority community with 25.25 per cent (20 million). The Muslims in West Bengal reside across the state and yet their concentration varies substantially. These two communities (Hindus and Muslims) share more than 97 per cent to the total population. The above table shows the trends of Muslims population (1951-2041) in West Bengal. In 1951 Muslim population accounted for 19.85 percent. The dominating position of the share of Hindu population continued, but then the share declined from 78.45 per cent in 1951 to 72.47 per cent in 2001 (Census of India, 2001). Although, all religious communities have increased but among them Muslims have more positive growth in terms of percentage shares to the total population. Overall, it has been observed that Muslims have been experiencing higher population growth rates than the Hindus and this is sometimes made into a political issue. Demographers have observed that the higher growth rate among Muslims is mainly due to their higher fertility rate, to some extent be associated with their low socio-economic[130] and educational status. They have further tried to explain this in terms of the time lag and delayed changes in proximate variables between different religious groups in undergoing demographic transition.[131]

Distribution of Muslim Population:

Muslims occupy an important position in society and culture of the state of West Bengal. Muslims are in minority both numerically as well as in terms of their position in

greater socio-economic and political structure in Bengal as well as of the country also. Muslims in India constitute one of the most backward sections of the society, along with the neo-Buddhists, and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes etc, in terms of both educational spread and the quality of performance. They are characterized by socially backward, economically poor and politically powerless indicators[132]. According to 2001 census, West Bengal occupies third position among various states and union territories of the country in terms of percentage of Muslim population (i.e., 25 per cent) after Jammu and Kashmir (67 per cent) and Assam (30 per cent). The Muslim population in West Bengal was 201240543 which formed 25.25 percent of the total state population and 14.64 percent of the country's total (138188240) Muslim Population. 83.22 percent (16845034) Muslim population lives in rural areas and 16.78 percent (3395509) in urban areas. Geographically Muslims are unevenly distributed throughout the state. There are ten districts of the state in which Muslims have a million plus population.

The highest share of Muslim population with 63.67 percent (i.e., 3735380) is found in the district of Murshidabad while the district of Darjeeling has lowest share with 5 percent (i.e.,85378) of total population. Three clusters of districts are made according to the concentration of Muslim population with the help of their mean and standard deviation which is shown in the Table-2. It may be considered that the districts where the concentration is more than 32.91 percent may call as "*Muslim concentrated district*". Further, the districts where the Muslim population is less than 16.95 of the total population may be called as *'low Muslim concentrated districts*". It is evident from the table that out of the 18 districts of the state, 5 districts show relatively higher concentration of Muslim population. They are Murshidabad (63.67), Malda (49.72), Uttar Dinajpur (47.36), Birbhum (35.08) and S 24 Parganas (33.24), forming a continuous region of high concentration of Muslim population in the middle parts of the state. During the Muslim ruling period in Bengal, Illiyas Shah"s

Kingdom at Gour and Sultan Nasiruddin and Hasan Shah‟s at Gour and Pandua of presently Malda district, and Nawab Shirajud Daula‟s Kingdom in presently Murshidabad district, are main reason for higher concentration of Muslims in central part of West Bengal (i.e., districts of Malda, Murshidabad, Uttar Dinajpur and Birbhum). Demographic concentration of Muslims in this region may be significant for their socio-economic and educational development as well as for political action if sincere efforts are made.

TABLE-1.5

Concentration of Muslim Population, West Bengal 2001, Region Wise.

Region	Concentration	Districts
High	More than 32.91	Murshidabad (63.67), Malda (49.72), Uttar Dinajpur (47.36), Birbhum (35.08), S 24 Parganas (33.24)
Medium	16.95-32.91	Nadia (25.41), Howrah (24.44), Koch Bihar (24.24), N 24 Parganas (24.22), Dakshin Dinajpur (24.02), Kolkata (20.27) Bardhhaman (19.78)
Low	Less than 16.95	Hugli (15.14) Medinipur (11.33), Jalpaiguri (10.85), Bankura (7.51), Purulia (7.12) and Darjeeling (5.31).

Source: Census of India, 2001, West Bengal.

Muslim population ranging from 16.95-32.91 percent of the total population is considered as the *‘medium slab of Muslim concentration’* which include the districts of Nadia (25.41), Howrah (24.44), Koch Bihar (24.24), N 24 Parganas (24.22), Dakshin Dinajpur (24.02), Kolkata (20.27) and Bardhhaman (19.78). Remaining six districts fall under “low concentrations of Muslims‟, these districts form two notable regions in the state, Jalpaiguri

(10.85) and Darjeeling (5.31) in the northern parts and Hugli (15.14) Medinipur (11.33), Bankura (7.51) and Purulia (7.12) in the south-western part of the state.

Literacy Rate of Muslims:

The literacy rate in West Bengal is not so bad and it is higher than the national average. The literacy rate in West Bengal is 68.64 per cent against the national average of 64.85per cent. Rural literacy rate in West Bengal is 63.42 per cent and in Urban part of the West Bengal literacy rate is 81.25 percent. There is also inter-religious inequality in literacy level.[133]Hence, it would be apt to examine where the different minority groups stand in terms of literacy[134]. Educational backwardness is a key factor responsible for the social, cultural, economic, and political backwardness of the Muslim community in Bengal.

TABLE-1.6

Muslim Literacy Rate in Comparison to Other Religious Communities in West Bengal

Muslim Literacy Rate in Comparison to Other Religious Communities	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhist	Jains	Total
Male	81.12	64.61	77.20	91.37	83.09	96.46	77.02
Female	63.09	49.75	62.30	81.98	66.22	88.87	59.61
Total	72.44	57.47	69.72	87.19	74.73	92.81	68.64

Source: Census of India 2001, West Bengal**.**

Condition of the Muslims is worse than that of all other religious communities of the state; they recorded lowest literacy rate among the religious groups as only 57 of them are literate. Literacy level of Bengali Muslims are not only less than the state's and national

average literacy level but also national Muslim average literacy level, where only 64.61 per cent of males and 49.75 per cent of females are literate, or in vice-versa they are the most illiterate religious community in the state of West Bengal. The highest literacy level is found among Jain (92.81 per cent), while Sikh accounted for 87.73 per cent and Buddhist and Christian with 74.73 per cent and 69.72 percent of literacy level respectively, occupy third and fourth position among the six religious' groups of the state.

TABLE-1.7

District wise Literacy Rate of West Bengal 2001

District Name		**General**			**Muslim**		
District		**Person**	**Male**	**Femal**	**Person**	**Male**	**Female**
1	Darjeeling	**71.79**	80.05	62.94	**50.38**	60.86	37.92
2	Jalpaiguri	**62.85**	72.83	52.21	**55.34**	64.98	45.01
3	Koch Bihar	**66.30**	75.93	56.12	**56.07**	64.59	47.11
4	Uttar Dinajpur	**47.89**	58.48	36.51	**36.04**	45.98	25.50
5	DakshinDinajpur	**63.59**	72.43	54.28	**67.21**	72.81	61.33
6	Malda	**50.28**	58.80	41.25	**45.30**	51.56	38.68
7	Murshidabad	**54.35**	60.71	47.63	**48.63**	54.21	42.76
8	Birbhum	**61.48**	70.89	51.55	**59.86**	68.28	50.97
9	Barddhaman	**70.18**	78.63	60.95	**68.79**	75.54	61.39
10	Nadia	**66.14**	72.31	59.58	**49.41**	54.42	44.03
11	North 24Parganas	**78.07**	83.92	71.72	**65.05**	71.41	58.13
12	Hugli	**75.11**	82.59	67.21	**73.50**	79.43	67.31
13	Bankura	**63.44**	76.76	49.43	**59.91**	71.81	46.96
14	Puruliya	**55.57**	73.72	36.50	**53.44**	71.32	34.14

District Name		General			Muslim		
District		Person	Male	Femal	Person	Male	Female
15	Medinipur	**74.90**	84.91	64.42	**64.97**	75.05	54.36
16	Haora	**77.01**	83.22	70.11	**67.80**	74.13	60.78
17	Kolkata	**80.86**	83.79	77.30	**68.06**	71.25	63.61
18	South 24Parganas	**69.45**	79.19	59.01	**59.83**	68.84	50.27
West Bengal		**68.64**	**77.02**	**59.61**	**57.47**	**64.61**	**49.75**

Source: Literacy Rate of West Bengal, Census2001, West Bengal.

Female literacy is one of the important indicators of educational development for any society. The table shows that the Muslim female literacy level (49.75 per cent) is lower than the general female literacy (59.61per cent) by 9.86 percentage points. In case of state average also, Muslim female literacy rate is accounted for only 49.75 per cent which is much less than the Muslim male literacy rate (64.61). It is an interesting feature that the gap between general literacy rate of the district and Muslim literacy rate of the district varies significantly. It is clear from the table 4 that the gap between Muslim and general level of literacy is highest in Darjeeling (21.41), where the general literacy rate is 71.79 percent, wherein only 57.47 percent of Muslims are literate. From the same table it can be inferred that as far as major districts are concerned Muslims are most backward in Darjeeling followed by Nadia (16.73), North 24 Parganas (13.02), Uttar Dinajpur (11.85) and Koch Bihar (10.23). The state government needs to pay special attention towards the Muslim education of these districts in particular and in the state in general as per as the Muslim literacy level is concerned, there are 18 districts out of which four have their literacy rate at below 50 per cent. However, it is surprising to note that in the district of Dakshin Dinajpur, where Muslims have registered (67.21) 3.62 percentage points higher than the general literacy level (63.59). The highest

literacy levels among the Muslims have been 73.50 per cent in Hugli. There are two districts (Bardhhaman and Hugli) where the literacy rate of Muslims is slightly higher than the general literacy level. The low level of literacy in the Muslim community is caused by their poor socio-economic condition or their poor socio-economic condition may be the consequence of low level of literacy rate of that community. For the investigation associated with literacy rate and socio-economic character, community wise detailed study of both the aspects is crucial and is the base of diagnostic planning for human development.

Educational Backwardness of Muslims:

There is definite correlation between the socio-economic conditions of the overwhelmingly large number of Muslims and the state of their education, which is supposed to provide a key to people's development. But this is the darkest and most discouraging aspect of life of the Muslims in the state. Though Muslims constitute 25 per cent of the total population of the state, their representation in the educational field is far warranted by their population share. Muslims are the most backward section of the society, in terms of both the educational spread and the quality of performance. This fact has been recognized by the programme of action relating to the New Education Policy (1986) which has specified Muslims and neo-Buddhists as educationally backward minorities. It speaks of providing suitable incentives to all educationally backward sections of the society, particularly in the rural areas. More specifically, referring to the minorities, it recognizes that 'some minority groups are educationally deprived or backward. It resolves that 'greater attention will be paid to the education of these groups in the interest of equality and social justice. If Muslims continue to lag behind in educational and economic spheres, it will have the effect of pulling down the general growth rate.[135]

The relative backwardness of the Muslim community and particularly of Muslim women has been noted as a factor of comparatively high fertility rates observed among the

Muslim population[136]. The census of India collected information regarding the literacy rate with certain details of male-female and rural and urban bifurcation. The coefficient of equality for the total literacy rate is 83.73 comprising 87.66 and 81.54 for rural and urban areas and 83.88 and 83.46 for male and female respectively.

TABLE-1.8

Muslim Educational Backwardness in West Bengal, 2001 (Region Wise)

Muslim Educational Backwardness in West Bengal, 2001 Region	Backwardness	Districts
High	More than 16.22	N. 24 Parganas (83.32), Uttar Dinajpur (75.26), Nadia (74.72) and Darjeeling (70.18)
Medium	7.08-16.22	Malda (90.09), Murshidabad (89.48), Jalpaiguri (88.04), Howrah (88.04), Medinipur (86.75), S. 24Parganas (86.15), Koch Bihar (84.58) and Kolkata (84.17)

Source: West Bengal Government (2004): West Bengal Human Development, Report p.03.

The clustering of the districts shows that there is comparatively high level of backwardness prevailing in the four districts namely N.24 Parganas (83.32), Uttar Dinajpur (75.26), Nadia (74.72) and Darjeeling (70.18). The backwardness is comparatively less in the district of Dakshin Dinajpur (105.69), Bardhhaman (98.02), Hugli (97.86), Birbhum (97.35), Puruliya (96.17), Bankura (94.44). A closer look of this scenario says that the high backwardness does not follow any pattern of the concentration of Muslim population.[137]

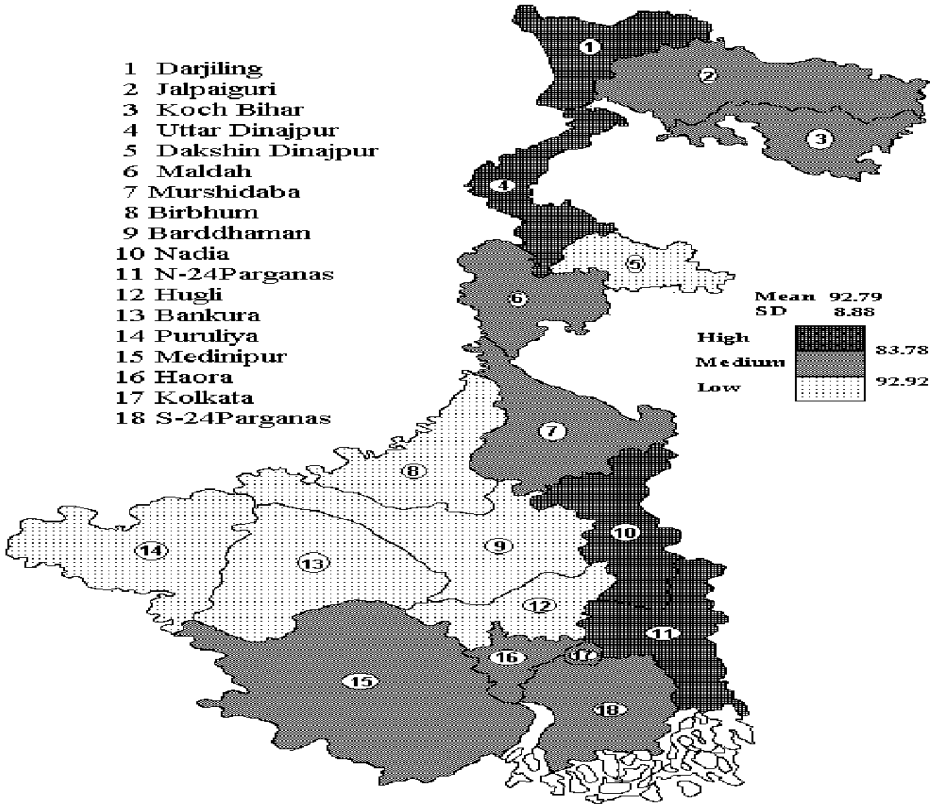


Figure: Pattern of Muslim Educational Backwardness in West Bengal.

Muslims form the largest minority in West Bengal, although they constitute 25 per cent of the population of the state, their concentration in six districts (where they form more than 25 percent of population of the district) are of paramount significance. It is found that the growth of Muslim minority is slightly higher than that of the general population. It generally shows that the lesser percentage of Muslims in a district, higher is their literacy level. Whereas, the district in which the Muslim concentration is low they also recorded lower than the general literacy of the state except Darjeeling. So, the concentration of Muslims in one place prevents them from education, the government discriminates those areas where the Muslims are concentrated more. It may apparently be perceived that Muslim community is the problem for achieving socio-economic development of a region or an area. But from the above analysis it may be inferred that Muslims are the most backward section of society, standing at bottom position in the educational field when compared to the general

population of West Bengal. No doubt, Muslims are not the main problem; rather mass illiteracy prevailing among them is the root cause of socio-cultural and economic development of the state in general and Muslims in particular. Immediate conclusion drawn is that the community needs development and progress which should be about 1.47 times of what exists now, to be at par with the general population of the state of West Bengal. Raising the level of literacy is the only solution to bring social consciousness among them. No doubt, socio-economic development of Muslim community might diminish the existing human group disparities. Thus, Muslim dominated regions are bound to remain in low level of development may be due to the irrational allocation resource for and negligence of planners and policy makers towards these regions. Therefore, it is explicit that no region is lagging behind solely because of Muslim habitation as well as deprived but it is implicit in the socio-economically backwardness of the region to which they belong.

Notes & References:

[1]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, 'Bangalar Samajik O Sangskritik Itihas'- Vol-1,(Bengali Translation of *Social and Cultural History of Bengal* By Dr. M. A., Rahim.) Bangla Academy Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1995, p.25.

[2]A. H. Dani, *Early Muslim Contact with Bengal*, proceeding of the Pakistan Historical conference Pakistan, 1951, p. 195.

[3]Ibid. p. 135.

[4]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, *op. cit*., p.135.

[5]M. H. Nainar, *Arab Geographer's Knowledge of Southern India*, other Books, Calicut, 1st published 1942, Reprinted 2011, p.89.

[6]Ibid.p. 89.

[7]Ibid.p. 89.

[8]A. H. Dani, *op. cit.,* p. 15.

[9]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, *op. cit.,* P.29.

[10]Ibid.p. 28.

[11]Ibid.p. 29.

[12]Ibid.p. 31.

[13]Ibid.pp. 29-31.

[14]Minajuddin, Siraj, *Tabkat-E-Nasiri* Translated by Raverty, Biblio verlag publisher, Reprinted 1991, p. 557.

[15]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, *op. cit.,* p. 32.

[16]Ibid. p.33.

[17]Ibid. p.33.

[18]Ibid. p.33.

[19]Minajuddin, Siraj,*op. cit*., p. 579.

[20]Ibid.p.575.

[21]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, *op. cit*., p. 33.

[22]Ibid.p.35.

[23]Minajuddin, Siraj, *op. cit*., p.57.

[24]Ibid. p.92.

[25]Khwajah, Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaka-E-Akbari,* 1st volume, Translated by Brajendranath De, Low price Publications, Unbridged, 1990, p. 208.

[26]Stewart, *History of Bengal*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1st Published 1913 and Reprinted, 2013, p. 152.

[27]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, *op. cit*., pp. 31-37.

[28]According to census in 1901, vol-1, 1st chapter, pp. 66-69.

[29]Mohammad Saduzzaman, *op. cit*.

[30]H. H. Risley *Tribes and Castes in Bengal*, 1892, p. 91.

[31]Ibid. p.94.

[32]Census of India, 1891, 2nd vol, p. 262.

[33]Mohammad Saduzzaman, *op. cit*., p. 33.

[34]Census of India 1901, vol-1, pp. 44-49 & 383.

[35]Ibid. pp.556-567.

[36]F. Rubbie, 'Origin of the Musalman of Bengal', *Hakikat-i-Musalmani Bangla(translate),* Kolkata, 1895, p. 120.

[37]District Gazetteer, Rangpur, 1911, p. 44.

[38]Ibid. p.41.

[39]Mohammad Saduzzaman, *op.cit.*

[40]Ibid. p.44.

[41]Ibid. p.44.

[42]Ibid. p.45.

[43]Durgadas, Sannyal, *Banglar Samajik Itihas*, (in Bengali), Banga Sahitta Parichoy, Kolkata,1906, p.58.

[44]A. Karim, *Prachin Puthir Biboron*, (in Bengali), Bangiyo Sahitta patrika, Kolkata, 1909, p. 159.

[45]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, *op. cit*., p. 46.

[46]T.C. Dasgupta, *Aspect of Bengali Society,* Kolkata, 1935, p. 86.

[47]Minajuddin, Siraj, *op.cit*., p. 574.

[48]R. C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal vol-1*, Dhaka University, 1943, pp. 128-129.

[49]Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Translated by Wheeler M. Thackston, Harvard University Press, New York, reprinted 2015, vol-3, pp.181-182.

[50]Ibid.pp.432-433.

[51]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, *op. cit*., p. 47.

[52]Ibid. p.48.

[53]Census of Bengal 1872, p.132.

[54]District Gazetteers, Rangpur, 1911, p. 44.

[55]Niharranjan, Ray, *Bangalir Itihas*, (in Bengali), Kolkata, p. 524.

[56]Ibid. p.525.

[57]Mohammad, Saduzzaman, *op. cit*., p. 50.

[58]Ibid. pp. 100-107.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Rajat, Kanta Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal: 1875-1927*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984, pp. 235-246.

[67]Gilmartin, David, 'Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 57, no. 4, 1998, pp.1079.

[68]Ibid.p.1080.

[69]Richard, Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier: 1204-1760*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. 113.

[70]Rafiuddin, Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity,* Oxford University Press, New York: 1981, p. 131; Sufia M Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language Imam Islamic Nation,* The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2006, p. 125.

[71]Sufia, Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal: 1884-1912*, Oxford University Press, Dacca: 1974, p.116. Chakraborty, Ashok, *Bengali Muslim Literati and the Development of Muslim Community in Bengal,* Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, 2002, p. 97.

[72]Partha, Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p. 105: Ghosh, Anindita, *Power in Print: Popular Publishing and the Politics of Language and Culture in a Colonial Society,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2006, p. 120.

[73]Rafiuddin, Ahmed, *op. cit*., pp.2-104.

[74]Sumit, Sarkar, *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Relocating Postmodernism, Hindutva, History,* Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002, p. 97.

[75]P. K. Datta, *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth-century Bengal,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p. 95.

[76]Ibid.p.76.

[77]Mahammad, Shah, 'Political Evolution of the Muslims of Bengal under the British Administration',*Quarterly Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2000, pp. 9-28.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Ibid.

[83]Joya, Chatterji, 'The Bengali Muslim: A Contradiction in Terms? An Overview of the Debate on Bengali Muslim Identity', Mushirul Hasan, (ed)., *Islam, Communities and the Nation: Muslim Identities in South-Asia and Beyond,*Manohar, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 265-282.

[84]Joya, Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp.127-130.

[85]Fazlul, Huq, and Aiyar, Sana, 'Region and Religion in Bengal: The Forgotten Alternative of 1940-43,' *Modern Asian Studies,* no. 42, vol. 6, 2008, p.1214.

[86]Ibid. p.1215.

[87]Ibid. p.1231.

[88]Ibid. p.1239.

[89]Ibid.pp. 1213-1215 and 1245-1246.

[90]Edward, Said, *Orientalism,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1978, p. 72.

[91]Carol A Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, 'Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament,' in Carol A Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, ed. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia,* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993, p. 9.

[92]M. R. Tarafdar, *Husain Shahi Bengal,* University of Dhaka: Dhaka 1965, reprint, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, 1999, p. 14.

[93]Ibid.p.19.

[94]Richard, Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier: 1204-1760,* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. 280.

[95]Ibid. p.178.

[96]Ashim, Roy, *TheIslamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1983, p. 4.

[97]Ibid. pp. 6-7.

[98]Ibid. p.215.

[99]Rafiuddin, Ahmed,*op. cit*., p. 6.

[100]Ibid. p.38.

[101]Bernard, Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 248.

[102]R. B. Bhagat, 'Census and the Construction of Communalism in India', *Economic & Political Weekly* vol.-36, No. 46/47, Nov. 24-30, 2001, pp. 43520.

[103]H. Beverly, *Report on the Census of Bengal, 1872,* Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1872, p.129.

[104]Bernard, Cohn, *op. cit*., pp.235-239.

[105]Nichola, Dirks, *Castes of Minds: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India,* Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2001, p. 13.

[106]James, Stuart Mill, *History of British India*, Ludden, 'Orientalist Empiricism', 1820. p. 264.

[107]Nichola, Dirks, *op. cit*., p. 5.

[108]Bernard, Cohn, *op. cit*., pp. 230-236.

[109]Ibid. p.230.

[110]H. Beverly, *op. cit*., P. 135.

[111]Ibid. p.130.

[112]Ibid. p.132.

[113]Richard, Eaton, *op. cit*., p.282.

[114]E. A. Gait, *Bengal Census Report, 1901*, p.165.

[115]Ibid.

[116]Ibid. p. 166.

[117]Ibid.p.167.

[118]H. Beverly, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-140.

[119]E. A. Gait, *op. cit*., p. 288.

[120]*L.O.* Malley, *Census of Bengal,* 1911, p. 446.

[121]Ibid. p. 74.

[122]H. Beverly, *op. cit.*, Appendix A, p. v.

[123]Ibid.

[124]Rafiuddin, Ahmed, *op. cit*., p. 111.

[125]Richard, Eaton, *op. cit.*, pp.101-137.

[126]W. W. Hunter, *Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen*,Premier Book House, Lahore, 1871, Reprinted from the, 1970, pp.70-85.

[127]H. Beverly, *op. cit*., p.136.

[128]Pete, van der Veer, *op. cit*.,p.23.

[129]H. Beverly, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[130]Ibid.p. 137.

[131]*Census of India (2001)*: Final population Totals, West Bengal. 2001.

[132]N. Hussain, and F.A. Siddiqui, 'Literacy and Socio-economic Marginalization of Muslim Population of Malda District, West Bengal (India)', *Arab World Geographer*, Vol.12, No.1-2, 2009, pp.62-75.

[133]A. Waheed, *Muslims of Uttar Pradesh, Centre for Promotion of Educational and Central Advancement of Muslims,* Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh Muslim University Press, Aligarh, 2007, p.45.

[134]M. A. Jawaid, 'Minorities of India- Problems and Prospects', *Indian Council of Social Science Research in Association with Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd*, New Delhi, 2007, p.33-36.

[135]West Bengal Government, *West Bengal Human Development, Report*, Kolkata, 2004, p.3.

[136]M. B. Mistry, 'Muslims in India: A Demographic and Socio-economic Profile,' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol. 25, No. 3*, December 2005, pp.399-422.

[137]S.M.I.A. Zaidi, 'Status of Muslims Education in India: An Analysis of 2001 Census Literacy Data', in Abdul Waheed (Ed.),*Muslims of Uttar Pradesh, Centre for Promotion of Educational and Central Advancement of Muslims,* Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh Muslim University Press, Aligarh, 2007, pp.56-62.

CHAPTER - II

NASHYA SHEIKH COMMUNITY OF NORTH BENGAL IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

CHAPTER - II

NASHYA SHEIKH COMMUNITY OF NORTH BENGAL IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Standing in front of the map of unbroken Bengal, one can see the river Teesta on his forehead. The face of that Bengali mother's *'Jhapta Sinthi'* is North Bengali. Adjacent to the Himalayas, it is located between 24 to 27 north latitude and 88 to 90 longitudes. In the distant past, this region was also known as *'Pundra'* and *'Barindra'*. *Mahasthangarh*, Brahmalipi of the 2nd century BC mentions '*Pundakal'* or *Pundnagar.* Later it came under the jurisdiction of the Gupta State. The undivided Rajshahi division of 1872 had an area of 17694 square miles. After the partition of 1947, the area became North Bengal with 21625 sq km out of 87853 sq km, a quarter of the part of West Bengal. The area of the northern part of the other side (now Bangladesh) is a quarter of that country i.e., 36369 sq. km out of 147570 sq km. We can imagine a united North Bengal with 5 districts on the other side of the country after the partition of the country. Here Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Bihar, West Dinajpur (later became 2 separate districts) and Malda. On the other side are Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna, Dinajpur and Rangpur.[1]

There are six districts in North Bengal namely Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. Its geographical location is Ganges in south to Himalaya in north and Bihar in West to Assam in east. The residential Muslim population is one of the most important indigenous people of this region. They are 25 percent of the total population in North Bengal in census 2001. In this context the Muslims are the

most important minority religious group in this region. They have been living in this region, even before their conversion to Islam. In large area of North Bengal, a large portion of indigenous Hindu population converted in Muslim in 15th to 18th century. So naturally they are very close to the indigenous Hindu population. Without the difference of religious faith there are various similarities in occupations, culture and tradition between the Muslims and Hindu population of North Bengal.[2]

Reference is made to the present North Bengal, as the eight northern districts of West Bengal. Ganges is the division of South Bengal and North Bengal. Past North Bengal has three districts in present day Bangladesh of Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Rangpur. However, the subject matter of this chapter is the Nashya Sheikh Muslim community in fragmented of Historical perspective of North Bengal. Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Malda and newly formed two districts Kalimpong, Alipurduar are the residents of these eight districts. Muslims make up a quarter of the Mate's population, or about four million. Their outward identity is that Islam is a minority community, but they are divided into a few notable communities. They have the opinion of the other ten people, individual ethnographic, historical and social context. It is in this overall being that they are basically known and flowing in the flow of time. The Growth of Islam in North Bengal in the early thirteenth century. Accordingly, the history of the Muslim population is the last seven or eight hundred years. But the pre-history of the people who converted to Islam at that time can be traced back to Pre-Vedic times. From time immemorial, the descendants of the people who survived pre-astrological, *Pundravardhan*a urban civilization, and fought many natural disasters and wildlife in the revering geographical terrain, were once the Semitic Arabs of Islam. While sitting, entered a new spirituality and social life by finding peace and in the secret faith of the mind. But their history was not lost in it, the inhabited land was not extinct, it was not erased. Physical structure likeness, language, profession and culture have

not changed. Their position and existence in the Museum of Anthropology is still important today. On the way, they have been accompanied by the neighbouring people, the foreigners, and the various Muslim nations of the foreign kingdom. Today, they seem to be one in harmony, but the language, the culture that has not been erased, does not have to end, the storm survives and somehow, they can be recognized. When touched by a skilled and artistic researcher, the picture of these familiar people can be very clear, their walk, society and life can be seen in the paintbrush.

Prag-Jyotishpur in North Bengal is a mythical name. No detailed history is available. However, '*Pundravardhana* is the symbol of the ancient urban civilization and towns of North Bengal. The area adjoining *Pandua* in the present Malda district is the ancient city of *Pundravardhana*. Grip is believed to have existed from 1500 to 320 B.C. There are no traces of urban civilization among the Austronesians and Mongolians among the three major ancient human ghettos in North Bengal. But the Dravidians, according to the Indus region, also developed urban civilization here. These Dravidians were the ones who challenged the external Aryan Civilization. These were identified by the Aryans as the main enemies and referred to in their texts as the '*Durshujati*''or bandit nation'.[3] They called the other two humanistic octopuses and Mongoloids '*Nishad'* and '*Kirat'* respectively.[4] Again, their language is incomprehensible. Aitareya Aranya has been called '*Pakshikalpa*' as it sounds like the sound of a bird. However, in the eyes of the powerful Aryans of the higher religions, cultures and languages, the ancient inhabitants of North Bengal were reprehensible and inferior. Therefore, the inhabitants of this region have crossed the historical centuries with mythological, classical and historical condemnation and neglect. Today, no matter what name they are known as Rajbangsi, Muslim, Baro, Santal, Nepali, Polia, the tradition of contempt and neglect seems to be going on equally. The Muslim communities of present-day North Bengal are mainly descendants of the ancient Austro-Dravidian-Mongolian people. The main

peoples' intoxication bears the identity of the Nashya Sheikh Mongoloid human race. Dravidian influence can be seen in Shershahbadia, Khotta, Momin etc. And the Austronesian influence is evident in a few small Muslim communities. Ansari, Hajjam, Khotta, Beldar etc. people from Bihar have taken their place next to them. The hill Muslims of Darjeeling could not leave the hill and go elsewhere. The mountains are their ghost-future, the refuge of their livelihood. The Bhatia Muslims of Sylhet, Mymensingh and Pabna in East Bengal seemed to be trapped in a delusion at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Kaljani river valley land of Cooch Bihar. While dreaming, they settled in Barai Bari of Cooch Bihar district and Mainaguri village of Jalpaiguri district. They make a living by selling snakes, amulets and stealing. At one time Islam became enchanted with the mantra. Today, their identity is Muslim.

Those who practice history are helpless in the face of a mysterious maze, the Arab general Mohammed bin Qasim conquered the Indus in the second decade of the eighth century and Bakhtiyar Khalji came to Bengal in the first decade of the thirteenth century. Sometimes there is a gap of 500 years, but Bengal has the highest proportion of Muslims in the country as a proportion of the population.[5] Why this abnormal swelling? Various kinds of interpretations are there, some talking about the influence of Sufi saints, some talking about the greed for high position in the royal court, some talking about converting to Hinduism due to the oppression of the upper caste, some talking about the theory of coercion. But none of them could be established on the basis of information. However, in terms of the history of the English, the practice of history in the 'Middle Ages' has been very extensive. Historians like Ramesh Chandra Majumdar say, “One of Bakhtiyar Khilji's national servants became the emperor of Gaur.[6] It is not surprising that all these instances encouraged the conversion of lower-class Hindus to Islam.” However, it is difficult to accept that one person converted to Islam in droves, inspired by the example of receiving. Recently, Nazrul Islam, a writer and

essayist, in his book *'Hindu-Muslim Relations'* opined that' as a result of propagating these devout Sufis for hundreds of years, people converted to Islam in groups.[7] Surjit Dasgupta sought to present a materialist explanation by refuting the views expressed in his books *'Bharatvarsha' and 'Islam*'. We know that under the pressure of multidimensional events, history turns its face, and with it comes culture, geographical location, public life, socio-economic conditions, and so on. If you want to know the nature of an event, you have to look at everything. During the Maurya rule in India, Buddhism also spread in Bengal. During the Gupta reign of the fourth and five Centuries, Brahmanism was favoured by the Raj, but there was no impediment to the practice of Buddhism.[8] But in the reign of Shashanka in the seventh century after the fall of the Gupta Empire, this religious generosity was not maintained. According to Dinesh Chandra Sen, Shashanka had issued an order to kill Buddhists as soon as they saw them. He wrote, "The way in which the Hindus defeated Buddhism and destroyed Buddhist history is shameful." Harprasad Shastri, said with the information of that Janapada (East Bengal) where more than one crore Buddhists and 11500 monks lived, not a single Buddhist scripture was found after thirty years of effort." Buddhist monks were forced into the lowest strata of society. Even then, hopefully, the Buddhist Palas ruled Bengal from eight centuries to four hundred years. On the occasion of the decline of the Pala kingdom in the twelfth century, the Sena dynasty of southern India first spread to West and East Bengal, then to North Bengal.[9] However, it is important to remember that at that time the whole of Bengal was not identified as an integral political territory. That episode of Bengali identity is quite shaky. Bakhtiyar Khalji captured Nadia in 1204 AD and Muslim rule began in Bengal.[10] According to Sukhmoy Mukherjee, a large number of Muslims entered Bengal from that time. M.A. Rahim, thinks that "a large number of Iranian businessmen, saints, preachers, teachers and fortune tellers came and settled in Bengal after the conquest of Bengal by the Muslims.[11] The description of Bakhtiyar's expedition to the north is found in

Minhaj-i-Siraj's Tabakat-i-Nasiri: "After a few years, he got the news of the areas around Lakhnauti and began to aspire to occupy Tibet and Turkestan. For this purpose, he formed an army of about ten thousand cavalries. There are three races of people living in the mountains between Tibet and Lakhnauti. One is called Koch, the second is called Mech and the third is called Tharu. They all look like Turks, but they speak different languages – a lot between

Hindustan and Tibetan. Ali Mech, one of the chiefs of the Koch and Mech tribes, was converted to Islam by Muhammad Bakhtiyar; this man agreed to drive him through the mountains." The subsequent history is of the tragic consequences and destruction of Bakhtiyar's desire for conquest. On the way back from Kamarupa, a river bridge was destroyed and most of his soldiers drowned while crossing the river. Bakhtiyar along with a few soldiers somehow managed to cross the river. Relatives of Ali Mech served the devastated Bakhtiyar. And fell ill and died. The modern name of the town of Bardhankot which Bakhtiyar reached after leaving Lakshnavati is Bardhankuti. The place is on the border of Bogra district in Rangpur district. Many have said that the spread of the Muslim religion began as a result of Bakhtiyar's campaign. North Bengal is an important region of Bakhtiyar's expedition. However, even before his arrival, Bengal had contacts with the Muslims, they also had settlements, the ancient coins of the Abbasid Caliphs were found in Paharpur of North Bengal, the coins of 788 AD In 1204, Bakhtiyar Khalji conquered *Nodirah*

[12] During his short reign he also established some Mosques, Madrasas and Khanqahs. In the context of Khanqah, Sukhmoy Mukherjee, M.A. Rahim thinks that if the saints were not in this country before Bakhtiyar, then why the need for the abode of the saints? Among the early Sufi saints in Bengal are Kazi Rukmuddin Samarkandi, Maulana Tafi-ud-Din Ardhi, Sheikh Sharfuddin Abu Tawasah, Baba Adam Shahid, etc., who initially played a role in the spread of Muslim religion in Bengal.[13]

Muslim arrivals and settlements have continued in North Bengal since the thirteenth century. People of different races and castes have come to Bengal from Turkey, Arabia, Iran, Khorasan, Afghanistan, Abyssinia, etc. and have assimilated into Bengal.[14] Combining Indigenous Peoples with External Muslim Populations, the issue of Muslim population has been debated since British rule. The wall of the Murshidabad estate, Khandaker Fazle Rajbi, in his book *Haqiqate Musliman-i-Bangala*, mentions the successive reign of 76th Subedars, Raja Namiz, from Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji in the early thirteenth century to the next six and a half years of Muslim rule.[15] All of them except Raja Qays, Jalaluddin Shah Ahmad Shah, Raja Todarmal and Raja Man Singh were Afghans, Mughals, Turks, Persians or Arabs. Bakhtiyar was a writer from Turkey, the last Nawab Mir Jafar Ali Khan from Arabia. They were accompanied by many religious and patriotic soldiers, administrators, officials and employees. All the Muslims who came to this country have remained united. The Muslim rulers of Gaur Bengal also welcomed them, gave those jobs and donated free land. In Rajshahi, Bogra, Dinajpur and Malda in North Bengal, there are numerous examples of such 'Madad-i-Maash' or Ayma help.

H. Riverley in 1872 and Rizli of 1901 commented that the Muslims in the region had converted from lower caste Hindus, but many modern sociologists disagreed. Riverley, argued in favour of his view, citing deep similarities in body features. However, many believe that the Muslim population in this part of Bengal increased significantly during the period and the Hindu-Brahmanical domination was not likely to be as strong. A historian like J. N. Sarkar has given this opinion. Mark Polo mentioned a lot of idolatry in the region. There is disagreement as to whether these idolaters were '*Hindus'*. This worship was performed by the people of the oppressed nation. Harprasad Shastri, believed that religion came from Buddhists. It may be mentioned that the practice of *Tantra* and the worship of gods and goddesses according to the practice of *Mahayantantra* in this region can still be seen in

folklore. Tantra influence can be seen in ancient *Tuksya* songs. According to Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay, *Dharmapuja* is an unorthodox ritual, derived from the Austronesian National Indigenous Society. According to J. Sarkar, the worshipers were 'people of the oppressed society.' They became true Hindus or their Aryanization took place in the middle ages, that is, when Islam was spreading in other parts of Bengal. Hinduism was not so strong before the arrival of Muslims in Bengal. He argued that temples of the pre-Muslim period were rare in Bengal. The temple was built even after the middle ages. He emphatically writes in his book '*The Construction of the Hindu Identity is Medieval Western Bengal the Role of a Popular Castes'* that there is no evidence of the destruction of any temple when Muslims initially came here. Many have grown up in the unhistorical belief that "Bengal, like the rest of India, had a quiet golden age of prosperous Hinduism before the advent of Islam." In fact, North Bengal was the abode of *Paundra, Shabor, Koch, Mech, Rajbangshi,* who were religiously omniscient or Animist. Hinduism or Vedic rituals were rarely adopted in this region. Dr. Niharranjan Roy also thinks that at that time i.e., before the arrival of Muslims most of the Bengali society was outside the caste system. "There is no evidence that any temple was destroyed when the Muslims first came here," he wrote in "*Popular Cants*". Many people have grown up believing that Bengal, like the rest of India, had a peaceful golden age of prosperous Hinduism before the advent of Islam." In fact, North Bengal was the abode of Pound, Shabor, Koch, Mech, Rajbangshi, who were religiously Omniscient or Animist. Hinduism or Vedic rituals were rarely adopted in this region. Dr. Niharranjan Roy also thinks that at that time, i.e., before the advent of Muslims, most of the Bengali society was outside the caste system.[16]

One thing is clear, however, that even if a large number of 'newcomer Muslims' build permanent settlements in North Bengal, the number of this class can never surpass the mainstream population. The converted people of this country have played a major role in the

formation and development of the Muslim society. Many believe that most of these converts came from Buddhists. Many influences of Buddhist culture are present in the folklore of this region. Many identify the Shivling of the Jalpesh temple as a symbol of Vajrayana Buddhism. Khan Chowdhury Amanatullah Ahmed wrote in his *'History of Cooch Behar 'section of 'Islam Pracharak':* It can be said that the spread of Islam in West Kamrup started in the beginning of the 13th century AD and later many saints and monks came to this region. The spread of Buddhism and Tantra in this western Kamarupa was in the past.[17]

According to Dr. McFarlane, the characteristics of blood that are found in caste, caste and invisible Bengali Hindus also prove in Bengali Muslims that Bengali Hindus and Muslims are a problem nation. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton also thinks that the Muslims of North Bengal are converts. It is not right that the majority of ordinary Muslim Muslims in North Bengal have converted to Islam because of the coercion of the Muslim rulers, nor is it right that they have become Muslims in groups from within Hinduism. The Muslims of this region are not a stranger nation or community alone. In fact, the people of the present Hindu and Muslim communities in North Bengal originate from the same biological source. However, an exceptional case can be noticed in the case of the Muslims of the Himalayan-adjacent Bengal. The physical characteristics of the Muslims here are identical with those of the dynasties. In fact, it seems to be the main force of human culture that binds society together through the construction of a mixed culture. The common man gives a new dimension to his culture through this mixture. The folk life that is the foundation of the northern village society, the folk sports, the festivals, the sources, the free spheres of drama music, breaking the fence of religious ties, everyone is one.[18]

Hindus have equally participated in Cooch Bihar and adjoining areas with Muslim singing in the songs of the one-time era or the song of the four ages. *Indra, Alla, Mahadev or Fatissa* is mentioned in this physiological song. Similar customs of the two communities can

be observed in the folklore of marriage, as a result of which the harmony is noticeable in yellow on the body, red sari from *chaulon* lamp etc. The Muslim wedding song firmly establishes this harmony. This loneliness can be seen in other folk rituals as well. *Goraksanatha's* song is about the arrival of the saints:

Ottar Hote Ashilo Pir Mukhe Champabari

Dudh Mangite Gelam Nanda Gowaler Bari.

(Champabari in the face of Pir come from the North I went to Nanda Goyal's house to ask for milk.)

The similarity of *'Bipasa'* of the Muslim society with the *'Bishuya*' or type of food of the Hindus on the day of *Chaitra Sankranti* is noticeable. In Bengal, adjacent to the Himalayas, all the rituals of Hindus and Muslims seem to be in harmony. Even in the case of such unclean observance of the dead, there are various conformities in the observance of rituals. Both communities observe 'Annuals'. It is a common practice in the rural Hindu-Muslim society to make a vow to the Pir by offering earthen horses or by tying a stone to a large ash tree or making a vow to the *Kanipir.* Signs of origin and coexistence can be seen in many reforms like waterfall, amulet taking.[19]

The largest component in the population of the North Bengal region was composed of Muslims. Taking the district as a whole Muslims constituted a minority, just one fourth of the total population. This was in marked contrast to the religious community wise composition of population in most of the districts in North Bengal including neighbouring Rangpur and Dinajpur in which Muslims formed a large majority.[20] In Jalpaiguri district the Muslims were in majority only in Boda, Pachagar and Tetulia *thana* areas adjacent to the districts of Rangpur and Dinajpur and had large concentration in two more *thana* (police stations) areas-Debiganj and Patgram which were transferred to East Pakistan (modem Bangladesh) after independence and partition in 1947.[21]

The Muslims of North Bengal however, did not constitute a homogeneous community or group. They had two major segments (a) the local Muslims the bulk of whom was composed of converted *Rajbansis, Koches and Meches* and (b) the Muslims who had migrated mainly from the east Bengal districts.[22] It can be said beyond doubt that local Muslims were preponderant among the Muslim population in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, North Dinajpur, south Dinajpur and Malda districts and particularly in the rural areas. It is mention well-intentioned that the local Muslims are in all respect identical with the local *Rajbansi Hindus, Meches, Koches* etc. except in religious beliefs.

The early history of the local Muslims is obscure. It is said by J F. Grunning in the District Gazetteer, Jalpaiguri (1911) that sheiks and Nashyas forming more than 99 percent of the Muslim population were native to the district.[23] About the Nashya Sheiks, it is believed that these people embraced themselves into Islamism, perhaps attracted by the humane appeal and preaching made by the *Pirs, Darbeshes* etc. According to Harendra Narayan Choudhury the title "*Nasya"* is significant. It is generally believed to be the corrupted form of "*Nasta"* means fallen or degenerated'.

It is evident from history that Muslim rulers and their lieutenant governors along with military army troops invaded the kingdom of Kamrup or Kamptapur and Cooch Behar in many a time. In the course of their invasion, they must have taken water, food etc. from the inhabitants in their way. Not only that they had conducted loot & rubbery village after the village. These areas, after the departure of the troops, were declared by the upper caste Hindus as *'Nasta'* or corrupted, because they came in touch with the *'Mlecchas'* or untouchable Muslims. These people being ignored by the caste Hindu society gradually inclined to Islamism. Thus, the native autochthonous group people comprised themselves into Islamic fold. Thus, in course of time, these people gradually came in touch with the Sufis (who were aristocrat migrants), and inspired by these Sufis, they threw off their lower caste,

untouchable identity and got encouraged to take the title 'Sheik' as they are the disciples of the pir or sheik. Among the Muslims of the northern region of west Bengal particularly North Bengal the largest section of them is Nashya Sheikhs.[24] It is worth mentioning that though theoretically Muslim society does not believe in caste system, yet it has argued by scholars that even after conversion they could not throw away their previous socio-cultural practices and believing. Therefore, amongst the Muslims of the region also a tendency was there towards upward mobility.[25] The following poem which became an adage during that time proves the fact.

Aage chilam Tulia Ulla

Pare holam Uddin

Tabar pare Choudhury Saheb

Kapal firlo seidin'.[26]

(Free English translation: At first, I was *'tulla', 'ulla'* which were the surnames of the Muslims, then I got the surname as choudhury sahib and with this my social prestige has become upgraded.)

So, the bulk of the local Muslims were converted to Islamised autochthons like Rajbangsi's, Koch's, Paliya and Meches. However, a fair number of the Muslims in Jalpaiguri came originally from Dinajpur, Rangpur and Purnea districts and from the Cooch Behar state. The Baikunthapur Zamindars encouraged migration of Muslims from Dinajpur and nearby districts to facilitate extension of cultivation. Colonel Hedayat Ali of Patna, who took an important part in the Anglo-Bhutan war, also helped migration and settlement of some Bihari Muslims in the scantily populated Duars.[27] Some accounts also suggest that many of the Muslims of the district were most probably a mixed group with converts and immigrant Muslim soldiers and colonizers, who came in the wake of the Pathan and Mughal conquests, by living side by side and intermarrying with each other. It has also been viewed

by scholars that Islamization could notably progress because Hinduism was not deeply rooted among the autochthons of this part of North Bengal. In the Dooars region of Jalpaiguri a few Bihari Muslims are found who perhaps embraced Islamism during the period between 13th to 16th centuries.[28] With regard to the religious beliefs and practices it needs to be observed that the Islamized Rajbangsi's, Koches or Meches were not very strict in adhering to orthodox Islamic faith and tradition. Many of their observances had a folk form characterized by worship of Pirs and Mursheds and contained elements of nature worship and of non-orthodox Hinduism.[29]

Islam spread in many contexts of social evolution in North Bengal. In addition to this, Islamization is also associated with some political events. Although the Nashya Sheikhs live in all the districts of North Bengal, Darjeeling and Malda have very few. They live only in the plains of Darjeeling and in the Ghazal and Chanchal blocks of Malda. According to historians, the origin of these Nashya Sheikh Muslims is Rajbangsi, Koch, Mech and Polia. There is no difference except in religion. English writer and government employee J. F. Grunnings mention in the 1911 report- "The Sheikhs and the Nashyas, who composed the majority of the Muslims of the district (Jalpaiguri), were in the main, natives of the district and in their appearance, dress and customs differed very little from the Rajbangsi's".[30] In fact, Nashyas are the sons of the soil in the North Bengal. All the traces of the local Koch-Rajbangsi's people are present in them. Mr. Grunning also mentions - "They were very much the sons of the soil". However, to know the context of their conversion, let's take a look at the history. However, the location of the famous Pir Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi in the Gaur area is known even before this period. However, Minhajuddin's book refers to the inhabitants of marginal North Bengal as Koch, Mech and Khen. From this time onwards, Brahmin scholars from Mithila Kanauj and other places came to Kamatapur. Kamateshwar kings and subjects gradually converted to Brahmanical religion. This process was further accelerated in the next

Coach monarchy. Vaishnavism, Shaiva, Shakta religions are established. The Koch community, similar to the tribes, became known as Rajbangsi through the adoption of Brahmanical religion and Sanskrit language. Government documents support this, "The*Koches*and Rajbanshi's and the *Meches* were speakers of the Boro-Sub-family of the Tibeto-Barmas family of languages. With Their Hinduization they have gradually shown preference of the Bengali, The Bengali written prose was introduced in the Cooch Behar court after the *koches* had become Hinduism founded a kingdom and became Rajbanshi." [31]

However, the dynasties fell victim to the racism of Hinduism. Priests and socialist Brahmins neglected them as inferior. He also expressed reluctance to perform *puja-parvan* in their house. The Rajbangsi's used to elect priests from among themselves without seeing *Upayantar*. Social discontent began to develop among them. And it is against this background that one Muslim campaign after another took place in North Bengal. Turkish-Pathan-Mughal generals have touched the soil of North Bengal many times. Hussain Shah, Kalapahar, Mir Jumla are especially notable among them. During the long journey, this Muslim army drank water from many ponds, collected food from many houses, looted many houses. Soldiers would leave at one time, but people would become irreligious, fallen or ruined. During these times, foreign Sufi saints used to appear as ambassadors of liberation under their rule. He used to attract the irreligious fallen people with the sublime message of monotheism, equality and brotherhood of Islam. Gradually these *pir* saints converted to Islam or became Muslims with initiation or mantra. However, it cannot be said that there was no coercion anywhere in the army operation. But looking at the tombs of innumerable saints, *dhams* (astanas), *chillas*, the location of *khanqahs* and the devotion of the people to pir, it is conceivable that the spread of Islam in North Bengal was mainly due to Sufi propaganda. However, the people who were identified as 'fallen' or 'ruined' on that day are said to be Nahsya Sheikhs, according to official documents. There is a text recognized by the

government of Cooch Bihar state "By far the majority of the Mahamedans are the Sheikhs, or as the popularly called *Nashyas*. They are like the greater portion of the Mahamedans of India descended from the Hindu converts to the religion of Mahammad. The title '*Nashya'* is significant. It is generally believed to be corrupted from '*Nashta'* which means "fallen" or "degenerated", and thus appears to be the most probable nickname which the Hindu subjects of the Hindu principality would give their converted Co-religionists,".[32] Eminent politician, writer, Constituent Assembly member and lawyer Upendranath Barman has unequivocally said, "There is no doubt that the Rajbangsi are the main inhabitants of Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Dinajpur in North Bengal, the north-eastern part of Purnia district in Bihar and the western part of Goalpara district in Assam. The Muslims have mainly converted from among the Rajbangsi's".[33] W.W. Hunter Says almost same thing-"The larger person descendent of Mahamedans in Rajsashi as on other neibouring Districts (Districts of North Bengal), is to be attributed to the conversion to Islam of the numerous low castes which occupied it....the large number of Mahamedans found here is the present day who occupy the same social position as their Hindu niobous."[34] Eminent anthropologist Dr. Atul Sur, following the opinion of English researcher Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, mentions that the Muslims of North Bengal bear the physical traits of the Mongol Koch nation, the Bengali newcomers (Turkish-Mughal-Pathan). " That means they are strange to be a converted Koch (current Rajbangsi) nation.[35]

In fact, 95 per cent of the Muslims in Indian society are indigenous Muslims. But they were not freed from the dominant racist practices of Hinduism. The process of caste mobilization was also transmitted from Hinduism to Islam. In the, only the Shudras are divided into three categories *Sat Shudra, Asat Shudra and Antyaja Varna*. The description of *Brihatdboram Purana* is almost the same. The *Brahmavaivarta Purana*competition between these characters was who would be 'water-moving' and who would be 'water-immobile'. That is to say, the upper caste Brahmins would drink water in their hands, they would eat food in

their hands - in terms of which social status would rise and fall. The upper caste Brahmins were also accorded status in the categories of *Radi, Barindri, Purohit, Shvashan* etc.

From the time of Muslim rule there were two classes in the Muslim society of Bengal according to their social status. Such as *Asraf* and *Atraf*. To put it bluntly, "Muslim society was led by a handful of Turkish, Afghan, Iranian and Arabic Muslims from abroad. Others referred to it as *Atraf* or *Ajlaf,* meaning non-born. The *Ashraf* class consisted of Syed, Sheikh, Mughal, Pathan."[36] On the other hand, there were different sections even among non-Muslim Muslims. Of course, this section is based on profession. Converted Muslims did not usually change the profession they had before conversion and according to the name of the profession they were called as Gola, Jola, Hajam, Barber, Butcher, Tailor, Farmer etc. in the society.[37]

Those who send the title of Khan. The officer in charge of the army was called Khan. Many Muslims and Hindus in this country have received the title of Khan due to their service in the army. Again, many have artificially used the title Khan to express aristocracy without any clues. Whether or not the Shersabadis of Malda Murshidabad are with the ethnographic, linguistic, cultural and professional Yagsutra Pathans, many of them identify themselves as Pathan descent from a few sources of history. And with that the aristocratic accessible Khan or Khan, Mandal, Sarkar, Chowdhury, Sardar, Biswas etc. are used.

Dai, a Muslim community in South and Uttar Dinajpur, is a sub-branch of *Nashya-Sheikh*. The word *dai* is synonymous with mother or milk mother. Milk-Mother was introduced in Arabia. Those who have completed the condition are breastfed for a few days to raise children in tradition and history, North Bengal was handed over. Hazrat Mohammad (*PBUH)* himself was brought up with a stepmother named Halima. This custom is not known to have been prevalent in the Muslim society of Bengal. But it is known that the women of the midwifery community were once skilled at delivering pregnant women and neonates and took it as a profession. But the older Lakers of this society call themselves the descendants of

that Arab midwife Halima *Bibi.* The present generation, however, does not want to introduce *'Dai'*, even if someone says it is dissatisfied. The main occupation of the Zola Muslims was weaving. It is said that during the reign of Bakhtiyar Khalji, these weavers were the first to convert to Islam in groups and later became known as Muslim Jola. In Islamic terminology, those who have unwavering faith in Allah, those who are polite in their conduct are *Momin.* However, the loom weaving profession is on the verge of extinction among the local *Momins* of Malda district and the *Momins* of Uttar Dinajpur from Bihar, mostly small farmers and agricultural labourers, but they are satisfied with the identity of the *Momins.*

The Muslim society of Bengal, as with varying degrees of importance in other parts of India, was composed of both immigrants and indigenous converts. The question of local conversion presents a historical complexity that has given scope for some intellectual wrangling. The controversy centres round whether or not the bulk of the Muslim people in Bengal are autochthons, and if so, what social and economic strata they were mostly derived from. When the British administrators first came in contact with the people of Bengal, they arrived at the conclusion that the Muslims constituted an insignificant number in the population. Their estimates, formed on very insufficient grounds, were generally assumed to be approximately correct.[38]Adam in his Education Report notes about the district of Rajshahi: Before visiting Rajshahi, we had been led to suppose that it was a peculiarly Hindu district.[39] Hamilton on official authority [the estimates of 1801] states the proportion to be that of two Hindus to one Musalman; and in a work published by the Calcutta School Book Society for the use of schools (1827), the proportion is said to be that of ten Hindus to six Musalmans. Adam's own investigations led him to reverse this to seven to three, or the proportion of 1,000 Musalmans to 450 Hindus. The first census of Bengal found 1,000 Muslims to 288 Hindus.[40] In 1830 the first census of the city of Dacca was taken by H. Watters, who estimated the native population at 66,667, of whom 35,238 were Muslims and 31,429

Hindus.[41] In 1839 Taylor observed that the population of the district of Dacca consisted of Hindus and Muslims in nearly equal proportions. Even as late as 1860, the Revenue Survey arrived at the conclusion that the population of the Dacca district consisted of 455,182 Hindus and 449,223 Muslims. These estimates indicate the. General conviction of earlier administrators until the first census of the whole of Bengal in 1872 revealed that, in Lower Bengal alone, there were 17,608,730 Muslims, of whom 7,948,152 or 45 per cent resided in the nine eastern districts, while the total number of Hindus in the same province was 18,100,438. Throughout the central and eastern districts, with the exception of 24-Parganas, the Muslims constituted at least one-half of the population. Within these districts is a central tract running from Rangpur and Mymensingh on the north to the Bay of Bengal, in every part of which the Muslims were in a decided majority. The discovery was too revealing to pass without an attempt to comprehend the phenomenon. The British administrators and observers strongly believed that this Muslim preponderance in the Bengal population resulted largely from the fact of local conversion.[42]Early observers like Hodgson and Buchanan-Hamilton had already paved the way for Beverley, Wise, Risley and who argued strongly in favour of the theory of local conversion. But it is not so much the local conversion as such, as their opinionated view about the conversion from the lower rungs of the Hindu social ladder that drew stiff opposition from some quarters and led to sharp diatribes from either side.[43]

Khan Bahadur Dewan Fazle Rubbie of Murshidabad wrote a book Aqiqat-*i-Musalman-i Bangla,* which was translated into English as *'The Origin of the Musulmans of Bengal'* (1895) to focus attention on the Muslim immigrants in Bengal at different periods of history. Fazle Rubbie's stand was strongly upheld as late as our own decade by Rahim, who along with Fazle Rubbie smells at the back of this 'low class theory' a 'definite intention of lowering the prestige of the Muslims of Bengal. The rejoinder from the other side is no less sharp: The dislike which educated Muhammadans have for the theory that most of the local

converts in eastern and northern Bengal are of Chandal and Cooch origin seems to be due to the influence of Hindu ideas regarding social status, according to which these tribes occupy a much-degraded position. The root of the controversy lies in the fact that the history of the spread and dissemination of Islam in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, is largely shrouded in obscurity. Historical allusions are sporadic and inadequate for framing an incontrovertible picture. Understandably enough, inference and imagination have taken the place of factual analysis. Fact of local conversion seems fairly despite this, the well-established; there are quite a few references in historical works to local conversion. The earliest is about the conversion of a Mech chief, 'Ali, at the hands of Muhammad bin Bakhtyar Khaljl during his march through North Bengal against Tibet. We are also told about the conversion of a Yogi of Kamrup named Bhojar Brahman; who arrived at Lakhnauti in the reign of 'Ali Mardin Khalji (1210-3 A.D.) in search of a Muslim scholar for the purpose of holding a polemical discussion. He was thoroughly impressed by QaI-Rukn-ud-Din Samarqandi and accepted Islam. From the same source we come to know about the conversion of another religious personality of Kamrup, Ambabha-natha. The conversion of Sultan Jalal ud-Din Muammad, son of Raja Ganesa, has already been discussed in some detail. Kalapahar, Alias Raju, the famous military commander in the Karrani regime is known the name, which sounds rather strange, can very well be an Arabic or Persian corruption of Vajra Brahman, a name quite appropriate for a Hindu Yogi or a Buddhist *Tantrist:* Rahim takes him to be a 'Vedantist Brahmin' for reasons not clear to his readers to be a Brahmana converts. Kalida sa Gaj adani, abais Rajput immigrant in Bengal during the reign of Islam Shah - 2- Sur (1545-53 A.D.), who had been converted to Islam, left a long line of illustrious successors including his son, Eshsa Khan and grandson Musi Khan, ‘Masnad-i Ala', two of the leading Barobhuiyas of Bengal, who identified themselves strongly with the local interests and culture. During the governorship of Islam Khan (1608-13 A.D.) Raghu-Raya, the Hindu chief of Shahzadpur in

the Pabna district embraced Islam. A number of medieval family histories record Brahmana and Kayastha antecedents of some converted Muslim families. The Pirali, the Sarkhanl and the Srimanta-khani Brahmanas were thrown out of the pale of orthodoxy for having family antecedents who had been converted to Islam. Kamaluddin Caudhuri and Jamaluddin Chaudhuri, the zamindars of Singhatia, were known to be Brahmana converts to Islam. The Raj is of Kharagpur were originally Khetauris, and became Muslims. The Dewan family of Pargana Sarail in Tripura was of known Hindu origin. The family of As'ad Musa Khan had a great Sanskrit scholar, Mathuresa, as his court-poet. 'Ali Khan of Baranthan in Chittagong is by origin a branch of the Srijukta family of Naupara. Their ancestor Syama Rayachaudhuri was converted to Islam. The ancestors of Asdullah, the zamindar of Birbhum in the time of Murshid Quli Khan, were known to be Hindus, the genealogical table of the Miyan family of Srirampur, in the subdivision of Patua-Khali, Bakla, shows their Brahmana ancestry. Ivananda-Majumdar was converted to Islam and came to be known as Siban Khan. The same is known about the Rajas of Rupsi in the thana of Jhalkathi and the Khan family of Sirjug in Bakla. The Muslim Chaudhury family of Shahbazpur in Sylhet traces its origin to the Hindu Jangdar family of Panchakhanda. Svaruparama, son of Syama-raya Jangdar of this Hindu family was converted to Islam and became known as Shahbaz Khan. The Muslim Caudhuri family of Daulatpur in Sylhet is also known to be a noted founder branch of the family of Anandapur, of Ananda-riya, the Medieval Bengali literature also alludes to the fact of local conversion. *Seka-Subhodaya*, one of the earliest literary works of medieval Bengal, doubtfully ascribed to *Halayuctha*, who was one of the court-poets of king Lakmaan Sena, shows the possibility of conversion at the Contemporary foreign travellers did not fail to observe the phenomenon of local conversion.[44]

Barbosa, who visited Bengal in 1518, noticed that of the ‘Gentiles’ Hindus 'every day many turn Moors [Muslims] to obtain the favour of the kings and the governors. All this

tends to show the trend of local conversion. This conclusion is further strengthened as tests of other disciplines such as anthropometry and serology are applied to the case. There has always been a general impression of common physical appearance between the bulk of Hindus and Muslims. Charles Grant was attracted by the fact that 'a. a great number of the poorest or the rural classes of Muslims are so mixed up with their Hindu fellow-labourers as, in social habits and appearances, to be half-amalgamated. Wise observes: ... if we examine a crowd of Bengali villagers Nat the present day, one and only one type of features, of complexion, and of physique pervades· them all, and it is impossible for the most practised observer, setting aside the different styles of dress, the beards, and the hair, to distinguish between a Muhammadan and a Hindu peasant.[45]Referring to the 'Nashya' and 'Sheikh' groups of Muslims *in* the Jalpaiguri district of northern Bengal, who together comprised, according to the census of 1901, 226,379 of the 228,487 Muslims in the district, J.F.Grunning remarks**,** 'In appearance, dress and customs, they differ little from the Rajbangsi (Hindu). The same view is reiterated by J.N. Gupta, 'In North Bengal, the Muslims resemble the Rajbangsi. With reference to the Indo-Mongoloids of north and east Bengal, Chatterjee notes: The masses, which are the descendants of the Bodos, pure or mixed, in North Bengal and East Bengal - in Rangpur, in Bogra, in Maimansingha, in Comilla, and in Sylhet are now largely Mohammedan in religion. Beverley writes: If further proof were wanted of the position that the Musalmans of the Bengal delta owe their origin to conversion rather than to the introduction of foreign blood, it seems to be afforded in the close resemblance between them and their fellow-countrymen. That both were originally of the same race seems sufficiently clear from their possessing identically the same physique. The general impression of physical resemblance and affinities is reinforced by the findings of modern anthropometric and blood-group studies relating to the people of Bengal.[46]

To Risley goes the credit of first making anthropometric studies that strengthened the hands of sociologists, anthropologists and historians concerned with Indian phenomena, Risley took special interest in the Bengal situation. Among other things he contended, on the basis of anthropometric data on a limited scale, that the Muslims of Bengal were primarily local converts from the lower rungs of the Hindu caste ladder. It is understandable, if undeniable, that Ripley's pioneering venture is not above criticism. But there is little sense in treating his work as a mere scrap of paper, as both Fazle Robbie and Rahim would have us do. It would be a mistake to think that Riley made a generalisation about the whole Muslim community in intended to do was to show that the Bengal. All that he lower strata of both the Muslim and the Hindu society of Bengal sprang from the same ethnic stock. This is why he relied on the anthropometric data regarding Muslims collected from some one hundred and eighty-five jailed convicts belonging to lower echelons of the social structure. This again is Risley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal is a monumental work in two volumes, each volume being further subdivided into two parts. Vol- I contain the Ethnographic Glossary and the second one contains detailed tables of Anthropometric Measurements. the reason for the corresponding measurements of the Hindus being taken caste wise to establish the identity of the former group not with the upper section of the Hindu society but the lower one, which is quite evident from his figures" This resolves the doubt raised by Rahim as he points out: Risley took the measurement of the nose of very lower class Muslims, while, on the other hand, he had the nasal examination of the persons of all classes of the Hindus, The real point of weakness in Risley's work lies in the extreme meagreness of his data and the lack of adequate scientific method and equipment necessary for such investigations. Risley, however, had set the process of inquiry which was carried on and stage for application to the Bengal situation by P.C. Mahalanobis, B.S. Guha and others. The most systematic and adequate study has, however, been made through the collaboration of an anthropologist, D.N.

Majumdar, and a statistician, C.R. Rao, under the auspices of the Indian Statistical Institute. The result of their work has been computed, analysed and incorporated into a quantitative study entitled Race Elements in Bengal. The most important feature of this investigation is that they proceeded independently on the basis of common data and arrived at similar conclusions. Among other problems, which they set themselves, one was whether Muslim and non-Muslim groups can be said to belong to two different populations Beverley, and if n0t, what was the relative place of Muslim groups, vis-a-vis the Hindu castes and tribes. It is not our purpose to go into the main lines of their investigations. We content ourselves with certain broad conclusions with closest bearing on our problem, which vindicate the position of Risley. To quote from the Report: As regards the relative position of Muslim groups, we notice that nine groups out of a total of fifteen fall within a narrow range of mean nasal height (21.80 to 22.20). All these nine groups have almost identical mean values as the two Namasudra groups, five have lower mean values and stand very close to tribal cluster and only one, i.e., Muslim of Dacca [the name applied to a group under study] occupies a position close to the caste groups. The Report proceeds; If we agree as to the competence of nasal height in defining group divergences, I feel that we should look among the tribal and scheduled caste non-Muslim groups of Bengals for a possible origin of Muslim population of Bengal, and not in the high caste groups, a fact which differentiates the Muslims of U.P., who cluster with the higher castes in nasal height from those of their co-religionists in Bengal. The serological data collected by Majumdar from practically all the districts of Bengal lead to the same. The Candelas have changed their caste name to Namasudra since the census of 1901.[47]

Referring to the Koch women of north Bengal with special reference to Rangpur, Glazier observes: the women of the common people wear the old Kamrup dress, which offers a marked contrast to the common Saree of Bengal. It consists of a square piece of coloured cloth, indigo-striped, passing under the arms and round the back, so as to cross in front where

the upper corners are tucked in, leaving the head and shoulders bare, and reaching to the knees below. All women, Hindus and Muhammadans alike, dress in this fashion; and they also attend the markets and transact the buying and selling, to the almost total exclusion of men. Shihab ud-Din Talish writes, The Muslims whom we met in Assam are Assamese in their habits and Muhammadans but in their name, in fact they liked the Assamese better than us.[48]

Beverley raises and tries to answer a pertinent question in this connexion. He writes: All this, it may be urged, can be sufficiently explained by long residence of Hindus and Muhammadans side by side and their frequent intercourse with each other. It was thus, it will be said, that the original tribes became so Hinduised, that in the present day it is difficult to know where to draw the line between them and Hindus. This no doubt is true enough, but the case is very different in regard to the Bengali Musalmans. In the first place the introduction of the Muhammadan faith into Bengal is an event which has occurred within historical times; whereas no one has yet succeeded in determining the date of the Aryan Glazier, E.G.: A Report on the District of Rangpur, JASB, 1872, 83. immigration, Moreover, even after the lapse of ages, the aboriginal element has not yet been so thoroughly effaced from the low-caste Bengali as to conceal his origin from the most superficial observer, But place a Chandal or a Rajbangsi and a Bengali Musalman together, and were it not for some peculiarity of dress or the mode of cutting the hair, it would be difficult to distinguish the one from the other, The probability is, they are one and the same race, and only within the last few centuries have they ceased to profess the same religion.[49] On the same point Gait argues: It is sometimes denied that the prevalence of Hindu superstitions is a proof of the Hindu origin of the people who believe in them, and it is urged that this may equally well be due to the religious torpor amongst the Muhammadans which prevailed at the beginning of British rule, This might possibly explain the facts in places where Muhammadans are in the minority but

it could never do so where they form the bulk of the population. The two religions would doubtless affect each other to some extent, but a strong monotheistic religion like that of Islam would never give way before a tolerant, amorphous and polytheistic creed like that of the Hindus.[50]

As still another proof of the local origin of the slims, in some parts of Bengal especially in the north-eastern areas peopled chiefly by Koces, Mececs, Bodos and Dhimals, in the early years of this century the great mass of the Muslims had no designations or surnames of Arabic or Persian origin. In these parts there were few Shaikhs and Khans, whilst the great majority were called by a common but unexplained name of Nasyi. Besides this, Hindu names and titles were very common. Names such as Kali Shaikh, Kalacand shaikh, Vraja Shaikh or Gopala Aula were regularly met with. The prevalence of Hindu names among Muslims was also observed in Nassya. In Noakhali 'Muhammadans with surnames of Chanda, Pal and Datta are to be found to this day. The foregoing discussion has made it abundantly clear that local conversion was a significant strand in the process of expansion of Islam in Bengal, which, in its turn, shaped the mould in which their religion was cast. It is evident that a considerable number of Muslims of various racial affiliations settled down in Bengal at different times. But our knowledge is next to nothing about their numbers and proportion to the other elements in the population. It may not be reasonable to think that the Muslims, who flocked into this country from the triumph of Muammad Bakhtyar Khalji onwards, all settled 'Noakhali is known throughout East Pakistan for the pervading influence of the priestly class called the Mullahs and "pure" Islam'. Webster, writing in 1911 about Noakhali, remarks: 'Formerly, it is said, the Mohammedans kept too many of their old Hindu customs, but about the middle of last century they came under the influence of a reforming priest, Maulavi Imamuddin, and are now, almost to a man, Faraizis. They abhor all innovations ... and the worship of saints, down in the land. We have absolutely no knowledge

about the movement and mobility of population in medieval Bengal.[51] We do not know how far the 'proverbial bad climate of Bengal had discouraged the prospective settlers of the upper strata of the Muslim society, The settled Mughal administration in Bengal caused on the one hand and undoubted inflow of Muslims of rank, but on the other 'the viceroys and nobles governing Bengal amassed wealth rapidly and returned to spend it in the luxurious palaces of Delhi and Agra. In the circumstances, any attempt to break their proportion into figures, as Rahim has chosen to do, appears bizarre and confounding. For reasons not at all clear to his readers, he takes the total Bengali Muslim population' in 1770 for 10, 6 million of which '3.27 million belonged to the stock of the immigrant Muslims and 7.33 million were from the converted Muslims'. He moves further: Calculating on the basis of 100 per cent increase on account of birth-rate, we find that the stock of the immigrant Muslims and the converted Muslims numbered about 8 lakhs and 9 lakhs, respectively, two centuries before. With a view to giving 'an idea about the increase of the immigrant Muslims, he draws on purely conjectural basis a chart of the 'Original Settlers', breaking them down racially, with actual numbers on their arrival and showing their respective positions in 1770 A.D. after centuries of growth, which, according to his calculations, comes cumulatively to 3,271,500 Thus in 1570 the Bengali Muslim population was 27 lakhs and the Hindus were 41 lakhs, in a total population of 68 lakhs, say 70 lakhs with the Buddhists and others, in Bengal. The Muslims represented 39.5 per cent of the total population of the province. In the growth of this Bengali Muslim people, the foreign element contributed 29.6 per cent and the local converts 70.4 per cent It is needless to point out that no reasonable attempt to deduce demographic conclusions for medieval Bengal is warranted by the extant historical materials. All that can be done about this is to make an attempt, with all its limitations, at comprehending the phenomenon in the light of actual positions revealed by much later census enquiries. There we may have a better 'idea' of the Muslim immigrants categorised under the title of Saids, Mughul, Pathan

and partially Shaik, partially because; we have already noted the tendency of Bengali Muslim aspirants to social promotion towards assuming the title of Shaikh. Gait's Report sums up the position very well, although he sounds a note of caution that 'no exact estimate is possible'. He writes ... it may be said generally that almost the whole of the functional groups, such as Jolaha A large number of the Muslim agriculturists also bear the designation of Shaikh as noted earlier. Similar tendency was noticed among the Hindu aspirants to social position in Bengal, who assumed mostly the caste designation of Kayastha. For this reason, Kayastha is sometimes called the 'national caste' of Bengal. On the same analogy Sheikh may be viewed as the national social group of the Bengali Muslims and Dhunia, throughout the province, the great majority, probably nine-tenths, of the Sheikhs in Bengal proper are of Indian origin.[52]

In foreign elements must be looked for chiefly in the ranks of the Saids, Pathans and Mughals. Even here there are many who are descended from Hindus, and ... high caste converts are often allowed to assume these titles, and, in some cases, to intermarry with those who are really of foreign descent, their number, however, is possibly only a small proportion of the total, and may be neglected. If the above estimates be taken as a basis, it would appear that the strength of the foreign element amongst the Muhammadans of Bengal cannot, at the most, exceed four million, or say, one-sixth of the total number of persons who profess the faith of Islam, besides local conversion, the other aspect of the question, concerning the social and cultural background of the majority of the indigenous converts, is also a very complex one. History does not help dispel the mist surrounding the actual process of conversion of such a vast number of people in the country, beyond a few recorded sporadic cases; these are quite inadequate for making generalizations on their basis. Besides, those cases have elusive reference to the upper sections of the Hindu society. Not much can be made out of this. Common knowledge and impressions, backed up by ethnological facts, point strongly to a conclusion about which history maintains an unfortunate silence, this need

not take us by surprise nor drive us to wrong premises. If the conversion of the masses does not Gait, find place in history, the history of the masses is of recent development. The affinities of the Muslim masses of east Bengal have been observed with the Chandalas and the Pods, and those of north Bengal with the Rajbari1sis and Koces. The conclusion is based not only on their striking physical resemblance, but also on the fact that the proportion of Hindus of other castes in these parts of the country has always been very small. The Koces are generally supposed to have spread in any numbers only as far westward as the Mahananda, which runs through the Purnia district. East of that river, where the bulk of the population was Koch, no less than two-thirds were Muslims, while to the west of it, where the Koch element was weak, less than one-third of the population was returned under the religion. The main castes were the Rajbamsis (including the Koces) in north Bengal, and the Caalas, 3rdand others in east Bengal. It may also be recalled that the Report of Maunder and Rao points out that nine out of the fifteen Muslim groups spread over the different districts of Bengal studied by them have almost identical mean values in the matter of nasal height as the two Namasdra groups, and five have lower\ mean values and stand very close to the tribal cluster. The Muslims belonging to this social and economic level constituted, at the census of 1901, about five-sixths of the total Muslim population of Bengal. Here again Rahim has his own statistical figures and conclusions. We quote him without comment: of the 70 per cent converted Muslims, at least half of them came from the upper strata of the Hindu and the Buddhist communities and the rest was recruited from the lower class. Thus, the Bengali Muslim population was formed of about 30 per cent converts from the upper-class non-Muslims and 35 per cent converts from the lower strata of the Hindu society. This explodes the theory that the Bengali Muslims were converts mostly from the low caste people of the Hindus. No society of the sub-continent could claim to represent a larger percentage of the immigrant Muslims and converts from the upper-class Hindus as well as the Buddhists.[53]

The Rural Character of the Muslim Masses:

If the indigenous element was a significant constituent in the forces of change and adjustment, the fact that the character of the Muslim masses in Bengal was predominantly rural was not less consequential for the development of Islam in the land. Islam may be characterized as 'a religion of the townspeople', and to the Muslim, 'a town was a settlement in which his religious duties and his social ideals could be completely fulfilled. While discussing the question of Indian Muslims from this standpoint, Mujeeb notes: Islam has, in all countries, promoted urban life, and Muslim civilization has everywhere been essentially urban in character ... the standards of life and culture have been urban: the ideally good life has been life 'among men', in habitations where the variety of habits, tastes and conditions has provided sufficient opportunity for cultural and spiritual experience. Educated Indian Muslims have, therefore, thought of their community as consisting primarily of city-dwellers, and judged themselves as a people setting up and conforming to standards of city-life; the Uneducated, uninformed population of the countryside has not been given the consideration to which it is entitled by the very fact of its existence. This is understandable, because, almost the whole contribution of the Muslims in manners, in literature, in art, is seen in the cities. Bengal marks a significant departure from this pattern of Islamic culture.[54] In Bengal the Muslims appear to take less readily to a town life than the Wolf, E.R., passim; Watt, W.M. Muhammad at Mecca, passim; also, his Islam and the Integration of Society[55]

The first point to be noticed is the very large proportion of Musalmans who subsist by agriculture, and the small number engaged in intellectual pursuits. No less than 7,316 1n every 10,000 Muhammadans are cultivators, compared with 5,555 amongst the same number of Hindus ... it may be said generally, that the occupations, other than those connected with agriculture, in which Muhammadans preponderate are very few. The chief is those of tailors, dyers, silk-worm rearers, operatives in silk filatures, cotton cleaners and pressers, butchers,

hookah-stem farriers, makers and sellers of glass bangles, and book-binders. Although they do not outnumber the Hindus, the proportion of Muhammadans is also high amongst vegetable and fruit-sellers, thatches, silk spinners and weavers, and cotton weavers.[56] East Bengal, where, according to the Census Report of 1901, two-thirds, and in north Bengal, three-fifths of the inhabitants are Muslims, has a characteristically rural landscape. It is again extremely significant that the Muslim preponderance was not met with in the vicinity of the centres and seats of Muslim power. In some districts like Rajshahi, Pabna, Noakhali and Mymensingh they formed three-fourths of the population, and in Bagura as much as four-fifths. None of these districts contained any of the places famous as the headquarters of Muslim rulers. In Dacca, which for a long time contained the seat of government, Muslims were very slightly in excess not Hindus. In Maldaha and Murshidabad, which contained the centre of Muslim rule for quite a few centuries, the Muslims formed a smaller proportion of the population than they did in the adjacent districts of Dinajpur, Rajshahi, and Nadia. In Bakarganj, Tripura, Rangpur, they constituted two-thirds of the population and in Jessore and Faridpur more than half. This characteristic pattern of distribution of Muslim population in Bengal was a surprising revelation for the British administrators and observers.[57] What was more surprising for them was that the Muslim preponderance, even in Bengal, did not, as we have already noted, thrive under the shadow of the seats of political and military power of the Muslim rulers, Underlying this line of thinking is an implied belief that Islamic expansion is better understood in the framework of force and militancy. The Bengal phenomenon proved shattering for the believers in brute force and persecution as significant factors in the expansion of Islam. This characteristic distribution of Muslim population in Bengal is indeed significant in the context of the broader question of the methods of conversion. If there is any question concerning Islam in India which has drawn universal attention and elicited a motley variety of individual pinions, but has remained as dark as ever, it is that of how Islam secured

the adherence of its indigenous followers. Far greater than the fact of local conversion, the motive forces behind it remain a vast open field for historical speculation. For a long time, the success of Islam was generally associated with the 'Fire and Sword' carried by the Muslim conquerors as we have just alluded to. The extension of political authority of the Muslim conquerors in the territories which their armies overran, occasional plunders, pillages and destructions following upon military victories, and stray and Isolated references to cases of oppression and persecution by the Muslim members of the ruling class have often been resorted to in accounting for the expansion of the religion.[58] Beverley believes: The Mohammadans were ever ready to make conquests with the Koran as with the sword. Under Sultan Jalaluddin (Jadu), for instance, it is said that the Hindus were persecuted almost to extermination. Gladwin mentions a law enforced by 'Tyrannical' Murshid Quli Khan that any Amal or zamindar, failing to pay the revenue that was due or being unable to make good the loss, should with his wife and children be compelled to become Muslims. If it is a matter of listing similar instances, we need not depend on such doubtful historical evidence. Sporadic occurrences of this nature whose historical accuracy is less open to question-may easily be gleaned for medieval Bengal through other sources. The cases of conversion recorded in the family histories are mostly results of compulsion or accident, rather than of a voluntary adhesion to the faith. Some ancestors of the ‘Piralis' the Ser-khanis and the sri manta-khanis' for example, became Muslims because they were outcastes on account of having been forced to taste or smell forbidden food cooked by the Muslim.[59]

The role of Pir, Ghazi and Darvesh of North Bengal in conversion into Nashya Sheikh Community:

The *Pir, Ghazi* and Darvesh had communities of North Bengal have played a significant role in the conversion of the Nashya Seikhs. These liberal saints did not discriminate between people. Attracted by their sense of equality, unity and brotherhood, a

large number of people converted to Islam. In this context, it cannot be said that Islam has been propagated only by Sufism. There were also political and economic reasons. Sufi saints entered the country before the establishment of Muslim rule in Bangladesh. In this context, the role of *Pir, Ghazi and Darvesh* of North Bengal is under discussion.

Only a few years after the establishment of the Muslim Empire in Northern India, at the time of Muhammad Ghori, Muslim kingdoms were established in the Western and Northern parts of distant Bangladesh. An extraordinary military genius who made this difficult task possible was Ikhtiyaar ud-Din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji. The story of Bakhtiyar ud-Din Khalji's victory campaign has been found in *'Tabaqat-i-Nasiri'* by Minhaz uddi Siraj.[60]

From two points of view, it seems that the Muslims of this country used to come before Baktiyar Khilji occupied a part of Bengal and many of them settled in this country. Prominent professor and researcher, Sukhmoy Mukhopadhyay has said that the ancient coins of the Abbasid Caliphs were first found at Paharpur in North Bengal and Maynamati in East Bengal, the coin at Paharpur being dated 788 AD. Secondly, a summary of a letter written by the famous saint Nur Kutb Alam in 1415 AD had been found 'Banglar Itihase Dusho Bochor'. (3rd edition, p. 109-110), (in Bengali). It says that after almost 300 years, the Islamic land had become dark and the perpetrators cast a shadow over the faith (religion) of Bengal. Bakhtiyar's arrival in Bengal took place 210 to 211 years before 1415 AD. So even 80 to 90 years before that, it seems from the letter that Islam was in this country.[61]

In short, the social establishment of Islam began within a century of the Bengali expedition of Bakhtiyar Khalji. The Sultans of Delhi, at that time, sent the Pir Darbesh Ghazis to the interiors of Bengal in order to conquer Bangladesh. Tantra practice and mysticism were rampant and widely practiced in Bengal at that time. The number of village deities and ghost worshippers had also increased in rural Bengal. In this situation, the Pir

Ghazis, with their unwavering faith and devotion, character strength and great virtues, successfully diverted the common people from their psychological inclination towards transcendentalism and conquered the minds and mentality of the people. In the service of the afflicted people, they had succeeded in restoring worldly confidence through their medical procedures. As a result, under the influence of the ongoing and rigorous Buddhist and Hindu domination, the converted Muslims were easily attracted to Sufism and *Pir* theory. The basic norms did not create any barrier for the oppressed and socially afflicted people.

The real meanings of the word *'Pir'*, among Muslims, are those who are God-born men or pious souls. *'Pir'* is a word of Persian origin. Their main goal is to achieve and show miraculous power. They stood apart from the ordinary crowd by way of their extraordinary and unworldly powers. No earthly power can bring them down to their knees. Their belief and way of life was self-purification through sacrifice and austerity. Even though they had astonishing spiritual powers, yet their main objective was the pursuit of truth and the attainment of salvation. Spiritual life in Islam dates back to the time of Prophet Muhammad and his companions. The main motto of *Pir* Ghazis was to reflect and propagate the *Tasawwuf*, that is, the method of spiritual pursuit taught by Hazrat.[62]

There was a time when the common people believed that the saints of *Pir Darvesh* had miraculous powers. That belief is not something that has been destroyed in the mindsets of the people. People from both the Muslim and Hindu communities still know the possibility of these miracles and still seek their help and intervention. They look up to these saints with the strong hope and belief that the Pirs can save the people from their hardships and troubles if they wish to, and can also raise the dead. Such is the faith that they bestow upon these Pirs.

However, in the light of the main discussion, it can be said that there are various folk tales and legends about the famous and infamous Pir Fakir Saints of Bengal and a wide area of North Bengal. Memories of their great and noble fame can be found between the

dilapidated, half-broken, extinct, half-secret shrines, Dargah, Chilla and their inscriptions. Satyapir, Tenapir, Ghorpir, Dhaelapir, Dariyapir, Kalipir, Manikpir, Madaripir (fishes and tortoises) were present here besides Mowajpir, Jaethapir, Dhakarpir, Laengrapir, Chelpir, Sekendarpir, Mokdumpir, Mushkilasaanpir, Akinpir, Shahpir, Pir Ataullah etc.[63]

First, in six districts of North Bengal viz Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar, Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur, many Pir, Ghazi and Darvesh were seen to develop. First, I will determine their location in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts. After the conquest of Nadia, when Bakhtiyar Khalji marched towards Tibet in 1206 AD, a local tribal leader converted to Islam and took the name of 'Alimech' and became Bakhtiyar's guide. It is believed that he established the first Dargah Mosque in Jalpaiguri district. From here he converted many people to Islam. He had many disciples. Another pious person in this district was Dinu Gomasta. He was a generous devotee. He built a mosque at Ghumti No. 4 on the outskirts of Jalpaiguri town. There is a lake situated next to the mosque. Devout Islam devotees perform ablution in the water of that lake. Two Muslims named Maulavi Muhammad Ibrahim and Makku Khan, accepted some land in way of charity from Baikunthpur's Raikat King Phanindradeb and this land was situated on the borders of Dinbazaar. Afterwards, they built a mosque here. This mosque is now known as Sonaullah Mosque. Many devout Muslims pray here, and during Eid and Muharram, they offer Sinni in reverence to Muhammad Ibrahim and Makku Khan. The folk festival begins at that time. The mosque of Nawab Bari of this district was built in 1885 AD by the religious and devout Khan Bahadur Rahim Baksh. Sufi scholars from different parts of India come here and perform Fateha. The mosque is associated with the history of communal harmony in the city of Jalpaiguri and there with the help of pious people like Sader Mahmud, Fakir Khan, Tasdudak Ahmad, Muhammad Ismail Gani Sardar, mosques were developed in Nayabasti, Pilkhana and Daptaripara and the arrival of Sufi saints took place.[64]

There are shrines of Pir-Chand and Pirkayet in the vast areas of Dhupguri, Falakata and Alipurduar in Jalpaiguri district. Their shrine is situated at Majid Khana, a few miles from the town of Alipurduar, near Salsalabari. Pilgrims pay homage to the two saints with perfume, rosewater, candles, incense sticks, various flowers, sweets etc. In the mountainous region, these saints preached the infinite glory of the theory of Allah, His ways and commandments, and set a great example for the people of the world in the correct path of spirituality and hence the attainment of Moksha, that is, salvation. In the deep forests of Dooars, we get to hear of another great saint, whose name was Darvesh Shah Zafar. He was an elderly man of very high value. He was the shepherd king of a huge herd of wild elephants and Sardar used to walk around sitting on the head of an elephant. Another devout warrior who appeared in this region was Hedayet Alimaan. He has become a legend in the region with his glorious achievements in the Bhutan War. This devout man is also remembered with reverence and respect by the people of the Muslim community.[65]

There are several ancient mosques of Muslims in the hilly areas of Darjeeling district. The oldest mosque is on Cart Road between Sukna and Sonada. In the first decade of the nineteenth and twentieth century, Sufi saints from different parts of India came here. The mosque has now been reduced to rubble by the ravages of time. The Juma Mosque on Darjeeling's Botanical Garden Road is a holy site for Muslim pilgrims. Sufi saints used to come here on the holy occasions of Muharram and Eid. There is another small mosque in Butcher slum. It is said that the mosque was built for the use of Ilyas Shah's troops. There is also a Madrasah which was run for a long time by *Anjuman-e Islamis.* Sufi saints attend this religious institution. In the plains of Siliguri, the festival of a saint named *'Chehelgazi'* is solemnly celebrated. He is honoured too on the occasions of Eid and Muharram. During the reign of Sultan Barbak Shah of Gour, this pious saint preached the message of monotheism and advanced civilization in the whole province of Assam.[66]

In the context of the district of Cooch Behar, it can be said that from the beginning of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fourteenth century, the kingdom of Kamarupa (which includes many parts of the modern Cooch Behar district), three Muslims in a row were attacked by the king. But the armies of the Kamarupa king defeated the Islamic army because of their excellent warfare tactics, valour and for local geographical advantage. In the same century, just as the state of Assam was established on the east bank of the Brahmaputra River, so was the state of Gosanimari or Kamtapur near the present city of Cooch Behar. At this time, the state of Kamtapur was almost destroyed by the attack of the Muslim rulers. Many heroes with the title of '*Bhuiyan'* then established their own rights in the Koch territory. In 1498-99 AD, the Sultan of Bengal, Hussain Shah won over Kamrup and Kamtapur. Thereafter, there was no pause between the subsequent attacks by the Pathans, the Mughals, the Nawab of Afghan named Subedar and the Faujdars. These campaigns and attacks of the Muslims played a significant role in the propagation and noteworthy growth of Islam. In 1661 AD, the Mughal army crossed the borders of Cooch Behar State and captured the capital and Mirjumla renamed the capital of Cooch Bihar as Alamgir Nagar. From this time onwards, missionaries began to come here for the development and spread of Islam, and attracted by the miraculous glory of Pir Ghazi Darvesh saints, many followers and devotees of Hinduism converted to Islam. There is a shrine of Pir in Maharaniganj under this district. Numerous devotees, Hindus and Muslims alike, pay their respects to Pir here by offering sugar, sweet candies, milk latex, raw milk, flowers, perfumes, etc. At the beginning of the 18th century, a Pir saint with miraculous powers lived a religious life here on the banks of the river Torsa. The king of Koch, Harendra Narayan was an ardent follower and devotee of him and had donated seven bighas of land as 'Pirpal' for the daily service at that Pir's shrine. The real name of this Pir is not known. Folklore has it that this Pir used to drown himself in the depths of the river Torsa and performed his rituals and worship. A fair is held here on the

occasion of Muharram. Four miles southeast of the hollering suburbs of Cooch Behar, in the regions of Dhaluabari, there lived a devotee named Shah Ikram. He was quite an old man with a high stature. At one time this area was full of deep forests. There was a giant snake that made its way out of the mountain and since then a big tunnel had been created there. Saint Shah Ikram is said to have performed his *sadhana* inside that tunnel. He was said to have destroyed the diseases that used to all mankind, their fears, droughts, excessive rainfall, natural disasters and its dreary wreck. Fascinated by the miraculous splendor of this Pir, the kings of Koch donated 77 *bighas* of land in his name.[67]

The shrine of Shah Sufi Ikramul Haque is located in Haldibari area of this district. He was born in 1851 AD at his Laljaan's house in Jhaljhalia state of Cooch Behar district. He has innumerable followers and devotees all over Bengal. Devotees built a shrine over his grave at Haldibari. Every year in the month of Falgun, a large number of devotees, both Hindus and Muslims, gather on the occasion of the festival of Uras (the fair of Huzoor Sahab). Many stories of Shah Sufi Ikramul Haque Darvesh are scattered and prevalent in the lives of the people of Cooch Behar district. He crossed the mountain forest and stayed at the old mosque in Cooch Behar. He used to come out once at the end of every Friday's prayers. Upon receiving the news, many sick people would gather there and everyone was healed by his miraculous grace. Even today, that same belief resides in the hearts of the people. Sufi Ikramul caged two genies in a bottle and threw it down a river. Since then, he had thrown so many bottles caged with genies that there was a shortage of glass bottles in the area at the time. Taking the opportunity of serving Saha Ekramul, a brother of the king of Cooch Bihar was cured of a serious illness. Sufi Ikramul is known as 'Pagla Pir' in various regions of Cooch Behar. Thus, in the folk society of North Bengal, various legendary stories spread far and wide regarding all these Pir Ghazi Darvesh saints.[68]

The Pir Ghazi saints have played a significant role in the history of Maldah district. Most of the Pirs who came to Gour and Pandua in Maldah came from outside India and settled here. Pandua Baradargarh under Gazol Police Station of Malda is famous all over India. There is a special place of worship in memory of the saint Hazrat Makhdoom Shah Jalal ud-Din. He came to this country with the aim of preaching the religion during the reign of Lakshman Sen. Gradually; he gained an unparalleled fame as the *'Sheikh'* of Gour. Through miraculous deeds and rigorous austerities, he became a proprietor of Gour and was loved and respected by its entire people. Maharaja Lakshman Sen donated a large number of villages and lands to him unconditionally and for the sake of charity. A notable example of this is 22 Hazari Waqf Estate. The estate has vast tracts of land in Maldah, undivided Dinajpur and present-day Bangladesh. Lakshman Sen's Chief Justice Halayudha Mishra wrote the book 'Sheikh Subhodoya' (in Bengali) based on the greatness and life events of Sheikh Jalal ud-Din. On the 22nd day of the month of Arobi Rajab, a fair is held here for about a month. Gatherings and competitions of *Milad Sharif, Ghazal Geeti,* and *Qawwali* is a unique spectacle of folk culture in this fair. Hindus and Muslims swear allegiance to the shrine of the *Pir* and offer the dessert *Sinni*. The devotees hang rags from pomegranate and pineapple trees so that all the evil doings of the celestial bodies are resolved in their favour. It is believed by the people that if they visit this *Pir's* shrine 7 times, and behave in certain religious ways, then the virtue of performing Hajj in Mecca is acquired there itself.[69]

One of the other holy places in this district is the *Dargah* of Shayak Akhi Firoz ud-Din. According to the historian Block man, he was a worthy disciple of the famous Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi. In the folklife of Maldah, he is noted as Pirana Pir or the Pir of Pirs. There is a shrine in the north-west corner of Bara Sagardighi near Sadullapur, in imitation of Ajmer Khwaja Babar Chillar. Here, the attendants sing Qawwali and put-on new sheets in a grand procession at the tomb of the Pir. During the reign of Sultan Ilyas Shah, the

famous Pirs of Bangladesh appeared. Among them are Pir Alaul Haque and Sheikh Raja Biyabani. Not far from Adina, in Bolbari, there is a shrine of Raja Biyabani. The dense forest is the abode of the Pir and hence his name is *Biyabani.'Biyara'*, in Persian, means remote, solitary forests. He died during the siege of the historic Ekdala fort in Delhi by the Sultan. Sultan Ilyas Shah, who was an absconder at the Ekdala fort, was his greatest devotee. He came out of the fort in the guise of a fakir and arranged for his master's funeral and last rites.[70]

Not far from Chanchal lies the tomb of Pir Sikandar Shah. Both Hindus and Muslims pay homage to this saint by offering *Sinni.* A fair is held here on this occasion, popularly known as *Ghazi Pir's* fair. Folklore says, Pir Sikandar Shah came to India from the distant lands of Mecca in Arab in the mission to preach their religion. Later, he came to Bengal and established a *Dargah*. Many people think that the real name of this Pir is Shah Ismail Ghazi. On the other hand, *'Zindapir'* has been gaining the respect of both the Hindu and Muslim communities in Kaligram, near Chanchal police station, for a long time. The real name of that saint is Suraj Khan. Like Yogi Men, he once entered the tomb in order to meditate and carried with him enough food to sustain him for six months.

Pir Shah Abdullah is situated at a nearby distance from Sadullapur of Maldah, and Muchipir is located in the jurisdiction of Haribpur police station. In the village of Bachamari in Old Maldah, there is Pir Shah Ibrahim, who came from distant Lanka. Manik Pir's Dargah is located on the banks of Mahananda, in Sahapur. Pir Qutb Shah's Dargah in Saralpara, which comes in the jurisdiction of Gazol Thana, is a holy place of the Hindu and Muslim communities. There exist many stories of fame about the miraculous powers of this Pir.[71]

Dhaldighi and *Kaldighi* are two huge lakes located at the end of Gangarampur in Dakshin Dinajpur district. Surrounding these two lakes, various legends and stories are scattered in this region. A saint named Maulana Ataullah used to live here. Through various

miracles, he was revered and became trustworthy to both the local Hindu and Muslim communities. Karim Ali Fakir was one among many of the servants of this saint. Every year, on the 25th of the month of *Magha,* on the south bank of *Dhaldighi,* on the occasion of *Pir Sahab's* death anniversary, the people of the Hindu-Muslim communities visit the grave of Karim Ali and pay their homage and pray to him. This is named as the Uras festival. This nearly 200-year-old festival goes public with an all-embracing feast. About twenty to twenty-five manas of rice pulao is cooked here and is eaten by people from both the Hindu and Muslim communities sitting together. On the 25th of *Magha*, the Muslims pay their respect and homage to *Pir Sahib* with *Sinni* and earthen horses. On the occasion of this Uras festival in memory of the Pir, a huge fair is held at the banks of *Dhaldighi* for almost a month. On the occasion of this fair, millions of visitors and devotees come and gather here from different parts of India. The fair is a wonderful example of Hindu-Muslim unity. Pir Karim Ali, when alive, had written a book named *'Marphat Bichar'* (in Bengali). In that book, it has been mentioned that, "*Allah ji* has two races, Hindu and Muslim. The two documents of these two races are the *Quran* and the *Puran*." It is noteworthy that in 1808-09 AD, Francis Bukanon, in his mention of Dinajpur and its description, had mentioned the reference of this *Dargah*. In the year 1912 AD, F. W. Strong Sahib identified this Pir as Mollah Ata ud-din. Next to his mosque there is a mention of the mosque 697 *Hijraddh* dated 19th October 1297 AD. There is a legend about this Pir that Ban king had two queens, named Dhalarani and Kalorani. It was the wish of the minds of these two queens that the king leaves behind a signature of great fame for the two of them. When the queens expressed their wishes, the king was satisfied with it and dug two lakes. One was named *Dhaldighi* and the other was named *Kaldighi*. When the excavation work of *Kaldighi* was completed, it became full of water but *Dhaladighi* did not bear water at all. Disappointed, the workers informed the king that they would not dig the lake. The king was very upset to hear this from the workers. Seeing this

situation, the workers informed the king that they had seen a stranger passing by the lake while they were digging it up. The next day, the king, together with the queens, began to search in the forest. After much searching, they saw the man worshipping under a tree. When the worship was over, the king asked him, "Are you a Saint, or a Prophet?" The man replied that he was Pir Ataullah. Then the king asked him if he could fulfil a wish in his mind. The Pir asked what he wished for. The king said that *Dhaldighi* should be filled with water. The very next day, the king saw that *Dhaldighi* was full of water.[72]

Now that the king's wish had been fulfilled by the Pir, it was the king's turn to fulfil a wish of the Pir in return. The Pir sent his nephew, Sultan Shah to the king's court. He told the king that Pir Ataullah only wanted a quarter of a handful of space. Hearing this, the king was upset. Because he was both surprised and scared to see the infinite power of the Pir, and yet again he thought that the Pir had to be given a place in his kingdom? He said he would not give any place for the Pir, at which Pir Ataullah got angry. As a result, a dispute broke out between the king and the Pir. After this incident, no trace of the king or his family was found.

It is said that the Kasbah Mahsho village near Raiganj in Uttar Dinajpur district was the capital of a Hindu king named Ganesha. The ruins of King Ganesha's homestead are still found here in the bushes in the jungle. Ganesha's son, Jadu, converted to Islam, and he became known in history as Jalal ud-Din. According to some, Ganesha's father's name was Mahesh Narayan and the place was named Maheshpur after his name. Later, the place was identified as Kasba Mahshopur. It was in this village where Pir Makhdumi Gayadul Hussain lived. Folklore has it that Pir Makhdum was a man with miraculous powers. He came with 72 comrades and fought with King Ganesha. When King Ganesha was defeated in the battle, he widely preached Islam in that region. At this time, Ganesha's son Jadu, converted to Islam, and married Asman Tara for Hussain Shah. When Hussain Shah established the capital of Pandua from Chhota Pandua, Jalal ud-Din came to Kamalabari and established the capital

there. King Ganesha's wife's name was Kamal and the place of Kamalabari was named after her. As soon as Jalal ud-Din reached Kamalabari with his wife, he was plunged into the hands of death. The newly widowed Asman Tara then took refuge in Pir Shah Makhdum's grave. Following the instructions of Pir Sahab, she conceived and gave birth to a son who was named 'Rumal-e-Sahab'. There is a 'white-well' here which people believe was dug by Pir Sahab on account of his miraculous powers. Many people consider the water of this well to be sacred and it is believed that drinking this water can cure severe incurable diseases. Every year in the month of Baishakh, a fair is held here on the occasion of Makhdum Pir's Uras and this fair is said to be dated 500 years old.[73]

When Shah Shuja was the subedar of Bengal, a saint named Sultan Hasan Sabia Borhana, with his huge army of devotees, settled in the village of Baliya Raja near Bindol. He used to wear short clothes and a draped ochre cloak and used to talk about religion with a trident or *'Trishul'* in his hand. There is a tomb of *'Jetha Pir'* in Shasan village near Hematabad police station. Every year on the occasion of the holy month of Baishakh, people of both the Hindu and Muslim communities pay homage to Pir Sahib with Sinni, mud horses and new clothes. At the same time, they slaughter goats; roosters etc. and perform 'Fateha' in the evening. A fair is held here on this occasion. In the village of Tungail Bilpara near Kaliyaganj police station, their lives 'Kheyajpir'. Devotees from both the Hindu and Muslim communities fast for three days to get rid of all their diseases and slaughter goats in the name of the Pir.[74]

The place of Dhakar Syed Pir in the interiors of the village of Kushmandi police station is significant. Folklore says that about one and a half hundred years ago, a handsome and liberal devotee Dhak Syed, arrived at an *Arjuna* tree and performed miraculous powers to cure many men and women from incurable diseases. The area surrounding the trunk of this *Arjuna* tree had gained a special spiritual reputation, where the local men and women

considered this to be a sacred place. Here, on the occasion of the appearance of Dhak Syed Pir on the day of Chaitra Sankranti, the Hindu-Muslim community pays homage to the Pir with earthen horses. Numerous devotees from far and wide come to the Dargah of the Pir to seek healing from ailments, and swear divine allegiance to abide by their vows after getting cured. A fair is held on this occasion. Daulatpur village in Dakshin Dinajpur has a shrine and a pillar called 'Langra Pir', surrounding which, the Muharram festival is celebrated with great pomp and show in Daulatpur. Besides, Dhelpir, Shonipir, etc. are also present.[75]

Ghorapir is near to Dalimgaon in Uttar Dinajpur district. During the Sinni festival in Ghorapir, the Goswami Brahmins nearby take that Sinni and start the fifth Dol solemnity. Besides, there is a shrine of Pir Baha ud-Din in Narayanpur of Gangarampur police station in Dakshin Dinajpur. The neighborhood around it is known as 'Pirpal'. This Pir is also marked by the name of 'Buranir'. Every year, except the first Thursday of the month of Baishakh, a fair is held here on every subsequent Thursday and the Pir's Uras festival is also held here. Residents of the Hindu-Muslim communities donate earthen horses to pay homage to the saint.[76] Another name of this Pir is Pir Hawa Hadi. Mentioning this Pir, his disciples preach various stories of his glory and greatness.

The worship of the Pirs is highly revered in the life of both Hindus and Muslims in Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts. Thakur Pir Mahamari is said to reside next to the Tulsi altar of the Hindu households. He is worshipped every Saturday by Sinni and horses. Again, the people of the Muslim community pay their respects to Pir Mahamari during the occasion of Muharram. Pir Mahamari is like a cross sign made with the help of a jute stick and he wears a crown on his head. The idea of folk life is that this Pir is said to destroy all the dangers that befall upon the village.

This Pir is no longer alive today but many shrines are still alive even after 5 to 6 centuries later. These shrines were symbols of Hindu-Muslim unity. As a result of Partition,

Muslims from many villages have migrated to Bangladesh but the shrines are still getting the status and respect of being holy places even today. In many villages, some Hindu communities are renovating those shrines of the Pirs and worshipping and offering Sinni in the name of the Pir. As a result of Ikhtiyar ud-Din bin Bakhtiyar Khilji's expedition, the upper caste Hindu community had fled from that region and hence the Pir had no influence on them.[77] Again, the influence of Pir is also less on the lower caste Hindus like the shoemakers, sweepers etc. In the middle of these two, there are some communities like the *Desi, Palia, Gauradashi, Koch* etc. on whom the Buddhist influence is quite high; and it is also on these communities that the impact of the Pir is the highest. But did the same people who were once driven by *Tantra*-based Buddhism get easily attracted and influenced by the miraculous and magical powers of the Pirs?

In this way, various legends about Pir Ghazi Darvesh have spread in the folk circles of the society. This greatness of ancient prosperity reminds us of the unity of Hindus and Muslims in the life of North Bengal.

Development of Ethnic Identity:

The converted Muslim society of North Bengal is not developing society, politically and economically like any of their counterparts. The converted Muslim community are those who could not get a proper place in Sheikh Community they claim as an indigenous Muslim community. The upper caste Hindus had given the nomenclature '*Nashya sheikh'* to the converted Muslim Community which meant the impure or diluted sheikhs. The indigenous Muslim community sought the various ways to sweep out the new given title *Nashya sheikh*, as they were ignoring *Nashya sheikh* Title. Some of them claim upper class Muslim shelter to the *Pir* and they got little prestige in the society. Apart from some of them government service and took the title like Sarkar, Khan etc, however they tried a lot but their cultural activity prevailed within their society.[78]

Now a central question emerges that – "who are the *Nashyas*?[79]The Muslims who resided in Koch, Mech, Polia, and Rajbangsi societies etc. were basically converted in Muslims from these communities, who later on were known as *Nashyas*. It is these *Nashyas* who are popularly known as *Nashya sheikh.*[80]During the period of 13th to 17th century Muslims attacks occurred frequently in Kamrup, Kamtapur and Cooch Behar. Perhaps for this might be the reasons for which Islam entered in North-Eastern part of India? The Brahmans, who were the holder and protector of the society, announced the indigenous peoples as a fallen group for the untouchability problem with Muslims. Sometimes the villages become fallen by the entrance way of Muslims soldiers.[81] These outcaste peoples become spoiled *(Nasto*) and religion less. These peoples were compelled to convert into Islam. Still, they were spoiled (*Nasto)* and religion less to the upper castes people. Gradually the word '*Nashya'* had originated from the above-mentioned term '*Nasto*' as a distorted pronunciation.[82] We found the name of "Panbor Nashya" as a recipient, fathers name "Asaru *Nashya*", caste Muslim from a reference of document in 1901(Koch Behar state). Now I would like to shed light on "Sheikh". The word Sheikh means "Greatest". The Sufi saints like Sheikh JalaluddinTabrizi who came to the undivided Bengal from Afganisthan, used the word Sheikh in front of their name. The *Nashya* Muslims protested about their dishonourable title and after refusing that title they introduced themselves as Sheikh as the disciples of "Sheikh" and used the title Sheikh. For an example we can say that we found the name of Mamud Sheikh whose father name was Tangru *Nashya*, caste Muslim.[83] But here it's noticeable that the migrated Sheikh use the title Sheikh in front of their name and the Nashya used the title after their name. For an example we can say the name of Jalaluddin Tabrazi and Piyar Mamud Sheikh. With this respect it may be mention that after the conversion into Islam, the *Nashya sheikh* started ideological struggle with Sufism by the influence of Shariatism and got change their names and title. After changing the names like Tangru,

Sandu, Domashu, Pedda, Tonda which belongs to the Rajbansi community, they started to use the name like Hajrat, Suleman, Abubaquar, Osman which belongs to Arabian origin. Vis a Vis they started to refuse their title Nashya and also, they refused their title sheikh as the title of "Shia community". They started to use of surnames like Rahaman, Ali, Main, Hussain, Sarkar, Islam, Ahmed, Uddin, Hoque, Abedin etc. At present simultaneously they are also using their previous surnames.[84] If we look for the answer for this, then we have to go through the anthropological study of the community. The similarities we find among the people of six districts of North Bengal, Purnia district of Bihar and Dinajpur and Rangpur districts of Bangladesh with Nashya sheikh to some extent reflect their old connection with each other. The Mongoloyed community and Rajbangsi community people had been living in this particular area. There are four kinds of people like Koch, Mech, Polia and Rajbangsi indigenous people. The various kinds of reasons were responsible for the conversation of huge numbers of people from four communities such as oppression and suppression of Brahmanism, social untouchably and economic and political. This process of conversion in Bengal continued from Sen. Period to British period. The new converted Muslim community wanted to prove them self as an indigenous community. Because, the indigenous community felt themselves as an upper class within Rajbangsi society.[85]

Although the Muslims of North Bengal are closely related with each other in terms of religious belief, there are many differences with regard to their language, culture, tradition, occupation. On this basis the Muslims of North Bengal are divided into various sub-castes. The Muslims of North Bengal mainly carried the characteristics of *Austric-Mongoloyed* race. In ancient time North Bengal was known as Pundrabardhana emerged under the supremacy of Austric and mixture of the Mongoloyed. In this discussed region they build up an agricultural settlement and village culture.[86]Hamilton Buchanan marketed that the people of *Koch, Mech, Rajbangsi, Polia* etc.are the indigenous peoples.[87] Minajuddin-ut-Siraj in his

book '*Tabaquat-i-Nasiri'*, he also marketed the people of *Koch*, *Mech* etc. as indigenous people.[88]During the last quarter of 15th century and first quarter of 16th century introduction of Vaisnava, Shaiva sect and the influence of the Brahmas, come from Mithila, Kanauj the indigenous people introduced with Hinduism. In this period with the introduction of Pirism and Darbeshism a remarkable portion of indigenous Rajbangsi, Polia, Mech peoples got attracted and converted into Muslim.[89]

When Baktiyar Khalji invaded Tibet in 1205 A.D. at that time indigenous people of North Bengal came in contact with Islam. In his book *'Tabaquat-i-Nasiri'* Minaj-uddin-Siraj says that at the' time of Baktiyar Khaljis invasion towards Tibet a tribal chief, named Ali Mech was his local guide.[90] Most probably Ali Mech was the first person of North Bengal who converted to Islam with his followers. After the establishment of Turkey rule at Gour in 13th century the *sufi* saint came there and introduced Islam in the large portion of North Bengal. During the period of 15th to 18th century in Bengal can be called as the golden age of Islamic introduction. Especially at Dooars region Islamic introduction continued till the 19th century also. The spread of Islam religion in North Bengal among the local lower class Hindu societies were converted by the help of the sultan of Gour and the liberal humanist Sufi saint of North Bengal. They changed their religion but their language customs, cultures, food habits etc were the same. Durga Prasad Sanyal wrote in his book *'Banlar Samajik Itihas'* Mirjumla was the first ruler who forced Rajbangsi's to convert into Muslim". [91]

To look at the origin of the Muslim society of North Bengal, Hunter, Buchanan Hamilton argued the Muslims of North Bengal are mainly converted indigenous Muslim. Sufi saints did not impose the rules of Hadis, Sariyat on the converted Muslims community, so they easily carried on the customs and cultures. In this area Islam got its popularity, they had to confess the hated caste system among the Hindu Society. Though there is no caste system, untouchability in Islam but all of these are found in converted Muslim community. The

lower-class Hindu society who converted into Islam, they did not change themselves professionally and society instead of converted in Islam. So, they have a lot of differences. Among these language and cultural differences are main important which varied on regional variation. Among the Muslim community of North Bengal, we find a number of sub-communities which are different by their language, cultural, profession. Among these, the *Nashya sheikh* is one of them.[92]

The great number of Muslims of North Bengal were *Nashya sheikh*, specially they are found in Jalpaiguri, Siliguri, North and South Dinajpur, Gajal, Chanchal of Maldah District. This community in general was converted from the people of Hindu religion, namely Rajbangsi, Polia, Koch, Mech etc. In this regard the famous politician and social worker Upendranath Barman wrote that, 'originally the Rajbangsi Muslims were converted from Hindu society and they entitle *Nashya sheikh*. In this regard we have to mention another eminent writer's view about Nashya Sheikh. Panchanan Barma, an eminent Rajbangsi leader in colonial North Bengal also noticed the conversion of Rajbangsi into Nashya Sheikh in large numbers, since the heydays of his career as an advocate. The term Nashya came from the word '*Nasto*' as such kind of community were converted from conservative Hindu society that's why they were announced by the Hindu as diluted or *Nasto,* even in the government records, Gazette, *Dalil* etc. Nashya Sheikh however speaks in Rajbangsi language. Not only in language, their food habits, dress up, culture, profession etc. are very much similar to that of the Rajbangsi's. *Nashya Sheikh* are peace loving and have a cordial relation with their neighbours. Religiously they are also liberal and less orthodox, even though they are also very much close to Hindu Rajbansi people and it is remarkable that among them the *Purdha* system was very rare. But economically *Nashya Sheikh* were dependent on village Cultivation, very few among them were service holders as at the same time they were not interested in business, Small handicraft Industry. Though cultivation was their main

profession yet they were mostly landless. As a result, most of them are below the poverty line.[93]

The *Nashya Sheikhs* is a numerically dominant Muslim group residing in the sub-Himalayan North Bengal. It has synonymous names like *Nashya* or Rajbangsi Musalman. They are mainly distributed over the northern districts of West Bengal, Particularly in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. Some of them are also found in north and south Dinajpur as well as in Malda. Due to lack of census data, it is very difficult to state the exact population figure of the last country (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of West Bengal). The *Nashyas* speak in local dialect at home and it is narrowly away from popular Bengali. But with outsiders the *Nashyas* speak in Bengali. Nowadays most of the well-to-do and educated *Nashya* families are learning Urdu and Arabic.[94]

There is considerable controversy regarding the origin and ethnic identity of the *Nashyas*. It is usually believed that they are the converts to indigenous ethnic groups of North Bengal and bear a mixed ancestry. Actually, they are considered to be the descendant of those Muslims who entered the fold of Islam from some indigenous groups, namely, Mech, Koch, Rajbangsi and Polia. History reveals that the Pirs and Fakirs as well as some ruling personalities of the late medieval era made a significant contribution to the growth of *Nashya* community in North Bengal.[95]

The etymological meaning of the word *Nashya* is rooted in Bengali word '*Nasto'.* The Rajbangsi Hindus and other Hindu caste groups of the locality regard the Nashyas as their fallen (degraded or converted) section thus called them as *Nasto-jati,* which in local colloquial popularization is as *Nashya Jyati.* Since the Nashyas are converts of recent past they also known as Nao-Musalman, i.e., the new Muslim. They are highly integrated with the local population, i.e., Rajbansis, particularly in respect to their language and little traditions. Thus, at first sight they appear to be Rajbangsi (a local Hindu caste group), but are really an

indigenous Muslim group. Considering their ethnic origin and social culture history the Nashya are popularly known as *Rajbansi Musalman or Rajbansis*.[96]

They are also designated as *Bhabe Musalman*. It was only a few decades before the Independence that the Nashyas were in masse exposed to and influenced by the process of Islamization. As a result, in recent times, they are integrated with the structural framework of Muslim society in Bengal. But they still retain many elements of their pre-Islamic past (tradition) which gave them a unique identity. Considering their ethnic origin, social history, cultural attributes and retention of many elements of per-Islamic traditions the Nashya are not favourably looked upon by other Muslims (Asraf or Khas) of the region. In this regard it may be noted that there is a Persian word *'Nosb'* meaning a drinker. The *Nashya* perhaps had the drinking habit which is forbidden in Islam. Hence, they were treated as a fallen Muslim. But the empirical reality of such a view of the higher status Muslims is difficult to establish.[97]

When we look at it historically it is clear that the term '*Nashya'* was used even by the administrators of the Kingdom of Cooch Behar to maintain a distinction between the indigenous Muslims and the immigrants. *Nashyas* are said to be the progeny of indigenous converts or of the place. It is evident that the political instruction of Mir-Jumla and many other Muslim rulers and administrators in the region brought along with them many Muslim subedars, faujdars and laskars. Finally, the advent of many Muslim Pirs and Fakirs into this region facilitates the growth of Muslim population from the indigenous masses. The immigrants Muslims, who moved to Northern Bengal, used to marry the local women belonging to Mech, Koch, Rajbangsi's and Polia communities, who spoke in native dialect of language. Thus, the Nashya Muslims came into existence in North Bengal.[98]

Initially some village heads and community leaders (Sardars) of some indigenous community of North Bengal converted to Islam for various socio-cultural reasons. The most famous of them was Ali Mech. Those early converts took much initiative to propagate Islam

among their fellows. Above all, the Muslim saints who came from outside played a significant role to popularize Islam among the local people by virtue of their spiritual, theological and liberal and liberal social activities. Actually, the Muslim Pirs and the influential local converters played a great role in the formation and growth of the Nashya community in the sub-Himalayan Bengal.[99]

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 shar-croppers and many are agricultural labourers. Once there was many *Nashya* Jote-dars, but nowadays for various reasons they have lost their big holdings. 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 *Nashyas* of both the rural and the urban areas are poor. The Nashya community is endogamous in character. The community is further subdivided on the lineage which is reflected by the use of their surnames. The most popular surnames among the Nashya are Bapari, Pramanik, Sarkar, Sardar, etc. Intermarriages take place among them. Hence there is no social differentiation on the basis of surnames.[100]

As a community the *Nashya* are endogamous. Marriage between *Nashya* with other Muslim groups, particularly with so called higher social status is not a usual practice. Monogamy is the most common type of marriage among them, but polygamy may occasionally be found (3%). The average age at Marriage of *Nashya* males and females are 23 years and 17 years respectively. Marriage by negotiation is a traditional practice. Widow Remarriage is allowed among them. Both surrogate and levirate systems are also followed. Payment of bride price was once prevalent among the *Nashyas,* but nowadays, it is completely replaced by the dowry system. The marriages are solemnized as per Islamic rules,

but rites and rituals in marriage are very much governed by the local traditions. Simple nuclear families are in prevalence among the *Nashyas*. However, joint families are still noticed among the landowning families. The average family size of the *Nashyas* is 5 members. The Nashyas follow both classificatory and denotative types of kinship terminology. Their kinship terms show a mixture of Bengali, Arabic and Urdu terms mixed with the local language. An important feather that occurs among the *Nashyas* as a result of Islamization is in the realm of kinship and marriage alliances with the cross-cousins (FSD and MBD) and is normally avoided by the parallel cousins (FBD and MSD). But the present time Nashya Muslims are adopting both the parallel and cross-cousin marriages.[101]

Traditionally, the *Nashya* are organized among themselves at the village and local level through elder's council locally known as paich, and had multifarious roles to govern the community and to look after their socio-religious-cultural issues. But today it has lost many of its traditions due to influence of formal statutory panchayets and party politics. The *Nashya* today participate in the modern political process, but their position in power politics is of peripheral significance. The representation of the *Nashya* in different political bodies at local, regional, state and national level is however very low. The socio-economic backwardness of the *Nashyas* is considered to be the primary reasons for their political marginalization.[102]

The state of education among the *Nashyas* is very disheartening. For historical, situational and socio-cultural reasons the educated middle class has not been properly developed among the *Nashyas*. Since the content of the middle class among them is significantly very small, the *Nashyas* do not figure in any significant number either in white-collar jobs or in politico-administrative matters of their locality. A case study among the Nashyas of a Village in Darjeeling district reveals that, among them 40.27 per cent was illiterate and 59.73 percent literate and educated. Among the literate and educated 27.82

percent had primary education, 24.86 percent had secondary education and only 7.05 percent had higher secondary and college education. Another case study of a Cooch Behar village shows that among the *Nashya* 48 percent was illiterate and 52 percent was literate and educated. Of the literate 24 percent and 5.38 percent had higher secondary and college education.[103]

The *Nashya* are Sunnis and follow the tradition of Hanafi School. In social-religious matters they follow the guidelines of the Barelvi School (Madrasha) of thought. But in recent times the Deobandi School (Madrasha) of thought through Tableau activities has made a significant impact on them. The belief in Pirism is still a typical feature among them. Thus, they are affiliated to the Muslim saints or Pirs. The *Nashyas* celebrate all the major Muslim festivals and perform the basic religious rites and ceremonies. But they tend to accept without much criticism the traditional social customs, which have passed to them from the previous generation. This continuity of little traditions facilitates them to integrate and assimilate the local society dominated by the Hindu Rajbangsi's. On the socio-religious level the *Nashya* cultivate the traits of Islamic great tradition to operate within the framework of wider Muslim society. The process of Islamization helped them in achieving a social position within the structure of a Muslim Society in Bengal. Local Moktabs, madrasahs and masjids (mosques) which are either associated with the Barelvi or the Deobandi traditions play a very significant role in Islamizing the *Nashya* community. The major life-cycle rituals observed by the *Nashya* are on the occasions of birth, circumcisions (in case of boy), marriage and death. The basis rites in respect of all these events are followed and performed according to local traditions. The *Nashya* women do not follow the strict seclusion or purdah system, which is a characteristic feature of Muslims belonging to the upper strata. The women folk of poor Nashya families participate in agriculture and other economic activities to support their family. The *Nashya* enjoy ambiguous social positions. The Muslims of upper social strata

usually keep a social distance from them on the ground of their pride being 'high-born' and attributes of Islamic culture. But the Nashya believe themselves as a part of Muslim *umma* (community) and strongly condemn the ethno centric views of other Muslim groups of so-called higher status who accorded the lower social position to them.[104]

For achieving higher social status *Nashya* followed the path of Islamization in various aspects of their social-cultural life even in naming and designating their own community. They claimed themselves as *Nashya-Sheikhs* to elevate their social position within the larger framework of the Muslim society. They have adopted the title sheikh in the ground of their affiliation to Pirs who happened to be the said social (ethnic) category. Apropos the Sufi sheikh they named their community *Nashya Sheikhs* and thereby justified their social position in the local society. But the high-status Muslims in general are not ready to accept the Nashya Sheikhs at their par. This is because of the fact that the *Nashyas* used the title 'Sheikh' as a suffix, but not as a prefix, which has been a normal practice among the higher status Sheikhs of India. This debate and counter-debate lead to a very complex social situation and it motivated the *Nashya* community to think about themselves in respect to their social position in Muslim Society.[105]

A cultural-duality is extremely visible in *Nashya* community. As a Muslim group, the *Nashya* have been Islamizing some of their cultural traits to get a social status (recognition) within the larger framework of Muslim society, and for this they interact with the other Muslim groups of their locality. On the socio-religious level the *Nashyas* cultivate the traits of Islamic great tradition for achieving a wider Muslim identity. The institutions through which they cultivate the Islamic great tradition are the Mosques and Madrashas. In recent times the most important organization of the *Nashyas* is *Tablique-Jamat*. This is purely a religious mission and a movement, and its basic goal is religious devotion rather than *jehad*. While on the other hand, the backward socio-economic condition of the *Nashyas* and the

ethno-political situation of the region have made them ethnicity conscious, and forced them to sink into the cell. As a matter of fact, on the politico-cultural level the *Nashya* emphasized to revive and cultivate the traditional cultural traits of their pre-Islamic past as a mark of their ethno-cultural identity and community solidarity. The media through which they revitalize their tradition are dialect, material culture, food habit and various elements of the little tradition. These they follow along with their non-Muslim neighbours. For various reasons an ethnic trend is getting prominence in the Nashya society. A very small section of their leadership has been demanding Kamatapuri language as their mother tongue. These two social processes of different nature i.e., universalistic Islamization (Muslimization) and particularistic traditionaliz-ation among the *Nashya* of the present times. These unique features of social organization and cultural dualism are maintained by them through the process of compartmentalization.[106]

The socio-economic life of the *Nashya* which we have examined in the foregoing sections clearly reveals that they have been suffering from the stigma of backwardness. Their low social position, lack of educational advancement, political marginalization and inadequate representation in the fields of trade, commerce and government service have put them into a precarious social position and emerging ethno-political situation of the country made the *Nashya Sheikhs* ethnic as well as class conscious. This mind-set has motivated them to sink into the cell. As a result, socio-politically the *Nashyas* have been emphasizing to revive their indigenous cultural traits of pre-Islamic past as a mark of their ethnic identity and community-based class solidarity. The media which they follow along with their neighbouring non-Muslim communities are the Rajbangsi. The emerging ethno-political movement of North Bengal and neighbouring areas of North-East India as well as other parts of the country have made a great impact on the *Nashya* community. The backward class movement and the State recognition of the OBCs have also influenced the said society. In

recent times the *Nashya Sheikhs* living in different parts of North Bengal are very much aware of their ethnic, social, economic and political positions. Various obstacles to social uplift gradually strengthen their 'in-group' ('we') feeling. This has made them ethnic as well as class conscious. Consequently, ethnicity is getting prominence in the *Nashya* society.[107]

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 is very often noticed at a local and regional levels. The most notable among them is Uttar Bongo *Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti* (UBAMSS). The samiti is Government Registered Social Organization of OBC Muslim in West Bengal (Reg. No. S-95179). The community leader of the *Nashya Sheikh* sans many other Muslim groups are now the active members of UBAMAA 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 leader of the samity is ended very successful in scheduling the *Nashya Sheikh* as one of the Muslim OBC group in West Bengal (Notification No. 84-BCW/RC-302/97, dated 1 march 1999). 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 benefits.

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.[108]

Ethnically, most of the Muslims of the district are not very different from the indigenous Rajbanshi's or Paliyas but they are undoubtedly Muslims who show signs of foreign extracts" (Page -88). There are many other observations which go to show that the physical features, socio-cultural characteristics of the Koch, Rajbanshi's (Scheduled Caste) resemble with those of their Muslim counter-parts here, majority of whom have been converted from the Rajbanshi's. Deeds of land produced show the names recorded as Saban Nashya, Jamir Nashya, Sayam Nashya etc. All the above records and evidences to show that they are an identifiable low social Muslim community who in the past four centuries have emerged as a result of conversion from the low ranked communities (Rajbanshi, Koch, Paliya). They speak the local Rajbanshi dialect in North Bengal. Their lifestyle resembles in every respect, such as, dress, food, occupation, physical features, beliefs, customs, socio cultural and economic activities etc. with the Rajbanshi and the Paliyas. Although the *Nashya Sheikhs* are Muslims they have still retained their traditional customs, rites and rituals followed in connection with birth, marriage, death and on different festive occasions. Majority of them live in villages. A few, who reside in Town due to their employment there, still have close connection with their relatives and fellow people in villages.[109]

The above social positions were changed artificially. If the financial situation improves, if you get education, if you join the government service or the army, if they became disciples of the Pir, many would declare themselves aristocrats. And the easiest way to do this was to take the title. Sheikh, Khan, Lashkar, Mamud, Syed, etc. used to express

their aristocracy by taking titles and removing their inferiority. In this context, a few proverbs can be mentioned.

"Roza Namaz kori keho Hoilo Gola.

Taman Koriya Nam Bosailo Jola.

Bolod Bahiya keho Bolay Mukeri.

Pitha Bechiya Nam keho Bolay Pithari."

"Agea thake Ulla shese hoi Uddin

Toler Mamud Upore Jay Kopal fere Joddin."

"Last year I was a Jola, this year I will be a Sheikh and next year I will be a Syed."

This process of social mobilization can be observed in the case of the nasal population of North Bengal. They were annoyed by the title and address of Nashya. At one point they adopted the title of 'Sheikh', abandoning the title of fallen or degraded. All the saints who came to preach Islam in the region were identified as Sheikh Muslims. As a disciple of this Sheikh, the local *Nasyas* also began to identify him as Sheikh. The son of Ghuyagru Nashya is Pierre Mamud Sheikh. But there was a difference. Foreign elite Muslims used to mention Sheikh before the name - such as 'Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi'. But non-native Muslims usually used to mention Sheikh at the end of the name. However, evidence has been found that some people used the word Sheikh even before the name. Again, in the early twentieth century there was a rumour that those who would use the sheikh would become Shia Muslims. Due to this rumour, many people gave up the title of Sheikh and adopted the Shariah-compliant Islamic titles of Ali, Uddin, Hossain, Rahman etc.

Notes & References:

[1]Goutam, Guha Roy, 'Uttorer Musolman Jonosamaj: Abhinno Utsoho', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Musolman Samaj o Sanskriti*, edited by Parthapratim Mallick, Sreejoni Dhara Sahitya o Sanskriti Bisoyok Patrika, Jalpaiguri, 2013, p.28.

[2]Bishnu, Prasad Mukhapadhaya, 'Uttarbanger Muslim Janagosthir Samajik Baichitra Abang Nashya Sekh Sampradyaya Ekti Alochona', *Itihas Anusandhan-15*, Paschim Banga Itihas Samsad, Kolkata, 2001, pp.313-319.

[3]Bajole, Rahaman, 'Uttarbonger Muslim Somroday: Pochichoy Sondhan', (in Bengali), *Oitije o Itihase Uttarbang*,Edited by Ichamuddin Sarkar, N.L. Publishash, Assam, 2002, pp.134-135.

[4]Ibid. p.136.

[5]Abdur, Rahaman Siddiqe, *Barendrabhumir Chirachorito Basinda-Bangladeh*, Bangla Accademy, Decca, 1985, p.29.

[6]Rameshchandra, Majumdar, *Bangladesher Itihas*, (Prothom Porba-Prachinyug), (in Bengali), Kolkata, 1943, p. 107.

[7]Nazrul, Islam, *Musolmander Koronio*, (in Bengali), Mitra and Ghosh Publisher, Kolkata, 2019, p.76.

[8]Niharanjan, Roy, *Bangalir Itihas- adiporba*, (in Bengali), Kolkata, pp.151-155.

[9]Atul, Sur, *Bangla o Bangalir Biborton*, (in Bengali), Sahityalok, Kolkata, 1994, p.182.

[10]Minaj-uddi-Siraj,*Tabaqat-e-Nasiri*, translated by A.K.F., Jakariya, Bangla Accademy, Decca, 1864, p.344.

[11]Sukhomay, Mukhopadhyay, *Banglay Muslim Adhikarer Adiporba*, (in Bengali), Sahityalok, Kolkata, 1988, p.61.

[12]Minajuddi, Siraj, *Tabaqat-e-Nasiri*, translated by A.K.F., Jakariya, Bangla Accademy, Decca, 1864, p.345.

[13]Sukhomay, Mukhopadhyay, *op. cit.*, p.87.

[14]Najrul, Hoque, *Uttorbanger Loksahityar Nritarthik o samajtarthig somikha*, (in Bengali), Bangla academy, Decca, 2007, p.43.

[15]Fujale, Rabbi, *Banglay Musolman*, (in Bengali), Bangla Accademy, Decca, 1995, p.87.

[16]Goutam, Guha Roy, *op.cit.*

[17]Ibid.

[18]Anirudha, Roy and Ratnabali, chattopadhyay, *Madhyoyuger Banglar samaj o sanskriti*, (in Bengali), K.P. bagchi Publication, Kolkara, 2001. P. 26.

[19]Goutam, Guha Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[20]Papaya, Dutta, Caste, *Society and Politics of North Bengal, 1869-1977*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, West Bengal, 2011. pp. 25-27.

[21]J.F. Grunning, *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers, Jalpaiguri*, 1911, p.45-46.

[22]Ranajit, Dasgupta, *Economy, Society and Politics in Bengal: Jalpaiguri 1869-1947*, Oxford University Press 1992, p.9.

[23]J.F. Grunning, *op.cit.*,p. 46.

[24]Census of India 1911, vol.5, part-I, chapter xi, p.446 by O'Malley; Harendra Narayan Choudhury, *Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar State Press, 1903, p.l20-121; Bazley Rahman, *Uttarbanger Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali) Kolkata 2008, p.44.

[25]Nirmal, Kumar Basu, *Hindu Samajer Gadan*, (in Bengali) reprint 1391 B.S. publication,Calcutta, p.142-147.

[26]Madhuparna, Guha, 'Binsha Shataker Uttarbanger Samaj Andoloner Khandachitra' (in Bengali) *Itihas Anusandhan*, vol-16, Kolkata, p.450-454.

[27]J.F. Grunning, *op.cit.*, p.ll7-118; J.A., Milligan, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement operations in the Jalpaiguri District 1906- 1916*, pp.l08-109.

[28]Ranajit, Dasgupta, *op.cit*.,p.19.

[29]J.F. Grunning, *op.cit*.,p.55.

[30]*W.B. District Gazzatteers, Jalpaiguri*, 1971, p.86.

[31]*W.B. District Gazzatteers, Jalpaiguri*, 1981, p.77.

[32]H.N. Chowdury, *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Koch Behar State Press, 1930, p.120.

[33]Upendranath, Barman, *Rajbanshi Khatriyo Jatir Itihas- Bhasa Khando*, (in Bengali). 1361. p. 19.

[34]W.W. Hunter, *A statistical Account of Bengal*, vol.VIII, p.40.

[35]Atul, Sur, *op. cit*., p.54.

[36]Fajole , RabbiKhondokar, *Banglar Musolman*, Translate by Abdur Razzak, Bangla Accademy, Dacca, 1968, pp.130-39.

[37]Nazrul, Islam, *Banglay Hindu-Musolman Samporko*, (in Bengali), 1401, p. 62.

[38]Ashim, Roy, *Islam and Enviroment in Medieval Bengal*, Ph. D. Thesis, National University Canberra, 1970, p.116.

[39]W. Adam, *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835-8*), (ed.), Basu, A.N., Calcutta University, 1941, p. 135.

[40]Francis, Buchanan Hamilton, A *New Account of the East Indies etc,* vol. 2, *(ed), W. Forster,* London, 1930, p.25.

[41]J. A. Vas, *W. B. District Gazetteers, Rangpur*, (ed.), Allahabad, 1911, p. 221.

[42]H. Taylor, A *Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, 1971, p.243.

[43]Herbert, Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal,*vol. II, Calcutta, 1891, p.78.

[44]Fazle, Rubbie Dewan Khan Bahadur, *The Origin of the Musulmans of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1895, pp.21-35.

[45]Ashim, Roy, *op.cit.*, pp. 120-125.

[46]J. F.Gruning, *District Gazetteers of Eastern Bengal and Assam* : *Jalpaiguri*, (ed.), J.N. Gupta, Allahabad, 1910, Jalpaiguri, pp.49-50.

[47]Herbert, Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal,* vol. 1, 1892, pp.45-65.

[48]Ibid.

[49]H. Beverley, *Report on the Census of Bengal*, London, 1872, p.131.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ashim, Roy, *op. cit*., pp.126-128.

[52]Ibid.pp.129-135.

[53]Ibid.pp.136-138.

[54]M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, pp.122-130.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid.

[57]J. A. Vas,(ed), *District Gazetteers of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Rangpur,* Allahabad, 1911, p.121.

[58]Ashim, Roy, *op. cit.*, pp.138-146.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Abdul, Humayun hai, *Muslim sonskarok o Sadhok*, (in Bengali), Bangla Academy, Decca, 1976, p.15.

[61]Ibid. p.17.

[62]Ibid. p.19.

[63]Bipul, Mandal, *Uttorbanga Charcha*, (in Bengali), Bangiya Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 2015, p.85.

[64]Sukhomay, Mukhopadhyay, *Bangla Muslim Adhikare Adiparba*, (in Bengali), Sahityalok, Kolkata, 1988, p. 61.

[65]Bipul, Mandal, *op. cit*., pp.84-92.

[66]Ibid. p.86.

[67]Ibid. p.87.

[68]Bajle, Rahaman, *Uttorbanger Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali), Shreshtha Publication, Kolkata, 2008, p.26.

[69]Bipul, Mandal, *op. cit*., pp. 84-92.

[70]Dhananjay, Roy, *Bangladesher Uttorpantio Sanskritik Itihaser Dhara*, (in Bengali), Amar Bharati, Kolkata, 2008, p.29.

[71]Ibid.p.30.

[72]Malay, Sankar Bhattacharya, *Uttor Dinajpurcharcha*,(in Bengali)Nandita, Kolkata, 2013, p. 56.

[73]Dhananjay, Roy, *Dinajpur Jelar Itihas*, (in Bengali), K. P. Bagchi publication and Company, Kolkata, 2006, p.56.

[74]Bipul, Mandal,*op. cit*., pp.84-92.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Tapan, Kumar Biswas, *'*Nashya Sekh Namak Musalman Samaj ki Agiyea Jete Parbe*?'*, *Uttar Banga Sambad, (*in Bengali)on 27th August 2015, p.7.

[79]Nabiul,Islam, 'Nashya Sheikhs of North Bengal in Historical Perspectives: A study of Ethnicity & Identity Danamic', *Karatoya, North Bengal University Journal of History*, Vol-10, March 2017, pp. 95-112.

[80]Fulchad, Barman, 'UttarbangerRajbansi Muslim Samaj: ProsangoNashyaSekh', (in Bengal) *Angikar, (*Sharad Sankhya),Arbinda Press, Cooch Behar, 1417(Bengali Year), pp.181-184.

[81]Sarat, Chandra Ghoshal, *A History of Cooch Behar* (Translated from original Bengali) Amanatullah, ChudharyKhan, 'Coochbeharer Itihas', *(Ed)* Hiten Nag, National Library, Siliguri, Reprint, 2005, pp.257-259.

[82]Ibid.

[83]*Land Document of Tungru Nashya, Asaru Nashya, Piyar Mamud Sheikh,* (Koch Behar State in 1901).

[84]Fulchad, Barman,*op.cit.*

[85]Bishnu,Prasad Mukhopadhyaya, *op. cit*.,p.315.

[86]Ibid.

[87] Francis, Buchanan Hamilton, *op. cit.*,p.l25.

[88]Minajuddin, Siraj,*op. cit.*

[89]Sarat, Chandra Ghoshal, *op. cit.*

[90]Minajuddin, Siraj, *op. cit.*

[91]Bishnu, Prasad Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit*., p.314.

[92]Ibid.p.315.

[93]Ibid.p.316.

[94]Rahim, 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.314-315.

[95]Rahim, Mondal, *op. cit*.,p.315.

[96]Ibid.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Rahim, 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.

[99]Ibid. p.316.

[100]Ibid.p.317.

[101]Rahim, 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.318-322.

[102]Ibid.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Ibid.

[108]Ibid.

[109]*West Bengal commission forBackward Classes Report-8*, 29th Oct, 1997.

CHAPTER - III

ISLAM AS PRACTISED BY NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL

CHAPTER- III

ISLAM AS PRACTISED BY NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL

In terms of the partition of India in 1947, what is meant by 'North Bengal' is 'Bengal' north of the Ganges. Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Cooch Behar are included in North Bengal. West Bengal is the name of an integral state; officially and politically, the name North Bengal is unimportant. Yet in human terms, the expression of human emotion is gradually being incorporated into government approval; As a result of which the North Bengal Development Board has been formed, North Bengal State Transport Corporation (N.B.S.T.C.) has been formed. Not the boundaries of a state, not the boundaries of a district, not the boundaries of a country; Outside of these boundaries, there is no doubt that those who seek to bind the northern part of small West Bengal to a new boundary will indirectly nurture separatism. Reviewing the history, it is clear that the Muslim population in India today is less than a thousand years old. The spread of Islam began with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the Arabian Desert at the end of the 6th century AD and his subsequent prophet hood from the meditation of God. Although the advent of Islam in India was in the early eighth century, the spread of Islam in India and Bangladesh started from the first half of the thirteenth century AD. The dawn of Islamic rule and expansion of Islam in Bangladesh dawned in 1202 AD after the conquest of Bengal by Ikhtiyar Uddin Muhammad-bin Bakhtiyar Khalji.[1]The first arrival of Islam in North Bengal took place in 1208 AD with the help of Ali Mech, a local resident, when Muhammad Bhaktiyar set out on an expedition to Tibet.

The Muslim population in North Bengal continued to grow steadily in the following centuries as a result of continuous Muslim invasions and internal racism since 1208 AD. However, historical analysis shows that the role of *Pir. Auliyas* in the spread of Islam in North Bengal was greater than that of Islamic invasions and campaigns. Thousands of men and women converted to Islam, believing in the '*Kudrat'* and *'Jawhud'* of the medieval *Pirs.* It is true that the physical constitution and caste of the Arab and Central Asian invaders do not match with the physical constitution and caste of the Muslims of North Bengal in most cases. On the other hand, after the partition of the country in 1947, the physical resemblance of the Muslims of North Bengal with the Hindu Bengalis who came from East Bengal was less, but no resemblance was found with the local dynastic community.

Meaning and Principles of Islam:

The word 'Islam' is derived from the Arabic root *'SLM'* that etymologically signifies 'security, peace, submission and obedience'. In the view of religion, the word Islam indicates submission to the will of '*Allah'.* (The Almighty, all knowing and the most powerful) and obedience to His laws with the end to establish peace through ensuring the right way of life) It is revealed in another notion that Islam, to begin with, was much more than a religion, a social revolution. It created, among the followers, what we call today social consciousness towards the weaker sections of the society and sensitized them towards their sufferings.

The word Islam means 'peace' and the word Muslim mean 'Surrender'. This surrender is not to any individual, not even to the Prophet Hazrat (sm), this surrender is only to the great God. One God, '*Allah'*, one prophet 'Hazrat Muhammad (sm)', one scripture '*Koran'*, one pilgrimage-place-Mecca, these are the main features of Islam. The five main pillars on which Islam stands are a) *Kalama* b) Prayers c) Fasting d) *Zakat* and e) *Hajj*. Above all, prayers have been described in the *Qur'an-Hadith* as the key to Islam. The brotherhood of Islam, founded on Semitic and modern religious theories, is very strong. In

order to keep this bond of brotherhood strong and intact, every Friday prayer has been described in Islam as 'obligatory' for every adult male. It is also mentioned in the *Hadith* that, “It is possible for the poor people for whom it is difficult to perform *Hajj* to earn the same virtue (religion) of *Hajj* through every Friday prayers.

The principal bases on which the Islamic system is founded are (1) a belief in the unity, immateriality, power, mercy and supreme love of the Creator; (2) charity and brotherhood among mankind; (3) subjugation of the passions; (4) the outpouring of a grateful heart to the Giver of all good; (5) accountability for human actions in another existence.[2]The cult in Islam is also very simple and established on five fundamental principles, viz (i) Professing of *Kalema* (faith) that there is no other God but Al(ii) Performance of *Salat or Namaz* (prayer),lah while Mohammad (PBUH) is His Prophet, (iii) Arduous accomplishment of *Siyam or Roza* (fasting) during the Arabic month of Ramadan, (iv) Payment of *Zakat* by the riches and (v) Celebration of *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Holy Macca) by them who are able to do So.[3]

The dogma of Islam also rests on seven basics convictions, viz (a) Belief in *Allah* (God), (b) Belief in *Farestas* (angles), (c) Belief in the Holy Books (scriptures appeared to the Prophets from Allah), (d) Belief in His *Paigambars* (apostles), (e) Belief in *Kiamot* (destruction of the universe), (f) Belief in *Akhira*t (resurrection after death and the award of paradise or hell on the basis of last judgement), and (g) Belief in *Takdir* or luck that indicates good and evil occur as predestined by *Allah.*

According to the proclamation of Almighty *Allah,* Islam has been introduced as the only religion for the mankind since the beginning of human race in the world. But the preaching of Islam has been completely established through the ultimate Prophet *Hazrat* Muhammad (PBUH), to whom the holiest scripture '*Quran'* is appeared. The Holy *Quran* is considered as the ultimate guide to the believers for ensuring universal and eternal peace. The

essence of the ethical principles of Islam is summarized in it where Allah Himself declared, "there is no doubt in this book- a guidance to the pious who believe in the Unseen, observe the prayers, and distribute (charity) out of what We have bestowed on them; and who believe in that which We have commissioned thee with, and in that We commissioned others with before thee, and who have assurance in the life to come; - these have received the direction of their Lord".[4]

However, generally the followers of Islam are called Muslim, but in real implication Muslim is he who cordially believes the supreme authority of Allah, orally admits Him as the Only Creator and Master of the whole universe, completely surrenders to His will and also submits to His divine injections.

The ideal society in Islam is called *Umma* that inspires the follower of Islam to agglomerate universally in ensuring their common interests. The *Umma* is therefore, a society in which a number of individuals possessing a common faith and belief come together in harmony with the intention of advancing and moving towards common goal. Its social system is based on equality and justice. The great tradition of Islam is founded on a worldview that is apparently non-hierarchical and historical in ethos. Islam has oriented towards holistic principle of social order. Islamic holism is based on the equality of Muslim *Umma* i.e., the brotherhood and collectively among the believers. The unity transcends the boundaries of territory and nation. It advocates for one nation of the believers' i.e., the Millat. The holistic principle that is the core in the notion of *Umma* and *Millat* has a radical egalitarian connotation. Existence of caste and class and the domination of individual over society or vice versa are alien to the social life in Islam. Islam permits a constructive interaction between the· individuals and the society on the basis of social solidarity and mutual responsibility. Islam admits for vast collective social life of man for constituting a society.[5]

Islam is not simply a religion but a complete code of life. It provides a framework for perfect way in every sphere of life and envisages a definite pattern of society that has its own mode of social interactions. As per Islamic notion the multitudes of people who collectively form a society are related to each other, at least in terms of belief and faith. Their equality by birth before God is palpably recognised by Islamic social norms.

Islam never recognizes any social division and distinction on the basis of ethnicity, lineage and occupation rather it regards all human beings to be equal and descendants of common ancestors. Thus, there is neither a difference of high and low nor of pure and impure. Islam follows the guideline that is proclaimed by Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) in his speech on farewell sermons:

"No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab,

Nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab,

Nor a white man has any superiority over a black man,

Nor a black man has superiority over a white man,

All are children of Adam,

And Adam was created from clay".[6]

Islamic egalitarianism is based on brotherhood, unity, sympathy, sacrifice and cooperation. The Holy *Quran* declares, "Verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood and Allah Himself is your Lord and Charioteer.[7] In principle, Islamic society is egalitarian in orientation. It seeks to establish a kind of egalitarian and un-exploitative social order with remarkably tolerant attitude towards other faiths and knowledge in permissible areas. Morality and humanity are the main focus of Islam. It helps in integrating diverse social elements within a single whole for establishing a social system based on justice and setting conflicting groups on the path of competition for virtue. The virtuous living according to Islam includes alleviation of the suffering of others, rendering assistance to the needy,

good neighbourliness and maintenance of peace in the society. Hence it appears that Islam emphasizes the need of a universal social order based on collectively and interaction of all mankind through their interrelations and interactions for virtuous living.[8]

The structure of social life in Islam is lofty, sound and comprehensive. Its substantial elements comprise sincere love for human beings, respect for the elders, mercy for the younger, comfort and consolation for the distressed, feeling of brotherhood for the sake of social solidarity etc. According to Islam a Muslim must maintain the following civility in his society: (1) when he meets with another Muslim, he should salute him in prescribed manner i.e., by saying "*Aas-Salamo-Alaykum Aur Rahamatullah"* means "May the peace of God be upon you". Similarly in return of salute from another Muslim he should reply *"Oa-Alaykum-Assalam Aur Rahamatullah"* means "May the peace of God be upon you too", (2) when another Muslim desires help from him, he should assist; (3) when another Muslim seeks advice from him, he should give him advice; (4) when another Muslim falls seek, he should visit and enquire about him; (5) when another Muslim dies, he along with other Muslims should attend his funerals; and (6) when another Muslim sneezes and says, *"Alhamdu-lillah"* means "Praise is due to . *Allah"*, he should follow the prayer and must say *"Yar-hamu-kallah"* means "Allah have mercy on you".[9]Islam conceives universe as a single whole and not compartmentalized into the realms with divergent laws. The basic teaching of Islam is the unity of God and Universe. The unity of God symbolizes the uniformity of the laws in nature. The unity within the diversity is one of the most important goals of Islamic messages. Islam does not intend to impose uniformity of culture in all its details, nor does it seek to break the regional and local traditions as which are considered God's creation and eco-culturally determined. The customary practices are also recognized beyond obligatory performances and taboos as per Islamic dictations. This discussion includes rites and ceremonies practised by the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim of North Bengal as a part of their culture. The great tradition of

Islam as well as little tradition of the *Nashya Sheikhs* where they are settling has been blended perfectly in their way of life. It is observed that life cycle rituals are performed at the household level whereas the Islamic religious practices are the joint responsibility of household and community. Islamic religion plays a vital role in every sphere of their life. Four distinct theological divisions are found in Islamic· religion viz., *Hanafi, Safei, Maleki* and *Hambeli.* The Nashya are *Sunnis* and follow the tradition of *Hanafi* School. In social-religious matters they follow the guidelines of the *Barelvi* School (Madrasha) of thought. But in recent times the *Deobandi* School (Madrasha) of thought through Tableau activities has made a significant impact on them. The belief in *Pirism* is still a typical feature among them. Thus they are affiliated to the Muslim saints or Pirs. The *Nashyas* celebrate all the major Muslim festivals and perform the basic religious rites and ceremonies. But they tend to accept without much criticism the traditional social customs, which have passed to them from the previous generation. This continuity of little traditions facilitates them to integrate and assimilate the local society dominated by the Hindu Rajbansis. On the socio-religious level the *Nashya* cultivate the traits of Islamic great tradition to operate within the framework of wider Muslim society. The process of Islamization helped them in achieving a social position within the structure of a Muslim Society in Bengal. Local Moktabs, madrasas and masjids (mosques) which are either associated with the Barelvi or the Deobandi traditions play a very significant role in Islamizing the *Nashya* community. They try to maintain the principle of equality and justice as these are. ·advocated by the prophet Muhammad. They do not believe in the intermediaries or pirs between the prophet and the common people. They are very particular in religious performances as prescribed in Islam. The most important religious activities of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community are noted below.[10]

Kalema:

Kalma, kalema means sentence, which is reliance *(astabakya).* The main sentence of Islam is mantra, which is not to become a Muslim without believing. The pen is the first of the five acts that are obligatory for Muslims in the Qur'an. The other four: prayers, fasting, *zakat,* and Hajj. These are obligatory for Muslims to practice, which is also a prerequisite for faith. The oneness of God and the belief in the prophet hood of Muhammad by reciting or reciting the Kalama is not just a belief; it is also a matter of practice. Kalma is to be recited in Arabic. Generally, it is the duty of every Muslim to learn the scriptures arranged in four or five stanzas. Kalma is the seed mantra of Islam: *'La ilahaillallah Muhammadur Rasulullah'*. In English it is as follows: 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger.' Even if he does not know this very word, he cannot be called a Muslim. If someone wants to become a Muslim after converting to Islam, he has to read Islam.[11]

Namaz:

Namaz means prayer to God or Allah. The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim believes in single God. Prayer to God is made at various occasions. Depending upon the occasion and time, the name of *Namaz* varies. Daily prayer is performed five times a day. These are called *Fozor, Johor, Ashar, Magrib and Esha* and performed in the early morning·, noon, afternoon, evening and night respectively.

Table 3.1

Religious calendar of the Nashya Sheikh is shown hereunder:

Activity	Name	Periodicity	Time	Place of Performance
Prayer	FozorNamaz	Daily	Morning	Home, open area and Mosque
,,	Johor Namaz	Daily	Noon	Home, open area and Mosque
,,	AsharNamaz	Daily	Afternoon	Home, open area and Mosque
,,	MagribNamaz	Daily	Evening	Home, open area and Mosque
,,	Esha Namaz	Daily	Night	Home, open area and Mosque
,,	Jumma Namaz	Weekly (Friday)	Noon	Mosque
„	Eid Namaz (d-ui-Fitar)	Annual	Morning	ld-gaha
„	Eid Namaz (Eid-ud-Zoha)	Annual	Morning	ld-gaha
Purification	Ojhu	Before performing prayer	-	-
Fasting	Raja	Annual	Day Long	-
Pilgrimage	Haj	Once in a life time		Mecca

Monotheism and performance of *Namaz* are also found among the followers of Islam. But a distinction is made between the *Nashya Sheikh* and other Muslims of their locality. The other Muslims loudly pronounce "*Amin"* whereas the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims speak "*Amin"*

not so loudly. Nevertheless, the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim places their hands-on belly whereas other Muslims do it on the chest.[12]

Apart from daily *Namaz* they perform a weekly prayer called *Jumma Namaz*. It is held on *Jumma* day or Friday. On other festivals like *Eid-ul-fetar* and *Eid-ud-zoha* they also conduct special prayers or annual prayers. On the death of any person of their community they perform the funeral prayer of *Janaza Namaz.* The male members participate in the prayer outside as well as inside the house whereas the females perform only at home except on id days. *Imam* or *Maulabi* or the religious head of the mosque or of a particular community supervised the weekly and annual as well as farewell *Namaz.* Daily prayer is done by the individuals themselves.

Ohju:

Ohju is a ritual purification of the body. According to the Islamic *Shariat*, Purification of Hand, Leg and Mouthpiece are Called *Ohju.* Normally it is done before prayer or *Namaz* by the followers of Islam. There are four obligatory acts of *Ohju*: washing the face with clean water, washing both hands up to the elbows, wiping a quarter of the head with wet hands and washing both feet including the ankles. *Qur'anic* instruction (Sura *Mayida 5:6*) on *Ohju*: O you who believe! When you stand up for prayer, wash your face and hands up to your elbows, turn your hands over your head, and wash your feet up to the ankles. If you are unclean, you will be especially clean. If you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes out of the bathroom or are accompanied by his wife and do not get water, then *Tayyum* will cover it with clean soil and turn it over with his face and hands. The *Shari'ah* has provided for the use of soil or sand if there is no water for ablution anywhere.[13]Not only in mosques, but also in offices, courts, schools, colleges, universities, and even on trains - wherever there is a separate place of prayer, there is an arrangement for performing *ohju*. In case of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims it is observed that after urination *ohju* is done. Even a highly educated (M.

A. and teacher of a college) person of *Nashya Sheikh* Community taking a mug of water while he goes to the urinal, at least when at home.

Roja:

Roja or fasting is considered by the members of *Nashya Sheikh* Community as an aspect of religious devotion. Attachment with the religion of Islam is tightening through the observance of *Roja*. It is not binding to each and every member of their community. Those who can stay on fasting the whole day performed *Roja*. *Roja* is observed in the month of *Ramjan* or the ninth month of Islamic calendar. Fasting this month is one of the five basic principles in Islam. Throughout the month of Ramadan, fasting is observed from morning to evening. In Arabic it is called fasting or fasting. The word fasting means abstinence. You have to eat some food before sunrise. He is called *Sehri*. *Sehri* should be completed before the obligatory or morning prayers. At one time, people in small groups shouted and told the neighbours that it was time to eat *Sehri*. He ran out of necessities after Mike sat down in the mosque. But even a few years ago, this scene could be seen in the villages of North Bengal. Now it is time to eat *Sehri* from the microphone of the mosque. Fasting is obligatory for all physically able Muslims. Fasting is not obligatory for children, the sick, menstruating women and breastfeeding women. However, it is obligatory to make up for it by fasting at any time later. Then fast silently all day. There are no rules for swallowing. After hearing the *Maghrib* Azan in the afternoon, one has to break the fast by breaking the fast. The rule of eating a glass of water or sherbet and dates or any other food to break the fast. The name of the episode of breaking the fast is *Iftar*. Then *Maghrib* prayers. After a while, *Tarabi* prayers are to be recited along with *Esha* prayers. At that time the rules of reciting some *surah*s from of the *Qur'an.* During the month of Ramadan, many people finish reading the entire *Qur'an.* Rules of eating full after *Tarabi* prayers. Not only at home, during the month of *Ramadan*, special *Iftar* meals are prepared in food shops or restaurants in Muslim-inhabited areas.

Delicious *Halim* is available in Muslim food shops in North Bengal for one month of Ramadan. The Qur'an (Sura*bakara 2:185*) says: "Whoever finds you in this month let him fast in it." The Qur'an (2:187) gives a clear indication of when and how to have intercourse with a woman during the month of *Ramadan:* 'It is lawful for you to have intercourse with a woman on the night of *Ramadan.*' In the same verse, there is an instruction on how long to eat and drink in *Ramadan*: 'And eat and drink until the white line of dawn appears to you from the black line of night. Then complete the fast till nightfall. ‘Ramadan was also a holy month for pre-Islamic Arabs. Fighting was forbidden during the month of Ramadan. Fasting was introduced long before the advent of Islam in Arabia. Pre-Islamic pagans also fasted in various rituals. Even long before Islam, Jews were allowed to fast one day a week. The first verse of the Qur'an was revealed in the month of *Ramadan*.[14]

Hajj:

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. The literal meaning of *Hajj* is to wish to go somewhere, to make a decision, to go around in a circle. Hajj is a must-do for Muslims. Every able-bodied Muslim is told in the Qur'an to go to Macca for *Hajj* at least once in his life. The Qur'an itself gives detailed instructions on what to do for *Hajj*. All the rituals of *Hajj* have to be completed between the 8th and 12th of the month of *Jelahojja* in the year *Hijri.* Pilgrims are required to take off their clothes and wear two seamless garments as they enter Mecca. The name of this ceremony of changing clothes is *Ehram*. Hajj begins with this ceremony. Then go to the Masjid-al-Haram in Makkah and kiss the black stone *'Hajre Aswad'* on the wall of the *Kaaba* and go around the *Kaaba* seven times. At the end of the circumference, you have to kiss the black stone again. This ritual is called *Tawaf.* About half a mile from *Kaaba,* one has to go to *Safa* hill and start walking up to *Marwa* hill. *Marwa* hill is 100 yards away from *Kaaba.* The distance from *Safa* to *Marwar* is about 450 meters. One has to run seven times between the two hills, which mean a pilgrim has to run about 3.15 km.

It is believed that Ibrahim's wife and son were deported there. This ritual is performed in their memory. Surrounding the *Safa* and *Marwa* hills and the middle road, the camp has now been taken to the Masjid-ul-Haram. Even elevators have been installed to ease the hassle of Hajj pilgrims climbing mountains. After reaching Arafat, they had to spend the night on the ground. Muslims believe that when Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, Satan appeared to deceive them. Millions of Muslims still throw stones every year during the Hajj for the purpose of that devil. *Hajj* is also to be sacrificed in *Mina*. After the sacrifice, the *Hajj* ends with the shaving of the head. *Hajj* pilgrims have to spend a total of three nights in Mina. *Hajj* is basically a pre-Islamic religion. People still used to go for Hajj from far and wide. There were 360 idols around the *Kaaba* till Hazrat Muhammad conquered Mecca and established Islam there. They used to worship those idols as they walked around the *Kaaba.* Even then their main deity was Allah. His idol was also there. After the conquest of Mecca, the statues were smashed at the behest of Muhammad, and all other murals, including Mary and Jesus, were removed. Muhammad then made a code of conduct for the Muslims to perform the *Hajj*. That is how *Hajj* is still celebrated. There is a provision of Hajj for the elderly or infirm, physically handicapped or prisoners in Islam. Call him *Hajj*. Even if someone dies wishing to go for *Hajj* or start organizing, someone can perform *Hajj* instead of him.[15]

Zakat:

Zakat is a compulsory religious gift. *Zakat* is derived from the rule of donating one year's accumulated wealth or part of the profits earned in Islam. *Zakat* is one of the five obligatory acts of Islam. The rule is that one-fortieth of the accumulated wealth must be donated. Muslims believe that *Zakat* frees people's minds from greed, covetousness and miserliness towards wealth. *Zakat* is instructed in many places in the Qur'an. The Qur'an (*Surat al-Baqarah* 2:43) instructs:[16] 'the amount of wealth that is left over is considered obligatory to pay *Zakat*, in Islamic terminology it is called' *Nisab*'. The *Nisab* of gold and

silver is determined by weight. And the calculation of grain or product is based on its price. It is prescribed in the Qur'an to pay *Zakat* for certain earnings and wealth. If a person has additional wealth for at least one year (354 days), one-fourth of that wealth has to be donated as *Zaka*t. The rule of paying *Zakat* at the rate of Rs Two and Half percentage. In the past, the Islamic State used to collect *Zaka*t in Baitul Maal or government treasury. Now it is distributed among the poor. Many people also pay *Zakat* for the development of educational institutions or public welfare.

Maktab and Madrasha:

These are the institutions where Knowledge on religious and secular life of the Muslims is acquired by the children. In the beginning the children were acquainted with Urdu language. Then they are trained to read the holy book Quran written in Arabic language.[17] Techniques of *Sijdah* (bowing down during *Namaz*) are also learnt by the ·children from the *Maktabs* situated in all the *Nashya Sheikh* settlements under study. *Maktab* literally means school. Maktab is the name given to the schools that teach the basics of Islam to the children. Madrasa education started after finishing *Maktab* lessons. In the villages of North Bengal, there are still many *maktabs* in the courtyard of the mosque. The imam of the mosque gives the basic lessons of Islam to the children of the village. Sometimes there is *Maktab* with any Madrasa. Although the West Bengal government approves Madrasa education, there is no such approval in the case of *maktabs*. Maktab has become *Maktab* in common Bengali. There are four levels in the Arab education system: *Maktab*, Madrasa, *Alia*, and *Milia.* In Madrasas languages, 'mathematics and science are taught formally. The· degrees such as, *Hafej, Kari, Aleem, Fazel* etc. are conferred from the Madrasha Board.

Madrasa is a religious school for Muslims. Origin of the word madrasa from the Arabic word *dars*. *Dars* means teaching. Madrasa is where teaching is done. At one time there was a system of teaching in the reserved part of the mosque. At one time a group of

devoted Companions lived there and listened to the words of Hazrat Muhammad. Later more mosques were built and mosque-centric Madrasas were built. Madrasas were established in this country after the advent of Islam. Even in the heyday of modern education, the importance of Madrasa education in Muslim society has not diminished. Rather increased in many cases. Still new Madrasas were built in the villages of Bengal. The first government-funded madrasa in the country was in Calcutta in 1781. The first educational institution set up by the British government was 'Calcutta Alia Madrasa College'. There is a syllabus for BA and MA in Islamic theology. Calcutta Madrasa has been upgraded to a Muslim University and renamed as Alia University. The largest and most respected madrasas in the state are: FurfuraFatehiya Senior Madrasah in Hooghly district, Beldanga Senior Madrasah in Murshidabad district and Batna Senior Madrasa in Malda district. The number of Madrasas in this state is about 15 thousand. Of these, 500 are high Madrasas and 105 are senior Madrasas.

Khariji or *Nizamiya* Madrasas are run entirely on private initiative and with the money of religious donations of the common people. In most of these madrasas there is no specific syllabus. It goes without saying that nothing but religious education is taught. Bengali language is not taught in many places. These Madrasas are mainly for boys. But the days are changing. Some Kharijis now include science, even computer learning, in addition to English and Bengali. These Madrasas are usually residential. Accommodation and tuition of students are all free. As a result, boys from poor families are sent there. Financially, one or two *Khariji* Madrasa fees are closed every year. And there is *Korania* Madrasa. Many also call it *Forkania* Madrasa. Since another name in the Qur'an is *Forkan*. These Madrasas are usually built on the premises of a mosque. Only the Qur'an is memorized there. Students memorize the entire Qur'an for three, five, seven or ten years, depending on their memory. He who memorizes the whole Qur'an is called Hafez in the Qur'an. They can often only memorize, remain ignorant of the meaning or interpretation of the Qur'an.

Masjid:

The mosque is a place of worship for Muslims. Literally means place of prostration. The pagans of the pre-Islamic era also called the place of worship a mosque. In the Qur'an, the word mosque is used to mean the *mosque-ul-haram* of Mecca. *Masjid-ul-Haram* is the mosque in the courtyard of which is the *Kaaba*. Muslims believe that *Masjid-ul-Haram* was built by the first man, the first prophet Adam. That shrine in Mecca was the holy temple of the pagan Arabs. After the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad occupied it and destroyed the idols of all the gods and goddesses there, deleting the images and declaring it the holiest mosque for the Muslims. It is said in Islam that every place is equal to Allah. Prayers can be offered anywhere. The Prophet says that the whole world has been given to him as a mosque. Yet Muhammad himself built the first mosque for Muslims in Medina. That is *Masjidunnabi.* Since then, huge mosques have been built in different countries of the world. In this country too, the Mughal emperors built many huge mosques and showed more splendour and power than they did in relying on Islam. Those mosques now stand as the finest examples of Mughal architecture in the country. It is also the pride of Indian culture.[18]

Very common houses of mosques can be seen in the villages of Bengal. The straw rice mosque is also in sight. However, all mosques have a minaret. Until a few days ago, the muezzin used to climb the minaret and call for prayers. Now all mosques have mics installed in the minarets. As a result, the muezzin no longer has to climb the minaret and call for prayers. On the west wall of the mosque is a semi-circular secluded place. It is called *'Mehrab*'. You have to pray facing the arch. The arch is always to the west, that is, to the Kaaba. All mosques have water for ablution. The mosque is arranged according to its capacity. Ponds, wells, tube wells or any kind of water source are kept. There must be an Imam in the mosque to conduct the prayers. Praying in a mosque is always considered more virtuous than praying alone in one's own house. If it is not possible every day, then at least

the *Jumma* (Friday) bar prayer must be performed in the mosque and standing in the queue. That is what is considered virtue.[19]Islam and the mosque are inextricably linked, as if two backs of the same coin. Therefore, before discussing the mosques of North Bengal, it is advisable to gain knowledge about the rise of Islam in North Bengal.

Whatever the religious reasons, judging from the modern scientific point of view, the importance of Friday prayers is immense in strengthening the bonds of brotherhood and social bonds. People who have been running for personal needs for a week get a chance to take a break and exchange ideas with each other through the weekly *Jumma*. So, the importance of Friday *Jumma* cannot be denied in any way.

Whatever the scientific point of view, it is well known that mosques were created for religious reasons. It is pertinent to note that with the establishment of Islamic rule in Bengal in the thirteenth century AD, the spread of Islam in North Bengal began in earnest during the Husainshahi and Ilias Shahi independent Bengali rulers of Bangladesh towards the end of the Sultanate period. The afternoon of this Islamic expansion was the reign of '*Zindapir*' Aurangzeb's Subadar-Shaista Khan and Mir Jumla Khan. Later, even during the independent Nawabi period, this trend was flowing at a slower pace, which continues to this day.

Although the first mosque in North Bengal was not built by historical sources, it is well known that the first mosque in the world was the Kurapara Mosque in Medina; which was built on 23rd September 622 AD. Although no significant information has been found as to where the first mosque was built in North Bengal, the archaeological significance of the thousands of mosques that exist today throughout North Bengal is immense.

One of the mosques of North Bengal which is of immense archaeological importance is the Barasona Mosque at Gaur which was built by Sultan Nasrat Shah in 1526 AD. The Sheikh Khairullah Mosque, built in 1812 AD, is considered as one of the monumental

architectures of North Bengal. The Kuttitola Mosque, built by the virtuous Mahiyasi Nari Shoara Bewa in Maldah, is one of the oldest mosques in the city. The other mosques in the Maldah district are the Chika Mosque, which stands a little southwest of Kadam Rasmal and stands intact, like the one hundred thousand mausoleums in Pandua. However, many are reluctant to accept this monument as a mosque. Other important mosques in Malda include Lotan Mosque, Gunwant Mosque, Lalbazar Dargah Mosque Today, there are several thousand mosques in the Muslim-majority Malda. Notable among these mosques that still stand as historical witnesses today are the small Dargah or Hazari Dargah Mosque, Qutubshahi Mosque, Eklakhi Samadhi Monument, Futi Mosque, Shank Mohan Mosque, Old Maldah Jame Mosque etc.[20]

The Adina Mosque is one of the historic mosques of Malda district which is still considered as a witness of history as an immortal memorial. 36 domed mosques made of brick and stone. This huge quadrangular monument with 36 domes made of brick and stone was built by Sultan Sikandar Shah in 1369 AD.

Although there are not many historical mosques like Malda in North and South Dinajpur, there are numerous specimens of mosques in these two districts which were built during the Sultanate or Mughal period. Although the mosques at Balurghat, Raiganj, Islampur, etc. are not very old, their craftsmanship cannot be ignored.

Of the six districts in North Bengal, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri have the lowest number of mosques. Although the number of mosques is small in the area adjacent to Alipurduar in Jalpaiguri district, a large number of mosques can be seen in Jalpaiguri, Dhupguri, Mainaguri, Batabari etc. The number of mosques in Darjeeling district is unusual compared to other districts in North Bengal. Although there are several mosques in Darjeeling and Siliguri, their historical significance is not so significant. The construction of mosques has

been in the forefront since the reign of the king of Cooch Behar, a marginal district of North Bengal; so today there are more than one and a half thousand mosques in this small district.

Although the history of expansion and construction of Islam and mosques in Cooch Bihar district is seven to eight hundred years old, for various reasons, no ancient mosque has been found here. A survey here found no mosque more than 450 years old. The reasons behind this may be: (a) financial crisis, (b) mosques may or may not have been built on a solid foundation in the beginning.

The custodians (Muslim emirs) of Cooch Bihar district have recently divided the entire Cooch Bihar district into a total of 48 *Halkas* (mosque-based areas). Sub divisional details of these lights are given in the table below.[21]

Subdivision name	**Halkar name**	**number of mosques**	**Total**
Cooch Bihar	1. Haribhanga	32	
	2. Boragari	20	
	3. Coochbihar	30	
	4. PatlaKhawa	80	
	5. Patchara	27	
	6. Rajpur	09	288
	7. Dewanhat	20	
	8. Shukatabari	70	
Dinhata	9. Peolaguri	31	
	10. Okrabari	27	
	11. Gitaldaha	12	
	12. Ratinandan	10	
	13. Natabari	23	
	14. Chowdhurir Hat	48	

	15. Nayarhat	20	
	16. Fakirtari	32	
	17. Petla	16	
	18. Batrigach	17	
	19. Paharganj	24	
	20. Vetaguri	18	
	21. Kharuvanja	47	
	22. Nazirhat	36	
	23. Garaljhora	12	446
	24. Maheshwar	14	
	25. Sitai	29	
	26. Giridhari	31	
Mathabhanga	27. Nishiganj	17	
	28. Kalpani	16	
	29. Sonarchalu	29	
	30. Bamuniya	32	
	31. Mathabhanga	70	297
	32. Baramaricha	90	
	33. Golenaohati	14	
	34. Ghoksadanga	26	
Tufanganj	35. Balrampur	20	
	36. Natabari	22	
	37. Kaljani	12	
	38. Chilakhana	26	
	39. Mansai	26	
	40. Tufanganj	06	

	41. Takuamari	20	297
	42. Dipurpar	39	
	43. Balabhut	17	
	44. Deocharai	20	
	45. Chotoguma	29	
	46. Dhalpal	60	
Mekhliganj	47. Panishala	70	
	Total		1397

The total number of mosques in 46 *halqas* out of five subdivisions of Cooch Behar district is 1396. The following is a description of some of the traditional mosques mentioned in it.

Sonar ChalunPaglu Bosuniya Mosque:

Jatamari is 7.5 km away from Mathabhanga town along the South Sitalkuchi road. The oldest mosque in the Mathabhanga subdivision is located on the left side of the road, 6 km west of Jatamari along the Sangarbari road. According to the inscription of the mosque and the description of Nurul Islam Bosunia, a descendant of Paglu Bosunia, this mosque, which is more than a century old, is contemporary with the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. The mosque was built by Pagal Basuniya, son of Ganta Basuniya, a resident of Sonar Chalun village, in the late seventeenth century. Built on a land of four *bighas* on about 15 acres of land, this ancient monument has a unique combination of Indo-Persian style of construction. Dome and arch art has been used in the construction of this monument. The ancient mosque, built of terracotta and *chunsurki*, stands out in a dazzling appearance as a marvel of ancient art. The present mosque has about 500 families. Out of these 500 families, a 30-member steering committee has been formed in a democratic manner. Md. Mozammel

Hossain and Abul Kalam Azad Mahasaya are the president and vice-president of this steering committee respectively. Mohammad Anwar Husain Ahmed is the secretary of the steering committee. Talking to the editor, we came to know that they have taken far-reaching and costly steps to maintain the existence of this ancient monument by collecting donations and not any government grant.[22]

Mosque of Nalatu Pramanik in Sitai:

It is known from the inscriptions on the walls of the mosque that this is the oldest religious institution in Cooch Behar district which was built 420 years ago with the music and charity of Nalatu Pramanik. According to mosque sources and Abdullah Pramanik, a descendant of Nalatu Pramanik, the four-century-old mosque was built on five acres of land at one end of a 14-bigha property donated by Nalatu Pramanik. Three large domes and four smaller domes built on the top of the mosque have enlivened the architectural style of the monument. The arched structure of the front door of the mosque adds to the historical significance of its architectural style. The Indo-Persian style of construction is evident in the construction style of the mosque, which is made of ancient bricks and limestone.[23]

MathabhangaJame Mosque (Town Mosque):

The Mathabhanga Jame Mosque is located in the centre of the town of Mathabhanga, just opposite the Madan Mohan Temple built 115 years ago by the generosity of Chowdhury Pasar Mohammad; this monument still stands intact as a shining symbol of holiness. Standing on a 15-acre plot of land on two *bighas* of land, the century-old structure is more striking in its architectural style than in the medieval style. Although one of the features of Islamic art can be seen in the construction of the dome and arch monument, the structure of Bhanna Sadh has given uniqueness in its variety. Adjacent to the south wall of the mosque are two successive burial grounds to the south of the small azan room, about 10 feet high. It is learned

that in one of them Chowdhury Pasar Mohammad has been buried and in the other his wife Unnesa has been buried. Although 10/15 urban families are associated with the mosque, hundreds of devout Muslims perform daily prayers at the mosque, including on Fridays. Although there are few families with the mosque, there is a committee of 10 democratically elected members to maintain and manage the mosque. Mohammad Hanif Miah and Bapi Siddique are the chairmen and secretaries of the committee respectively. Proceeds from stalls and messes built on the land of the mosque are spent on the repair and maintenance of the mosque. Thanks to the generosity of the mosque committee, about 7/8 poor students can study in the mess at low cost which is considered as a part of public welfare.[24]

Dankoba Waqf State Sheikh Amulya Wholesaler's Mosque:

The century-old traditional mosque is located in the village of Dankoba, about three km west of the town of Mathabhanga and about one km south of the Madrasa Chowpatty. The foundation stone of this mosque was laid by the local zamindar Sheikh Amulya Paikar on Friday 1st *Agrahayan* 1329 BS. It is said that Amulya, the owner of 600 bighas (233 acres) of property, built the mosque with 75 *bighas* of land (25 acres) in the name of the mosque. Indo-Islamic artefacts can be found in this ancient monument built on eight hundred acres of land. On the roof of the monument are three large domes, which are a reflection of Islamic craftsmanship. The front door of the monument, built of terracotta (light brick) and *chunsurki*, is in the shape of an arch. The architectural style of this century-old monument is truly captivating and dazzling. Unfortunately, the mosque is still in a state of disrepair due to lack of proper maintenance and repairs, even though about 400 families still perform prayers under the mosque. Locals allege that the mosque is in a state of disrepair due to the weakness and neglect of his daughter's descendants after the death of his son Sheikh Amulya. The mosque is currently overseen by Golzar Hossain Miah, son of Abdul Majid Miah (Amulya's grandson) and local Fazle Karim Miah (Sardar). Besides, there is no committee to run the big

society, there is no democratic system. No tribute is collected from any worshiper. There is no government grant. Descendants of the local Adiyar and Amalya wholesalers are embezzling 75 *bighas* of property in the name of the mosque. According to sources, some descendants of Inam and Amulya wholesalers of the mosque are still getting an allowance of 4.25 per month from the *Waqf* Board. It is pertinent to note that the lion's share of the 600 bighas of Amulya Mian's property has become vest and the descendants are now living below the poverty line.[25]

Nagar Gopalganj Kadar Uddin Waqf State Mosque:

From Mathabhanga town, take the Shitalkhuchi road and proceed 9 km south to the Post Office Bazaar. Nagar Gopalganj village is located 4 km east of the post office market. This mosque, which is almost a century old, was established in this village in 1335 BS with the generosity of 13th Chaitra zamindar KadaruddinMian. Zamindar Kadaruddin, who was reportedly rescued, had more than 1,200 bighas (400 acres) of property. Among them, he donated 351 *bighas* of property in the name of the mosque as *waqf* property. Later, when most of the land of Zamindar Kadar Uddin Sahib became *khas*, all the lands except 45 *bighas* of the mosque became *khas.* In the present situation, there is no cultivable land left under the mosque, all the lands have been evicted by Adiyar. Built on about 12 acres of land, including the veranda, the architectural style of this century-old monument is also unique. The architectural craftsmanship of the mosque is characteristic of the mixed art style. 130 families are socially associated with this ancient mosque. There is a nine-member committee, including Editor Nurul Haque, to manage the mosque. Through the efforts of the committee, this century-old mosque has been able to retain its intact heritage even today.[26]

Bara Maricha Khan Chowdhury Amantullah Ahmed's Mosque:

This ancient mosque, one of the most famous in the Mathabhanga subdivision, was built about a century ago by Amirullah Patwari, the father of Dewan Khan Chowdhury Amanatullah Ahmed, the king of Cooch Behar. The monument is located about 27 km from Mathabhanga, 1 km south of Baramaricha Bazar on the Mathabhanga-Sitai road. The construction style of this monument is a wonderful blend of Indo-Islamic art. Built of terracotta and limestone, the monument's numerous domes and pillars and arched front doors add to its historical significance. Mr. Chowdhury's 18-room house, which is 50 meters south of the mosque, is still standing as a witness of history. There is a huge pond 100 meters to the east of the mosque. According to legend, the area from the pond to the mosque is an excellent example. Although guest houses are wiped out today. According to local sources, the mosque had 32 *bighas* of land in its name but was evicted today. In the absence of the Chowdhury, this ancient mosque is in a dilapidated condition due to financial difficulties and lack of renovation. A committee of 22 democratically elected members is in charge of overseeing the mosque. Md. Badruddin Miah and Bamizuddin Miah are the president and secretary of the mosque respectively. Md. Nur Islam Miah is in charge of the mosque. All the work of the mosque is done from the donations of about 350 families associated with the mosque.[27]

Research and reviews of mosques in North Bengal have shown that there are no clear signs of a mosque being demolished for any reason, as in other parts of India. On the other hand, the mosques that have been built or are being built all over India, even during the Sultanate and Mughal periods, have inevitably been able to give birth to a fertile and mixed art form, known as Indo-Islamic art. The role of the mosques that have been or are being built in North Bengal from the thirteenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century, even in the present century, are by no means insignificant.

Tablig Jamat:

Tabligh Jamaat means preaching, that is, preaching of Religion. *Tabliqh* is to convey the message of Islam to the people. Muslims believe that God sent prophets to earth at different times to preach. In their absence, the followers of the Prophet will continue to preach. To this end, an organization called *Tabligh Jamaat* was formed in Delhi in 1920 on the initiative of Maulana Mohammad Elias.[28] At present, Tabligh Jamaat has become an international propaganda movement across the borders of this subcontinent. *Tabligh Jamaat* has been working all over the world to make Muslims firmly believe in Islam and to inculcate and adhere to the precepts of the religion. The activities of *Tabligh Jamaat* are limited to the Muslim community. Attracting non-worshipers to prayers is also their big job. The world centre of *Tabligh Jamaat* is in Delhi. *Tabligh Jamaat* has offices in all the districts of all the states of India. In many places, their organization is spread at sub-divisional, block and village level. The work of the preachers is centered on the mosque. The preachers call that mosque *Markaz*. Their daily routine is designed in such a way that the preachers can keep in touch with the marquee every day. In this way the work of *Tabligh Jamaat* is conducted by keeping in touch between the regional or local marquees and the central marquees. The preachers think that it is the duty of every Muslim to serve and protect Islam. And this work can be done best through preaching. This work is done in two ways: *Mokami* (regionally or locally) or preaching tour. Preaching can be done in the mosques of a particular area by forming *Mokami Jamaat* with a few people from any region. And one day a week (usually Thursday night) to go to the mosque in your area or the surrounding area and invite Muslims to join in the preaching. In addition, the preachers travel far and wide to preach, even in other states or countries. *Tabligh Jamaat* is also very strong in West Bengal. In addition to making illiterate Muslims in remote villages more devout Muslims, they also teach the lesson of Islamic brotherhood.[29] But this movement is anti-propaganda. The preaching work and the

preaching work go on in such a way that it attracts no attention. As a result, many have no idea about the scope and size of *Tabligh Jamaat.*

Tabligh Jamaat has been expanding its offices in every district of North Bengal in this way. And the illiterate Nashya Sheikh of the remote village has been influencing the Muslims since the establishment of *Tabligh Jamaat.* The main centers of *Tabligh Jamaat* in North Bengal are Suktabari in Cooch Behar district and Shishubari in Jalpaiguri district. From here the work of *Tabligh Jamaat* in North Bengal is controlled. In this way the work of preaching through every mosque in North Bengal is done. Every week, every month and once a year, *Tabligh Jamaat* gathers at Suktabari and Shishu Bari, the headquarters of North Bengal. Here, for three days a week, a few people form a congregation and go out to visit the local area. During these three days, they went from house to house preaching in the area of three mosques in accordance with the teachings of Muhammad. In this way, for ten days in a month, one month in three months, two months in six months and up to four months in a year, the work of *Tabligh Jamaat* is done.

Pir, Ghazi and Darbesh and the Nashya Sheikh Community of North Bengal:

The role of Sufism is significant in the context of the conversion of the *Nashya Sheikh* community, the son of the original land of North Bengal. In this context, the current practice of Sufi *Pir,* ghazis and *Darbesh* is the main topic of discussion for the *Nashya Sheikh* community. Extreme devotion to the *Pir, Ghazi and Darbesh* of the Nashya Sheikh community can be seen in the various parts of North Bengal. The location of these Sufi shrines of *Ghazi* and *Darvesh* in different parts of North Bengal is still prominent today. The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim community of Islam also has an extreme devotion to these mystical fraternal Sufi saints, *ghazis* and *Darbesh,* along with the basic precepts, *kalema*, prayers, fasting, *Hajj* and *zakat*. The entry of this Sufi philosophy is not just for the Sheikh

community. People of Muslim-Hindu community as well as people of all other communities pay equal homage to *Pir, Darvesh* of North Bengal.

There was a time when the common people believed that the saints of *Pi.r Darvesh* had miraculous powers. That belief is not something that has been destroyed in the mind-sets of the people. People from both the Muslim and Hindu communities still know the possibility of these miracles and still seek their help and intervention. They look up to these saints with the strong hope and belief that the *Pirs* can save the people from their hardships and troubles if they wish to, and can also raise the dead. Such is the faith that they bestow upon these P*irs.*

However, in the light of the main discussion, it can be said that there are various folk tales and legends about the famous and infamous *Pir* Fakir Saints of Bengal and a wide area of North Bengal. Memories of their great and noble fame can be found between the dilapidated, half-broken, extinct, half-secret shrines, *Dargah, Chilla* and their inscriptions. Satyapir, Tenapir, Ghorpir, Dhaelapir, Dariyapir, Kalipir, Manikpir, Madaripir (fishes and tortoises) were present here besides Mowajpir, Jaethapir, Dhakarpir, Laengrapir, Chelpir, Sekendarpir, Mokdumpir, Mushkilasaanpir, Akinpir, Shahpir, PirAtaullah etc. People still gather at the shrines or graveyards of various saints, fakirs, saints, irrespective of caste or creed. This reunion took place while they were still alive and their memories are still fresh in our minds. They were respected by Hindus and Muslims. Ekramul Haque (Rh:), the most popular Sufi saint of Haldibari in Cooch Behar district of North Bengal, was the recipient of such homage. His life philosophy and influence remained described.

The famous '*Huzur Sahib'* of Haldibari, Shah Sufi Sayyid Muhammad Ekramul Haq (RA) was one such Sufi saint. He was born in 1851 in the house of Hekim in Jhaljhalia state of Koch Bihar state. Jhaljhalia is located six kilometers south of Tufanganj town. His grandfather was a hakim in the Maharaja's State of Kochbihar State. His father's name was Shahsufi Sayyid Muhammad Ibrahim (Rh), mother Sayyida Hajera Bibi (Rh), and

Grandfather Muhammad Azizar Rahman (Rh). His ancestors are known to have Arab blood.[30]

The reason for their arrival in Koch Bihar is known to be that Mohammad Azizar Rahman (RA) was a resident of Talippur village in Murshidabad district. He came to this kingdom as Raj Hekim. He has lived here since 1839. From an incident of that time, we can know about his expertise in *Hekimi*. During the reign of Maharaja Shivendra Narayan, construction work was going on in the palace. Two masons fell to the ground from above and lost consciousness. The king's doctor examined them and declared them dead. But Muhammad Azizar Rahman (RA) saw them and declared them alive. But where the king's doctors say dead, this sage says alive! As a result, it is necessary to give proof. He covered the bodies of the two men with two bottles of medicine and blankets. After covering them for an hour, he removed the blankets from their bodies and found them alive. He was honoured by the royal government of Koch Bihar and donated more than 500 acres of land as *Lakheraj*.[31]

There are many miraculous stories about the life of Huzur Sahib in the mouths of the people of Haldibari. From there it is difficult to tell the story of his life separately. After spending some time at his grandfather's house, he had to go to his father's house. His father's house was in Punashi village of Murshidabad district. His interest in spiritual matters can be seen in him from an early age. He came in contact with the saints and fakirs in his childhood. As a child, he wore *pajamas-Punjabi* and a hat and prayed five times. He also had the habit of reading other scriptures including the Koran.[32]

A training teacher was arranged for his teaching at an early age. From him he learned to recite Nuh-Saraf, Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh-Usul, Hikmat-Mantik etc. and gained origin of them. Not only that, he also mastered the French language. For higher education he studied at the Government College, Bahrampur. There he studied poetry, physics, chemistry, etc. He was

well versed in *Hakimi* medicine and Sufi philosophy. He was proficient in Persian as well as Bengali and English. His memory was strong. So he received modern education as well as spiritual knowledge. One day in college, a student disrespected his hat. That makes him dissatisfied. He dropped out of college in this incident. He then devoted himself to spiritual pursuits.[33]

His *'Pir'* or guru was Hazrat Sayyid Murshid Al Qadri (RA). From there he returned to his village. Then he came in contact with various Sufi saints. They are: Shah Sufi Sayyed Abdul Aziz Qudsi (Rh), Shahsufi Sayyidfateh Ali Waisi (Rh) and others. From them he gained various spiritual knowledge.[34]

Huzur Sahib then went to *Beaban* forest and started meditating. Sayyid Fateh Ali Waisi (RA) ordered him to meditate on this. He started his pursuit under a mango tree at Sapnikala in Ramganj in Dinajpur district. When his fame spread there, he left the place. He wants to hide himself in the pursuit of God. As a result, he moved to Cooch Behar again. But why would people leave? Here, too, people come to *Jummabar* with their problems and get solutions. But the crowd continues to grow in his reputation. As a result, he had to move again. He devoted himself to the pursuit of the forests, hills, and mountains of *Dwars* and Assam. During this time some other devotees and saints met him. As a result, his storehouse of spiritual knowledge became full. After attaining spiritual pursuits, he returned to Punashi's house.[35]

Huzur Sahib started the spiritual preaching with the permission of Shahsufi Muhammad Fateh Ali Waisi. He preached in a wide area of Dwars and Assam. At that time there were no roads or vehicles like today. Naturally, he had to preach on foot, in ox-carts, and on horseback. When he was older, his disciples carried him on their beds. Not only in Dwars, Assam or North Bengal, he was also a novice in spiritual preaching in 24 Parganas, Nadia, Burdwan, Medinipur, Hughli, Birbhum, Howrah, Bankura, Murshidabad districts.

Moreover, he was tireless in travelling and learning. He visited the shrines of famous Sufi saints in India. He is known to have performed many miraculous abilities in his travels. Many people in different places accepted his discipleship. He has organized many *thawabs, dharmasabhas* etc. in Isal. He gave religious explanations there and also took measures to spread modern education in those places.[36]

At the age of 36, the married life of the lord began. His wife is Sayyida Maryam Nesar. His marriage was consummated through a special event. His father-in-law was Muhammad Sultan, the zamindar of Bamundi village in Burdwan. He holds his daughter, Mary Nesser, in *'Gene*'. He is not well in any treatment. Hearing the fame of the lord, the zamindar took refuge in him. Sir made him well. The zamindar proposed marriage of his daughter to the lord. But will the daughter marry a fakir? This marriage function organised except the relatives of the zamindar. But this marriage is done by the will of the *zamindar babu.*[37]

As mentioned earlier, living a monastic life was not necessary in Sufi practice. Spiritual pursuit can be done beyond the worldly desires even from within the world. So many Sufi saints got married and lived a family life. The same happened in the case of Huzur Sahib. He has five sons and a daughter. The sons are: Shahsufi Sayyid Muhammad MahibdulHaq (Rh.), Shahsufi Sayyid Alhaj Muhammad Mahbubul Haque, Shahsufi Sayyid Muhammad, Malubul Haq, Shahsufi Sayyid Alhaj Muhammad Sirajul Haq and Shahsufi Sayyid. The daughters are HazratSayyida Musa: Jamila Khatun, HazratSayyida Musa: Rahela Khatun, Hazrat Sayyida Musa: Rabia Khatun, Hazrat Sayyida Mahmuda Khatun and Hazrat Sayyida Damusa: Shams Bajega. As a father, he was responsible for his sons and daughters. Again, his sympathy for the inconvenience of the neighbours was equally showered. His characteristic was full of holiness. He has preached the word of God. He has preached

among many devotees. But he had the same vision towards people of all religions irrespective of race or religion.

He explained religion in the light of the Qur'an. "There is no coercion in religion," it said. He preached this message. He is the famous saying of Hazrat Muhammad that if a person tries to harm others, Allah will harm him. Whoever tries to narrow the life of others, Allah will narrow his life. 'In his advice, he also said, "Unite in religion and break unity in unrighteousness.' That is, he advised to follow the path of *Naid.* Another of his advice is particularly noteworthy, the heart is a transparent lake, it has four channels — eyes, ears, mouth, wings, hands and feet.[38] If we use the canals properly, the waves will play in that lake, the merriment will rise; but if we don't do that, that is, if we don't close those drains, it will make the lake worse. He himself was pure in heart and advised his disciples to be pure in heart. He expresses his focus on God in his poems,

"Khodabhinnonahionyojagatersar,

Tahardhiyanemognothakoanibar.

Tri jagatpratinidhihridoyanchale,

Ashile korban karo hridoykomole."[39]

Wherever he has gone, people have found guidance in his message for humanity. Dedication to God is the best way to salvation. Only he who has the qualities of humanity in his heart can dedicate himself to Allah. He has brought man from the complex cycle of darkness to the path of light. People believe that he had the miraculous power to do good to the sick and helpless people.

Mr. Jagatber Sira Hujar of Nilphamari district of present-day Bangladesh has been invited. Huzur Saheb the residents of the area have invited Huzur Saheb to go there just in time. No one is accepting his discipleship even though he is invited to accept it. One of them went to Mr. John Hujar and told him that two tigers were coming from the forest and were

harming cows, goats etc. As a result, people here are very frustrated. If the lord calls the two tigers and asks them to do harm, then they are much benefited. The master replied, wild tiger, will they hear the call of the people? But why would the fans leave him? They believe that only Mr. Huzur can save them from tiger attack and all losses. Huzur could not help but respond to the words of the fans. So, he asked them to call the two tigers in the afternoon. He asked them to slaughter two Khasi for the two tigers. The devotees did as he was told. He then asked to keep the meat in two separate containers. Meanwhile, word spread in the villages that Huzur Sahib would bring the two tigers to the house of the devotee in the afternoon and forbid them to do any more harm. As a result, many people gathered. At the right time, the master called the two tigers. Two tigers came at his call. The people in the crowd started screaming in fear. The master forbade everyone to shout. The two tigers came slowly and started licking his legs. He turned his hand on the heads of the two tigers and said, "Do not harm the village cows, goats or anything else." It is seen that the tiger ate the meat of the two pots and went back to the forest. After that day, the two tigers did no more harm to the people of the area. Seeing this miraculous power of Mr. Hujar, the locals also started accepting his discipleship.[40]

In this way, the people of different parts of Bengal and Assam have been blessed with his blessings in their helpless condition throughout their lives. He has been a disciple of people from different places and has joined *Isals Swab* in different for many years of his life. While doing all this, he fell ill. So, he came to Nizamuddin Pradhan's house in Jalpaiguri for treatment. Nizamuddin Pradhan spent a lot of money on his treatment but instead of improving his condition continued to deteriorate. Thus, three months passed. He heard the last call. It was time for him to leave. He began to prepare for it. For this Khadim asked Mizuddin to inform his two sons Maksudul and Sirajul to come. The next day he repeatedly asked Tamizuddin if his sons had come. Repeatedly, Tamizuddin opened the door and saw

the two of them coming. Another son Mahbubul was with Huzur Sahib. He called his sons and gave them honest advice and later consulted with the devotees. In the end, he said, he should be buried in Haldibari. He had bought 116 bighas of land there. Huzur Sahib took his mortal body to take the name of Allah. He died at the age of 93 on 13th Bhadra (1944 AD) of Bengal in 1351 AD. Then the time is 8 o'clock in the morning. The sky was overcast that day. Among them the people of Bengal and Assam lost their beloved Huzur Sahib.[41]

His body was brought from Jalpaiguri to Haldibari by his innumerable devotees in special beds. There he was kept in the house of a devotee in the village of Baladanga. The final journey from there all day is to the present *Isal Swab* field. He was buried in that field according to his wishes. It was raining heavily at that time. While lying in the grave, the rain stopped completely. Thousands of fans paid their last respects to him with tears in their eyes.[42]

Devotionals and Sufism played an important role in keeping the social order in India in the Sultanate era. The Sufis resorted to generosity and tolerance in preaching like them. The preachers of devotion and Sufism did not look at the race, caste or religion of the people. So, all the Hindus and Muslims were respected by them. As a result, people from all walks of life were inspired by these two ideals and were taught social equality and tolerance. As a result, religious tensions abated. The influence of Sufism is also found in the writings of Ibn Battuta. He writes that Sufi Sheikh Jalaluddin received many donations from his Hindu devotees. Sufis were also particularly interested in Hindu yoga. Their unpretentious, simple life, love of God brought an end to the bitterness and mutual distrust of the twelfth century. It had an impact on education, literature, and culture. The achievements of the Sufis in the spread of Hindustani music are undeniable. The flow of two different doctrines was actually intertwined. And this created a mixed culture in India. The '*Khanqah*' became centres of knowledge and learning. Sufis used to explain the religion and its creation to the people

gathered in different congregations in a life-giving and miraculous way. This facilitates the mental development of the fans. So, it can be said in the words of historians, "Sufism developed broad-mindedness and catholicity of the socio-cultural leadership of both the communities and fostered the feelings of religious tolerance and hastened the process of synthesis between their socio-cultural traits." In fact, there is no doubt that in the Middle Ages devotionals and Sufism dominated society. Later, standing on it, it seems that Akbar was able to plan 'Din-i-Ilahi'.[43]

This trend of Sufism was also present in Huzur Sahib. He influenced the Muslim society of North Bengal. The Muslim community of Assam was no exception. In fact, he has contributed to the progress of Muslim society in the region. He is equally revered by the people of Hinduism. That is why everyone, irrespective of religion, is ready to pay their respects at his *Isal Swaab* ceremony.

Mazar Sharif is built around the tomb of Huzur Sahib. A high memorial has been erected on his tomb. There is a dome decorated with handicrafts. The main memorial is surrounded by four pillars. Next to it is the tomb of his daughter. Adjacent to the shrine is the Jame Mosque and *Musafirkhana*. The office room, the kitchen, on the other side is the residence of his descendants, the charity. Next to it is the tomb of his grandson Khoka Huzur. There is a stage of *wazmahfil* in the wide field. Every year during the annual ceremony, devotees listen to the Koran and other scriptures under the tin roof. It is here that eminent academics and theologians give their speeches. Ekramia Madrasa is in this hurry. The road has gone through. The field on the east and west sides of the road was filled with the noise of people during the fair. Recently a large gate has been constructed in these premises.[44]

Isal Swab or *Dharmasabha* is organized every year on 5th and 6th Falgun in the memory of Huzur Sahib. The fair was centred on this *Dharmasabha.* At first, two or four shops were set up for the needs of the people of *Dharmasabha*. Gradually that number

continues to grow and gradually takes on the appearance of a fair. Now this fair occupies half the space of Haldibari town. These two days everyone comes here on foot. The sounds of the footsteps are hearing both day and night. The fair is only for two days. But his preparations have been going on almost throughout the year. Camel traders came from far away deserts of Rajasthan. The camels are tied up a short distance from the main square of the fair. On the day before the fair, there was a commotion all around. There is some food store in one and some sports and entertainment shop on the other side. There is some Book stall in the middle of the fair. On the day of the fair, Haldibari became the destination of all vehicles from Jalpaiguri. On this day all the roads of Haldibari come and merge at the *Dargah*. In the food stalls of the fair food stalls, there is a huge stock of Quran Sharifs printed in different countries, religious books of different sizes, big and small, biography of Huzur Sahib and other books in the size of Huzur Sahib, biography of Huzur Sahib and other books. There are shops for wooden household goods, blacksmith shops, *bati*, *jati* etc. However, sword, *tangi*, *kukri, ramada*, road and other weapons shops are also sitting in the fair. The stock of these weapons did not please the writer at the fair held in memory of the man who sacrificed his life for peace. Household items made of bamboo are also traded. In fact, almost all the necessary items are available at the fair. However, circus, merry-go-round or any such entertainment is not allowed as a remembrance festival.[45]

From the morning of the 5th of *Falgun*, the name of the benefactor is *Dhal.* The flow of people overflows throughout the night. There is no pause until the end of the next day. This writer himself has seen in the stream of people just rows of black moving heads. From the morning of the first day, people started coming to Qatar by route cars, reserve cars, trains. Even on the roof there is no place to store sesame seeds. When there was no barbed wire fence on the Bangladesh-India border, people from the other side used to come here in groups. Now of course it takes a visa. This is really the sea of great reunion.[46]

Millions of incense sticks were lit around the shrine. Hindus and Muslims alike participate in it. Along with lollipops and sweets are also offered. Incense sticks have now been introduced to prevent fires from occurring. Instead of incense sticks, roses were also offered. This is followed by the vow and the vow of defending the previous vow. Donation items like chicken, rice, pulses, money etc. are stored in the donation box adjacent to the shrine; the two-day fair grounds are decorated with various garlands of lights. Discussions on Islam and Sufi philosophy continued. Many disabled people prayed for help at the fair and fakirs and saints came.[47]

While walking in the fair, I saw that there was no sign of unrest anywhere. However, there are police measures to be taken in advance. Close circuit TVs have also been installed for several years. Security is being tightened here. On the second day of the fair, special prayers were held under the tin shed in front of the *Mahfil* stage at noon.

Not only the fair, but the whole year the devotees come here and pray for the blessings of the Lord. They believe that amulets and charms are beneficial for their disease. There is a common saying at the root of spiritual faith objects that match faith, far from argument. With that faith, a group of countless fans are expecting *Tarkaruna.*

Funeral:

Of all the rituals in the life cycle, *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims especially extol their funeral rites as very distinctive and sophisticated. They maintain that they are very dissimilar to the Hindu and tribal in treating their dead. They wash the body of the dead person with perfumed soap, taking special care to wash the mouth, clean the teeth, nostrils and lower parts of the body, dress it in new clothes, smear scented oil (*atar*) on it and then, instead of burning the body as most Hindu do, put it in a grave. Close relatives of the dead person perform the

task of washing and dressing the body. Villagers co-operate with the relatives in washing or *gosol*. There are always a few persons in the village especially skilled in such jobs.[48]

They take special care in digging the grave, so as to keep the walls inside smooth. In fact, there are always certain experts among the villagers whose help is sought for this kind of work. The grave has to be deep enough that one can comfortably sit upright inside. They believe that after the grave is filled in and the mourners have left the cemetery, an angel of God awakens the dead person and makes him sit up in his grave. One of the reasons for washing and perfuming the dead body is to ensure that the angel may not abominate the dead person seeing dirt on his body. The corpse is carried on a bier to the graveyard by pallbearers who have to bathe before touching it. Before entering the dead all the assembled Muslims say *janajanamaz* for the dead person, facing westward. The body is placed inside the grave with its head to the north and feet to the south, its feet turned towards the west. All *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslims, irrespective of any social and class status, come and join *Janaja* and throw fistfuls of earth on the grave. Even *Nashya Sheikh* passing by on such occasions are supposed to join in the *janaja* and throw earth on the grave. This is considered a meritorious act. Before putting earth on the grave, they make a flattened roof of bamboo and boundless of paddy stalks, the object being to leave sufficient space within for the dead to sit up. The roof is constructed level with the ground. On this roof or platform, they put earth and raise a mud plastered tomb in the shape of a triangular prism. Women never accompany a dead body to the graveyard.[49]

Nashya Sheikh keeps a dead body for twelve or thirteen hours before burying it. It takes a long time to arrange all the paraphernalia connected with burial-digging a grave, washing and dressing the corpse and so on. Moreover, they often wait for the relatives, who are immediately informed of the death, to come and pay their last respects. Villagers and relatives of the dead within the village go to other villages where close kin of the deceased

live to inform them of the death. Hindu low caste villagers often act as messengers for their *Nashya Sheikh* co-villagers, conveying such news.[50]

The death of rich persons brings together many more relatives and neighbours then the death of poor individuals. Neighbours are not always given news of the death if they are not kin, but they come on hearing the news from others. Female relatives who come to see the dead person for the last time and people who come to throw earth on the grave are often fed after the internment by the family of the deceased. Villagers and close relatives are very helpful at such times in arranging the refreshments. They chop wood, fetch water, cook and serve food and water to the guests. However, I observed that although all the villagers participated in *janaja* and in putting earth on the grave, only the members of the factional group to which the deceased belonged took part in arranging and partaking of the food. On the seventh day after the death of a person, his family, if it can afford to, arrange *milad* and give alms (*khairat*) to beggars.[51]

Nashya Sheikhs Muslims frequently argued with me that the Hindu funeral system was indecent. It did not adequately maintain the privacy of the deceased, as the cloth wrapped around the dead body was usually burnt first leaving the body. Through a number of informal talks with my *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim respondents I felt that they were greatly convinced of the solemnity and superiority of their funeral system. They quite often asked me whether I liked their funeral and did so with a very self-assured air, expecting an affirmative answer. The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim believed that their tradition is inherently excellent.[52]

Circumcision:

No Muslim should omit the ceremony of circumcision (*i.e., khatna orsunnaot)* and every *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim male child is circumcised within the seven year of his life. During the ceremony the maternal uncle of the boy is usually present. Circumcision is always

done by a special Muslim barber locally known as *hajam*. However, the barbers themselves dislike the term and call themselves *khalifa*. In every year on the nineteenth of Bengali month *Chaitra* (corresponding to April) there were as many as thirty-two small boys circumcised on one single day. Circumcision is done in the early morning before sunrise. Two barbers come. One holds back the muscular portion with a forked bamboo piece and lets the skiing hang loose while the other cuts the skin with a sharp razor. They get one to ten rupees for the operation, according to the means of the child's family. For a few days before circumcision, women of the family, especially the young and fun loving, beat drums (*dhol*) and sing songs till late in the evening. This they also do before a marriage ceremony. They say that this sort of merry making is something beyond or rather against their *shariat* or tradition. However, young women and men maintain that it is a local tradition and they like indulging in it. Most women try to conceal the fact and say they never indulge in such merry-making. However, before any *sunnat* or marriage the village is filled with the sound of singing and beating of drums till late at night[53]. Some *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims rationalize this singing and drum beating by saying that the women are illiterate and therefore and they know no better than to go against *shariat***.**

The birth of the first child is normally greeted with the warmest demonstration of unaffected joy in the homes of the parents of both wife and husband. The birth of the first child usually takes place in the house of the wife's parents. A *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim sends his expectant wife to her parent's home when her time approaches. This is a local custom. This custom is also prevalent among the Hindu. The wife is not sent to her parent's home for subsequent births; but some parents who can afford to, and live either within the village or nearby, bring their expectant daughters' home to all such locations.[54]At childbirth, women of a particular Hindu caste are called to attend as midwives. In general, no women of any other caste or community work as midwives in the areas. The wife of the head of the Hindu family

at Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, together with her son's wife, serves as mid wife to the Muslim villagers of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and adjoining villagers.[55]

When a male child is born, and especially when the child is the first issue, there is often much clamorous rejoicing. According to the Islamic custom, *azan* (summon to prayer) is called allowed by a male, not for prayer but to proclaim the birth of the child. This is done at *Nashya Sheikh* only the occasion of the birth of a male child. The child father or grandfather usually does the proclaiming. Some devout Muslims well versed in Islamic rules read *Takbir* (i.e the creed) in the left ear of the new-born.[56]

After parturition the mother observes 'pollution' for seven days. For these seven days she does not over regular prayers (*namaz).* On the seven day after the birth of the barber shaves the child's head and pares the nails of both child and mother. The mid wife's presence is customary at the time of this ceremony. There are two Muslims barbers in the village of *Nashya Sheikh* family, either of whom may be called on this occasion.[57]

After being shaved the child is bathed. The mother also takes a birth and her 'period of pollution' is then considered over. On this day *Nashya Sheikh* celebrate *Aqika.* On this occasion parents, grandparents and other close kin like uncles and aunts etc. Name the new-born. *Aqika* consist of a sacrificed to Allah in the name of the child, to goats for a boy and one for a girl. A quarter of the sacrificial meat is distributed among the poor. The *Nashya Sheikh* at Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri usually give away this portion to the poor within the village. Another quarter of the meat is given to kin, generally close kin. The rest is kept for their own consumption.[58]

Those who cannot afford the ceremony of *Aqika* on the seventh day after the birth of a child may postpone it till the fourteenth or the twenty- first day, or any convenient time later on. Some of them sacrifice only one goat at the time of the *Aqika* of a male child. Others

arrange the rite in consumption with *korbani*, when sacrificing a large animal; they offer one seventh of it to Allah in the name of the child whose *Aqika* is being fulfilled. It may be pointed out that there is no such rule in the secret text justifying this practice. The *Nashya Sheikh* in the area of the study, however, does it because they say that for a long time this has been their practice. The poor who cannot afford anything skip the ceremony of the sacrifice and it is not considered unlawful to do so according to Islam.[59]

Feasts and Festivals:

We will describe here the feasts and Festivals of the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim as we have observed them in my research area around. Most of these are either village or community level observances. There are a few major Muslim feasts and festivals. Most of them are celebrated in commemoration of mythical events or occurrences in the historical past of the Islamic world. Codified information and instruction as regard different feasts and festivals are available.

The Islamic tradition maintains and overall informative in the different socio religious practices and performances, and these are carried out by Muslims throughout the Islamic *shariat* it is also maintains the 'introduce solidarity of the *Nashya sheikh* Muslim as a community. The source of all these practices is the Islamic sacred texts, the Quran and the *Hadith*. The text forms the ideal model. The tradition is embedded in the text and has its own system of communication for making ordinary Muslims conscious of their faith, values, norms and ideals of life as depicted in the sacred texts. It also acts as the means of converting people from other religions. This tradition helps them to assure their individual, as well as collective, identity and consequently builds a sense of social solidarity among them.[60]

The Muslim found them separated from the rest of the people in the area in their celebration of the standard Muslim feasts and festivals. The Hindu and the tribal did not

participate with the Muslim in these festivals accept as observers or as recipients of special festive alms, such as *Fetra* or part of the meat from sacrificed animals in *Korbani*. The clean caste Hindu, however, does not normally receive anything from the Muslim on such occasions. The tribal's and the Hindu low caste have no such social taboo.[61]

The outward aspect of the religion-social segregation of the *Nashya sheikh* Muslim from other communities is evident in the non-participation of the neighbouring, communities in the Muslim feast and festivals this is very important, because it delineates clearly the boundaries that the *Nashya sheikh* Muslim erect through their endeavour to be exclusive.

The Hindu is capable of incorporating any community within their social structure. In the local context they do not recognize the separate entity of a community. To them, the identity of a community is related to the position it holds in the local social hierarchy; but the internal mechanism previously mentions, which is manifestation of the transition of Islam, tends to project the *Nashya sheikh* Muslim as a distinct entity outside the local hierarchy.[62]

The *Nashya* Sheikh Muslim festivals are held according to the lunar months of the *Hijr*a year. The *Hijra* year is strictly lunar, and the months are adjusted to the course of the moon within a cycle of thirty years, containing nineteen common years of the three hundred and fifty-four days and eleven intercalary years of three hundred and fifty-five-days. Each year is divided into twelve months containing alternately thirty and twenty-nine days with the exception of the last month of the intercalary years, which invariably contains thirty days. The intercalary years are the second, fifth, seventh, tenth, thirteenth, sixteenth, eighteenth, twenty-first, twenty-fourth, twenty-sixth and twenty-ninth of the cycle. The *Hijrah* months are not constructed on astronomical principles. Each month commences from the evening on which the new moon is seen. Thus, the duration of the months depends on the state of the weather. No month, however, can contain less than twenty-nine or more than thirty days. The following are the names of the months of the *Hijra* year.[63]

1) *Muharram*
2) *Safar*
3) *Rabi-Ul-Awwal*
4) *Rabi-Ul-Akhir*
5) *Jumada-Ul-Awwal*
6) *Jumada-Ul-Akhir*
7) *Rajib*
8) *Shaban*
9) *Ramazan*
10) *Shawal*
11) *ZulQad*
12) *Zul-Hajj*

The *Hijra* year does not correspond to either the Bengali or Western year. In general, the Muslim of *Nasahya Sh*eikh in my area of study follows the Bengali calendar or *Punjika*. There are no corresponding fixed dates and times for these festivals in the Bengal or the Western calendar.[64] The Muslims observe *Muharram* in commemoration of the prophet Mohammed s grandson Hussain. Hussain was murdered in the battle of Karbala in Arabia. I will give a short description of the way *muharram* is commemorated by the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims in my area of study.[65]

As a mark of morning for the sad demise of Hussain, the Muslim of *Nashya Sheikh* in the area of study do not shave or pare their nails from the evening on which muharram starts till the 10th day of the month. Nor do they use soap or oil at the time of bathing during this period. The Muslim in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and in other Muslim populated villages around west Bengal, as also in the neighbouring towns of Silliguri, arrange them fight at the commencement of *Muhrram* lasting till its last day. Staves of hard bamboo, flexible canes and sometimes sharp weapons like axes are used in the fight. The Muslim performs this with a view to representing the battle between Hussain and his enemy fought in the field of Karbala. They also beat drums (representing war drums) during this fight.[66]

Every *Nashya Sheikh* village or section of village takes out a position to various part of the area. The various Muslim villages and hamates inhabit ate by different Muslim groups came closer through this visit. The participants, however, visit not only Nashya Sheikhs Muslim villages or Muslim sections of villages, but also those of the Hindus. They exclude tribal helmets from their visits. Although the *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslims go very enthusiastically to Hindu villages and hamlets with their procession, one can easily perceive and year of aloofness in the Hindu response to such visit. The Hindu usually plays the role of a passive observer. In contrast, when the Muslim passes through, *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim inhabited areas, there is an active response. The people visited join in a share equally the spirit of the rite. In short, the response in whole hearted and meaningful.[67]

They perceive the limits of their social and cultural boundaries vis a vis those of the neighbouring communities. During Muharram, the display of *Tazia* is also part of the observance. *Tazia* is a symbolic representation of the Muscleman erected on the plains of Karbala over the remains of Hussain. It is prepared by covering a framework made of strips of bamboo with pieces of paper neatly clipped and pasted on it. It is further decorated with different kinds of colour paper cut outs of flowers, horses with wings, tinsel fringes etc. Muslim villagers in the area devote a lot of time, of ten days or even month together, in preparing large and elegant *Tazia*. There is obtaining considerable competition among them the Muslim of different villages or sections within a single village in the preparation of large and highly decorated *Tazia*.

The Muslims take out a special position with *Tazia* on the tenth day of Muharram. A large number of such positions in my area of study end at a village named Banarhat (Jalpaiguri district). Banarhat has a *Mazar* (Muslim shrine) of a renewed local pir. Many Muslim of the area visit this village on the tenth day of Muharram to see the positions and the *Tazia* as well as *Mazar*.

The Muslims at Banarhat took out a position with a *Tazia* in every year. In subsequent years the villagers were not able to prepare a Tazia due to lack of funds, but they took out positions without the Tazia. The framework of the *Tazia* prepared was, however, utilized the next year to prepare a *Tazia* to sell to the residents of another village.[68]

We noticed that some old Muslims at Banarhat resented the joyous way in which Muharram was being commemorated. They dislike making a display of *Tazia*. They also did not like shame fights, the beating of drums and playing of musical instruments. They considered this to be anti-Islamic frivolities. However, we found that the young and the number of older people who enjoyed these things considerably outnumbered the old dissidents.[69]

As is usual, anyone who takes part in the Muharram positions goes barefoot. The Muslims in such positions sing songs in lamentations for the sad demise of Hussain. At intervals they squat, jump, beat their breasts and shout the name of Hussain, demonstrating their indignation for the incident that happened at karbala. This action is locally known as *matam*. Children as well as grown up boys take part very enthusiastically in *matam* and in the singing. To learn the *namaraz* songs for the occasion's eager Muslim villager buy print copies of booklets in Bengali full of (Muharram songs) sold, as the occasion approaches at local fairs (mela) or in the market.[70]*Sabe Barat* falls on the fourteenth month of *Shaban*. The Muslim believes that god on this night registers all the actions people will perform during the ensuring year. Learned and devote Muslim of both sexes regard this as an important occasion and honour it by sitting up all night reading the Quran.

There is another *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims ceremony of this kind known as *Sabe- i-miraj* which precedes *Sabe-barat* and each observe in the seventh month, *rajab*. According to Islamic tradition *sabe-i-miraj* is the night of the prophet Mohammad ascent or nocturnal journey to heaven on a supernatural horse called *Buraq*. It is said to have taken place on the

night preceding the 27th day of the month of *Rajab*. The Nashya Sheikh Muslim, especially the erudite and the devote, commemorate this event by sitting up all night praying and reading and listening to the *namaraz* written narratives concerning it. [71]*Roza* or the ceremonial fast for a month during the 9th lunar month of *ramazan* is one of the cardinal duties *(i.e.,farz*) in Islam. Express injection regarding it is given in the Quran. Muslim, both male and female, normally observes each day of the *ramazan* month as one of strict fasting from pre-dawn to sunset. The sick, the aged pregnant women or women breast-feeding infants, however, are exempt from the actual necessity of fasting during *ramazan.*

The commencement of every fast day is preceded by the performance of *Niyet,* a vow to keep the fast. It is traditional (*sunna*) for the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims who fast to take an early morning (pre down) breakfast or siori. There are certain specific rules that one must or should observe during the fast. In the evening, immediately before and just after the call of azan each over, they break their fast. They call this *eftar*. They say *niyet*, a vow for breaking the fast.[72]

Taraweehnamaz is reading during themonth by the fasting Nashya Sheikh Muslims which is one of the most important observances. Women do not, however read this *namaz*. There are twenty *rekat, i.e. shura,* in the *taraweeh* (locally pronounce as *tarabi*). This prayer is read in congregation in mosques at the time of *aesa,* i.e., late evening prayer it precedes the last three *rekat of aesa*. It is customary among the Nashya Sheikhs Muslim who fast to say the *taraweeh* is day for the whole month of *ramazan*, reading through the whole Quran in that period. The Imam leading the *taraweeh* has to know the Quran by heart. Thus, Muslims prefer to employ a hafiz as an *Imam*. When the whole Quran has been read through the *taraweeh* can discontinued.[73]

To be more specific about the observance of the ceremony, let us see how the *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim at Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar villages celebrate the month of *ramazan*. As

regard fasting, women are more particular than man. Almost all the adult women at Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar observe roza, unless they are sick otherwise enable to undertake it or are commanded by puranic injections not to keep roza or fast. Only a little more than fifty percent of adult males fast however. The general reasons for not keeping the fast, especially among the males, are sickness and overwork. The poor *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim of this area, who working in the field, maintain that they cannot fast because the of their long hours of work.[74]

Although children are exempt as a rule from fasting, some of them fast occasionally with their elders for a day or two. A few devoted youths take keen interest in fasting. The *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim who carefully follows the fasting but there is not necessary reading *namaz*. There are some persons among *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims who reading Quran both day and night during the month of fasting. The villagers who keep roza try to take their early morning breakfast (*siori)* at the appropriate time, which they came to know from charts send by the local *Madrasha.*These charts show the scheduled time of *efte*r as well as *sirori* for each day of the month of *ramazan*. As the timing of *siori* and *efte*r each related to sunrise to sunset, it varies a little each day. The chart also contains other instruction concerning *roza* and the ensuing ceremony of *Idu-ul-fitr*. The chart is usually displayed at the entrance of the monks, so that anyone who wants may consult them. The time schedule is given in the *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim almanac too.[75]

A considerable number of villages *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim, is bringing his own food, gather at the village monks for *efter*. Some bring their children with them. Some old people bring their grand-children. Relatives and friends irrespective of their social positions except foods as their informal gesture of kingship or friendship. If a *musafir* or traveller comes at the time of *efter,* he too gets a share of foods from others. They get through their *Efter* quickly in order to join the early evening prayer, *i.e.,magribnamaz*, after which they disperse to eat

more heartily at home, before gathering again in the monks to say *aesa* and specially *taraweeh* prayers.[76]

Some of these villagers distribute sinni after the prayers, usually among the people gathered for the *taraweeh.* Many distribute sinni after the *taraweeh* following the completion of their reading of their quran. Many wait to distribute sinni until death complete their reading of the Quran. This particular *taraweeh* is locally called *khatamtaraweeh* which literally means compilation of the *taraweeh*. *Sinni* is also distributed by many on the 27th of the *ramazan* month for the following reason. Nashya Sheikhs Muslim specially celebrates the 27th night of *ramazan.* The night is literally known as the night of power. On this night the devout spent the whole night reading the *quran.* It is the believed of the local that this night all creation at some moment bows in humble adoration to the omnipotent.[77]

The *khatib* of the village monks, especially if he is a hafiz, leads the *taraweeh.* In reorganisation of his service during the *taraweeh* the Muslim villagers of this area usually present him a gift of one hundred and fifty rupees. This someday rose either by subscription or by selling the paddy given away by the rich as wiser. If there was no *khatib* in the mosques. The villagers employed a *maulav*i from a local *madrasha* to perform the duty of an imam in the month of *ramazan,* especially for the *namaztaraweeh*. He was a hafiz as well as a *kari.* He charged two hundred rupees on each occasion for his services.[78]

From the above description of *roza* we find that the majority of the village *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim involved in fasting, taking *siori,* performing *efter* and reading *taraweeh*, year after year, during the month of *ramazan.* This has a great impact on the mind of individual Muslims and on the *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim community as a whole. A natural tendency arises at both individual and collective levels to keep up the tradition of fasting. This argument is not limited to the actual participants only but is shared by every other member of the community.[79]The day after the month of *Ramajan, i.e.*, the first day of the 10th month of

Shawal, is ceremoniously observed as *Idu'lFitr*. It marks the end of the month-long fast or *Roza*.[80]

On this day each local *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim family which can afford to distributes among the poor two and a half seers of rice or equivalent in money for each member of the donor family, including new-born babies, if any. This is *fetra*. According to Islamic tradition all well-to-do Muslims have to give *fetra*. In other words, *fetra* is *wajib* for such individuals. (i.e., should be performed by the followers of Islam). After taking a bath in the morning and before going for *Id namaz*, the Nashya Sheikhs Muslim weigh and put aside the rice to be given away as *fetra*.[81]At the area of my study the head of the family usually undertakes this responsibility.

A portion of the *fetra* is often distributed among poor villagers, mendicants and beggars immediately after the Id prayer. Some Muslims in my area of study carry rice in plates or in bowls to the *idgah* for distribution after the prayer. A large concourse of poor people gathers outside the *idgah* to receive alms. At Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts in many villages the neighbouring low caste tribal poor people like *santal*, *orao* from the nearby village outside the *idgah* for the special alms of *fetra.* Also, there are poor Hindu children of low caste who wait to receive alms.[82]Besides distributing *fetra*, which on this occasion is *wajib*, the Nashya Sheikhs Muslims should read two rekat of Eid prayer. According to the sacred rule of Islam this is also *wajib*. The *namaz* is to be read between eighth or ninth a,m., and noon, and not on any account after that time.

The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim wears new clothes for going to the *idgah*. Some wear special scarves, brought from Mecca, on their shoulders. The *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim villagers usually take particular care to perfume their clothes and body with *attar* or scented oil on this occasion. *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim children wearing gaudy clothes gather with their elders in the *idgah.* Young boys try to imitate their elders by joining in the prayer and doing

everything the others do. Before praying, some villagers burn incense in the *idgah* and upon the tombs of their near relatives.[83]

Devout Nashya Sheikhs Muslims usually repeat *takbir* while proceeding from their homes to the *idgah* for saying *Id namaz*. it is*sunna* (traditional and customary) for the Muslim to attentively listen to *khodba*. After the *khodba, monajat*(supplication for the remission of sins) is read. Before leaving the *idgah* after the prayer, the *khodba* and the *monajat* being over, Muslims facilitated each other by embracing and shaking hands. Some people shake hands with the imam and give him a present, according to their means, of tenth to twenty rupees, or sometimes less. The imam who led the *taraweehnamaz* in the preceding month of *Ramajan* usually performs the duty of imam on the occasion of Eid namaz.[84]

On the day of *Idu'l-Fitr* Nashya Sheikh Muslims wear new clothes. At Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Muslim buy new clothes not only for their respective families but also for their poor relatives living within or outside the village. Servants are also given new clothes. *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim villagers of this area employed as agricultural domestic servants in the homes of local Hindus often persuade their musters to buy them new clothes for this day, although the Hindu usually buy new clothes both for themselves and for their servants for the yearly celebration of *Durga puja* held in the Bengali month of *Aswin* (September to October). Besides wearing new clothes on the day of *IdulFitr*, each Muslim family prepares sweetened *semui*, vermicelli with milk, sugar, raisins and dried and sliced coconut.[85]

The actual ceremony of *Idul-Fitr* helps maintain the boundaries and separate identity of the Nashya Sheikhs Muslim community. On these occasions, prayer is *farz*(a must). Further it is traditional (or *sunna)* for the Muslim to read the *farzrekat* of their daily prayers in congregation; but the daily round of duties scarcely allows them time to do all this. In the village all male Muslims make it a rule to gather for prayer on the festive day of Id. Through this community prayer the villagers realize their common affiliation to a single, identical

religion. Though there may be internal discord and though there certainly are differences in class, rank, status and age, on this day and in this prayer gathering they are all made to feel equal. They come together for the same purpose and, to all appearances, greet one another without inhibition. It must be stressed that this Islamic principle of equality practised in their sacred life does not extend beyond it. The everyday social life of the *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim maintains its distinctions of class and status rigidly. This is because the Koran and the *hadith* have copious codified rules for religious life but comparatively few for the secular.[86]This is the last annual *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim ceremony according to the lunar year, *Hijrah*. It is also called *Baqrid or Korbani*. It begins on the tenth day *of Zul-Hajj* and lasts three days. The principal ceremony, however, is usually completed on the tenth. This festival, according to Muslim scripture, is to commemorate Ibrahim's (i.e. Abraham's) willingness to offer up his only son as a sacrifice in obedience to God's command. Like *Idulfitr*, the ceremony of *Idu'zZuha* also requires as reading of an Id prayer in the *idgah*[87]The Nashya Sheikhs Muslim in my area of study tend to get the reading of this Id *namaz* over quickly, so as to get on sooner to the more interesting, though long-winded ceremony of sacrificing animals. Unlike the practice in *IdulFitr*, the Muslim on this occasion does not usually spend large sums of money on new clothes. *Idu'zZuha* is observed among all Muslims, both as a day of sacrifice and as a great festival.[88]

In these verses the reason for Islamic sacrifice has been explained. It is said that the sacrifice is not for the propitiation of the higher power, because God does not delight in flesh or blood. It is more a symbol behind which there is a deep spiritual meaning. The animal generally offered for sacrifice, such as camels, cows, bulls, goats and sheep are, moreover, useful in many ways.[89]

The sacrifice is performed at selected sides within the village. There are many pieces in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. All the village men, boys and children get involved in holding

and skinning animals and in dressing and dividing the meat into shares. Care is taken not to spoil the hide while skinning. Although skinning, dressing and dividing into shares is laborious work, it is done with enthusiasm and is finished by the afternoon. On its completion an auction is arranged within the village to sell the hides. Money procured by selling the hides is given to the local *madrasah.*[90]The most communal part of this rite of sacrifice is the distribution of meat to all *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslim households with in the village and to relatives within and even outside the village. The poorest family in the village gets a share of the sacrificial meat.

Notes & References:

[1]Richard, Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier: 1204-1760*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. 113.

[2]S. Islahi, *Islam at a Glance*, MarkaziMaktabaIslami,Delhi, 1978, p. 48.

[3]Aziz, Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964, p. 127.

[4]Hossain, Shahadt Mahmud, *Muslim Women education in some villages of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Sociology, North Bengal University, West Bengal, 2001, p. 71.

[5]S. R. Mondal, *Dynamics of Muslim Society*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p. 46.

[6]Hossain, Shahadt Mahmud, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[7]Rukaiya, Begum, 'Family System in Islam': *An Analysis in North Bengal University Review; Vol. No-VI*, Sociology Department, North Bengal University, 1992, p. 234.

[8]S. R. Mondal, *Dynamics of Muslim Society*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p. 49.

[9]Hossain, Shahadt Mahmud, *op.cit*., p. 74.

[10]Rahim, Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashyashaik of North Bengal,' of Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mita, (Ed.),*Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, p. 319.

[11]Milon, Dutta, C*halitoIslamiSabdokosh: An Encyclopadic dictionary of common Muslim terms and word*, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata, 2008, p. 101.

[12]Personal interview of *Hashen Ali (Imam,* age: 72), by the researcher, on 08-11-2015, 11 a.m., at Duramari.

[13]Milon, Dutta, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

[14]Ibid. p.257.

[15]Ibid.p.281.

[16]Ibid.p.148.

[17]Ibid.p.243.

[18]Amjad, Hossain, 'Uttorbanger Masjid', (in Bengali), *UttorbangerMusolmanSamaj o Sanskriti*,Edited by ParthaprotimMallick,SreejaniDhara Sahitya BishoyokPatrika, Jalpaiguri, 2013, p.139.

[19]Milon, Dutta, *op.cit*., p. 231.

[20]Amjad, Hossain, 'Uttorbanger Masjid', (in Bengali), *UttorbangerMusolmanSamaj o Sanskriti*,Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick, SreejaniDhara Sahitya BishoyokPatrika, Jalpaiguri, 2013, P. 139.

[21]Ibid. p.141.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid. p.142.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid. p.143.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Milon, Dutta, *ChalitoIslamiSabdokosh: An Encyclopadic Dictionary of Common Muslim terms and word*, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata, 2008, p. 166.

[29]Ibid. p. 167.

[30]Abdur, Rahaman, *SitareEkram o AttharProdip,* (in Bengali), Votbarri, Cooch Behar,Sodrit publication, 2013, pp.12-65.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Abhijit, Das, 'Sufibad o Haldibarir Huzur Sahed', (in Bengali), *UttorbangerMusolmanSamaj o Sanskriti*,Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick, SreejaniDhara Sahitya BishoyokPatrika, Jalpaiguri, 2013, pp. 103-107.

[36]Abdur, Rahaman,*op.cit*., pp.66-69.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Abhijit, Das, *op. cit*., p.105.

[40]Ibid.p. 106.

[41]Abdur, Rahaman, *op. cit*., p.70.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Abhijit, Das, *op. cit*., p.106.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid. p. 107.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ranjit,Bhattachaya, *Moslems of rural Bengal:A study in Social Stratification and Socio-Cultural Boundary Maintenance*, Subarnarekh, Calcutta, 1991, pp. 91-129.

[49]Personal interview of *Hashen Ali (Imam)* by the researcher, on 08-11-2015, 11 a.m., at Duramari.

[50]Surajit, Sinha, 'Kingship among the Sunni Sheik Moslem of Birbhum', *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, Vol-20, No-2, West Bengal, July 1985, pp. 99-110.

[51]Personal interview of *Hashen Ali (Imam)* by the researcher, on 08-11-2015, 11 a.m., at Duramari.

[52]Surajit, Sinha, 'Kingship among the Sunni Sheik Moslem of Birbhum', *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society,* Vol-20, No-2, West Bengal, July 1985, pp. 99-110.

[53]Fulchad, Barman, 'UttarbangerRajbansi Muslim Samaj: ProsangoNashyaSekh', (in Bengal) *Angikar, (Sharad Sangkhaya),* Arbinda Press, Cooch Behar, 1417(Bengali Year), pp. 181-184.

[54]Surajit, Sinha, 'Fieldwork Report Religion in an Affluent Society', *Current Anthropology*, Vol-7, No-2, April 1966, pp. 189-195.

[55]Ranjit,Bhattachaya, *op. cit.*

[56]Ibid.

[57]Surajit, Sinha, 'Fieldwork Report Religion in an Affluent Society', *Current Anthropology*, Vol-7, No-2, April 1966, pp. 189-195.

[58]Personal interview of Aminur*Rahaman, Abul Hossain* by researcher, on 25-10-2015, 1-30 p. m., at Deomali and Joterwar.

[59]Personal interview of *Hashen Ali (Imam)* by the researcher, on 08-11-2015, 11.00 a. m., at Duramari.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

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

[63]Ranjit, Bhattachaya, *op. cit.*

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Personal interview of*Hashen Ali (Imam)* by the researcher on 08-11-2015, 11.00 a.m. at Duramari.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Personal interview of *Mahhamad Abas* by the researcher, on10-11-2015, 10.30 a. m.,at Banarhat.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Surajit, Sinha, 'Fieldwork Report', 'Religion in an Affluent Society', *Current Anthropology'*, Vol-7, No-2, April 1966, pp. 189-195.

[71]Ranjit,Bhattachaya, *op. cit*.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Personal interview of *Mahhamad Abas* by the researcher, on10-11-2015, 10.30 a. m., at Banarhat.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ranjit, Bhattachaya,*op. cit.*

[77]Personal interview of*Hashen Ali (Imam)* by the researcher, on 08-11-2015, 11.00 a.m. at Duramari.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ranjit,Bhattachaya, *op. cit*.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid.

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

[83]Ibid.

[84]Ranjit, Bhattachaya, *op. cit.*

[85]Personal interview of Kochimuddin, Tachiruddin, Hachen Ali, Rahimuddin,MuklecharRahaman by the researcher, On 15.06.2015, 11.30 a. M., at Duramari,Nathua.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ranjit, Bhattachaya, *op. cit*.,p. 126.

[88]Personal interview of *Hashen Ali (Imam)* by the researcher on 08-11-2015, 11.00 a.m. at Duramari.

[89]Ranjit,Bhattachaya, *op. cit*., p. 127.

[90]Personal interview of *Hashen Ali (Imam)* by the researcher on 08-11-2015, 11.00 a.m. at Duramari.

CHAPTER - IV

SOCIAL LIFE OF THE NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL: PAST AND PRESENT

CHAPTER - IV

SOCIAL LIFE OF NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL: PAST AND PRESENT

This chapter looks into the social life of the *Nashya Sheikhs* of North Bengal their Past and Present condition of this community. The *Nashya Sheikh* or *Nasya Sekh* is a Muslim community, inhabitants of the northern parts of West Bengal. They are culturally and linguistically similar to both Rangpuri people of northern Bangladesh and Goalpariya people of Assam. Though small in number, a section of people of Purnia in the neighbouring state of Bihar belong to that community and locally they are known as the Bengali Sheikh. With reference of some regional names, more commonly they are known as the *Rajbangsi Muslims*.[1] The *Nashya* are considered to be an important indigenous group found in northern West Bengal, particularly in North Bengal. They concentrated in the districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda district of Chachol and Gajol.[2] They are homogeneous with the Koch Rajbangsi people and also, they are bi-lingual – one is Bengali language and another is Rajbangsi language or Kamatapuri language. Outside home or in occupational sphere they used both Bengali and Rajbonshi language but in-home setting they prefer Rajbonshi language for communication.[3] Rajbangsi's were originally the practitioners of animism, but later on they converted themselves to Hinduism. Although they converted to Hinduism but they were loose followers of Hinduism, but gradually a small section of this people (mainly *Koch, Rajbonshi, Mech, Polia*) converted to Islam.[4] The local Hindus started calling them '*Nostoseikh*' that means, impure Sheikh or spoiled Sheikh. This conversion of small section influenced many, which resulted major sections conversion into Islam from Hinduism and collaborated with mainstream Muslims. This association impacted

their name '*Nostoseikh*' which slowly got Islamised and turned them into '*Nashya sheikh*'.[5] The *Nashya's* trace their origin into the indigenous communities of Koch Rajbangsi of northern part of West Bengal. Their conversion to Islam is said to have taken over from few centuries, and the *Nashya* still retain many cultural traits of their pre-Islamic past.[6] Most of the traditional people of the community are non-practitioner of Muslim beliefs and practices but the newer generations are becoming more Islamic and the number is increasing day by day due to the impact of globalization.[7]

The *Nashya Sheikhs* as a community were once strictly endogamous but their marriage with mainstream Bengali Muslims brought them closer to the Bengali culture. Their physical appearance seems to be more similar to Bengalis rather than Rajbangsi people. They are divided into lineages such as Bepari, Pramanik, Sarkar, Rahaman, Ali, Miah, Islam and Sekh etc. Each of these lineage groups did intermarry among them. The community is mainly following Hanafi school of Sunni Islam.[8] The community have set up their own political and cultural organization, the Uttar Bango Angrassar Muslim Sangram Samiti, which acts as pressure group for this community. The Government of West Bengal so far identified *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim as OBCs on the basis of their occupation and socio-economic condition.[9] Currently the people of Nashya Sheikh Community in North Bengal, they are politically united through the *Nashya Sheikh* Development Forum (*Uttarbanga Nashya Sheikh Unnayan Mancha).*[10]

Cooch Behar was a feudatory princely state merged with Indian union on 28th August 1949 and became a district of West Bengal on 1st January, 1950. Prior to merger it was ruled by the famous Koch king for about four hundred and forty years (1510-1949). Before the Koch king the land earlier called Kamtapur was under the procession of the Khen dynasty.

The present Cooch Behar is situated in the North Eastern part of West Bengal. It is roughly triangular in shape, sandwiched between Assam and Bangladesh. Its total land area is

about 3,087.0 sq. km., of which 60 per cent is low and 40 per cent is high land. Cooch Behar is rich in water resources. The famous rivers are Tista, torsa, Raidhak, Gadadhar etc. The district is important for its paddy, jute and tobacco product.

According to 1981 census Cooch Behar had a population of 1,771,643(male 915,461 and female 456,182) its location is composed of a variety of ethnic stocks, mainly of Indo Mongoloyed and mixed origin.[11]Harendra Narayan Chowdhuri's account in 'History of Cooch-Behar'(1908) reveal that the population of different sections of Muslims were Moghal-49, Pathan including Sayyads-1,146 and sheikh including Nashyas-1,69,551.[12] He further stated, 'By far the majority of the Musalmans are the Sheikhs or they are popularly called *Nashyas*. They are, like the greater portion of the Mahomedans of India, Descendants of the Hindu converts to the religion of Mahammed. The title *Nashya* is significant in this respect. It is generally believed to be the corrupted form of '*Nashta'*, which means 'fallen' or 'degenerated' and thus appears to be the most probable nick-name which the Hindu subjects of a Hindu principality would give to their converted co-religionists. Different ethnic and religious groups lived together. Majority of them are Hindu same are Muslims and few are Buddhists, Jains, Shiks, political relations between the Koch dynasty and the Mughals. This led to the establishment of peace and interaction between Koch kings and Muslims.[13]

On the other hand, Jalpaiguri was the Northern most districts in pre-1947 Bengal. It was bounded on the west by the Purina District of Bihar and Darjeeling district, on the North by the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan and also Darjeeling district, on the south by the district of Rangpur and Dinajpur and princely state of Cooch Behar and on the east by Goalpara district of Assam. In 1947, under the Rad Cliffe award the five police stations of Patgram, Tetulia, Pachagar, Boda and devigang west to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

Dinajpur district was one of the largest districts in undivided Bengal. The area of Dinajpur district was 3.986 square miles. According to the 1911 census, the population of

Dinajpur district was 1, 6,463. Dinajpur, the main town of the district, was situated on the left bank of the *Punarbhaba* River. During the partition of the country in 1947, West Dinajpur district was formed with the western part of the district and West Dinajpur district was included in West Bengal. Balurghat is the district headquarters of West Dinajpur district. In 1992, the former West Dinajpur district was re-divided into South and North Dinajpur districts for administrative convenience. Itahar, Raiganj, Kaliaganj, Hematabad, Karandighi, Chakulia, Gayalpekhar, Islampur and Choprablokniye North Dinajpur districts were formed. It is pertinent to mention that in 1947, Islampur was shifted from Purnia district of Bihar to West Dinajpur district. As a result, a large section of the Muslim community in Uttar Dinajpur district came from Bihar.

Muslim rule in Bengal was established in 1201 AD with the conquest of Bengal by Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji. After defeating Lakshman Sen, Bakhtiyar Khalji stayed in Nadia for some time and then established his capital at Gaur. In a short time Bakhtiyar Khilji conquered the entire *Barind* land. However, despite the conquest of the *Barind* lands, the Muslim rulers could not occupy East Bengal during the Mughal period due to geographical reasons. However, in East Bengal, the Muslim Sufi saint Shah Jalal and other Sufi communities preached Islam. Under the influence of Shah Jalal, many Hindus converted to Islam. It is pertinent to mention that before the partition of the country in 1947, Hemang Biswas, a mass music artist, took initiative to preserve Hindu-Muslim unity in Sylhet by composing songs on Pir Shah Jalal. The inscription found in Birbhum district seventeen years after the conquest of Bengal by Bakhtiyar Khalji shows that Sufi saints from north-western Iran established *khanqas* and settled there. The traveller Ibn Battuta also saw the existence of many Sufi saints in Bengal in the fourteenth century. They preached Islam cantered on Bangladesh. They roamed freely in different places and the townspeople gave them various subtopics. Karunaketan Sen writes that huts existed in various villages of Dinajpur district for

the worship of the Muslim community. Which were called *Jummaghar*. Even in one village, there were multiple *Jummaghars* where Muslims from different communities used to gather for religious purposes. Note that the Pirs and Fakirs not only preached the religion, they also cut down the forest and turned many uncultivated lands into cultivable lands. It is known from the writings of Francis Buchanan that the forest tiger and the tiger lived together in Dinajpur. Under the influence of Pir and Fakir, the tigers gave up violence. This power of the Pirs was revered by all and believed that the Pirs and Fakirs possessed magic and miraculous powers. In this way, the Pirs helped to clear the forests of Dinajpur, settle them and expand the agricultural economy. Evidence that Islam did not spread by the sword was in the heart of Muslim rule, Delhi and the Agra region, where the Muslim population ranged from 10 percent to 15 percent. East Bengal and West Punjab, far from the heart of Muslim rule, account for between 60 and 90 per cent of the Muslim population. Even from Dhaka, Murshidabad and Maldar, the epicentre of Muslim rule in Bangladesh, the Muslim population was much larger in Dinajpur, Rajsahi and Nadia. "

The district consisted of two well- defined tracts which differed in physical features, history and administrative arrangement, types of economic activities, funereal arrangement and production systems. One tract which lay to the west of Tista River and also partgram to the east of the river came under the British rule after the East India Company received the Dewani in 1765. The total area of this tract in 1931 was 879 sq. Miles. The other tract lying to the east of Tista, known as eastern Dooars or in common parlance Dauars, having an area of 2053sq miles, was taken away from Bhutan at the end of the Anglo Bhutan war of 1864-65. It deserves mention that till the 1940 people of local origin not only in Jalpaiguri but in neighbouring Rangpur district too referred to Dooars and Bhutan.

In the perspective of the administrative history of Bengal Presidency, the district of Jalpaiguri was most recent. It came into being in January 1869 by the amalgamation of the

Tetulia subdivision of Rangpur district with recently annexed Daurs. The district headquarters came to be located in Jalpaiguri, a village which was residence of the Zamindar of the Baikunthapur estate Hooker who visited '*Jalpaigoree'* in early 1849 describe it as a 'last straggling village the place had a also military cantonment even before it was selected as the distinct headquarters.[14] Sometime later it was also chosen as the headquarters of the commissioner for Rajshahi Division. Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh in his article 'Muslims of Jalpaiguri District' states that in Jalpaiguri District three sections of Muslims are generally found-*Pathan, Sheikh* and *Nashya*.[15] Later on, the *Nashyas* declared them as *Sheikhs.* They are local Muslims and primarily live-in villages and practice agriculture. The Muslims were generally termed as '*Deshi'* and '*Bhatia*'. There was practically no social tie among these two groups of Muslims because the '*Deshis'* were cultivators and '*Bhatias*' were engaged in different other skilled professions.

Social Structure of the Nashya Sheikh Community:

The socio-economic 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, 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. Other dogmas of this community are *purdah* system (veil), child marriage etc. The marriage between *Nashya Sheikh* and another upper-caste Muslim group is prohibited and strictly followed.

Among the local Muslims Pathan, Sheikh and *Nashyas* are found in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and some parts of Malda district specially Gajol and Chachol of North Bengal. The *Nashyas* were originally the lower caste Hindus. According to the census of 1871, the total population of the Muslims was 74,791 males and 70,189 females; total, 144,980, or 44.2 percent of the population of Jalpaiguri districts.[16]At the present day, the religion of Islam has ceased to make any further progress in the district. Presently the *Nashays* populates in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri in huge number consisting 600,911 out of the total population of 2,4792,155 in Cooch Behar and 369,195 out of the total population of 3,401,173 in Jalpaiguri respectively (Census 2001),[17] in which *Nashya Sheikhs* are most prominent.

Nashya sheikh community, in general, is a contested Muslim community from Rajbanshi, Koch, Mech and Poliya community. So, there are many similarities in language, creed, social rituals and culture between *Nashya sheikh* community and Rahbabshi Hindu social framework. On the other hand, *Nashya sheikh* community are district from Muslim community. Although they are being followed Islamic tradition. Muslim community still are not agreed to regard *Nashya sheikh* s Muslim religious community. They remain as neglected caste in Muslim society. Elite Muslims usually could not accept a martial relation between a son of the Khan family and a girl of Nashya sheikh Society.[18] Other social class converted Muslims such as *Dhai, Nadeghosti, Hazem, Bhat, Badiya, Beldar, Goysala, Sarkar, Kosai, Kalwarmomin, Ansari, PahariaMusalman, Jhola* embraced racially. In changing social religious framework *Nashya sheikh* community believes in the concept of equality, unity and brotherhood. Although *Nashya sheikh* community was converted Muslims. They have followed the Islamic traditions. They regarded every *Musalman* as a brother of each other. In this way they made togetherness in every stage of society.[19]

The position of women:

Discussions about the position of women' have a special place in the current discussion. In order to organize programs for women's welfare on women's empowerment, women's emancipation, women's equality, etc., various research articles are being written, government activities are being announced and many voluntary organizations are being formed. After all, has there been any significant change for those who are so organized? This dialectical thought has been lingering for a long time but the right direction is still out of reach. Unwittingly, our West Bengal is divided into two parts North Bengal and South Bengal. This division is based on the location of the two banks of the river Ganges flowing through the state. As the capital city of the state, South Bengal is naturally much more advanced than North Bengal for natural reasons. In that sense, it is undoubtedly backward or backward towns in the state of North Bengal, that is, the people living in this town are backward from there. Again, according to the overall picture of the state and the country, there is no difference between the leading and backward groups of the people of the country. As in other parts of the country, one of the major backward communities in this region is the Muslim community. It can be said with certainty that there is a difference between men and women in the same way as in other places. Like other districts in the state, the Muslim population of North Bengal ranks second in religious beliefs. In this context, the picture of the districts of North Bengal can be seen at a glance. Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda are the six districts of North Bengal. For administrative convenience, these six districts have been divided into 16 subdivisions, 67 Police Stations and 77 aggregate development blocks. The total number of villages in North Bengal is 7575 out of which the number of inhabited villages is 7145. According to the 2001 census, 1.47 crore people live in North Bengal which is 18.4 per cent of the total population of the state. Districts of North Bengal at a glance:[20]

TABLE4.1

At a glance the population and literacy rate of the districts of North Bengal:

Name of The District	Total Population	Literacy Rate		
		Total	Male	Female
Darjeeling	1,609,172	71.79	80.05	62.94
Jalpaiguri	3,401,173	62.85	72.83	52.21
Cooch Behar	2,479,155	66.30	75.93	56.12
North Dinajpur	2,441,794	47.89	58.48	36.51
South Dinajpur	1,503,178	63.59	72.43	54.28
Malda	3,290,468	50.28	58.80	41.25
North Bengal	14,724,940	60.45	69.75	50.55
West Bengal	80,176,197	68.64	77.02	59.61

Source: Census of India 2001, Final Population, W.B.

One of the most important criteria for the development of education, in that sense, the overall literacy rate of the state is 68.64 percent whereas in North Bengal it is 60.45 percent. Again, this rate of inequality between men and women also exists. In the state where male literacy rate is 77.02 percent, in North Bengal male literacy rate is 69.75 percent. The female literacy rate in the state is 59.61 percent while in North Bengal it is 50.55 percent. A picture of the backwardness of North Bengal can be seen in the disparity in literacy rate. It goes without saying that out of the total 19 districts of the state, eight districts have a lower literacy rate than the national average (65.2 per cent) and five of these districts are in North Bengal. Darjeeling district alone has an average literacy rate of 71.79 per cent, higher than the national average of all the national and state literacy rates. There is a good reason for that, but that is not the point. However, the literacy rate of Siliguri, the only subdivision in the plains

of this district, is more or less the same as that of other districts of North Bengal. The literacy rate of the three hill subdivisions has always been high.

If this is a picture of the overall literacy of the districts of North Bengal, then it is easy to guess the difference in this rate among the different populations. Before discussing the position of the Muslim community in the districts of North Bengal, our overall situation can be seen in the context of our country. In the words of the poet, "Different languages, different costumes, different combinations are great." For centuries, people of different religions have carried on the great tradition of great reunion by living together and maintaining good relations. But as not all communities develop at the same rate, some divisions are growing. If the necessary initiatives are not taken properly, which can take a terrible form? For example, the lion's share of the overall development that has taken place in our country is being enjoyed by the people belonging to the caste Hindu community. However, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities, one of which is our current population, their level of development is very low, but we are all citizens of one country. In the absence of information, the real picture is not presented to the public. Again, based on the information obtained, it can be said with certainty that the Muslim community is extremely backward from the socio-economic point of view. In 2005, the Prime Minister of our country formed a high-level committee headed by retired Judge Rajinder Sachar, popularly known as the Sachar Committee. The report of that committee states that Muslims are backward in two ways; their inferior education with which the inferior quality of education has been added has greatly increased their deprivation in improving the present education. The report further states that the Muslim community in West Bengal lags behind the caste Hindus and even the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the state in terms of education and socio-economic status.[21]

In the context of the current position of Muslims in our state, Islam based on the 2001 census mentions that one of the largest and minority communities in the state is the Muslim community. Twenty-five percent of the total population of West Bengal belongs to the Muslim community. Regarding the educational status of the people of this community, it has been stated that among the Muslims of the state, the number of people who have taken up to primary level education is 50.3 percent which is less than 54.4 percent of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes where the overall number is 80.4 per cent. The percentage of people who have completed elementary education or up to eighth standard is 26 percent Muslim, 29.9 percent Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and 58.1 percent overall. The undergraduate population is 3% Muslim, 3.5% Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and 14% overall. He added that the number of Muslim government employees in the state is only 2.1 percent. He also noted that although Urdu-speaking Muslims are leaders in this regard, the number of Bengali-speaking Muslims is negligible. From these figures, an overall picture of the socio-economic status of Muslims in the state has emerged.

If this is the picture of the overall Muslim backwardness of the state, then the position of the backward North Bengal where there is overall backwardness is easily conceivable. Muslims occupy an important place in the society and culture of the state. Muslims are a minority in terms of the country and the state, as well as in their larger socio-economic and political infrastructure. They have been described as socially backward, financially poor and politically powerless. In this context, the position of our target Muslim community in the districts of North Bengal can be seen at a glance.

TABLE4.2

At a glance the population of the districts of North Bengal, Muslim Percentage of population and Muslim population

Name of The District	Total Population	Total Muslim	Percentage of Muslim population
Darjeeling	1,609,172	85,378	5.31
Jalpaiguri	3,401,173	369,195	10.78
Cooch Behar	2,479,155	600,911	24.24
North Dinajpur	2,441,794	1,156,503	47.36
South Dinajpur	1,503,178	361,047	24.01
Malda	3,290,468	1,636,171	49.72
North Bengal	14,724,940	4,209,205	28.58
West Bengal	80,176,197	20,240,536	25.25

Source: Census of India 2001, Final Population, W.B.

The Muslim population in the six districts of North Bengal is 28.58 per cent (4,209,205). The highest number of 49.72 per cent (1,636,171) Muslims live in Malda district followed by 47.36 per cent (1,156,503) in North Dinajpur district. The lowest percentage of Muslims is 5.31 per cent (85,378 per cent) in Darjeeling district and a little higher at 10.78 per cent (369,195) in Jalpaiguri district. In the other two districts, the number is 24.24 per cent (600, 911) in Koch Bihar and 24.01 per cent (361,047) in South Dinajpur.

There are also linguistic differences in what Muslims have developed so far. The Muslims of West Bengal are mainly divided into Bengali and Urdu. The majority of Muslims are Bengali speaking while a handful of Muslims are Urdu speaking. On the other hand, Bengali-speaking Muslims live mainly in rural areas. On the other hand, Urdu-speaking

Muslims usually live-in urban areas. In terms of infrastructure, people in urban areas enjoy more benefits than those in rural areas. Naturally, Urdu-speaking Muslims enjoy the lion's share of development compared to Bengali-speaking Muslims, but their numbers are very small. Since the Muslims of North Bengal live mainly in the rural areas, the pace of development of the Muslims here is very low. Excluding Malda and Islampur, the number of Muslims in North Bengal is almost non-existent. The percentage is not calculated, only a handful of families can be found in some cities. In Balurghat, the district headquarters of South Dinajpur district, we reached out to two families through personal experience till 1979. Owns a Medina hostel, He lived on the Far East side of the city, known as *Antebasi*, and the owner of Nadia Shawl Repairing probably lived in a slum. I have now heard that two or four more Muslim families have settled in the town. But this position of the people of this community in a district headquarters. This is a picture of Muslims living in the urban areas of North Bengal. The development of a community based on a village cannot be overstated.[22]

A number of researchers have shed light on the socio-economic backwardness, development and change of Indian Muslims. They point out in their research that for various reasons, Muslim society lags far behind the stability of modernity. One of the reasons is widespread illiteracy and backwardness in education. At present, education has been identified as the key to development. In view of this important key to socio-economic development, the overall literacy picture of the districts of North Bengal and especially the Muslim literacy picture can be seen at a glance.

The average literacy rate of the six districts of North Bengal is 60.45 percent with male literacy of 69.75 percent and female literacy of 50.55 percent. In the case of Muslims, the literacy rate is 51.72 percent. Among them, male literacy rate is 60.13 percent and the female literacy rate is 42.49 percent. In terms of overall literacy rate of the state (68.64 per cent), the difference in literacy rate of North Bengal districts (60.45 per cent) is 8.19 per cent

less than other districts of the state. Gender differences: Male literacy rate in North Bengal is 7.27% lower than male and female literacy rate in the state is 59.61%. Literacy rate in districts of North Bengal (50.55%) is 9.06 percent less. This picture of literacy indicates the backwardness of the districts of North Bengal. The difference in female literacy in particular has presented backwardness not only in terms of literacy but also in terms of socio-economic status of women in the region. In this context, it should be noted that the literacy rate of the total eight districts of the state is even lower than the national average literacy rate of five districts in North Bengal.

TABLES 4.3

At a glance the overall and Muslim literacy rate of the districts of North Bengal:

Name of the district	Muslim literacy rate in the districts of North Bengal			Literacy rate of districts of North Bengal		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Darjeeling	71.79	80.05	62.94	50.38	60.86	37.92
Jalpaiguri	62.85	72.83	52.21	55.34	64.98	45.01
Cooch Behar	66.30	75.93	56.12	56.07	64.59	47.11
North Dinajpur	47.85	58.48	36.51	36.04	45.98	25.50
South Dinajpur	63.59	72.43	54.28	67.21	72.81	61.33
Malda	50.28	58.80	41.25	45.30	51.56	38.68
North Bengal	60.45	69.75	50.55	51.72	60.13	42.59
West Bengal	68.64	77.02	59.61	57.47	64.61	49.75

Source: Census of India 2001, Final Population, W.B.

The situation of Muslim literacy rate in the districts of North Bengal is again deplorable. In North Bengal, where the overall literacy rate is 60.45 percent, the Muslim literacy rate is 51.72 percent, which is 8.73 percent less than the overall literacy rate.

Difference between Muslim literacy rate as compared to overall literacy rate of North Bengal districts by male and female literacy rate is 9.62 percent less than male (69.75 percent) literacy rate in North Bengal. Difference in female literacy, the literacy rate of Muslim women (42.49 per cent) is 8.06 per cent lower than that of women in North Bengal (50.55 per cent). As a result, the backward community in the state is North Bengal and the more backward Muslim community of that community is also the backward woman society of this society. According to international beliefs, Muslims are the most backward among other minority communities. The following table is presented in support of the statement.

TABLES 4.4

West Bengal has a higher literacy rate than any other community:

	Hindu	**Muslim**	**Christian**	**Sikh**	**Buddhist**	**Jain**	**Total**
Male	81.12	64.61	77.20	91.37	83.09	96.46	77.02
Female	63.09	49.75	62.30	81.98	66.22	88.87	59.61
Total	72.44	57.47	69.72	87.19	74.73	92.81	68.64

Source: Census of India 2001, Final Population, W.B.

Among the various religious communities in the state, Muslims are the most backward in literacy. While the Muslim literacy rate in West Bengal is 57.47 percent, the Hindu literacy rate is 72.44 percent. Christians 69.72 percent, Sikhs 87.19 percent, Buddhists 74.73 percent and Jain's 92.81 percent. For natural reasons,although the Muslim community is slow, it is attracting the attention of researchers in sociology and social anthropology.

The main topic of the present article is the Muslim Women's Society of North Bengal. Female literacy is one of the most important criteria for the development of any society. From this point of view, the women's society of North Bengal can be highlighted. Table 3 shows that North Bengal's female literacy rate (49.75 per cent) is 9.86 per cent lower than West

Bengal's overall female literacy rate (59.61 per cent). In the context of the districts of North Bengal, South Dinajpur is the only place where the overall literacy rate (54.28 per cent) is 7.05 per cent higher than the Muslim female literacy rate (61.33 per cent). Although the Muslim literacy statistics of this district seem unbelievable to me, the information is true. In the case of other districts, there is a wide disparity in the overall literacy rate. Among the districts of North Bengal, Darjeeling district has the highest overall literacy rate (71.89 percent). There, too, the Muslim female literacy rate (37.92 per cent) is 25.02 per cent lower than the overall female literacy rate (59.61 per cent), which is the largest gap between male and female literacy among the districts of North Bengal. In the other four districts, the gap is 9.01 per cent in Cooch Behar, 7.20 per cent in Jalpaiguri, 11.01 per cent in North Dinajpur and 2.57 per cent in Malda. Again, this gap between men and women is quite worrying. Which is clearly mentioned in Table 3? To get rid of this situation, the national and state governments need to take necessary steps to expand education, especially for Muslim women in the backward districts of North Bengal and for the Muslim community as a whole.[23]

Indian women's society is backward in education and Muslim women's society is more backward. One of the main reasons for the backwardness of women's education is the basic outlook of the Indian education system from prehistoric times. From the beginning of the institutional education system in ancient times to the present time, the education system of our country is religion-dependent. From ancient times to the present day, the Indian education system can be divided into four eras. Ancient education, medieval education, British education and post-independence education. Throughout the ages, there has been an attempt to keep women in the grip of religious discipline in the male-dominated society. In ancient times, the emergence of a strict intellectual system of Vedic education created some opportunities for women's education, but there were very strict restrictions on women's education. Although the Muslim education system was introduced in the Middle Ages,

women did not get the right to education. Although there were mentions of some mad women in the era, they were all members of the royal family. Their lessons have been completed in the inner courtyard of Rajpuri.

Although many changes have taken place in the education infrastructure over the ages, the mentality has not changed completely even today. As a result, it is not in our heart for women to become educated in the real sense. This is the mentality of most of them, whether they have been subjugated or enslaved by men for ages. That utterance of the Manusanghita, woman will be under the father in childhood, under the husband in youth, under the child in adulthood. Women will never be free. Even today we continue to observe this traditional saying like a devout devotee. Everyone agrees, regardless of their religious beliefs. Naturally, some initiatives have been taken to promote women's education, i.e., Muslim women's education, but the actual implementation is just a fantasy.

Not only North Bengal or Muslim women's education, the overall education of any country depends on political will. If those in power have the goodwill to build a truly benevolent state system, the first step taken is to expand universal education. We learn this lesson from the history of the welfare state in the country. But there is plenty of room for question about the goodwill of the rulers of our country and state. If exploitation is to be maintained in the name of governance, then the ruling class never takes initiative to spread education among the people. The more education opportunities are created, the more it becomes impossible to govern. In this situation, if the overall education is to be expanded in the real sense, then the government of the country or the state government has to formulate a realistic plan and involve the people in its implementation. Only then the desired result is possible.[24]

Since Muslims are the most backward in the society especially Muslim women therefore special programs need to be taken for their development. In order to bring the

pioneers and the backward people in a row, only the special needs of the backward people can be brought in a row. To that end, facilities need to be provided by the government. Only then can the backward Muslim women of North Bengal in particular and North Bengal as a whole be developed. The present article seeks to present a picture of the general and especially Muslim society in North Bengal. Some developmental ideas have also been introduced on the basis of various data. But this is just an attempt to present a bigger problem. The questions raised here can be analysed in more depth to find the right direction. However, the main goal of the discussion is the actual development of the target group. And man wants the development that can be seen with the eyes, can be touched, that is, direct development. Education is an indirect means of development. That one-hundred-year-old crop of Chinese proverbs but its qualities are not easily realized by people. Naturally, these activities are not directed towards the way they need to be conducted in order to achieve this development. As a result, the desired goal is still elusive. Education programs alone are not enough, and other development programs need to be integrated. Because hunger is never a pursuit, just as it can never be fruitful if it takes the initiative to expand education without thinking of financial development. Again, overall development is impossible leaving a large section of the society behind. To that end, the overall development of North Bengal can be achieved through the real development of Muslim and Muslim women society.

The position of women in Islam is very clear. The attitude of the *Quran* and *Hadish* bears witness to the fact that a woman is at least as vital to life and society as man himself.[25]The status of women was taken for granted to be equal to that of man. Islam has given to the women are equal to rights and privileges. The rights and responsibilities of a woman are equal to those of the man but they are not necessarily identical with them. There is no grand assumption that women are less important than a man just because her status, roles and rights are not identically the same as men in the *Nashya Sheikh* community. But the

fact is that Islam gives her equal rights, acknowledge her recognizes her independent personality. Though Islam admits the equality of men and women yet, in practice inequalities between them are very wide in many areas. Their conditions are also something different from the ideal's norms due to various historical and socio-cultural reasons.[26]

In traditional Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts women in *Nashya Sheikh* Community used to live in a much-closed social environment. There were many social restrictions regarding the patterns of behaviour and activities of the women. They observed strict seclusion or *Purdah*. The women in *Nashya Sheikh* Community were suffering from several social disabilities. The girls were mostly married at a very early age, immediately after puberty. Unilateral from of divorce and polygamy etc. were also prevalent. The education had been a serious problem among the *Nashya Sheikh* women in Jalpaiguri & Cooch Behar districts. The literacy rate of women among the *Nashya Sheikh* Community is still now very poor. Women are under their father at their childhood stage at the younger age under their husband and at the older age under their sons. The women could not come out of the social structure to move forward. However, a little number of Muslim girls goes to the school but they have lack of mentality be educated. Firstly, they have no educational environment in their home. Secondly, they could not purchase books for the lake of many. Not only the problem is found in Muslim girls but also, it's found the enter *Nashya Sheikh* Students.[27]The economic roles of the *Nashya Sheikh* women were very significant in nature. They were basically engaged in domestic works and child rearing, keeping of fowls, ducks, cows and goats was a common practice of the *Nashya Sheikh* households and the women were mostly engaged in such activities. A few of the *Nash*ya women were also engaged in certain craft works such as weaving, cane basket making etc. The women who belong to the Nashya *Sheikh* community are mostly in isolation. They were ignorant, illiterate and confined in their homes due to strict rules of *Purdha* or seclusion. Instead of equality and justice, their

position in society was exploitative in nature for various reasons such as performance of excessive labour, negligence, avoidance, Fremantle fortune and separation or divorce even in sexual matters. However, widow remarriage was allowed and usually practiced by the people. The birth of the girl was looked down upon as very unfortunate and their opinion in family matters and other social affairs. The system of dowry though prevalent was not very high and compulsive as at present.[28]The sample survey reveals that 53% of the males married before the age of 17 as against 89% of the females in that age group. The materials on record go to indicate that the rites and rituals followed by them at different stages of life cycle (birth, marriage, death (excepting burial) are similar to those prevalent prior to their conversion, i.e., these are still followed in accordance with their traditional heritage. In the cases of divorce, re-marriage, widow-marriage they do not strictly adhere to prescribed Islamic rules, but are guided by the traditional norms and values.[29]

The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim feels that the incident of close-kin marriages is in decline due to the allure of dowry. The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims say that the dowry system has only recently came into vogue among them. In fact, in inquired about the incidents of dowry and found that in the fifty's dowry had not been involved in any marriage in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. They consider it a Hindu custom. The *Nashya Sheikhs* ideally repudiate the system of dowry as it is not according to their *shariat*. The rich Muslim, however, cannot resist the obvious attractions of getting more wealth through dowry. Besides the recent Hindu trait of dowry, the *Nashya Sheikhs* have adopted a host of other Hindu customs in their marriage ceremonies. They apply turmeric on the bodies of groom and bride, they send lagan, parents to the bride by the groom's party, and they observed *Astamangala*, in which the newly married husband comes to live with his wife in her natal home for a day after marriage.[30]

Food Habits:

Diet systems of the *Nashya Sheikh* community are similar to that of Rajbanshi *Jati.* Village inhabitants of *Nashya Sheikhs* like to eat rice, bread, meat and different types of vegetables. It is interesting to say that earlier they had eaten frowsy rice or bread; nowadays they have not eaten a frosty diet. In recent times we found changes in their food habits, such as instead their traditional diet system such as *shidal, cheka*; now instead of these they eat rice, buckler, breed, fish, meat and various vegetables. Their favourite diets are fish, meat, and dal. But in the previous time the people of the Hindu society domesticated goat, duck, pigeon and hen in order to make their economic benefit besides using these animals as food.[31] In the same way the people of the Muslim community are domesticated these animals. Few decades ago, and still also the domestication of hen and duck has become a common feature among the people of Muslim community. Hence, in most of the houses of Muslim community there separately provided cell for the animals. In order to solve the increasing demand of milk, curd etc cows are also domesticated.

They welcomed their guests by providing them rice with meat. Most important changes of their food habits were drinking of liqueur, which is highly restricted in the Shariat. Even the wise people of the village or Imam were compelled to ostracize liquarishen men in the society. It is a hard task to say that drinking was not prohibited in their society. In the earlier time the devastating problem of the *Nashya sheikh* community was drinking water. Because, they had to carry drinking water from natural ponds, rivers, drainage and lakes.[32]

In the present time the scarcity of water has been solved. Now the Gram panchayat has given different facilities like tube-well, etc. to the *Nashya Sheikh* community and along with the *Nashya Sheikh* the rest poor people of the village are getting the facilities. Along

with water facilities the *Nashya Sheikh* community is accepting different facilities like milk, *chhana* etc. from goat.

Dress and Ornament:

Generally, the male members of the *Nashya Sheikh* community were used to long pants, shirts, *lungi* (lower dress of the male); *pajama* (women pant), sandal etc. a few decades ago the peasants of *Nashya Sheikh* community used the traditional dress like *Tawel*, *Lung*i (dress of lower part of the male), half pant for the work in the field. These dresses were used to cover up the secret portion of the body. In previous times the peasants of the *Nashya Sheikh* community worked in the agricultural field with wearing *lengti* (innerwear). But in the present-day changes have been found in the society about dress like the lengthy (innerwear) is not been in use by the *Nashya Sheikh*. Instead, they wear *Lungi*, half pants, full pants, shirts etc for their daily life. Previously due to the scarcity of footwear they used Kharam (one kind of footwear made by bamboo or wood) instead of shoes. Now *kharam* is not available but high status in the society like *Maharam*, *Munshi* etc are used to wear religious cap, Panjabi and pajamas in early days but these dresses are in common use by the villagers also, like Nashya sheikh as well.[33]

In now a day there are several changes found in the dress of *Nashya Sheikh* Women's also. Earlier dresses are similar to the *Adibasi* or tribal people, women's dresses are divided into two parts upper and lower portion. Upper portion was covered by towel or short clothes; lower portion was covered with clothes surrounding their body. They did not use their inner wear as they did not have their stable economic condition or social requirements for using so. But now a days we don't found the earlier dresses instead they use sari, *churidar*, etc. even the *Nashya sheikh* community women of town area are use modern dresses also like jeans, top etc. The most interesting feature of *Nashya Sheikh* women's dress is that they did not use veil in the past and in present also, nut some *Nashya Sheikh* women are using veil which is

not due to teh religious concern but to seek attention of other Muslim groups but a few. Now *Nashya Sheikh* Women use sari or *churidar* and the *orna* of their sari or *churidar* is covered their head.[34]In ornaments, the *Nashya Sheikh* women generally did not use ornaments though in a few cases they used ornaments of low-cost metal like bronze, copper etc. but they now use ornaments of silver, city gold etc and in some cases gold ornaments also.

House:

The Nashya Sheikh community though did not have any special feature in constructing their houses. Their houses were very much similar to those of the Rajbanshi Hindu community people. Some of the houses are arranged in a line though some are isolated. Most of the Houses were covered with streams and railings and walls were made of Bamboos. The poor kitchen and one room for domesticated animals.

These rooms were constructed by bamboo posts and strums. As these materials were easily available so there were no problems in constructing new houses or deconstructing the old one, for the poor people. By begging or borrowing bamboo and wooden material were collected. Earlier, they could have straw in nearby river sand banks. They constructed their bed room with a long shelf, over which they used straws for their comfort. Over which they used handmade mat and hand patched cloth. For pillow, they used old cloths or wooden stools together. For the night lamp, twister's straw sticks were used which slowly glittered and by blowing it flame came out, by using that flame night lamps were kindled; more over flames were used in smoking tobacco as well. Few families of little high esteem had a drawing room, evens four-five family jointly head drawing room which was used for gatherings or hospitality to the guests, *Fakirs*, *Darbesh* etc. Earlier, the Mosques were not prevalent in the villages, on special occasions the villagers were gathered in nearby Mosques for Namaz or religious prayer. But from 1970 onwards Mosques are increasing in the village label also.[35]

Nowadays we find significant changes as far as houses are concerned within the N.S. community. Instead of strains and bamboos, houses are brow constructed with tin and so in some cases cemented houses are also in use. The room on the North side is considered a big cottage. Earlier most the *Nashya Sheikh* family did not have any Latrine, male and female members of the family used open areas for ablutions. But now the situation has changed because of the Government policies, facilities and onwards of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community people.[36] There is no special feature in their House or cottage making this the same as Rajbangsi, some houses are in Aligned and some are scattered manners. Previously they used to make their House with bamboo and jute tricks. But at present they make their House with Tin on the roof and wall and Bricks Houses also noticeable. Though at present Earthen House is found in Malda and Dinajpur district among the *Nashya Sheikh* community. They give more important to the northern side cottage of a House[37]

Marriage:

The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim occurring in the area of study are a quixotic mixture of the both local (regional) and textual (Islamic) rites. We will describe first the local rites that have become an integral part of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim marriages, as these give us an insight into the mechanism of adjustment that the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims make in a plural society. We shall then move on to the textual rites to strength my hypothesis regarding the maintenance of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim's identity.[38]

Marriages are usually arranged by the parents and guardians. When people visit a family to select a bride or a groom it is locally known as *Namsamandha*, which literally means "negotiations". [39]*Lagan* is usually sent in a new leather suitcase or in a small still trunk. It is sent a few days or a week before the marriage. It includes a complete set of clothes- a share, blouse, petticoat, handkerchief, shoes or sandals, cosmetics and so forth. Sometime we noticed a book dealing with conjugal life along with the cloth and

cosmetics.[40]During *Astamangala*, when the newly-married husband visits his Wife's natal home; he is often invited by the newly-related kin within the village to them. Each of these families gives him five rupees according to their means, after entering him. He also receives gifts from his wife's family. In the course of me inquires I came to know of two Muslim brothers in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar who married in; one got one hundred and forty rupees in lieu of clothes and the other a wrist watch costing one hundred and fifty-five rupees from their wives' families.[41]

The smearing of the bodies with paste of turmeric is done every morning anoint the body of the groom with perfumed paste prepared from the leaves of a particular tree locally known as *sondha*, plus certain special flowers called *gophul* with the addition of a few other items. At the time of applying *sondha* the women sing songs. The turmeric paste and *sondh*a used on the body of the groom is scraped off and sent to the bride to be smeared on her body in turn. The Muslims say that the perfume of *sondha* attracts *jin* (spirits). To prevent this happening, the bride and the groom have to keep close to their persons an iron article, usually a *janti* or a pair of nutcrackers. Spirits are supposedly rendered harmless by the proximity of iron. The day before the actual marriage ceremony no turmeric or *sondha* is applied. On this day the bride and the groom bathe in the morning, using soap if desired. In the evening there is a ceremony known as *khirkhawano*. This is held in both the brides and the groom's homes. During the ceremony a dish of sweetmeats and home-made rich cakes is placed before the bride or the bridegroom. Village relatives who are in attendance present gifts to the betrothed after taking a little of the food from the plate and putting it in the mouth of the bride or the groom as the case may be. In the ceremony of *khirkhawano* the father first puts some dust *(dhulphul*), which is collected from the shrine of *satypir,* into the mouth of the bride or the groom. This dust is considered sacred. Lastly the mother takes part in the ceremony, putting a small portion of the sweets into the month of the betrothed.[42]

On the marriage day the groom is accompanied to the house of the bride by villagers and relatives. Members of this party are locally known as *barat or borjattri*. The party of *barat* who came to the marriage of the girl which I attended consisted of only a few men and women, besides the mother of the groom. Woman companions who come with the groom and his *barat* party are locally called *dolabibi*. The groom, if he can afford it, manages to hire or borrow a horse and prefers to come riding to the *shamiana*, or marquee, but not being used to riding horses he mounts the beast only when actually approaching the village.[43]

The groom and his party came in the morning. They were given an outhouse *(baithakhana*) to stay in. The groom wore *chapkan* (a long shirt), white pyjamas, shoes of black leather and socks. At about eleven o'clock the members of the *barat* party bathed and then took food prepared for them by the bride's family. The grooms and brides' parties communicated only through the matchmaker. At about 1 p.m. the marriage ceremony took place. On the evening of the same day the groom was given a special dinner. A few of the bride's relatives who were on joking terms with the bride, and now considered themselves to be on the same terms with the groom, shared food from the same plate with him. They joked with him while eating the food, often embarrassing him to the point of curbing his appetite. On the following morning the bride and the groom were sent away in a bullock cart with her belongings.[44]

Although most of the Bengali Muslims in Koch Bihar and other parts of the region are Hindu converts, they have been observing their rituals and other rituals, but in the past, they have been carefully observing the rituals and traditions. Where religious restrictions also become secondary to them. It is here that the northern *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims have their uniqueness and uniqueness which nurtures the deep sense of harmony among all the peoples of the region since time immemorial. As mentioned earlier, they i.e., *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims also observe the anniversary of the deceased like Hindus. In the same way, in the case of

marriage, we still find enough similarities from the rules of conduct to the song or the folk thoughts. Even decades ago, *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim women used to wear vermilion like Hindus after marriage, and according to all Hindu wedding customs, the use of *dala, chilonbati* (sieve), *kulo* sorting, pot placement, lamp lighting, banana, betel nut are almost identical. However, the main ceremony of the wedding was performed by *Mollah or Munshi* in accordance with Islamic rituals. And the wedding song in the dynastic society is therefore known as the wedding song of the Muslim society, it can be said that this wedding song or song has established a popular social thought by complementing each other.[45]

The auspicious time for the marriage of the Muslims of this region is in the Hindu calendar. *Ghatak* also saw the arrival of certain days. The marriage relationship developed during *Ghatak*'s marriage. *Ghatak* farewell is also done according to the Rajbangshi tradition with clothes, prices, gifts. *Ghatak* also goes from house to house building a garland of that relationship. This is his unwritten profession. Unlike Hindus, Muslims in this region do not get married in the month of *Poush, Chaitra or Mal*, and there is no provision for marriage in the month of Muharram or Ramadan. With Islamic thought in mind.

Bargaining on the question of dowry is like that of the Hindu community. It was decided to speak in front of five people of the village. Yellow on the body is the tradition of the two houses, it is also a ceremony. At the wedding, the bride wears a red fringed sari, but no other fringed colour. Like the Rajbangsi, the Muslims of this region perform a number of essential functions from the day before the marriage. The arrangement of wedding *barandala, chalunbati, kulo* also reflects the Hindu religious rituals in the marriages of the Muslims of this region. There is a special style of decorating *'chailonbati'* which is similar to Rajbangshi wedding. It can be said that there is no special difference. It is placed on a bamboo sieve in a beautiful square with a banana peel, before which the sieve is decorated with Alta, vermilion and turmeric. The reason for enclosing the banana shell is so that all the materials placed on

the lamp do not fall on the banana, lamp, and pot. This is the way to get rid of clutter you don't need. It is one of the essential items for the marriage of the Rajbangshi and *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims of this region. This *chalun* lamp is decorated with 16 vermilion (i.e., 8 pairs) bananas, at least four lit lamps with oil, salt, *ampata* with two jugs of water, a pair of whole betel nuts and a few betel leaves (of course pairs) etc; By doing this, the *Sadhva* women are an experienced woman appointed for marriage who is also known in the society as *Bairatima* or *I Bairati*. This *Bairati*dynasty also performed all the rituals along with the priest in the marriage. There is a dance song with it. It can be said that his leadership created a pleasant atmosphere. They are also known as '*Gidali'* in the Muslim society. This *chailoan* lamp, i.e., the dollar, reflects the fertile culture of the community. Bananas are a symbol of the future health of the future couple, the lamp here is the flow, happiness and prosperity (care is taken so that the lamps do not go out in any way), moreover, vermilion, banana, betel, betel nut are all elements of fertile thought. Before the main ceremony of marriage, that is, according to the Islamic rites, the *'Nikah'*, all the rituals of the Hindu rites were performed by the *Ai Bairatis* with laughter, jokes and mockery. And the tumultuous dance of *Kathagan* continues in every episode. However, it is said that the song is not a song keeping in mind the Islamic thought. Because singing in Islamic Sharia is against Islam. Such a song:

Dalarnam mor rangomala

Dalarnam mor phulmala

Dalasajeboroghorermajhe

Rosiyadamanerdalasajilore

Rosiyaaaroserdaladekhi baba kande

Daladekhi maa o kande

Daladekhichaoyal daman hasilore…

This *dala, chalun*, while arranging the lamp, so the women led by *Bairati* all sing together. An emotional atmosphere is created, through dance songs. *Gidali's* group presents *Dala as Rangmala and Phulmala* here and describes the state of mind of the parents with Daman and Berry through a song. The *Bairati* women complete the folklore by singing multiple songs around *Dala.*

Many folk customs of Hindu, especially Rajbangshi society are still observed with care by *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim society. Like the dynastic society, the bridge of kinship between the bride and groom is built through dance songs. A kind of folklore idea works in an attempt to reflect on the future life of the future couple through some small folklore. Such a twin game, a lot like a cow game. Water is poured into a water-filled vessel (pot, cauldron) and the lamp is floated by two. If the two come closer to each other, it is assumed that the future life of the couple will be happy. Of course, the game continues until the pair. For Hindus, this game is played with water or a small part of a crown.

When the bride and groom are yellow, the brides and grooms all sing along with laughter and jokes. Like Hindus, this folklore is performed through joy and fun by all the neighbours.

Holdichokmokchaoyal o daman

Daman sei holdipailenkonkhane

Bhaijokebondokthuiya

Sei holdiaanchi khaya

Sei holdidamanormaakosobghay.

Semantics :(HoldiChhakmamak - Yellow smeared face, Chawal-Boys, Vaijo-bhabii.e.,Baudi should be (mako-mekhe) make up.

Again, without describing the expression on the groom's face, someone sings a song for the purpose of feasting.

Mata chayanadan kur

Ohe poncho aio

Matakhanibacharseobeler moto

Mata chayna den kur

Ohe poncho aio.

(Semantics: Mata-Head, Dan-Give, Aio-mather, Bairatis are addressed; Baller-Bell, Kur-Turmic powder)

The groom is dressed in vermilion while applying turmeric. Multiple songs are sung while wearing this vermilion.

Chilchilkhorompayediye

Chollammoydan, meyraaamaajaan

Moydanotenamiyadekhongsidurerdokane

Meyraaamaajaan

Oi sindurporaitenariruthilogham

Meyraaamaajaan

Hate ache semlairumal

Mochmonarirgham, meyraaamaajaan.

When the yellow is smeared, the groom's son-in-law (*Banu* is addressed in the dynastic Muslim society) and his friends pick up the bride or groom. This program is known as *'Koldharani'*. Like the '*Mistar Dhara'* of the Rajbangshi society, the marriage of the Muslim society of this region is also a matter of 'Dost'. It is customary to say the word 'friend' three times or to recite '*kalema'* like the bride and groom to form a kinship relationship. However, like the dynastic society, the influence of this style is decreasing

among them. This extinction is not only happening in Islamic thought, but also in social and economic and certainly due to mentality. That is why the issue of *'Mistar Dhara', 'Panichita Baap'* is also on the verge of extinction in the dynastic society. The groom is arranged according to Islamic rituals in accordance with the rules and regulations. There are some songs at that time. It should be noted that religious Islamic rituals are somewhat accepted, but ceremonies such as weddings cover a large part of the ceremonies of lost nationalities of the past, and all that exists in the notable dynastic folklore is a little different. There is a scattering of songs as well as the language, lyrics and dynasty of the songs in the Kamatapuri dialect. There is no difference in pronunciation and posture. It is here that the issue of conversion to the question of nationality becomes apparent. Even if religion has changed for some reason, they still cherish the chronological thinking of the past, transcending petty religious sentiments. As for the lyrics, the consonant captures all the contexts of the time left behind. Religion has become just a stepping stone to sectarianism.

Khatokoriyamoishalkons mor

Mukhejhampodari

Batonotenai mor moishal, dhoraitenai mor moishalre

Ekshoektamoishampishalkonaeklaychoraiche

Batanotenai mor moishalre

Duratenai mor moishal re-

Kon basotinerbetikonadiyeche mor moishalokasha re

Batanotenai mor moishal re.

The original animal husbandry of the Koch-Rajbangshi society *Maishal* the culture surrounding *Bathan* is captured in the lyrics. This thought provoked the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim community, which was once a large part of this glass dynasty. Although the religious boundaries have changed over time, the shadowy shadow of the source field has come up in

the songs, uttered by other women, one of the bearers of the village tradition. Many such songs are scattered in many villages. These have not been lost in the fires of time and economy. And since it is not lost, we can find the commentary of the past by testifying to the present. At one time, in the Rajbangshi society, the pre-wedding songs were widely sung, in the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim society, therefore, the song ceremony took place around the folk rituals. Although both groups have summarized these issues in the course of time, those songs strongly indicate the close connection between the past and the present.

Although Rajbangshi society is Hindu, marriage ceremonies are very different. Although there is a scriptural part, this part is done by the so-called Kamarupi Brahmin. *Adhikari Bamun* has a big role to play. Again, the folk part is done by *Bairati* i.e., experienced women. There are many differences in marriage. Even in the *Nasya Sheikh* Muslim society, except for some ceremonies like recitation of Kalama in front of *Ukil Baba* and *Sakshi Sabud* under the influence of Islam, the rest of the rituals are not religious in nature but can be said to be more of a folk tradition. It is to be noted that this lawyer *Babai* was respected in the Muslim society like the *Panichita* father of the Rajbangshi society and was bound by kinship. For a long time, the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim community has followed their own traditional thinking. Lately, in some cases, religious restrictions have not been a major obstacle. On the contrary, the majority *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim society has given importance to issues like marriage and early mutual thinking. With a few small changes, they have incorporated life and family as their own folklore.

In Rajbangshi society, the bride is given on the day of marriage but in Muslim society, the gift is given on the next day, that is, on the day when the groom goes home with the bride. The bride's father will hand over the betel nut and raw money to the groom. There is no separate episode of stale marriage. As soon as the bride enters the house of the father-in-law, the boy, i.e., the groom, will sit in the north-south house with the boy's mother on his

lap. There are some folk ceremonies and songs. The women of *Barapaksha, Bairatis* will complete these ceremonies in dance songs and take the bride as their own.

Song in every episode; in the past, wedding ceremonies in dance were given another dimension, just as in the dynastic society as in the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim society. Over time, the mentality of both groups has changed dramatically, especially for economic reasons. And in these way songs, songs are being lost from society. However, in some areas the practice of this song evokes old times. That applies to the Rajbangshi society as well as to the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim society.

The rule of collecting something to stop the bride and groom at the gate is quite common in the rural society. The people of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim Samaj also blocked the way through the gate of the bride's house. Drinks, betel nuts, *bidis* block the way for the bride and groom. After the debate over *Dakshina,* the matter was finally settled in a joke. As a model of rural folklore, the groom has to handle many things with a smile to get a bride. The funny thing is that in this case, even if everyone is released, the groom is stopped until he gets a suitable *Dakshina.* After leaving, they sing again, especially women. I have no enemies.

Hate damanernarkelbashi

Date damanernishi

Biyakoirbaraaichen daman

Aajabadsharbeti.

Ki ki daman aainchen daman

Jhompaivoreya

Jhompakhuliyadekhong re, daman

Sudhuaakarmati.

Jhompakhuliyapakmarnung

Vora sobharmaje.

Another song;

Baser agale duma mir mir kore

Ghaichegaburbogunai

Hulurnakandekhe

Aanohuluk bando kathalergoche

Katholbeichapaishadiya-

Hulurnachondekho.

(Semantics: Jhamp-bag, Aka-Unun, Pak Marnung-running, Gabru-groom, Bagunai-Jamai, Dhuma-Dhoya, Hulu-a kind of animal, Biral- Cat)

In these songs, just like in Rajbangshi society, in *Nasya Sheikh* Muslim society also *Ibairati* and women sing for the bride and groom. A pleasant atmosphere of humour is created through the song. As a result, a different environment is created between the groom and the bride in which everyone is not only acquainted but also a bond of kinship. When the bridegroom comes home with the bride, the bridegroom's wives, especially the bridesmaids, block the way, demand money to carry him in their arms, and sing songs. In that song, there are more than one words addressed to the bride. The words by which the bride is made her own, domestic:

Chikiyarduladulbodoner kala

Kali nageichenborubiyakenebela.

Nijerjeithanihoiyachariyanadei gala

Take nabujhaitehoiyageichebela.

(Semantics: Jathani-Barshali, Baru-Bar)

The groom is jokingly asked why it is so late to return. Or held the bride's boudi? Seeing the tiredness of the groom's body ('*chikiadhuladhul badan kala'*) the groom has been

slanted. In fact, in this way, through the joke, the ceremony called marriage is taken to another level by everyone, especially the women.

Songs are sung for the purpose of the bride, there are slashes as there are slanting remarks, sometimes there is a mockery of age but none of them is literally true, everyone knows that this is how the *mahal mahal* makes the wedding happy it is also a part of the folklore.

Sonar koti, ruparkoti

Didi boraibaporibar genu-

Gacherboraigacheroilo

Kotibaroilo dale

Noyasorokdiyajaykerajar beta dakaypuchari kore.

Etoboyoseetokalerkoina

Biyo ban a hoi tore

Shisvorasendur dish

Biyobakorimtokenakvorasona dim biyobakorimtoke

Another same song;

Mukhikusaiyergonogonogito

Tor bap nachateyageiche

Amar balichoto.

Palkirkaportuliyadekhong

Dumrakolargach

Amar borughorsondaichekare sitar pati

Tomarbalighorsonday

Dilkis kore mati.

(Semantics: *kushai* - sugarcane, *chateya*-ball, *dhali* - bride, *dhumra* - thick, *tiknis* - tupshabda).

In this way, through the song, there is an invisible competition between the opponents. The bridegroom is heard by the women of the bride's side and the bride is heard by the bridegroom's side. All in all, as the kinship between the neighbours surrounding the marriage intensifies, so does the relationship between the people of another village. Marriage became a proper celebration. Especially the women of the two villages, forgetting all the arrogance surrounding the marriage for a few days, join in the joyous atmosphere. Old relationships are new.

The wedding songs of the Muslim society of this region, the wedding songs of the Rajbangshi society complement each other. Nothing special from the language, words and presentation of this song, one can find the source of *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim society. The folklore aspect of the past is reflected in the song. The use of vermilion is hidden in the word vermilion, the friend actually holds the mister, *Ukilbaba*, *Panichita* is the name of the father, the twins play, and the dia-floating lap indicates the relationship with the dynastic society in everything. In fact, in the evolution of sociology, religion has changed, but there has been no special transformation of secular and social thought. This has been under the pressure of time and under the influence of some supernatural acceptance. For which the special feature of the Muslim society of this region. Religious orthodoxy has never been a problem for harmony. Another ideology has been created with folklore, popular ideas and religious generosity which is a unique feature of this region. In this specialty, therefore, wedding songs or hymns are not only a small element, but also another humorous source of self-assembly.

Religion:

The *Nashya Sheikh* community of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri are the follower of Islam. The converted *Nashya Sheikh* community though not been able to overcome the ritual and influence of the previous religions, but the main ideology of Muslim religion i.e peace, they embrace. So, they are quite liberal. The poor villagers of *Nashya Sheikh* Community are influenced by the *Munshi* and *Maolana* of their village.[46] They follow the five principles of Islam i.e*Namaj* (prayer), *Roja*(fasting), *Hauj* (pilgrims), *Zakat* (charity), *Kalima* (religious quatations). Most of the *Nashyasheikh's* male and female, like to pray for *Namaz five* times a day. Every year they followed fasting of one month for *Roja.* But many female and male members of the Nashya *Sheikh* community do not follow it strictly. The *Nashya Sheikh* Community people of villages and towns are practicing *Haujjatra* (pilgrims) to Makkah and Madina. The *Hajis* are (who has gone to pilgrim to Makkah and Madina) Mazar Miya Haji (Nathua hat), Haji Kasimuddin Rahman (Duramari), Haji Akbar Ali (Dhupguri), Haji Sahidul Islam (Dhupguri) and many others. For charity i.e., *Zakat*, the *Nashya sheikh* community people give as far as they could to the Masjid, Madrasha and the beggars of nearby places of Masjid and Madrasha. Every male and female member of *Nashya sheikh* community read the Kalima or religious quotations as well.[47] In now a day within the districts of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri ideology of Muslim religion propagated by *Tablig-e-jamat*. The main centre of *Tabliq-e-jamat* in Jalpaiguri is situated in Sisubari (now in Alipurduar district) and the main centre of Cooch Behar district situated in Suktabari. The *Nashya sheikh* community people are deeply influenced by the Sufi ideology as well. They have deep faith to the Sufi pir also. *Nashya sheikh* community people travel the *Dargah* of Sufi *pirs*and *darbesh* quite frequently. In this regard fair are conducted every year by the Sufi pir and darbesh. The places of pir and darbesh of Jalpaiguri district are are Kalu Saheb er mazar (Jalpaiguri), Majnu Shah er mazar (Dhupguri), Tafiut Saheb er mazar (Rangalibazna) and Hajrat Shah Sufi Sher Ali er mazar

(Khuniabhita, Dhupguri), HaldibariEkramulSahebermazar (Coochbehar). The Nashya sheikh community people interested in this mazar are quite remarkable, along with another Muslim and non-Muslim also. During nineteen hundred seventies the number of Munshi and Mauluvi at the village level were too small, so the Munshi and the Mauluvis were brought from Bihar and U.P and they *Namaj* of the male member of villages. This Munshis and Mauluvis kept a long beard and wore a fagetupi (religious cap) and with the influence of them the male villagers had started. The ritual of long beard and white religious cap. They helped in various religious customs and rituals even in marriage, naming ceremony, *khatna* (circumcision) etc. According to the Quranic law, they used to be the high esteemed persons of the village. They directly or indirectly help in conducting *Namaz, Hauj, Zakat* etc. They used to explain the good (halal) and bad (haram) also. Even in the *Qurbani* (sacrifice), they used to be most important person.[48]

The birth of the first child is normally greeted with the warmest demonstration of unaffected joy in the homes of the parents of both wife and husband. The birth of the first child usually takes place in the house of the wife's parents. A *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim sends his expectant wife to her parent's home when her time approaches. This is a local custom. This custom is also prevalent among the Hindu. The wife is not sent to her parent's home for subsequent births; but some parents who can afford to, and live either within the village or nearby, bring their expectant daughters' home to all such locations.[49]At childbirth, women of a particular Hindu caste are called to attend as midwives. In general, no women of any other caste or community work as midwives in the areas. The wife of the head of the Hindu family at Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, together with her son's wife, serves as mid wife to the Muslim villagers of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and adjoining villagers.

When a male child is born, and especially when the child is the first issue, there is often much clamorous rejoicing. According to the Islamic custom, *azan* (summon to prayer)

is called allowed by a male, not for prayer but to proclaim the birth of the child. This is done at *Nashya Sheikh* only the occasion of the birth of a male child. The child father or grandfather usually does the proclaiming. Some devout Muslims well versed in Islamic rules read *Takbir* (i.e the creed) in the left ear of the new-born.[50]

After parturition the mother observes 'pollution' for seven days. For these seven days she does not over regular prayers *(namaz).* On the seven day after the birth of the barber shaves the child's head and pares the nails of both child and mother. The mid wife's presence is customary at the time of this ceremony. There are two Muslims barbers in the village of *Nashya Sheikh* family, either of whom may be called on this occasion.[51]

After being shaved the child is bathed. The mother also takes a birth and her 'period of pollution' is then considered over. On this day *Nashya Sheikh* celebrate *Aqika.* On this occasion parents, grandparents and other close kin like uncles and aunts etc. Name the new-born. *Aqika* consist of a sacrificed to Allah in the name of the child, to goats for a boy and one for a girl. A quarter of the sacrificial meat is distributed among the poor. The *Nashya Sheikh* at Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri usually give away this portion to the poor within the village. Another quarter of the meat is given to kin, generally close kin. The rest is kept for their own consumption. [52]

Those who cannot afford the ceremony of *Aqika* on the seventh day after the birth of a child may postpone it till the fourteenth or the twenty- first day, or any convenient time later on. Some of them sacrifice only one goat at the time of the *Aqika* of a male child. Others arrange the rite in consumption with *korbani,* when sacrificing a large animal; they offer one seventh of it to Allah in the name of the child whose *Aqika* is being fulfilled. It may be pointed out that there is no such rule in the secret text justifying this practice. The *Nashya Sheikh* in the area of the study, however, does it because they say that for a long time this has

been their practice. The poor who cannot afford anything skip the ceremony of the sacrifice and it is not considered unlawful to do so according to Islam.[53]

Language:

The mother tongue of the *Nashya sheikh* community people of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Uttar Dinajpur, dakshin Dinajpur and Malda districts as well as Whole North Bengal are Rajbanshi or Kamatapuri language. As they pose the language of Rajbanshi people, so they are considered as the Rajbanshi Muslim or Bengali Muslim. They practiced the Rajbanshi language and culture from the very early days. Though nowadays the new generation of *Nashya sheikh* community is learning Arabic and Farsi in Madrasha but the number is too small. One of the major problems of *Nashya sheikh* community as far as the language is concerned is that their mother tongue is Rajbanshi language, official language are Bengali and English whereas religious language is Arabic and Farsi, so they are not able to concentrate to anyone of those language but they overcoming the problem as far as they could. The important cultural aspects are that though they have changed their religion but not previous manners. The *Nashya Sheikh* use *kamtapuri or Rajbangsi* language and use Rajbangsi customs and manners.[54] They like to carry on their life as same as Rajbangsi use only different *Roza*(Fasting), *Namaz* (Prayer) and later on there have been introduced Urdu words such as *Abba, Amma, Chacha, Gosul* etc.

Location and area especially this Kamatapuri or Rajbangsi language is known by various names in North Bengal. Such as Rajbangsi, Kamatapuri, Suryapuri etc. The influence of Hindi-Urdu mixed language of Bihar is noticeable in special areas of Dinajpur. On the other hand, the differences between the regional Bengali languages of Suryapuri, Shershahbadia, Penchi and the local Bengali language are also very clear. A temporary review of the language here reveals similarities with the Rajbangsi language in most cases, but the language of the native Bengal Muslims can be considered as the language of the

Rajbangsi Muslims. Which is the language of the native *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim community?[55]

Linguistic differences between Sher Shah Badia and Penchi communities:

Bangla shobdo **(Bengali Word)**	***Shershahbadiya Shobdo*** **(Shershahbadiya Word)**	***Pechishobdo*** **(Pechi Word)**
Akhon	Akhoni	Okhni
Shilpata	Pata	Shilti
Unun	Aakha	Chulah
Jalani	Thelar	Kathi
Aakha-	Khaccr	Uskathi
Baba	Babji/ Baji	Bapu
Jangol katr Astro	Haisa	Haosa

The language of the Pathan community:

Bangla Bhasa **(Bengali Language)**		***Pathan Bhasa*** **(Pathan language)**
Ki Korcho?	What are you doing?	Ka Korhoto Re?
Kheyecho?	Have you eaten?	KhailaaHonn?
Chole Gecho?	Gone?	Chall Gohil?

Rajbangsi Muslim and Suryapuri language:

Bengal or Rajbangsi Muslims are living all over the vast area of North Bengal. The Rajbangsi are divided into four classes due to some differences in physical Structure and language; Namely- Rajbangshi, Kshatriya Rajbangshi, Desi Rajbangsi and Palia Rajbangsi. In West Dinajpur district, Desi Rajbangsi and Palia Rajbangsi are known only as Desia and Palia. Similarly, the slightest physical structure and linguistic differences exist among the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim or Rajbangsi Muslims.[56]

The pronouns used by the Nashya Sheikh Muslims are as follows:

Bangla Shobdo	**(English Word)**	**Nashya Sheikh Muslim *Sohbdob*(Word)**
Ami	(I)	Mui, Moo, Hami
Amra	(We)	Hmara, Mora
Amake	(Me, To Me)	Mok
Amader	(Us, Our)	Hamar
Tumra	(You, You All)	Tumrah
Se	(She/he)	Uma,Uyai,Usma
Tara	(They)	Umrah
Tar	(His/her)	Okhre,Uyar,Usmar
Take	(Him)	Oshak, Osmak, Ook

Examples of verbs:

Bangla Shobdo **(Bengali Word)**	**Rajbangsi or Nashya Sheikh Muslim *Shobdo* (Word)**	
Jabo	(Let's Go)	Jamo,Jamu, Jam,Jamku, Jabku
Kori	(I do)	Koru, Korchu, Korohi
Korechi	(I Did)	Kornu, Koriyahin
Ele	(When)	Aalu, Aalo
Na	(No, Not)	Nihi
Tar Barite Jete Hobe.	(She has to go Home)	Usmar Barit JabaHobi

"Ho", "Bo", "Go" and trivially Re, Ku, etc. are used at the end of the verb in honour. For example, where did you come from? *–Kunthite Ailen Bo*? How much did you pay? *KetokeNilchi Ku?*

Here are a few words from a folk-tale prevalent in Rajbangsi or *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim society.

Bangla shobdo	(English Word)	Rajbangsi or Nashya Sheikh Word
Lau (Sabji)	Vegetables	Toka
Chele	Boy	Chengra, Chuya,
Ache	There is	Chea
Gobor	Dung	Chan
Basher Toiri Jhuri Baskets	made of bamboo	Daki
Komore	At the waist	Kochat
Jomir Simana	Land boundary	Ali
Konistho	Junior	Keni
Korlo	Did	Kolli
Deho	Body	Gotor, Deha
Stri	Wife	Maiya, Jaya
Kupba Idara	Well	Chuha
Snan Korte	To bathe	Gao Duhaya
Egulo	These	E Nungla
Bati	Bowl	Khuri
Boithokkhanar Samne Jayga	The front of the living room	Chundar
Pat Khori	Jute chalk	Sinja

Gash ba Khorer toiri agundhoriyerakhar jonno, To hold a fire made of grass or straw, Bhuti

As the language of Suryapur was mixed in Islampur area of Uttar Dinajpur district, the name of the language was given to Suryapuri Language. The language is spoken from Barduar in Raiganj to Sonapur, Bangladesh in the east, Amar (Purnia) in the west and parts of South Katiyar.[57]

The examples of Suryapuri Language:

Bengali Language	**(English)**	**Suryapuri Language**
Taratari Aso	Come quickly	Hidke ass
Eimatroamibarijabo	I'm just going home	Aalaymui jam
Baba	Father	Bau
Bhai	Brother	Bhei
Chele	Boy	Nunu

Although the above Suryapuri language is known by different names, there is no doubt that the Rajbangsi language has merged with it. Even in some cases Rajbangsi language has prevailed. Apart from that, some of the Islamic words adopted by the converted Muslims of West Bengal in the post-conversion period

Such as:

Meat- Gusto

Uncle- Cha-cha

Aunty- Khala

Father- Abba

Mother- Amma

Literature:

The contribution of the *Nashya sheikh* community people in the field of literature is not more than little. But the contribution of the Muslim people of Jalpaiguri district was highly praised by various researchers and scholars. There were a few eminent people available during the pre-independence period, like B.P Rahimunnecha, she was a great literator. She had given economic assistance to a magazine called Mihir-o-sudhakar. BegomSuphura Khatun, (wife of barrister AminurRahaman) daughter of Mymensingh

Barutia Rajbari, during nineteen hundred thirty *'narimul'*, a noble was written by her. The most remarkable one was the wise of Zamindar Hamidulla khan of Tetulia, Begom Azizunnechha. She translates the work of Tomas Panne's heroic sentimental 'the *harmit*' in Bengali. She was the first English educated Bengali Muslim poet. In recent times Helen-Nuri-Azad of Bakali (Jalpaiguri) is a very familiar name in the literary field of North Bengal. His writings are published in many magazines and Books. Moulana Mahammad Sahidul Islam is also a much-rewound person of Dhupguri (Gadom), his writings are also found in many Books and Magazines.[58]Pasarul Alam is a much popular writer of Uttar Dinajpur (Islampur), his writings are also found in many books and Magazines.

On the other hand, in the district of Cooch Behar we are unable to find any *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim community people as far as literature is concern. But in local folk lores and in little magazines we found Muslim scholars in literary field, though they don't have any significant role. As historical writer, we found Amanatullah Chowdhury, though he is not been considered as remarkable one. In the field of Music, Abbasuddin Ahamed established his profile very much. Moreover, as a record artist Naib ali and Ayesha Sarkar of Dinhata win the hearts of the critics. Ajimuddin MIya of Chandamari established himself as a Radio artist. Parvin Sultana of Dinhata and Najrul Islam of Harinchoura (Cooch Behar) are also earned their status in the field of Music.[59]

The family of 'Abbasuddin Ahmed is one of the famous *'Nashya Sheikh'* families of North Bengal. The people of Koch Bihar of Abbasuddin, most of his birth and deeds are soaked in the earthy juice of Koch Bihar and Koch Bihar's mind. His eldest son, Justice Mustafa Kamal, his daughter, one-time East Pakistan and later Bangladesh's famous singers of folk-music, modern music, Islam music all such artists as Ferdousi Rahman are rarely born in Bengal. Justice Kamal retired as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Abbasuddin's second son, Mustafa Zaman Abbani, is also a well-known artist, and his

expertise in music is worthy of envy. He has already gifted several books to the people of Bengal. He has done very important work on Sufism in Bengal. His able wife Ashma Abbasi is also a famous writer. Many poems, stories, novels have come out of his hands. Justice Kamal's daughter Nasheed Kamal is a university professor and a renowned artist of folk music, Nazrul Geeti, modern songs etc. Like his cousin Ferdousi Rahman, he has been performing in many countries around the world besides Bangladesh. The most respected person in this family is Abbas's wife Ratnagarbha Begum Lutfunnesa. There was a simple rural housewife. Man has carefully cared for his accomplished children. But very few people know that that simple rural bride created such beautiful literature. In 1967, he published some of Abbasuddin's letters to the Bhayoiya emperor Abbasuddin in his book 'Praner Aleya', 'Pranapriya Aleya' and Begum Lutfunnessa 'Time Speaks'. These letters are literature. I have rarely seen such a readable letter.[60]

Folk song or Music:

The role of Muslims is very negative in the history of Bengali music until the emergence of Nazrul and Abbasuddin duets. Outside Bengal, Hindustani music has been dominated by Muslim musicians from the middle Ages to the present day. The Muslims of Bangladesh but have not been able to keep pace with the Muslims of other parts of India. The invaluable resources of Bengali folk music have also remained hidden from the public eye, disrespected, neglected and neglected. But in this folk music, the artistic pursuit of the Nashya Sheikh Muslim masses of rural Bengal has been captured for a long time. The family of Abasuddin Ahmed is one of the famous *'Nashya Sheikh'* families of North Bengal. Abasuddin is a man of Koch Bihar, most of his birth and deeds are soaked in the earthy juice of Cooch Behar - the mind of Koch Bihar is nourished. His eldest son, Justice Mostafa Kamal, his daughter, one-time East Pakistan and later Bangladesh's famous singers-folk music, modern music, Islamic music, everything like Ferdosi Rahman was born in Bengal.

Abbasuddin Ahmed:

Abbasuddin Ahmed**: (**27 October 1901 – 30 December 1959) was born in Tufangang subdivision of Cooch Behar district of *Nashya Sheikh* Family of West Bengal on 27 October 1901 in British India. His father, Zafar Ali Ahmed, was a lawyer at Tufanganj court. Ahmed's first son Mustafa Kamal served as the Chief Justice of Bangladesh during June–Dec 1999. His only daughter, Ferdausi Rahaman is a classical musician. His youngest son, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, is a folk researcher, writer, singer and social worker. Ahmed's granddaughter, Nashid Kamal, daughter of Mustafa Kamal, is a singer, professor of demography and writer.[61]

His early education was from schools and a college of North Bengal. He came closer to music through the cultural programme at schools and colleges. He was largely a self-taught song composer and singer. For a brief period, he learned music from Ustad Jamiruddin Khan in Kolkata. He was a Bengali folk song composer and singer born in the Bengal province of British India. He was known for Bhawaiya folk song which is a style commonly found in Rangpur and Cooch Behar.[62]

Abbasuddin Ahmed started his career as a clerk in DPI office of Kolkata, where he stayed from 1931 to 1947. Afterwards he had worked in a permanent post in the Department of Irrigation. He was offered a job of a recording expert in a government organization in the time when Ak. Fazlul Haque was the chief minister of the state. His songs played a crucial role in evoking the opinion of Muslim public in the favour of 'Pakistan Movement'. After the partition in 1947, he joined, as an Additional Song Organiser, the Department of Information and Broadcasting. He also participated in the South East Asia Conference in Manila in 1955, the Bengali Cultural Conference in Rangoon in 1957 and the International Folk Music Conference in Germany in 1956 as the representative of Pakistan.[63]

Ahmed started his career by singing modern Bangla songs for the HMV studios, followed by modern songs of poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet of Bangladesh. He then proposed to Nazrul Islam to write and tune Islamic songs, which he sang in numerous numbers and recorded for the HMV studios. He has a pioneering role in bringing the music to the home of the Indian Muslims and arousing them from a state of backwardness. He was the first Muslim in erstwhile India who used his own name in the record labels. Before Abbassddin Ahmed, Muslim singers would use pseudo names, so that their Muslim identity would be anonymous. He later recorded Bhawaiya, Khirol and Chatka which were famous in Cooch Behar and Rangpur as well as the whole present North Bengal. Later he started to sing other folk songs like jaari, sari, bhatiyali, murshidi, bichchhedi (songs of estrangement), marsiya, dehatattwa, and musical plays. He also collaborated with Jasimuddin and Golam Mustofa.[64]

Abbasuddin Ahmed distinguished from his contemporary composers and singers during the ’20s. He has been credited with vocalizing everything from Islamic songs to Folk songs. His mesmerizing voice and stirring songs intertwined with our cultural heritage. His musical influence waved in Cooch Behar where he was born. He was committed to heart and soul to learn music. He developed his musical skills under the guidance of Ustad Jamiruddin Khan in Kolkata and Ustad Kader Buksh in Murshidabad. He was acclaimed a folk singer of great originality. Initially, he attained recognition for folk songs like Bhawaiya (a genre of North Bengal folk song aka Cart man’s song), Khirol and Chatka in Cooch Behar and Rangpur district. Along with folk, he sang different types of songs such as modern, patriotic, Islamic and Urdu songs.[65] Folk songs like *Jari, Sari, Bhatiali, Bichchhedi, Dehatattava, Marsiya, Palagan* and Islamic songs such as *Hamd-Nath* sung by him became popular and made him one of the beloved folk artists in this land.

Muslim Rejuvenation:

In collaboration with Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, Pastoral Poet Jasimuddin and Poet Golam Mostafa he sang the songs composed by them. They inspired cultural practice in Bengali Muslim society and played a significant role in promoting Muslim rejuvenation. Abbasuddin Ahmed worked with Nazrul Islam while he made records with renowned companies like 'His Master's Voice' known as HMV. He also made a number of records with Megaphone, Twin and Regal companies. The song 'O Mon Ramzaner Oi Rojar Sheshey' is an inseparable part of the Muslims which proclaims the embodiment of graciousness and complacency. He was the first singer to lend his voice to this song. He also voiced a collection of Islamic songs composed by Nazrul. Their collaboration consolidated communal harmony that transcended the narrow boundaries of religion.[66]

Bhawaiya and Bhatiali King:

Bangladeshi movie 'Uttarer Sur' (Northern Symphony) is based on the livelihood of one Bhawaiya singer. Woman is the central character of Bhawaiya song. It expresses the feelings and emotions of women. The song '*O Ki Gariyal Bhai'* is one of the Bhawaiya songs sung by Abbasuddin. The song exhibits the woman expressing her love towards the Garials (Cart men).

"O ki gariya bhai koto robo ami panther dikhe chayare…."

Abbasuddin Ahmed portrayed the life of North Bengal. From his childhood, he was surrounded by the feeling of hard-working life and boundless harshness of nature. His song *'Allah Megh De'* became one of the worthiest remarks.

"Oh God, give clouds, give water, give shelter, Oh dear one ...".

A traditional type of song sung by boatmen of eastern Bengal is *Bhatiali. Bhatiali* songs are about experience, expedition and relentless journey against the stream. His popular Bhatiali

songs are written by Pastoral Poet Jasimuddin. Among those *Amay Bhashaili Re, AmayDubaili Re and Majhi Baya Jao* are widely popular.[67]

The contribution of Abbasuddin is unparalleled and mesmerizing. He wrote an autobiography named *Amar Shilpi Jibaner Katha* (1960). He was posthumously honoured with the Pride of Performance Award in 1960, *Shilpakala* Academy Award in 1979 (posthumously) and highest civilian honour of Bangladesh, *Swadhinata Padak* in 1981 (posthumously). It is quite relevant to ask the question is his spirit and legacy being carried on. It is required to commemorate the folk maestro in order to save our cultural heritage. Abbasuddin made a number of gramophone records that demand to be preserved. He has left an indelible impression meant to be cherished. The great soul left for heavenly abode on 30th December 1959.[68]

These songs are still prevalent in the Muslim community in the villages amidst innumerable rules of conduct on any important social occasion like marriage. However, the prevalence of these songs in urban areas is almost non-existent. Under the pressure of the modern omnipotent civilization of the city, it is gradually disappearing. In rural Muslim villages in remote northern Bengal, wedding songs are usually composed orally to meet immediate needs and are sung to the tune of folk-music, which is why the songs of this region of the Muslim community also play a special role in folklore.

Belief and Customs:

Traditionally, the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim community of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri Districts are believed in various Belief and Customs. They are following these beliefs from generations, like *Gosalpana* (when new seeds of Paddy are showing*), Nayabhat* (when new paddy taking at home), *Pusna* (cake made of rice meal), *Chaitra Sankranti* (last day of Chaitra month), *BachharPahela* (first day of every new Bengali year*), Sona Kapar* (during

marriage gifts of Golds and saris), *HaludMakha* (using turmeric on face and body at the day of Marriage), *Git Gaoa* (Singing of Marriage songs), *Chailan Bati* (giving blessings with lamp), *Pasa Khela* (Playing Pasa), *Swad Khaoano* (giving foods of woman's choice during pregnancy), *Nabo Jataker Chul Katano* (cutting of hair of a new born baby), *Mukhe Bhat* (ceremony of putting rice into a child's mouth for the first time), *Asouchapalan* (after death of any family person), *Kriya Karma* (Final ceremony for the peace of the death soul after 40 days of death), *Dostipata* (making new friends), *Bapdai Deoa*(establish father as a relation), *Mannat Kara* (wish to God or Allah during bad times) etc. Though these kinds of local culture are not approved by Islamic law, those are deep rooted into the mind of the *Nashya Sheikh* people. Though these kinds of customs and beliefs are not now practiced by *Nashya Sheikh* People, but those are prevalent in the society in limited numbers.[69]

The *Nashya Sheikh* people do not like to cut their beard, hair, or nail on Friday. One of the most striking customs is that they believe every child of them takes birth by the blessings of Allah. They also believe that every child will be brought up by Allah. But now there are some changes in that custom. They believe, if three brooms are kept together, there must be a quarrel with each other. If they lend Chilly to their neighbours, they believe, the relation between the neighbours will break up in near future. They are of the view that if they abuse water, which they have to use for Uzor (using water for wash before prayer for Namaz), and the rest of the water if they drink, they will be blessed by Allah. They followed several customs like – if any couple have 16 children, there will be a re marriage between them. Another peculiar custom is that, if any husbands give *Talaq (Divorce)* to his wife and again want to marry to the same wife in future, the woman has to *Nikah* (marriage) with the oldest male person of that village for a minimum 90 days for purity. Only by then the previous husband is able to marry his earlier wife.[70]

It is revealed that they are not confined by the rules of *Shariat,* Islamic customs and Islamic rules. They always maintain the Hindu Rajbangsi culture but need not to justify the culture as following the same as Muslims or not. Even they used to follow the Hindu good day in these special days for their marriage, birth ceremony etc. They always avoid the Hindu evil month for their occasion such as *Poush mash* (month), *Chaitra mash*, *Bhadra mash*etc and they also avoid the *Ramjan* month (Fastimg) and *Maharam* month for their marriage. They also make bargaining in their marriage for dowry. Brides wear red sharee in their marriage like Hindu. So, they are not lagging behind to maintain the Hindu customs and culture. Apart from the few educated *Nashya Sheikh* Families, most of the families who are comparatively less educated or illiterate do not subscribe to the notion of birth control.[71]

Though they have changed their religion, their cultural activities are the same as the *Rajbansi* community. They are aligned with the local cultural activities like folk song, dance, music, acting, sports etc. The main entertaining folk song and play of *Rajbansi* in North Bengal are *Bhawaya, Kushan, palagan* (folk song and drama) are aligned with the *Nashya Sheikh* community. Apart from, many other folk song and drama of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri are- *Gorakhnath Gan, Aloary Gan, Satyapir and Motherpir, pachaliGan, Murshid Gan, Bhawaiya Gan, Dotaradanga, Saitolgan* etc. On the other hand, in Malda are- *Gambhira*and marriage song. The Muslim Youths were experts of these songs, the most examples are Abhasuddin. In the field of *Bhawaya*, Muslims are more experts than the Hindu. With these Muslims women are not lag behind; the most examples are Hamida Banu (Assam border), Aysha Sarkar, Parvin Sultana (Dinhata), Jinaraman (Dhupguri) etc.[72] Now their cultural activities are in crisis, and the big question emerges who will preserve these?

When new seeds of Paddy are sown (Gochorpana):

Paddy plantation is one of the most celebrated rituals of all indigenous Rajbansi and *Nashya sheikh* communities. It is celebrated every year in the months of June and July. This

is celebrated on the first day of planting of paddy.[73] This paddy planting method is done through special materials, like - one black shrimp, banana tree, *teoya* tree, jute tree, which are planted on the rituals field. It was arranged with five to seven banana pieces of casserole and five pieces of *kajal* and *sindoor* were given to each. With it, a straw-shaped fire was set on fire. Then the *Borashala* rice seedlings are planted. Five to seven saplings were planted. Gold and silver were given in a glass of water from five to seven trees. This practice is called as Gochorpana.[74] Then they would go straight to the house with all the extra belongings. Looking back, it was forbidden. Then all the materials were kept in the north house of the house. They came home and drank milk first. On that day, there will be one kind of pulses (*Maskalai*) and black turtles as vegetables on the menu. At meal time it is necessary to take rice pulse vegetables. Nothing can be taken later. *Nashya sheikh* people have been practicing this ritual from their predecessors. The purpose of this ritual is to improve the yield of paddy cultivation.[75]

The basic premise and origin of folklore is the observance of worldly things. Since this area is the main area of agriculture, most folklore is the product of agricultural products. The original form of folklore is the prayer of the abundance of objects or animals that are involved with agriculture. This is the folklore that the goddess is remembered for or those for whom it is observed, all of them are non-Aryan gods.[76]

The main purpose of this ritual is to worship the goddess Lakshmi to produce more rice. At that time there was no way for humans to do so if there were insects and various diseases in paddy. Therefore, people desire the fasts of the Goddess. So, they used to do this. This ritual is observed when the paddy crop is ripe to emerge from the paddy tree during the *Ashwani or Kartik*, (in the Bengali month) planting of paddy in the month of *Ashar*. A farmer and his family observed this ritual. This is celebrated in the *Kartik sankranti*. On this day, a small *Chala*is given to the rice paddy and this is usually made of jute. Many people make this

Chala with straw. Women in the house wipe the door of the house. Apart from that, lemon leaves and puffed rice are sprinkled on each paddy field. It burns the soil lamp with every field. Duck is sacrificed to the paddy field for worship. This duck meat is brought home and cooked and eaten all but the head of the duck is given to the goddess for worship. This duck's head is cooked in a new clay bone and is worshiped.[77] Roaming around the paddy field and calling goddess Lakshmi by lighting the lamp at night or lighting a fire in a bundle of jute. This time of paddy is called catching up paddy. The practice of performing this behaviour when catching up paddy on the paddy tree. This call is called thus.

"khatolangoldighalish.

Hamardhanerboroboro shish

Saroisaroi

Hanserdimakchurfuti

Ai maa lakhihamarveeti."[78]

(i.e. "Short plough consists with longer plough stilt.Sprout of our paddy long?

Pipkin pipkin

Egg of Duck and Edible Root.

Comes Laxmi towards us.")

Thus the treatment is carried out in the pond through the openings of banana trees from the paddy field. The house is celebrated on the eve of the entire observance. The ritual of *Baribandha* is called *Hawkdak*.The last *Ashwin* is called *Hawk* and 1st*Kartik* is the Called *Dak*.On the day of the *hawk*, the farmer went to the field and tied up all his land. So, that the groundwater does not run out. It is done by men and in the house; women tie the straw or banana tree to tree.

Cow bathing folk practices were prevalent among people of all communities. All the cows are bathed on that day. Then oil and semen are fed on the cow horn by rubbing oil all

over the body.[79] Women in the house worship the cows and enter the cows at night. Cowshed is given special status by burning incense at night. It is customary to feed pumpkins to cows these days. This *BakharJauni* is a medicine for various diseases of cows. If it feeds, the cow will remain healthy throughout the year. This is one of the main purposes of cattle-eating behaviour. This folklore is celebrated on the day before the worship of goddess *Kali* and the night of worship of goddess *Kali.* All the devotees bathed and became pure and worshiped the god with a *Athiya* (special banana) banana. At night the rose is fed and bowed out again in the morning. This folklore is called worship of cows. In this folklore cowshed are well coated with raw cow dung. Then two statues of *Garhiyaand Gorhiani* were erected. These two statues are presented in front of bananas, duck eggs, smear with minimum. Besides these, milk, puffed rice and *Athiya* bananas are worshiped with *Prasad*. This is cow folklore. This folklore is for cultivating agricultural land. t is the belief that the fruit will be more in the paddy tree. This folklore is called a house-bound because on this day, the branches of the thorny bushes and the leaves of poisonous trees are tied in the house. As a result, mosquitoes will not enter the house. Such faith works. Cows want to cultivate land. These are two important resources. Cows and land had a special role to play in the survival of people. This is where people used to practice folklore along with land.[80]

At present, the various practices and beliefs of the *Nashya Sheikh* community of North Bengal are facing destruction due to various reasons for the so-called modernity. On the other hand, for religious reasons, in the community of *Nashya Sheikh*, the influence of the Islamic culture is gradually being lost. *Gocharpana* practices are currently on the verge of destruction because of the change in paddy cultivation as a result of modern competitive crop production. People no longer practice it, because now people do not cultivate paddy only once in a year. Now it has lost its importance due to the production of crops, three to four times in a year. On the other hand, the *Nashya sheikh* community has lost its importance as

there is not being mentioned of the observance of the law in Islamic *Shariah* law. The practice of *Hariguri or Serosero* has also lost its importance today, as a result of using different modern chemical fertilizers and medicine. It has increased the production of crops as well as the use of various kinds of medicine to protect the crops from insects, spiders and several diseases. As a result, the attitude of people has changed. The practice of *Guruchumani* is also not observed in this way because the use of modern tools, techniques and equipment in the cultivation has greatly reduced the use of cows for cultivation in the society. On the other hand, as the Islamic fundamentalist spirit has grown into the intoxicated in *Nashya Sheikh* Community and people have abandoned non-Islamic practices and beliefs in the wake of the infiltration of Islamic customs. Thus, the culture and belief of the *Nashya Sheikh* community is also in crisis today due to the influence of modernity and the Islamic law.[81]

Based on the above discussion, we can see that although there are non-Islamic practices and beliefs prevailing in the *Nashya Sheikh* community, it is almost destroyed today. Today, a very small section of families of villages in different districts of North Bengal are still practicing *Gocharapana*, *Hariguri ,Garuchumani* and keeping faith. Because they thought that these practices and beliefs were being practiced by their ancestors. Therefore, they do not believe that these practices and beliefs are in religious law.

The various rites associated with *Nashya sheikh* birth, marriage and death are highly distinct from those of the other neighbouring communities, making the *Nashya Sheikh* community distinctive socially and culturally. Like the other Muslim religious and social practices these rites are thoroughly codified the *Hadith* texts. Over and above this codification there are certain local innovations peripheral to the main body, in no way interfering with the Islamic absolutes inherent in this rite.[82]The ritual of the life cycle in a society is traditional in the sense that it is practised generation after generation. Its adherents

usually become conscious of the various traditional precepts and practices of their society through informal and formal tutelage by elders.[83]

So far, the formal knowledge of traditional rituals is concerned; the *Nashya Sheikh* is more systematic in this than any of their neighbouring communities. In so far as the formal knowledge of traditional rituals is concerned, the Muslims are more systematic in this than any of their neighbouring communities. They have codified rules even for the details of their various life cycle rituals. Moreover, there are trained agents to make laymen aware of the tradition.[84]

The Hindu has the core of their tradition in a codified form. However, in practice, the Hindu tends to continue themselves far less to the codified form than do the Muslims. In actuality, the former introduces the enormous number of local usages (deshachar) and popular practices *(locachar*) or in other words, local innovations that mostly overshadow the codified tradition. The differences that exist between castes are reflected in the practice of religious and non-religious traditions among the different Hindu castes. Unlike the different Muslim groups under observation, the different Hindu castes do not maintain uniformity in their traditional practices and rites.[85]

Rites of passage of any community have large variations, almost from one household to another. In fact, there is no end to ethnographic description if one desires to go into every detail as practised by the people. However, I have presented here, from a special point of view, the general pattern of the rituals that I have observed and in which I have participated.[86]

Moral Standard:

The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim peoples are very much simple minded and peaceful in nature. They are very much hospitable and well behaved toward their neighbours. They merely followed the rigidity of Islamic lows but they gave respect to the *Pirs* and *Darbese*s.

When a *Nashya Sheikh* Muslim comes across with other Muslims, they give *Salam* to them for welcome. If anyone doesn't give *Salam*, he might be considered as 'Beyadab' i.e., one who doesn't know any disciplines or formality. Young members give respect to the older members of the society, with their behaviour and soft voice. In meetings of the older members, young members generally don't joint. The people of *Nashya Sheikh* Community don't wear any dress which reflects any disrespect to the seniors. They don't like to talk too much during meals; they don't wear footwear when taking meals. Women of *Nashya Sheikh* People keep distance from the men of society and they are generally soft spoken in nature. Though in some areas due to the social environment they quarrel with each other.[87]

Education:

Education has been considered as a key instrument of change and development in contemporary times.[88]It is widely believed that the level of education among the Indian Muslims is very low compared to other communities. Though many scholars have reported the educational backwardness of the Muslims; yet most of them have not made any attempt to present an analytical account for this state of affairs.

In any society the system of education plays an important role in training, development and allocation of its manpower resources. It is one of the most important agencies whereby a person with ability can rise from one status to another in social hierarchy. The entire culture, non-material and material both are transmitted and changed through education from generation to generation.

The nature of crisis on education:

Since the colonial lords took over the sceptre of the country, willingly or unwillingly, whatever it was, they also took some initiatives to spread educational education. But the problem is with the Bengali Muslims. The language problem of Muslims in other parts of the

country was not so, complicated as Urdu began to take the form of their oral language, the language of education and the colonial government also thought that Urdu was the only language of Indian Muslims. Here they are wrong. Bengali Muslims are considered to be Urdu speaking. If there is a problem in this, the educational institution is average. In which language school will Bengali Muslims learn to read? Because Persian was the official language during the Mughal period, it was the only language of instruction for upper caste Muslims. Our Bengali Muslims could not learn that. The language of religion is Arabic, but he could not learn it. The language of Indian Muslims is Urdu; But they did not learn. Their oral language is Bengali, and their state language is English. This is the nature of the language crisis of Bengali Muslims. And because of this language crisis, not only the literacy rate, but also the spread of education in the Indian subcontinent was the lowest among the Bengali Muslims. Even in Balochistan, the North-West Frontier Province, the rate of education was very low. But the reason was not the language, but the problem of social attitudes.

In fact, just as Bengali Muslims did not learn Urdu, they did not learn English, the language of the colonial rulers, in the first period. This, of course, was a universal matter for Indian Muslims. Again, the upper caste Bengali Muslims did not allow them to learn Bengali. Bengali Muslims first got the opportunity to learn through Bengal in 1936. At this time Bengali became the medium of entry level education. Apart from that, Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haque became the Prime Minister (then the Chief Minister was called the Prime Minister) and the tide of educational education of Bengali Muslims came. This tide lasted until independence. Because from 1936 to 1947 the Muslim League and Fazlul Huq's Krishak Praja Party ruled Bengal. One thing that needs to be mentioned in this context is that it was at this time that Bengali Muslims, not only in general but also in part, took an active part in the conversion of Bengali into the language of the royal court and the legislature. It may be

recalled here that a large section of the Muslim members of the newly formed Bengal Legislative Assembly of 1938 were Muslims from the villages of East Bengal. They could not speak English in the legislature. So he used to speak in Bengali. And because they spoke in Bengali, their speeches were not recorded in the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly. However, it can be clearly said that the triumph of educational education of Bengali Muslims started in 1937-48, although this journey was not smooth. This is because Urdu was widely spoken in Calcutta and the adjoining districts of Calcutta. The majority of the Muslims in Calcutta were Urdu speaking and that is why the school that Begum Raekeya opened for girls in Calcutta as a Bengali was an Urdu medium school. Begum Raekeya did not think of imparting education through Bengali language in 1911. Because just as there was a lack of Bengali girls, there was also a lack of mentality to read Bengali. Abdul Latif of Faridpur's '*Kathbangal*' or Syed Amir Ali of Hughli was against teaching in Bengali. Evidence of this attitude can be found in the family of Begum Raikeya of Rangpur and the family of Mir Mesharaf Hassan of Nadia. Begum Raikeya's family was not allowed to study in Bengali. Again, the father of Mir Mesharaf Hassan, a prominent and contemporary Muslim writer, hated the Bengali language. With this film in mind, we are talking about the Bengali Muslims of North Bengal. I think if you don't know this canvas, the issue of North Bengal will not be solved. Although North Bengal had some different problems. That is why I am coming this time.

Regional inequality:

Just as Urdu-speaking Muslims were in the majority in Calcutta, so were Bengali Muslims in North Bengal. The number of Urdu-speaking Muslims here was negligible. As a result, the spread of academic education has started late here. Maktab Madrasa was here. But his medium was Arabic or Urdu. In fact, a large portion of Urdu-speaking Muslims belong to the Ashraf class, so they get more government opportunities. For example, we can talk about

Rajshahi Madrasa. Rajshahi Madrasa has received much less government support than Madrasa in Hooghly, Dhaka and Chittagong. Here is an example of this inequality. For example, the Rajshahi Madrasa received very little money from the 'endowment' of the prominent Muslim social worker Haji Mohammad Mohsin. Because there were no Urdu speaking Muslims here. In the end, Rajshahi Madrasa did not get any money from that endowment. Thus, North Bengal was a victim of linguistic deprivation. However, for teaching Urdu, Arabic and Persian in government schools, the British government and the royal family of Cooch Behar adopted their schools.

We are aware of the role of zamindars, *jotdars* and rich classes in the formation of maktabs, madrasas or modern English schools. But in this role of the Muslim zamindars of North Bengal we see that in the twentieth century it may be mentioned that in the northern part of North Bengal, that is, in the areas outside the permanent settlement, there were no zamindars, there were *jotdars.* And there were zamindars in the permanent settlement area. For example, in Malda-Bogra, Pabna, Dinajpur there were some Muslim zamindars or landlords. In Bogra he had several growing Muslim zamindars. But he could not play such a role in setting up the school. This is also due to language problems and weakness towards Urdu. However, the local Muslim community of Jalpaiguri has played a relatively important role in this regard. This time I am coming to terms with that. Some may question why I am just talking about olives. Of course, there are some reasons. Jalpaiguri is a divisional city of Rajshahi division. The inhabitants (like Bhatia Muslims, Bhatia Hindus) were Muslims, a relatively progressive class. The Muslim community of Jalpaiguri was on par with the Hindu community in any district of North Bengal in terms of land-learning-finance-social prestige. The Muslims living in Jalpaiguri, like the resident Hindus, played a special role in establishing tea gardens. Jalpaiguri had an important place in the history of enterprise of the Bengali Muslim society. At that time, the number of entrepreneurs in the Bengali Muslim

society could not be counted. There was also a significant role in the field of education. Several went on to study barrister, medicine, and the arts at other universities, including Oxford. Sir FA Rahman, the first Muslim Vice Chancellor of India, is from Jalpaiguri. He became the Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University. Again, the immigrant Muslim community of Jalpaiguri was of special importance in social prestige. | The only person holding the title of Nawab of North Bengal was Nawab Mesharaf Hassan of Jalpaiguri. However, there was also a family with the title of Nawab in Bogra. However, the majority of the landlords' Muslims were native Muslims or dynastic Muslims. Many large Muslim landowners were in the Dwars Khasmahal area of Jalpaiguri district. Above all, the Muslim community in Jalpaiguri district was of special importance in the politics of the Muslim League. This is why I have chosen Jalpaiguri as the 'model' Muslim district. This time I am coming to that.

The admirable role of the local Muslim landlords (known as *jotdars*) in setting up schools in Jalpaiguri town and district is noteworthy. Although they began to play the role of patronage from the beginning of the three decades of the twentieth century. Munshi Sanaullah Mohammad is one of the most notable contributors in this regard. He was a local Muslim landlord and a wealthy man. His generosity and patronage became legendary at the same time. But what is awaiting analysis in this context is that the resident Muslim society did not play much of a role in the establishment of the school. Although, they were much more influential in the influence of education. It is also seen that the local Muslims played a leading role in the modern schools and madrasas which were established in different parts of the district. The cause of this indifference of the inhabitants and the so-called aristocratic (*Ashraf*) rich Muslims and landlords needs to be thoroughly investigated. Despite this close initiative of the local Muslims, educational education did not spread rapidly among the Bengali Muslims of North Bengal. Because the crisis was long-term and it was a linguistic problem. However, in this context, the women who were at the bottom of the Bengali Muslim

society, but the school opened. Although, he sincerely wanted to teach Bengali girls to read and write. But she could not implement it because she did not get a response from the Muslim community at that time. As a result, the condition of the Bengali Muslim women's society in North Bengal was very sad.

Impact of partition of North Bengal on education:

If the country becomes independent, on the condition of secession, and not on the basis of religion, language or ethnicity. The growing Muslim community moved to ‘Pakistan got everything’. Just as the growing Hindu society and later the general Hindu society came to India and took the name of 'Refugee'. And those who went to Pakistan from India took the name of *Mehji*. Towards the end of the post-partition period, the Muslim community in general became obsessed. Despite government generosity, generous promises, and administrative security, they suffered from mental instability in the first quarter of the century. As a result, he could not think much about education. After the coup in Bangladesh, their mentality began to change. I am saying all this in the context of the condition of the Muslims in West Bengal. But just as this change helped them to overcome their emotional turmoil, an old problem began to re-emerge. That is to say, the government of all colours or ideologies of Urdu-speaking Muslims in West Bengal is a little more biased towards the Urdu-speaking Muslims, conscious, unconscious or subconscious. North Bengal is not free from its influence. On the contrary, this effect has further complicated the education crisis of the Muslims of North Bengal. It is the official language of Islampur subdivision of North Dinajpur district of North Bengal,of course Bengali as well as Urdu. This country was not in North Bengal before partition. Because there were no Urdu speaking Muslims in North Bengal. As a result of the reorganization of the state in 1955, several *thanas* of Purnia district were merged with West Bengal and came to be known as Islampur subdivision. As a result of these police stations being with Bihar, their mother tongue became Udu. For this reason, the

government amended the Language Act of 1971 to give Urdu the status of the language of the state of West Bengal along with Nepali. This is why Urdu is the official language of Islampur subdivision. We see this as one of the causes of the education crisis in the Muslim community in North Bengal. This problem did not exist in North Bengal in the pre-partition period.

There is going to be a problem with this new problem. That is why the Hindu and Muslim dynasties in the plains of Kochbihar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts in northern Bengal are demanding education in their mother tongue at an early stage. Just as we generally understand Hindu to mean Bengali, so we understand Hindu in Rajbangshi. But there are Muslim dynasties like Muslim Bengalis, whose mother tongue is Rajbangshi or Kamatapuri. The majority of people in present day Rangpur of Greater Bangladesh and the majority of people in the northernmost northern districts of West Bengal and some districts of Assam speak Rajbangshi. This time new schools and teachers have to be appointed to give primary education in Rajbangshi language. This is the problem of the government. But if there is another problem, even if they take primary education in Rajbangshi, high school and college level education must be taken in Bengali. Then he will study in Rajbangshi language, he will study in Bengali language, again he will study in English language at the postgraduate level and he will have to know Hindi for the job. It seems that the pressure of language will increase in the case of Rajbangshi Muslims. Thus they have to know or read some Arabic, Urdu, and Persian. This time you have to read Hindi, Bengali, and English. It is also true that a number of dynastic Hindu-Muslim students drop out of school at the primary level only for linguistic reasons. This crisis needs to be accompanied by a collaborative crisis. That is what will be the script of Rajbangshi language? Because first they are writing in Assamese script in Assam, in Bengali script in West Bengal. It will also cause script problems and will harm

the Rajbangshi speakers. Dynasty creation will be a loss to literature. Again, the Rajbangshi Hindus and Muslims of Bangladesh will write and read in Bengali.

A few numbers of people are educated in the *Nashya sheikh* society. Before independence the changes of Govt service were uncertain in the community. They could not realise the value of education because they were confined to agriculture heriditically. The light of education could not enter because of the lack of educational institutions in British period.[89]Their main tendency was the son of a farmer would be a farmer, so the educations were valued less to them. This tangency was mainly responsible for lag behind the community. The back dated thinking is neglected today but the community lost their base of education, modernity etc. Mainly the averages percentage women in North Bengal in Muslim community are highly lag behind. The Socio-Economic factors are more responsible for their orthodox mentality. The women could not come out of the social structure to move forward. However, a little number of Muslim girls goes to the school but they have lack of mentality be educated. Firstly, they have no educational environment in their home. Secondly, they could not purchase books for lake of many. Not only the problem is found in Muslim girls but also, it's found the enter *Nashya Sheikh* Students. That's why their participation is poor in modern education so the rest of the students cannot enter higher education to complete their basic education in Muktab-Madrasha.[90]

Table 4.5

DISTRICT WISE MADRASAHS

District	Jr. High Madrasah (including Unit II and new setup)	High Madrasah (including H.S)	Sr. Madrasah (including Fazil)	Total	Unit II	New setup	H.S (10+2)	Fazil	Urdu Medium Madrash	Girls Madrash	vocatioal
Bankura	5	9	1	15	0	5	3	1	0	1	
Birbhum	5	22	4	31	0	2	9	3	0	0	
Burdwan	0	31	3	34	0	0	9	1	0	2	
Coochbehar	0	21	2	23	0	0	5	1	0	0	
Dakshin Dinajpur	3	12	4	19	3	0	6	3	0	1	
Darjeeling/Siliguri	3	2	0	5	0	2	1	0	2	0	
Hooghly	5	23	9	37	2	0	8	5	3	3	
Howrah	5	25	3	33	5	0	12	2	1	7	
Jalpaiguri	3	7	1	11	1	2	3	1	0	0	
Kolkata	0	8	1	9	0	0	2	0	4	3	
Malda	12	55	14	81	12	0	35	7	0	12	
Murshidabad	39	53	16	108	27	9	38	9	0	14	
Nadia	4	14	4	22	4	0	5	0	0	0	
North 24 – Pgs	6	28	17	51	4	2	19	9	0	5	
Purulia	0	4	1	5	0	0	2	1	2	0	
Purba Medinipur	1	14	2	17	0	1	6	1	0	1	
Paschim Medinipur	3	13	3	19	0	3	3	1	0	1	
South 24 Pgs	3	38	12	53	0	3	13	6	0	3	
Uttar Dinajpur	8	15	5	28	0	8	9	3	5	2	
Total	105	394	102	601	58	37	188	54	17	55	156

Sources: West Bengal Madrasha Service Commission 2011.

According to the West Bengal Madrasha Service Commission (2011), the total number of Junior high Madrasha 105 out of the 3 are Jalpaiguri district and there was no junior high madrasha in Cooch Behar district. In High Madrasah (including H.S) the total number of West Bengal are 394 out of the Cooch Behar are 12 and Jalpaiguri are 7. In Sr. Madrasha including *Fazil* 102 ave West Bengal out of the Cooch Behar district are 2 and Jalpaiguri district are 1. The total number of Madrasha including Junior high Madrasha, High Madrasha(H.S) and Sr. Madrasha (Fazil) in West Bengal are 601 out of the Cooch Behar district are 23 and Jalpaiguri district are 11. In Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts there was no Urdu and Girls Madrasha.[91]

The central government appointed on march, 9 2005 a committee of seven member underSreeRajenddra Sachar, a retired Judge to look into the social, economic and education condition of Indian Muslim community.[92]The Committee had given a Comparative report to study the community with minority communities were the condition of Muslim community of West Bengal is pathetical. The Union government and state government brought the *Nashya Sheikh* and other Marginalised Muslims community under OBC category, to consider the socio-economically backward Muslim class of North Bengal. No doubt, the consideration of the government is positive. The community is hopeful to bring the community under socio-economically and educationally in forward to give the government facilities in government service and other sections. The state of education among the *Nashya* is very disheartening. For historical, situational and socio-cultural reasons the educated middle class has not been properly developed among the *Nashyas.* Since the content of the middle class among them is significantly very small, the *Nashyas* do not figure in any significant number either in white-collar jobs or in politico-administrative matters of their locality. A case study of Jalpaiguri among the *Nashya Sh*eikh the literate and educated 27.82 percent had primary education, 24.86 percent had secondary education and only 7.05 percent had higher secondary and

college education. Another case study of a Cooch Behar village shows that among the *Nashya* 48 percent was illiterate and 52 percent was literate and educated. The literate 24 percent and 5.38 percent had higher secondary and college education.[93]

TABLE 4.6

Educational survey of Nashya Sheikh Community of some areas of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts.

Sl. No.	Name and Address of the School	Percentage of the Muslim Population of the area	Percentage of the Muslim student in the School
1	Belakoba High School P.O- Prasanna Nagar Dist- Jalpaiguri	25%	7.25%
2	Jateshwar Girls High School P.O- Jateshwar, Dist- Jalpaiguri	20%	6.73%
3	Bhutnirghat High School P.O- Bhutnirghat, dist- Jalpaiguri	5%	1.73%
4	Jurapani High School P.O- Jurapani, Dist- Jalpaiguri	12%	3.45%
5	Promodnagar Jr. High school p.o- promodnagar, Dist- Jalpaiguri	30%	17.58%
6	Jateshwar High School p.o- jateshwar, Dist- Jalpaiguri	20%	5.81%
7	Vetaguri Lal Bahadur Sastrividyapith P.O- Vetaguri,	30%	12.25%

Sl. No.	Name and Address of the School	Percentage of the Muslim Population of the area	Percentage of the Muslim student in the School
	dist- Cooch Behar		
8	Ambari Dhaniram High School p.o- Ambari, Dist- Cooch Behar	20%	5%
9	HaldibariNabakishor High School p.o-Haldibari, dist- Cooch Behar	40%	23.38%
10	WahabulUllumjr, High School p.o- Bagribari, dist- Cooch Behar	25%	11%
11	Dewanganj High School p.o- Dewanganj, dist- Cooch Behar	28%	13.70%
12	Dewanganj jr. High School p.o- Dewanganj, via, Haldibari Dist- Cooch behar	27%	13.27%
13	Kamalakanta jr. High School p.o- Fatemamud, dist- Cooch Behar	60%	45.79%
Total		342	146.84
Percentage		26.30%	11.29%

Sources:Educational Survey of Nashya Sheikh Communityof Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar: Anagrashar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.).

According to the Uttar Banga Anagrashar Muslim Sangram samiti, educational survey of *Nashya Sheikh* Community of some area of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts are reveals that in the area of Prasananagar in Jalpaiguri district the total population of Muslim percentage are 25% but in this area the percentage of Muslim Student in School are 7.25%. In

the area of Joterswar the total Muslim population percentage were 20% out of the Muslim student percentage in school are 6.73%. In the area of Jalpaiguri district at Bhutnirghat the total Muslim population percentage were 5% but the Muslim student percentage in this area are 1.73%. In Jurapani Muslim Population were 12%, where Muslim Students were 3.45%. In Promod Nagar Junior High School the population of Muslim people were 30% where the Students percentage was 17.18%. In jateswar High School Muslimpopulation was 20% against the population of 5.81%. In the district of Cooch Behar at Vetaguri Lal BahaduSastri Vidyapith the population of Muslim People were 30% where the students of Muslim community were 12.25%. In Ambari Dhaniram High School Muslim student were 5% where the percentage of population were 20%. In Haldibari Nabakishor High School the percentage of population was 40% where the students were 23.38%. In Wahabul Ullumjr, High School the population of Muslim people was 25% where the Students were 11%. Whereas in Dewanganj High School we found the population were 28% belongs to Muslim Community but the Students were 13.70%. In Dewanganj jr. In High School we found the population of Muslims was 27% but 13.27% were the Students percentage. Here at Kamalakanta jr. High School we found the sound number of Muslim students i.e., 45.79% among 60% of Muslim people. According to the former survey report the whole population percentage of Muslims within the two districts was 26.30% but the Student percentage of both the Districts was 11.29%.[94]

TABLE 4.7

Drop-out statement of NashyaShiekh students (Primary Education) – Uttar Banga Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.).

SL. NO	Name and address of the school	Category of students	Year and class. 1994-95,i-ii-iii-iv	Year and class.1995-96, ,i-ii-iii-iv	Year and class,1996-97, i-ii-iii-iv	Year and class,1997-98, i-ii-iii-iv	Percentage of drop-out
1	Hedayetnagar primary school,p.o-Jateshwar, dist-Jalpaiguri	Total-Muslim (NS)	68-29-25-21 46-13-15-07	75-35-29-25 45-19-13-10	82-42-31-26 43-24-17-12	80-44-35-29 43-25-21-16	57% 65%
2	Jigatari primary School,p.o-Dalimpur,dist-Jalpaiguri	Total-Muslim (NS)	95-26-19-09 27-06-06-01	128-28-22-14 42-04-07-04	130-14-28-18 46-07-08-06	120-50-40-20 35-26-05-02	79% 92%

Sources: Drop out Statement 0f Nashya Sheikh Students (primary Education), Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.).

So, the table 4.3 easily represents the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims Students of Primary Stage were very frequently Dropped out and out of the total percentage of Drop out i.e. 57% and 79% in the respective Schools they consist the major numbers i.e. 65% and 92% in respective Schools. So, we find that in primary Stage, the *Nashya Sheikh* Students were not able to keep them in School by the Students and by the Parents also, which is also the major cause for their Educational Backwardness.[95]

The average educational standard of the *Nashya Sheikh* class is also very low. The materials on record go to indicate that their participation in the field of education is not upto the mark; about 10% read upto primary stage, 8% upto secondary level, and 3% up to Higher secondary level, percentage of Higher secondary Education among them is quite negligible,

(Graduation-2%, Law-o.5% and post Graduate-0.5%). The spread of education among the female is extremely low; primary -6%, secondary -4% and Higher secondary -1%. One percent only reached up to Graduation level.[96]

Due to poor socio-economic conditions the percentage of dropouts at different stages of education is quite high. It is 50% at the stage of primary level, 80% at the secondary stage, 90% at higher secondary level, 95% at the Graduation level and 99% percent at the post-Graduate level. Their poor economic condition forces the children to join either their family occupation or other t5hen family occupations and thereby assist their parents in managing the family.[97]The sample survey conducted reveals that out of the surveyed population, 9% of the females were literate against 23% of the males. About 17% 0f the children (5-14) had school education. The sample survey further revealed that the dropout rate was as high as 89% at the primary stage and 80% at the secondary stage.[98]

Most recently, it has been noticed that a section of the Muslim community has a tendency towards madrasa education. This is the sub continental trend. In other words, this trend is increasing in India-Pakistan-Bangladesh. This trend is also developing rapidly in West Bengal and its northern part. As a result of the expansion of madrasa educational institutions, illiteracy may be reduced to some extent. However, this assumption is also proving to be wrong in Bangladesh. Despite the proliferation of madrasa educational institutions there, illiteracy has not diminished. In fact, illiteracy can be reduced by increasing the opportunities for education in the mother tongue; I think it is not possible in any other language. Becauseof a child are the language of the mother's mouth and the language of her surroundings. Therefore, if we can teach him in his mother tongue, then it is possible to end illiteracy. Since it is a multilingual country and religion is inextricably linked with the country, the benefits of mother tongue are becoming limited here. That is why the government and the society are not able to teach 52 letters to 52% of the people of the

country. If we look at it as a social problem, it may not happen or even if it is a country of one religion. For a country of many religions, multi-languages and foreign rule, universal education is still elusive. For so long no country like ours has been subdued. I think it is not possible to fully understand the education crisis without this issue. This fear cannot be solved in this country and in this land by blaming it. It is not a matter of decision, but of experience and perception. And it is also a harsh reality that it is difficult to free the country from the curse of illiteracy in a democratic structure through academic debates or popular sentiments. Because religion and language are being used here as a tool of reaction instead of progress in the hand of politicians and religious businessmen.

Political involvement of Nashya Sheikh Community:

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 of political representative. 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 and Cooch Behar. 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 a 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 were the Projamondal party in spite, in the accused league Khan Amantullah Chowdary, Ansar uddin Ahmed, Moulbi Fazlay Rahaman and Mukbul Hossain these four expelled from Cooch

Behar. Latter period Ansar uddin Ahmed came back toKoch Behar and assumed 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 second phase Dr.Fazlay Haque, in the long period all India congress committee member within the congress politics. Before 1977 he was also member of minister of state. Well speaker, handsome and notable efficient organizer and with popularity till today has been serving 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 notable is his 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.[99]

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 PahadiaMuslim*.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 is very often noticed at 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. BajlayRahaman has 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 Sheikh'* 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.[100] The *samiti* is Government Registered Social Organization of OBC Muslim in West Bengal (Reg. No. S-95179). 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 *Nashya*sand Sheikhs and other indigenous backward Muslim groups of the region. The leaders of the *samiti* are ended very successful in scheduling the *Nashya Sheikhs* as one of the Muslim OBC group in West Bengal (Notification No. 84-BCW/RC-302/97, dated 1 march 1999).[101] 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 benefits[23]. 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.[102]

Notes &References:

[1]M. K. A. Siddique, *Marginal Muslim Communities in India*, (edited), Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 74-89.

[2]Rahim' Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya Shaik of North Bengal', in R. K, Bhadra & Mita, (ed.),*Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, pp. 314-315.

[3]Nabiul, Islam, *Examining a Marginalised Muslim Group in Historical Perspective: Dynamics of Socio-Economic Life of the Nashya Sheikhs of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts in West Bengal,*Unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation, Department of History, North Bengal University, 2015, pp. 85-87.

[4]Pasarul, Alam, *Uttarbanger Anagrasar Muslim Somaj*, (in Bengali), Sahajpath, Uttar Dinajpur, 2013, pp. 9-20.

[5]Bajlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Kamishaner Report O Uttar Banger Muslim Samaj*, Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha, Uttar Banga, 1996, p. 26.

[6]Rahim, Mondal, 'Muslim Minority in Koch Behar: Their History and Culture', in 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.

[7]Bajlay. Rahaman, 'Koch Behar Zilar Muslim Porichiti', Amjat Hossain (ed.), *Kamrup Theke Kochbehar*, Suhrid Publication, Kolkata, 2014, pp.115-116.

[8]Rahim, Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya shaik of North Bengal'in R. K, Bhadra & Mita, (ed.),*Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, pp. 314-315.

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

[10]Nabiul, Islam, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

[11]Rahim, Mondal, 'Muslim Minority in Koch Behar: Their History and Culture', in 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

[12]*West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Report-8*, 29th October, 1997. pp. 3-10.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Subhrayoti, Roy,*Transformation on Bengal Frontier: Jalpaiguri, 1765-1948*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2002, pp.50-60.

[15]Ananda, Gopal Ghosh, 'Jalpaiguri Zelar Musalman Samaj' (in Bengali), in Ajitesh Bhattacharya, *Madhuparni*, Jalpaiguri Jela Sankha, Balurghat, 1394, (Bengali Year), p. 123.

[16]W. W. Hunter,*A Statistical Account of Bengal: Jalpaiguri*, First Printed by Trubner and Co. London, 1876, National Library, Siliguri, Reprinted, 2012, p. 45.

[17]*Census Report of India*, 2001.

[18]Personal interview of *Abul Karim* by researcher, on 07/11/2015, 2.00 p. m., at Duramari.

[19]Pasarul, Alam,*Uttarbanger Anagrasar Muslim Somaj*, (in Bengali), Sahajpath, Uttar Dinajpur, 2013, pp. 9-20.

[20]Mahabub-ul, Alam, 'Uttorbanger Muslim Nari Somaj: Poschadpod Jonopoder ek Poschad Jonogosthi', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Muslim Somaj o Sankriti*,Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick, Srijoni Dhara, Jalpaiguri, 1913, pp. 49-54.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Rahim, Mondal, *Rural Muslim Women Role and Status*, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 2005, p. 81

[26]Ibid. p. 82.

[27]Tapan, Kumar Biswas, *'Nashya* Sekh Namak Musalman Samaj ki Agiyea Jete Parbe*?'*, *Uttar Banga Sambad, (in Bengali)* on 27th August 2015, p. 7.

[28]Rahim, Mondal, *Rural Muslim Women Role and Status*, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 82-83.

[29]Report -8, *op. cit*.

[30]Surajit, Sinha and Ranjit, Bhattacharya, 'Bhadralok and Chhotolok in a Rural Area of Bengal', *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol-18, No-1, March 1969, pp. 50-66.

[31]Personal interview of *Kutubuddi Rahaman* by the researcher, on 12/11/2015, 11.00 a. m., at Nathuahat.

[32]Umesh, Sharma, *Jalpaiguri Raybahadur-Khanbahadur*, Granthatirtha, Kolkata, 2001, p. 56.

[33]Personal interview of *Dubiruddin Miya and Domashu Miya* by the researcher, on 15-11-2015, 3.00 p. m.,at Duramari.

[34]Personal interview of Azima Bewa and Fatima Bibi by the researcher, on 17-11-2016, 1 p. m., at Khatimari.

[35]Umesh, Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[36]Personal interview of *Aminur Rahaman, Abul Hossain* by the researcher, on 25-10-2018, 12 noon, at Dewmali, Joteswar.

[37]Fulchad, Barman, 'Uttarbanger Rajbansi Muslim Samaj: Prosango Nashya Sekh', (in Bengal) *Angikar, (Sharad Sangkhaya),* Arbinda Press, Cooch Behar, 1417(Bengali Year), pp. 181-184.

[38]Personal interview of *Amjat Hossain, Sahidul Islam* by the researcher, on 29-10-2017, 11 a.m., at Dhupguri, Gadum

[39]Surajit Sinha, and Ranjit Bhattacharya,*op. cit.*,p. 52.

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

[41]Personal interview of*Hashen Ali (Imam),* by the researcher, on 08-11-2015, 11 a.m., at Duramari

[42]Ranjit, Bhattacharya,'Marriage among the Sunni Sheik Moslem of Birbhum', *Human Science*, Vol-35, No-1, West Bengal, 1986, pp. 42-49.

[43]Imtiaz, Ahmed, 'The Concept and Ideology of Caste among the Moslems of Rural Bengal', *Caste and Social Stratification among the Muslims*, (edited), Monohar Books Service, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 125-130.

[44]Ranjit, Bhattacharya,'Marriage among the Sunni Sheik Moslem of Birbhum', *Human Science*, Vol-35, No-1, West Bengal, 1986, pp. 42-49.

[45]Jyotimay, 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.

[46]Personal interview of *Hamidul Islam* by the researcher, on 19-11-2015, 12 noon, at Dhupguri.

[47]Personal interview of Kochimuddin, *Tachiruddin, Hachen Ali, Rahimuddin, Muklechar Rahaman* by the researcher, On 15.06.2015, 11.30 a. m., at Duramari and Nathua.

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

[49]Ranjit, Bhattachaya, *Moslems of rural Bengal*: *A study in Social Stratification and Socio-Cultural Boundary Maintenance*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 1991, pp. 91-129.

[50]Surajit, Sinha, 'Fieldwork Report, Religion in an Affluent Society', *Current Anthropology*, Vol-7, No-2, April 1966, pp. 189-195.

[51]Personal interview of *Aminur Rahaman, Abul Hossain* by researcher, on 25-10-2019, 1-30 p. m., at Deomali and Joterwar.

[52]Surajit, Sinha, and Ranjit Bhattacharya,*op. cit.*,pp. 50-56.

[53]Personal interview of *Amjat Hossain, Sahidul Islam* by the researcher, on 29-10-2015, 11.00 a.m., at Gadum, Dhupguri.

[54]*West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Report-8, op. cit.*

[55]Riyajul, 'Simanto Pochim Dinajpurer Musolman Samaj o Sanskriti', (in Bengali), *Madhuporni*, Poschim Dinajpur Jela Songkha-7, 1399,p. 95-98.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Umesh, Sharma, *op. cit.,* p. 42.

[59]Bajlay,Rahaman, 'Koch Behar Zilar Muslim Porichiti', (in Bengali), Amjat Hossain', (ed.), *Kamrup Theke Kochbehar,* Suhrid Publication, Kolkata,2014, pp.115-116.

[60]Sukhbilash, Barma, 'Uttorbanger Lokogaane Muslim Somaj Jibon', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Muslim Somaj o sankriti*, *Srijoni Dhara*, Editer by Parthaprotim Mallick, Jalpaiguri, 1913, p.64.

[61]Abbassddin, Ahmed, *My life in Melodies*, translated by Nashid Kamal, Adorn Publications, Bangladesh, 2014, p. 47-49.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Songs on Abbasuddin, *Prothom Alo,* 27 December 2012.

[67]Abbassddin, Ahmed, *op. cit.*

[68]Ibid.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Personal Interview of Kochimuddin Rahaman by the researcher, on 21-11-2015, 12.30 p. m., at Balabari(Rajganj).

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

[72]Bajlay, Rahaman, 'Koch Behar Zilar Muslim Porichiti', (in Bengal), *Kamrup Theke Kochbehar,* AmjatHossain,(ed.), Suhrid publication, Kolkata, 2014, pp.115-116.

[73]Fulchad, Barman, 'Uttarbanger Rajbansi Muslim Samaj: Prosango Nashya Sekh', (in Bengal)', *Angikar, (Sharad Sangkhaya),* Arbinda Press, Cooch Behar, 1417(Bengali Year), pp. 181-184.

[74]Personal interview of Kochimuddin, Tachiruddin, Hachen Ali, Rahimuddin, Muklechar Rahaman by the researcher, on 15.06.2015 at Duramari, Nathua.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Pasharul, Alam,*Islampur Na Ishwarpur?,* (in Bengali), Sahajpath, Islampur, 2019, pp 65-67.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Fulchad, Barman, *op cit.*

[80]Pasharul, Alam,*Islampur Na Ishwarpur?,* (in Bengali), Sahajpath, Islampur, 2019, pp 65-67.

[81]Personal interview of Kochimuddin, Tachiruddin, Hachen Ali, Rahimuddin, Muklechar Rahaman by the researcher, On 15.06.2015 at Duramari, Nathua.

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

[83]Ranjit, Bhattachaya, *Moslems of rural Bengal:A study in Social Stratification and Socio-Cultural Boundary Maintenance*, Subarnarekh, Calcutta, 1991, pp. 91-129.

[84]Ranjit, Bhattachaya, 'Muktan Snan: Notes on Methods and Interpretation of field Data', *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, Vol-2, No-1, 1967, pp. 27-32.

[85]Surajit, Sinha, 'Social and Cultural Constraints in Agriculture in Three Villages (Hindu, Moslem and Tribal) of West Bengal',*Science, Technology and Culture*, (edited), Research Council for Cultural Studies, New Delhi, 1970, pp. 120-130.

[86]Imtiaz, Ahmed, 'The concept and Ideology of Caste among the Moslems of Rural Bengal', *Caste and Social Stratification among the Muslims*, (edited), Monohar Book Service, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 125-130.

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

[88]Abdus, Samad, *Banglar Musalman Janajati,(*in Bengali), Badiya Bartha Prakashan,Malda,2008, p.35.

[89]Rahim, Mandal,*Educational Status of Muslims Problems Prospects and Priorities*, Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1997, p. 7.

[90]Tapan Kumar Biswas, *op. cit.*

[91]West Bengal Madrasha Service Commission, 2011.

[92]Tapan, Kumar Biswas, *op. cit.*

[93]Moinul, Hassan, *Hunter Theke Sacchar: Bharate Musalmander Artha-Samajik Abasthan, (*in Bengali), Biswabangiya Prakasan, Kolkata, 2010, p. 156.

[94]*Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti, (U.B), 'Educational Survey of Nashya Sheikh Community of North Bengal'*, 1997, pp. 1-2.

[95]Drop Out Statement 0f Nashya Sheikh Students (Primary Education), *Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti, (U.B.),* 1997, p. 1.

[96]*West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Report-8, op. cit.*

[97]Ibid.

[98]Ibid.

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

[100]Rahim, 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.

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

[102]Report -8, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER - V
ECONOMIC LIFE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF THE NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL:

I: ECONOMIC LIFE - CONTINUITY AND CHANGES
II: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND IDENTITY FORMATION

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 labourers[1]. 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 Dinhata 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 Jalpaiguri[5].

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 places 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 percent are employed in government jobs. Nine Muslim communities in West Bengal have been listed as OBCs. But OBC's conservation is only 6 percent. 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 censorship report, the number of Muslims in Uttar Dinajpur is 115,7503. 47.36 percent of the population of the district is Muslim. 98.6 percent

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 lacalpeople. 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 GaniAhammed:

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 Madrashah 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, Paharpue 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 sectored 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 Dhupgurimarket, Nathuahat, Jateshwar and Jaigaon.And on the other hand some front rank markets of Cooch Behar district are Haldibari, M\athabhanga ,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 storethe 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 shake 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). Theywere to do their word 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 sheikh*s 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: OccoputionalCondtition 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%
1st Grade State Level officer	3.3%
Bank	2.18%
Private corporation	4.08%
Project onLow 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 *Bhumijo*Rajbangshi 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 Paich[42]. 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*Chhatrishi* (Thirty Sex). 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. Tamser 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 in1980s in Maharashtra. Maharastra Muslim OBC organization was founded in 1981with 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 actio0n 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 Christan 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 o0f 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 PahadiaMuslim.*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 benefits[23]. 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 Rawlatt 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 Bahrampur 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.AtinBasu, 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.

Notes & References:

[1]Tapan, Kumar Biswas, 'Nashya Sekh Namak Musalman Samaj ki Agiyea Jete Parbe*?'*, *Uttar Banga Sambad,(in Bengali),*on 27th August 2015, p.7.

[2]Umesh, Sharma, *Jalpaiguri Raybahadur-Khanbahadur*, Granthatirtha, Kolkata, 2001, p.56.

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

[4]Personal interview of Kochimuddin, Tachiruddin, Hachen Ali, Rahimuddin, Muklechar Rahaman by the researcher, On 15.06.2015 at Duramari,Nathua,Falakata, Cooch Behar.

[5]Pasarul, Alam, *Uttarbanger Anagrasar Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali), Sahajpath, Uttardinajpur, 2004, p.21.

[6]D.H.E.Sunder, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the Western Dooars in the District of Jalpaiguri,*1889-95, Edited by D.C. Roy, N.L. Publisher, Shivmandir, 2013, pp. 5-8.

[7]Charuchandra, Sanyal, Other (Ed).,*Souvenir of Jalpaiguri District*, Contenary vol., 1869-1968, p.13.

[8]J.F. Grunning, *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers- Jalpaiguri*, N.L. Publisher, Shivmandir, 2008, pp.108-110.

[9]Sukumar, Barai, *Local History of North Bengal*, Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2016, p. 22.

[10]Ananda, Gopal Ghosh, edited,*Madhuparni*, Jalpaiguri Jela Sankhya, 1394, B.S. Publication, pp. 221-222.

[11]Anirudha, Roy, *Itihas Anushanddhan,(* edited), FKLM Pvt., Kolkata, 2004, pp.326-330.

[12]Sukumar, Barai, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

[13]Souvenir of Padamati Union Rahimuddin High School, (*50 Years Celebration*), 1946-1996. p.66.

[14]Ibid. p.62.

[15]Sukamar, Barai, *op. cit.*

[16]Ibid. p.23.

[17]Umesh, Sharma, *Jalpaiguri Roy Bahadur- Khanbahadur*, Grntatirtha Publication, kolkata, 2001, pp. 41-46.

[18]Sukamar, Barai, *op. cit*., p. 24.

[19]Ibid.p .25.

[20]Ibid.p. 30.

[21]Ibid.p.30.

[22]Nabiul, Islam,'The Economic Life of the Nashya Sheikhs of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts: A Study of the Historical Perspective', *Karatoya, North Bengal University Journal of History,* Vol-9, March 2016, pp. 45-55.

[23]Personal interview ofKochimuddin, Tachiruddin, Hachen Ali, Rahimuddin, Muklechar Rahaman, by the researcher, on 15.06.2015 at Duramari,Nathua.

[24]Personal interview of *Bulbul Rahaman,*(Teacher), by the researcher, on05-11-2015, 2 p.m., at Shisabari.

[25]Personal interview of *Mahhamad Abas* by the researcher, on10-11-2015, 10.30 a.m.,at Banarhat.

[26]Umesh, Sharma, *op. cit.*

[27]Ibid.

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

[29]Personal interview of *Bulbul Rahaman,*(Teacher), by the researcher, on05-11-2015, 2 p.m., at Shisabari.

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

[31]Ibid.

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

[33]Rahim, 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.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Bazlay, 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.*

[39]Ibid.

[40]Rahim, 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.

[41]Rahim, 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.

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

[43]Ibid. p. 93.

[44]Jyotimay, 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.

[45]Ibid. p. 45.

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

[47]Debabrata, 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.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Rahim, 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.

[51]Government 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.

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

[53]Rahim, 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.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

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

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid.

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

[60]Ibid.

[61]Rahim, 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.

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

[64]Report -8, *op. cit.*

[65]Khudiram 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.

[66]Ibid. p.286.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Khudira 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.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Khudira 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.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Sohabar, 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.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ibid.

CHAPTER -VI

NASHYA SHEIKH AND OTHER COMMUNITIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

CHAPTER-VI

NASHYA SHEIKH AND OTHER COMMUNITIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

This chapter looks into a comparative study of *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal. The North Bengal is one of the backward places of West Bengal as far as India. Within the six districts of North Bengal the Muslim community is the biggest minority community from the North of Ganga to the heart of Himalaya, from Mahananda to Sangkosh, the geographical location in which North Bengal situated the old inheritance are marked as Muslims. They are the son of soil of North Bengal. The Muslims were ancestral of this area from the historical age with the clearance of forest. Their struggle can be found approx, the Tarai and Dooars from a very early age. Within the conflict of socio-political, environmental changes, development-underdevelopment, destruction, they are rich to the present century overcoming the various struggles of caste, from the last few centuries. They used to depend on the Agriculture of the village centric North Bengal which is still mobile in this area. Especially in the Districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar of North Bengal, Agriculture is the major source of livelihood. Most of the *Nashya Sheikh* People of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts have been engaged themselves in Agriculture along with various other Communities. As the common occupation is Agriculture, so the people of many Communities have a few common characteristics, such as economic condition, their lifestyle, their social status etc. So that, we cannot differentiate a *Nashya sheikh* community of people from a Rajbangsi Hindu or a Polia, Mech, or other Communities. Only the *Nashya Sheikh* people can be differentiated by their Religion.[1]

Demographic Changes:

By the time of independence of India, in 1947, the territory of North Bengal was dissected. Moreover, the Koch Bihar kingdom fell down during 1950 and some parts of Purnia district was merged into the West Dinajpur. Refugees were taken in North Bengal from East Bengal. From India some people gone to East Pakistan, in this socio-economic perspective the local Muslim community faced a big backdrop in their political and socio-economic sectors.[2] They were simply found most as agricultural labour or as mason, rickshaw driver, unskilled labour, transport worker. Even they were found as the beggar also. They were even backward in the education and government jobs. This is very much of a concern from the point of view of a minority community. Is there no path for solving this backwardness in our constitution or political system?[3]

Before partition, some aristocrat educated Muslims came to North Bengal from South Bengal. Some for jobs, some for business, and they became permanent residents of this area. In Army of Maharajah of Cooch Bihar, there were some Muslim Mughal and Pathan employed. After partition, aristocrat Muslims went to East Bengal. Now they have some relatives alive, however they have been assimilated to local Muslims.[4]

Before going through the point that is changing the demographic picture, we represent a short introductory word on the above point. As we have been taken the source of data from various date especially the Census Report of 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001, found that it characterised the different wings of process of migration and immigration of Muslim group at here.[5] The Districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar had a Muslim majority area before independence. On the basis of source and information from the essay named ‘Jalpaigurir Muslim Samaj’ written by Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh, published in Madhuparni, Jalpaiguri zilla Sankhya, has given a float light over the point with a new dimension.[6]

He shows, Jalpaiguri with Muslim majority town alike from the other towns of India. It had different characters. Muslims of Jalpaiguri were intellectual middle class, land owner tea planters, educationist and businessman.[7]

The different classes of this Muslim group have come from the different parts of our country. They are lawyers, and the Bar Association has been dominated by them. They were politically conscious. Central National Muhammadan Association was established at Jalpaiguri also. In 1923 Sonaullah donated huge money to Swaraj Fund. That's why he was awarded as Amir-ul-Mulk by DeshbandhuChittaranjan Das. Not only that, he was the strong patronise of social activities also. He donated funds for establishing a School,Social Organisation and Mosques. Dr. Shiv Shankar Mukharjee, through his research work, shown Muslim engaged in business were came from Dhaka, Nowakhali and Patna districts of East Pakistan. Not only that Muslims of Bihar, U.P. and Lakhnow gathered here. They gradually became financially sound through their respective businesses. So according to Professor Ghosh, Muslims of Jalpaiguri can be classified with their category of origin i.e., Pathan, Sheikh and Nashya.[8] J.A. Millign in his survey reports showed that a large number of Muslims from Dinajpur, Purnia and Bihar came here and settled at Rajganj as described by Nassya by Upendranath Barman. So, on the basis of linguistic similarity their successors lived at different parts of Indo-Bangladesh border area adjoining region of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts. Keeping in mind the above information we representing the recent structural history i.e., demography of Muslim group residing at Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts.[9]

The Muslim groups are gradually becoming minority, after soon the independence. So, the lot of this city who paid the large amount of revenue to the colonial Government had been washed out and migrated to East Pakistan after 1947. The migration in microscopic as described by Ranajit Das Gupta in his essay "Hindu relation of Jalpaiguri districts in pre

independence", published in Charu Chandra Sannayal, Smaraq Grantha, meanwhile it is to be noted that Hindus migrated here in lieu of their exchange of property of East Pakistan. The exchange was done among the Hindus of East Pakistan and Muslims of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts.[10]

Within four decades through these characteristics of migration and push back policy of Bangladesh Government large number of Muslim settled once again in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. The migrated outsider and converted, all are gathered since after the 1971. It is very much cleared that the Muslims have been settled after the sign of Neheru-Liakat Pact (1950). Muslim immigration of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts was found to have risen significantly. [11]

It can also be assumed that after the Pakistan resolution 1940, the migrants of the Muslim groups from the Eastern part of Bengal started and with the partition of Bengal the influx of migrants into North Bengal took place in large scale. It obviously influences the society, economy and polity of the post partition of North Bengal.[12]

Changing demography of dominating Muslim group has become significantly increased. Before the independence the bulk number of Muslim lawyers, intellectuals and businessman migrated to Bangladesh and few of them were settled, in rest of Muslim majority area of Bengal.[13] The demographic picture of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts had shown the Muslim majority region. Mainly they settled at Indo-Bangladesh adjoining area, few of them settled at Shishubari of Alipurduar Sub-Division, newly township of Jaigong and Mathabhanga Subdivision of Cooch Behar. Not only that Birpara, Madarihat, Hasimara, Sitai, Shitalkhuchi we can find a large number of Muslims settled here. The area of Jalpaiguri Sadar Division i.e. Rajganj ,Berubari, Pukurjan, Sannasikata are also the Muslim majority area . It is noticed from the Sarba Shikhya Mission, the majority Muslim students are reading at Sannyasikata High School. It is very questionable that the areas where they

settled had confined within the adjoining region. Recently they settled in difference area of nearly from the town also i.e. Siliguri, so the area where they settled in Jalpaiguri District has a rectangle in shape. [14]

Now we represent the comparison figures of population of Muslim groups in Jalpaiguri district in respective census of 1961, 1971.

TABLE 6.1

Population (Religion wise) in the District of Jalpaiguri in 1961 and 1971

	1961		**1971**	
Religious community	**Population (number)**	**% of total population**	**Population (number)**	**% of total population**
Hindu	1160954	85.41	1591201	86.81
Muslim	129771	9.55	156992	9.97
Christian	48570	3.57	55707	3.18
Buddhist	18258	1.34	15628	0.89
Jain	780	0.05	1572	0.08
Sikh	950	0.06	1253	0.07

Source: Census of India, 1961, 1971.

Here we found that the Hindu population was decreased in 1971 but Muslim population was increased, from 1961 as 1.40% and 0.42% respectively.[15] When the Chirstian and Buddhist Community's population percentage was also decreased, but the Jain and Sikh population was increased.

Another comparison of figures of population by religion in Jalpaiguri district gives us a fare idea in proliferation of Muslim population.

TABLE 6.2

Population (Religion wise) in the District of Jalpaiguri in 1981 and 1991

	1981		**1991**	
Religious community	**Population (number)**	**% of total population**	**Population (number)**	**% of total population**
Hindu	1938062	87.50	2375168	84.81
Muslim	193658	8.75	281054	10.04
Christian	63555	2.87	107969	3.85
Buddhist	16368	0.74	31633	1.13
Jain	1406	0.06	862	0.03
Sikh	1628	0.07	1607	0.06
others	149	0.01	2250	0.08
Total population	2214871	100.00	2800543	100.00

Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991.

Here in this decade, we found the Muslim population was increased as 1.29% in the Year of 1991, whereas the Hindu population was decreased as 0.84% in 1991 as compared of 1981.[16]

Here we can see the Hindu population with the span of decades has gone down from 87.50 in 1981 to 84.81 in 1991, registering a decrease of approx 2%, whereas the Muslim

population has increased from 8.75% to 10.04% registering a steady increase. In addition, here we found an interesting increase in the percentage of population of Christian and Buddhist's. Whereas the population of Sikh and Jain were decreased in 1991 from 1981.

TABLE 6.3

Population (Religion wise) in the District of Jalpaiguri in 2001

2001		
Religious community	**Population (number)**	**% of total population**
Hindu	2893124	82.32
Muslim	395680	12.39
Christian	138725	3.99
Buddhist	39610	1.14
Jain	1036	0.03
Sikh	2135	0.06
Others	2604	0.07
Total population	3472914	100.00

Source: Census of India, 2001.

Here we found that the Muslim population was increased in 2001 as 2.35%, where Hindu population was decreased in 2001 as 2.49% as compared as 1991. On the other hand, in the year 2001, the Christian and Buddhist population increased but Sikh and Jain population remained the same as compared to 1991.[17]

Now we can see, the overall changes happened from 1961 to 2001 as far as population is concern within various Religious Communities, which shows, Hindu population was decreased as 3.09%, Muslim population was increased as 2.84%, Christian population was increased as 0.42%, Buddhist population was decreased as 0.20%, Sikh population was only remain the same as 0.06% from 1961, Jain population was decreased as 0.02% in the District of Jalpaiguri.

TABLE 6.4

Population (Religion wise) in the District of Cooch Behar in 1991 and 2001

Religious community	**1991**		**2001**	
	Population (number)	**% of total population**	**Population (number)**	**% of total population**
Hindu	1659733	76.45	1871857	75.50
Muslim	506728	23.34	600911	24.24
Christian	1467	0.07	2162	0.09
Sikh	215	0.01	330	0.01
Buddhist	353	0.02	474	0.02
Jain	2093	0.10	2193	0.09
Others	556	0.03	489	0.02
Religion not stated	*	*	739	0.03
All Regions	**2171145**	**100.00**	**2479155**	**100.00**

Source: Census of India, 1991, 2001.

Here we found the Demographic changes in the District of Cooch Behar within various Religious Communities from 1991 to 2001. Due to unavailability of sources, we aren't able to mention the Demographic status of earlier decades. From the available data we can say that the Hindu population was decreased as 0.95%, Muslim population was increased as 0.9%, Christian population was increased as 0.02%, Buddhist and Sikh population was remaining same, whereas Jain and Other population was decreased as 0.01%.[18]

On the whole the Muslims are settled at Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. They played a significant role in different aspect of life. On the basis of source of information especially signified the socio-religion and economic relationship of Muslims with the Rajbanshi's also. They worked with the Hindus and involved in Agriculture, food production and Government service. Here we can see the cultural assimilation of different communities. It gave a new shape of livelihood. Source from Ranajit Das Gupta, Grulling and Ananda Gopal Ghosh we may agree that Jalpaiguri had its different in Eco-Religious-Political character. Muslims are influenced here like Hindu. They are neither communal nor conservative. They are mixed with the Hindus, Rajbanshi's and another sect also. So, it is one of the District towns which represent a new shape of Indigenisation and brought a new era in the history of modern India.

Adaptation, Adjustment and syncretism:

To find this answer we have to consider our democratic system, constitution, Mondal Commission and central- state governance policy. We can find agitation against Brahmanism of the south Indian states as early as our independence, it started from 1885. But the higher castes people of south India were divided into many forms, whereas lower castes people were united for their culture and language especially the Drabida language and cultural community. For this Muslim community has been enjoying the benefit of other backward communities before independence. During the formation of the constitution of India the

constitutional body was very much concerned about minority reservation and for this the advisory committee on fundamental rights and minorities formed under the leadership of sardar Patel. This committee supports minority reservation and recommended it. But H. C. Mukherjee and others strongly opposed the recommendation of minority reservation in the constitutional assembly. For that this proposal of reservation was abandoned.[19]

Apart from anthropological platforms, it can be noticed that in regards to folk culture, Muslims are mainly influenced by local culture. The flow cultural continuity of folk culture of Koch, Mech-Rava, Rajbangsi and Polia is still existent. Dr.Riajul Haque in regards to research on folk culture stated, "In the various Muslim society of West Dinajpur District, despite existence of somewhat different type of profession, linguistics and behaviour, there is no difference with main stream Koch cultural sphere's festival, folk play and folk songs." In regards to folk culture, the Muslims of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri are connected to Rajbangsi folk culture. In the usage of turmeric, in decorating house, during sowing new crop, the ceremony of gochorpona, Nabanna, songs of marriage and other ceremonies of marriage, otherworldly ceremony, cutting hair of newly born child, Sadh bhakshan of pregnant lady, beating drums during Maharam, playing Lati, Tajia procession and immersion, in lighting essence sticks in the Dargah of Pir, in lighting candle, in Manating, in believing ghosts, in doing Jharphuk, in menu list having Sukatachhyaka,use of shidol, etc numerous examples exist. They are naturally connected to Rajbangsi folk culture. Even Muslims too were included into Hindu laws like Rajbangsi's under Koch monarchy. "The Muslim of Kochbeharis also generally guided by the Hindu law of in evidence unless any Muslim dissents and proves in court that his family was guided by the Muslim law from before."[20]

In social norms Muslims don't have the so-called Varna system like Hindus but because staying close to Hindu society complete emancipation from it could not be gained. During Turkic-Pashtun age, a handful foreign Muslims (Turkic, Afghan, Irani, Arabi) were in

the leadership of the society. They identified themselves as "sharif" (Aristocrat, Sharif). As per Hindu Varna system of four classes, this Ashraf was used to be identified. Sayyed (a learned person like Brahmin), Mughal-Pashtun (warrior like Kshatriya), Shaik (merchant like Vaisya), and remaining native converted Muslims were called "Atraf" or non-aristocrat. In North Bengal, these "Atraf" sect's local untouchable Muslims were called "Nasya-Shaikh". In later days, during partition and district reconstructions other low caste Muslims too were included into the populace of North Bengal, though their number is limited. In present, in regards to regional and professional terms the sects which can be noted among the Muslims are noted below.[21]

"**Nashya'Sheikh"**- Now North Bengal's 90% Muslims are *Nashya Sheikh.* "Nashya" means ''Nasta". Sheikh means qualitatively best. Foreign Muslims identity was Sheikh. But in course of time, it took jjust to be Muslim to be called a Shaikh. As it was believed that local converted Muslims were degraded in quality because of conversion, that's why this class's Muslims were called '*Nashya Sheikh".* These Muslims are basically converting from local communities of North Bengal like Rajbangsi, Koch, Polia and Deshiya. That's why even today their language is Kamrupi or Kamtapuri. Except religion they are similar with Rajbangsi, Polias in terms of clothing, food, folk culture, profession and in appearance. They are all peasants and habitations are in rural area. Negligible parts who are now employees in urban areas they too came from peasant families and urban area's small group of Muslims still retained their connection to rural areas. Surplus agricultural labourers are involved in professions like pulling Rickshaw. These *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims were referred to as Rajbangsi Muslims to be the researchers. But in some pre-independence census and in Government documents and in some post-independence Government's gazettes the word *"Nashya Sheikh"* can be found. In nature they are simple and good neighbours.[22]

Bengal Sheikh:

As the word "Sheikh" means better or best so with the intention to identify self with aristocratic status, like other Muslims of West Bengal, Bengal Sheikhs to identify them as Sheikh. They generally live in South Dinajpur with Bengali as mother tongue. They are basically peasants and generally live-in rural areas. Their behaviours, folk cultural, attitude and in appearance they are similar like Rajbangsi's. Their ancestors converted from the Rajbanshi community. Many refer them as Rajbangsi Muslims too.[23]

Sayeed:

Sayeed, this word means leader. Arabic enlightened and educated family's people are known as Sayeed. North Bengal's West Dinajpur (present day North and South Dinajpur) and Cooch Behar's Lelay's a group of Muslims identify themselves as Sayeed. They are not Arabic but converts to Islam from these areas. However, they sing Ghajal, kawali, Giit and Baul songs while travelling from house to house. In return they accept something in home holder's house. In profession they are basically baggers. Many calls them "Machbhandary" in Cooch Behar.[24]

Sheikh:

Scatterly some Pathan descent's aristocratic Muslims today still live in Maldah. They identify themselves as Sheikh. They use a language named Khotta which is an admixture of Hindi or Urdu. Ratua, English Bazaar, Manikpur Thana belonging to Diara and Tal, are main places of their habitation. Many consider their original homeland was in Bihar's Darbhanga.

Dinajpuri Bhatia:

In Darjeeling district in both Dinajpur districts there is a group of Muslims who are known as Bhatia's. Many consider them to be included in Maldah's districts' Sherbadiya group. General tradition is many years ago, their ancestors were in Arab country. In North

Bengal, their arrival happened during Sher Shah's time. Prior to this supposedly they were in downstream areas or in the South. Whatever the case is now they have been totally assimilated among local people. Now they are classified as BPL. They are mainly involved in professions like rowing boat, agriculture, business of cow-buffalo and goat.[25]

Bhatt:

"The word "Bhat" came from the word Bhar. Bhars generally used to entertain kings and landlords by singing poems. In two Dinajpur' areas adjacent to Bihar border, those Bhatt class's Muslims who can be seen today, however, no longer do this work. Perhaps their ancestors could have done this. Now they are mainly involved in repairing umbrellas, sewing cloth and samiyana. There is dominance of Urdu in their language.

Gain:

Generally, the singer community is identified as Gain. In almost every area of North and South Dinajpur, there are more or less Gain community's Muslims. They mainly earn their livelihood by singing the Pachali of Satyapir and Madder Pir. They are generally Muslims of Rajbanshi language. Their pachali song is very much like Rajbangsi cattle herder's songs of Gorakhnath.

Hiram:

Various Muslims belonging to the barber class's Muslims of various areas of North Bengal are called Hiram. Apart from cutting hair and beard, Hajams also do circumcision or Khatna. In regional terms they are called "*Naua*" and "*Osta*". They generally live more in areas of two Dinajpur districts adjacent to Bihar. They are mainly Hindi speakers.

Bakani:

This class's Muslims generally live in North and South Dinajpur. They are generally converting from lower Hindu castes. They are mainly peasants in profession. They are mainly interested in selling various agricultural crops by basket in Bazaars.

Adivashi or Tribal Muslim:

These Muslims are generally of Santhal descent. Their main area of habitation is Jalpaiguri district's Doors area. They can be seen engaged in mainly agriculture, collecting woods from forest and working as Coolie in tea gardens and in cattle farming. Their language is Santhali. They still don't use Arabic names; instead, they still use Santhali names.

Momin or Ansari:

In Kaliachak's vast areas Momin Muslims live. They are called Jolas too. Their previous profession was working in the handloom industry. They are converts from lower caste Hindu sects.

Panjhra:

They are Muslims of fishermen class, involved in the fishing industry. They are converts from lower Hindu castes. They have a tradition of using Sindur among their married women.

Deshi:

Desi Muslims identify themselves as Gaurdeshi. Probably after the fall of the King of Gaur, their ancestors began to live in areas near Gaur. But many guess their ancestors could be Rajbangsi. Now their customs are very much like Rajbangsi's.

Badiya:

Kaliachak, Maniachak and in Ratua area Badiyas live. They are called Sherbadiya. According to some they are descendants of Pathan king Sher Shah. Integrands to customs they are La-Majhobi meaning they are not believer of any 4 ways of Islam. Professionally they are mainly peasants and small businessmen.[26]

Bihari Muslims:

For many days, Hindi speaking Muslims from Bihar have lived in North Bengal. Now they are this area's permanent residents. They are simple, loyal and modest. Most are involved in small occupations. As Butcher, Dhunkor, small business man, washer man, and barber they are known.Mr. Ahul Fazal, a member of the Association gave oral evidence. In fact, he has stated that the 'Pahadia Muslims' constitute an endogamy social group and they are identifiable as a separate racial group entirely distinct from the other social groups. It has been stated that persons in this class or their ancestors who originally belonged to Scheduled Castes and other degraded or depressed classes embraced Islam and this class is a class of converted Muslims from the Scheduled Castes and other such low and depressed classes in society. Though a class converted to Islam from such sections of the downtrodden people, the persons in this class maintain their separate and distinct identity and it is not possible for any other group to infiltrate into the social group. It has also been stated in evidence that the person in this class who are converted Muslims from Scheduled Castes and other downtrodden and depressed classes have still maintained even after conversion many of the customs and traditions of the class or caste from which they became converted and notwithstanding becoming Muslims, ceremonies like 'Bhatriditiya'and 'Rakhi Bandhan' are still in vogue in this class. It has also been indicated in evidence that this class generally speaks its own ethnic dialect and maintains its mode of dress-style, food habits and various other activities which are largely based on the old traditional habits of the class or tribe to

which it belonged before conversion. Change of religion has brought about no change in their condition. The particulars furnished go to indicate that there are no Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Chartered Accountants and other professionals in this class and only in the teaching field, teachers – Primary, account for 0.5%, teacher –secondary, Account for 1% and teachers – Higher Secondary –Nil. The Educational standard of this class is very low. It is established that in theGovernment and non –Government services there is nobody in any high and middle rank of the Government and non-Government services. Only in the case of ordinary jobs 3% of the persons in this class are employed in the ordinary Government jobs and 1% in the non-Government jobs. Representation of this class in Government, semi-Government and even non-Government services is indeed negligible. It appears that there is no M. P. there is no member of the Zilla Parishad and Block Panhayat or Gram Panchayat from this class. Living conditions of this class is indeed miserable and most of the people of this class live in thatched huts and the main source of livelihood is fish selling, butchering and working as daily agricultural labourers.[27]

The materials submitted go to establish that this class of Pahadia Muslims consists of persons who or their ancestors have been converted from Scheduled Castes and other low and depressed classes of the society and the change in religion has not in any way improved their status –social, educational and economic, and it appears, on the other hand, that this class has been further down-graded. The materials submitted, clearly establish the educational backwardness and social backwardness of this class and also the very poor economic condition. The Commission is also satisfied that the 'Pahadia Muslims' who are converted from Scheduled Caste and other low and depressed classes and who even after conversion maintain identity of the peculiar ethnic origin and continue to observe the traditions and customs peculiar to this class, constitution endogamy social group and they are identifiable as a distinct social group and they live as a distinct social group. The 'Pahadia Muslims' in the

opinion of the Commission, constitute a distinct and separate and identifiable class. The Commission is satisfied on a proper consideration of the materials placed before the Commission that the 'Pahadia Muslims' class is a socially and educationally backward class in the State and deserves to be included in the list of Backward Classes in the State. The Commission notes that there has been no opposition from any quarter to the inclusion of this class in the list of Backward Classes in the State.Shri Bhupendra Chandra Barman (a retired Primary SchoolTeacher), Secretary, Nikhil Banga Kshatriya Barman Samaj Kalyan Samiti Appeared before the Commission to represent the case of their class, supported by Shri Bijoy Sankar Barman (Vill- Nutan Durgapur, P.O.- Alinagar, Dist.-Jalpaiguri). They took oaths and submitted necessary particulars. As per their submission, the 'Banshi Barman' class is one of the down-trodden, underprivileged and socio-economically and educationally backward classes of people ant they are looked down upon by their neighbours in the locality. It was stated in evidence that they are a small class of people, numbering only 2,251 persons (male – 1200 and female – 1,051). Their Population In the different districts of the State of West Bengal are as follows –Nadia (473), North 24-Parganas (31), Jalpaiguri (754), Cooch-Behar(882) and South Dinajpur – (111).They are dispersed in the following P.S./Blocks and Gram Sabha of the districts concerned: North 24-Parganas: Barrackpur – I (Majhipara, Palasi) Nadia:Krishnagar South and Ranaghat – II (Bhat-Jangla and Debargam).South Dinajpur : Bangshihari (Brajaballavpur and Alahabad).Jalpaiguri: Falakata (Choakhola, Joteswar, Goabar Nagar).Cooch Behar: Cooch Behar – II, Dinhata (I& II) (Khapaidanga, Gosanimari and Burirhat).[28]

They submitted that though they are small in number, they are distinctly identifiable as an endogamous social group having mongoloid physical features. They migrated to West Bengal and other parts of India (Assam, Orissa) after independence from East Bengal (now in Bangladesh). They were inhabitants of the forest tracts of the Districts of Dacca (Sripur,

Kaliakoir, Savar Police Stations). They are not aware of their old history; whatever they know is based on hearsay and guesswork. This much they, however, know for certain that their forefathers used to live in the jungles under the Vawal Zamindars in Bangladesh. They used to live on hunting and agriculture.[29]

Originally, they were known as 'Sardars'. They worked as Lathialsand guards of the Zamindars of Bhawal who designated them as 'Barman'. As the Lathials of the Zamindars, they not only changed their class name from Sardar' to 'Barman' but also thought that they were 'Kshatriyas' for which they introduce themselves as 'Surya Banshi Kshatriyas'. But no one cared for those adopted class names and titles. The people in general called them 'Banshi'. This Is because; one of their main functions was to hunt in the jungles with bamboo sticks (called 'Bansh' in Bengali) and supply the hunted animals to the Zamindars.[30]

The Banshi-Barmans are internally sub-divided into several exogamous 'gotras' such as Ajgi, Bhoggi, Kanta, Songmati, Chalhai etc. Which follows their mother's line of descent? At present most of them belong of Kashyap' gotra.The Goddess 'Kamakshya' in Assam is their main deity and worship of 'Devi Kamakshya' is their major religious ceremony. This indicates their association with Assam since long.It is a fact that majority of them live in the North-Bengal District (Cooch-Behar, Jalpaiguri, South Dinajpur) where the Rajbangsi's also bear mongoloid physical features and use 'Barman' as one of their surnames. But the 'Banshi-Barman' representatives pointed out that in spite of those facts they have no social connection with the Rajbangsi's; and that both these classes form distinct social groups. The following account of Risley will be quite worth-noting in this regard.[31]

Suraj-Bansi:

This title, properly denoting one of the two main shocks of Rajput's, has been assumed within comparatively recent times by a hybrid Mongoloid caste claiming to be the

aborigines of Kamrup and now inhabiting in the jungle tracts of Bhowal in Eastern Bengal. According to Dr. Wise from whose notes this article is condensed, the Suraj-Bansi's were formerly regarded as akin to the Kochh-Mandai, but the Brahmans taking advantage of their credulity and ignorance, led them to believe that they were descendants of Chhatri who, by throwing away their sacred thread escaped the axe of Parasurama". After 1871, Suraj-Bansi's prayed to the Zamindar (who was Srotriya Brahman) to re-invest them with the sacred thread. An amount of Rs. 2,000 was paid and the sacred thread with due solemnity was presented, thereby elevating their position, which created disgust of the Hindus of these parts.[32]

"The Kochh-Mandai, who reside in the same jungle assert that a few years ago the Suraj-Bansi were known as Kochh-Mandai, and even at present Bansi is their ordinary appellation. The Suraj-Bansi's are peculiar toBhawal, and are not met with beyond the limits of Dacca district. They're certainly allied to the Kochh-Mandai, but have modified the mongoloid type by marrying with low Bengali castes.[33] Their original language, probably a dialect of Garo, has been forgotten and Bengali is universally spoken. The Suraj-Bansi is generally a darker and tailor, but less muscular man than the Koch-Mandai.Certain of them still retain the peculiar mongoloid cast of features, with oblique eye lids and scanty growth of hair; but the majority have the common Bengali countenance, with bushy moustaches and voluminous cues, for they have adopted the Vaishnava fashion of wearing the hair, they already call themselves worshippers of Vishnu, and have engaged the services of Patit-Brahman purohit. Twice a year, in Phalgun and Baisakh, they worship under a Sal tree Kamakhya Devi, the tutelary Goddess of Kamrup in Assam. Durga, Manasa Devi,and Bura-Buri are invoked in seasons of sickness and domestic trouble and special honour is paid to the Sun as reputed ancestor and eponym of the caste. They have borrowed three gotras Kasyapa, Aliman and Madhukuliya and marriages into the same gotras are forbidden. Widow marriage has been abandoned; divorce is prohibited, and the Hindu system of marrying girls before

puberty adopted, furthermore having assumed the sacred thread of the Chhatris, they imitate them in observing Shradh on the nineteenth day after death. By Hindus they are not admitted to belong to a clean. Almost all Surajbansis are cultivators, growing rice, tobacco, mustard and cotton on clearings in the jungles. Fishing is deemed dishonourable.[34]

The submission made by the 'Bansi-Barman' class of people and the comments and observations of Risley relating to Suraj bans is go to indicate that this class, 'Bansi-Barman', is an off-shoot of 'Kochh' group of people who are scheduled castes, and that they are the product of "tribe-caste continuum "process. As per their submission the social position of this class is not satisfactory. They maintain their own occupational habits, social customs and rituals for which they are looked down upon by their upper-caste Hindu neighbours. Risley also noted about a century back that they were not considered as a clean caste by the Hindus. Their statement reveals that about half of their population still get the treatment as most ordinary persons like the scheduled Castes and tribes.[35]

It was submitted before the Commission that the average educational standard of this class (both males and females) is up to primary only; of the male population 53.21% and of the females 42.20% read up to primary level; 1.33%of the males and 0.48% of the females up to Higher Secondary level and 0.24% of the males and 0.10% of the females up to Graduate level. The rate of drop outs at different stages of education for assisting the parents in their family as well as other than family occupations are as follows: -Primary level – 66.83%; Secondary level – 4.22%; Higher Secondary Level – 3.99% and Graduate level – 0.66%. The materials on record go to indicate that their attainment in the field of education is not at all satisfactory, and they may be regarded as educationally backward.[36]

Traditional occupation of this class of people is cultivation and they still primarily depend on agriculture. The materials submitted before the Commission reveal that about one-third (30%) of the population possess land as owners 30% own land and also work on others'

land as sharecroppers; 5% totally depend on sharecropping; 34% work on others' land as agricultural labourers. All the categories of farmers are in possession of land much below the ceiling. Only 1% of there is engaged in petty family business. Majority of them are still below the poverty line. Due to lack of education among them, their achievement in the 'services and professional' sectors is also not worth-noting. This class has a practically negligible percentage of employment in Government and Non-Government services at a higher level (0.09%). In middle ranks there are only0.64% and in ordinary jobs 0.53% only. There is no doctor, no Engineer, no Lawyer, no Chartered Accountant etc. among them. There are only a few Primary teachers (0.40%) and those engaged in other professions (0.44%). The facts established by evidence – oral and documentary go to indicate that the economic condition of this class is extremely unsatisfactory. The living condition of this class of people is also not up to the mark. About 28% live in thatched and mud wall kutcha houses, 49% in brick wall semi-pucca houses, and 23% in pucca houses. About 15% have bathrooms, 25%have dug a well system, 20% have thatched sheds; and 40% go to open fields to attend the call of nature. Cent per cent of them depend on Tube-wells for water. There is no MP, no MLA, no representative in statutory bodies accepting 0.09% in Block Panchayat. Taking in consideration all the facts stated, materials furnished and submissions made, the Commission has arrived at the conclusion that the 'Bansi-Barman' class constitutes socially and educationally a backward class in the State and the Commission recommends inclusion of the Banshi-Barman class in the list of Backward Classes in the State and the Commission, accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.[37]

It may be noted that there is no objection to the inclusion of 'Banshi-Barman' class in the list of Backward Classes and no one has raised any objection to that effect before the Commission. No one appeared on behalf of the State Government, although 'Notice' was served on the Government of West Bengal.

Before partition from British period South Bengal's some aristocrat educated Muslims came to North Bengal. Some for jobs, some for business became permanent residents of this area. In Army of Maharajah of Cooch Bihar, there were some Muslim Mughal and Pathan employed. After partition, aristocrat Muslims went to East Bengal. Now they have some relatives living however they have been assimilated to local Muslims.[38]

In the above explanation it can be seen that, among Muslims of North Bengal a larger part is from Rajbangshi Gotra i.e., appeared from Mongolian heritage. Among this underdeveloped Mongolian heritage people, only Muslims are denied opportunities of Reservation. [39]

Other Muslim communities are laid back in terms of financial, social and education. They are a socially deprived class for 3000 years. Even before conversion to Islam they were known as "Non-Aryans". To Aryans they were inferior and hated. They were known as Dasyu in AiterayaBarhmana, Aiteryaa Aranyaka Pakkhikalpo, Smlechha in Mahabharata, Brtaya in Manusamhita, Kirat, Yaban, Khos, Papashay and Nisadh etc in Bhagabat Purana. Before just conversion to Islam, they were hated and untouchable before High caste Hindus. To escape from this neglect, hatred and discrimination even after embracing Islam they still could not escape from Social exploitation.[40] That's why their backwardness and social obstacles have come historically. Medieval era's Mughal-Pashtun rule's history is generally referred to as rule of Muslim rule. In many cases British historian's intentionally distorted information's the rule of Muslim rulers is depicted as destroyer of temples, non-believer, torturer, plunderer, haters of other's religion or even as villains in history and literature. So, common Muslims in social viewpoint become isolated. So, they can't develop confidence.[41]

This social backwardness created backwardness in education too. During British period, British administrator's political motives, to some extent aristocrat Muslim's narrow mindedness, and Muslim's village centric geographical location too were reasons of

backwardness in field of education. Insufficient statistics and a primitive transport system prevent creating a general depiction of education among North Bengal's Muslims. Apart from some old statistics and Indian and West Bengal's Government's negligible information, there is no other way. In British rule there was not much spread of education among districts of North Bengal. Dr. F Buchannan visited North Bengal from 1807-1814 and reported that, Muslim had gotten sufficient chance of education in those districts where major people of were Muslim. He pointed out that in Dinajpur there were 119 Primary schools and 9 Person schools belonged from 13 of 22 Police Station. But there were no Primary schools in 9 Sub-division Rangpur where Muslim was in Majority, even its education system neglected than Dinajpur. There were no Public schools, and handily found a single person who had the legibility to be a cheek. At that have Malda was part of Dinajpur district.[42]

In the year of 1735(1835) in the respect of the decision of Lord Makely, English education system was introduced in this area but Muslim refused to accept the new English education system. Most of people thought, regarding this attitude of Muslim towards the new educational system, Elite Muslims fearing of losing of their religion that why they refused to accept English education and they also thought that this system . With the faults of Muslim society, the problem was further complicated by the British's "Filtration Theory" in regards to education. The modern education system was first implemented in Calcutta and its surrounding areas, but in far distant areas of North Bengal according to this policy no school was built for many days. "As Muslims generally lived in the villages so they did not have the opportunity to have education in urban English schools.[43] In Cooch Behar State, although the Jenkins school was established in 1861, only residents of urban areas and royal Government's employees gained the opportunity to learn. These historical reasons are the sources of historical backwardness of the Muslims in education. The situation created by this backwardness is today even more evident. Although in recent times the separate depiction of

Muslims of North Bengal can't be found separately however still an estimate can be made with the statistics from all India statistics. As per the survey taken by "Yojana Commission" in 1987-88 national rate of literacy was only 52.21%. There the rate of literacy among Muslims was only 42%. The situation of females was even more pathetic. When the national average is 39.42% their Muslim female's literacy rate was only 12%.[44]

Due to backwardness of Muslims in education, during British period the whole Bengal's Muslims became laid back including the Muslims of North Bengal. In the first 100 year of British rule, Muslims were not employed in jobs because of political reasons (so that the Nawabi rule never came back). In regards to these both reasons the number of Muslims employed in administration reduced drastically in Government posts. Although contemporary Bengal's population's half was Muslim as per Hunter Report Published in 1871 among native employees of Government 88% was Hindu. Rest was Muslims and Christians and others. As per Civil List among 2111 Government employees the number of Muslim employees was only 92. Among high Court's Justice, Queen's law enforcing employee and Barristers, there was not even a single Muslim. Among 240 native lawyers enlisted between 1851 to 1868, Muslim was only one. Contemporary Lieutenant Governor of Bengal wrote to Lord Meo in a letter that "I fear we did not play fairly to the Muslims in terms of education. In the Inspecting Agency of Education Department, it is doubtable whether there is even a single Muslim.[45]

TABLE 6.5

The percentage of the various communities in advantage of various sections:

Community	Population	Politics	Services	Business	Land
Brahman, khatriya, Vishay	15%	66%	87%	92.2%	92%
Others Backward classes	51.31%	8%	7%	2.3%	5%
S C & S T	22.5%	22.5%	3%	2%	1%
Muslim minorities	11.19%	3.5%	3%	3.5%	2%

Source: Rahaman, Bazlay, Mondal Kamishaner Report O Uttar Banger Muslim Samaj, Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha, Uttar Banga, 1996, p. 27.

Meaning in 5 year the percentage of Muslims employed in jobs is 4%. As per all India and West Bengal's past and present's information if the situation of Muslims is so pathetic then the situation of backward minority Muslims of North Bengal can be estimated by any conscious and thinking person. For most village people their village seems to them their world. They know about Bloc and District Headquarter towns to some extent. Their knowledge regarding Kolkata is still unclear and mysterious. They have no clue regarding the culture, History, Geographical location and economy of the greater India. Now from this aforementioned discussion we can come to some decision about Muslim community of North Bengal in the light of historical, anthropological, social, Economic and education.[46]

Notes & References:

[1]Bajlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj*, (in Bengali), Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, pp. 17-27.

[2]Ranajit, Das Gupta, *Economy, Society and Politics in Bengal: Jalpaiguri 1869-1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992, p. 6.

[3]Bajle, Rahaman, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj*, (in Bengali), Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, p. 19.

[4]Bajle, Rahaman, 'Cooch Behar Jellar Muslim Parichiti', (*in Bengali*), Amzad Hossain, (ed)., *KamrupThekeKochbehar*, Suhrid Publication, Kolkata, 2014, p. 119.

[5]Soumendra, ProsadSaha, 'Changing Muslim Demography of North Bengal in Post-Colonial Period (1947-1997): A Case Study of Jalpaiguri District', *An International Research Journal, Jaipur,* India, 2013, pp. 24-25.

[6]Ananda, Gopal Ghosh, 'Jalpaiguri Jelar Musalman Samaj', in Ajitesh Bhattacharya, *Madhuparni*, Balurghat, 1987, pp. 122-123.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Bimal, Pramanik, *Endangered Demography Nature and Impact of Demographic Changes in West Bengal 1951-2001*, Kolkata, 2005, p. 34.

[10]Ranajit, Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-16.

[11]Ananda, Gopal Ghosh, 'Sadhinata Uttarbanger SiKi Satabdir Britanta', (in Bengali), '*1947-Parabarti Uttarbanga-1'*,(ed.), Ananda Gopal Ghosh &Kartick Saha, N. L. Publisher, Siliguri, 2013, p. 41.

[12]Subhajyoti, Ray, *Transformations on the Bengal Frontier Jalpaiguri 1765-1948*, Routledge Curzon, New York, 2002, p. 138.

[13]Ananda, Gopal Ghosh, 'Jalpaiguri Jelar Musalman Samaj', in Ajitesh Bhattacharya, *Madhuparni*, Balurghat, 1987, p. 123.

[14]Soumendra, ProsadSaha, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[15]Bimal, Pramanik, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[16]*Census Report of India 1981 and 1991.*

[17]*Census Reportof India 1981 and 2001.*

[18]*Census Report of India 1991 and 2001.*

[19]Bajlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj*, Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, pp. 18-23.

[20]Pasharul, Alam, *Uttarbanger Anagrasar Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali),Sahajpath, Islampur, 2008, pp. 14-23.

[21]*West Bengal commission For Backward Classes Report-8, 29th Oct, 1997.*

[22]Rahim, 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.

[23]Bajlay, Rahaman, '*Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj'*, Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, pp. 20-21.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Pasharul, Alam,*UttarbangerAnagrasar Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali), Sahajpath, Islampur, 2008, p. 24.

[26]Bajlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj*, (in Bengali), Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, pp. 23- 29.

[27]*West Bengal commission For Backward Classes Report-8, 29th Oct, 1997.*

[28]Ibid.

[29]Abani, Mohon Kusria, *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Jalpaiguri*, Calcutta, 1981, p. 67.

[30]Pasharul, Alam, *UttarbangerAnagrasar Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali), Sahajpath, Islampur, 2008, p. 28.

[31]Ananda, Gopal Ghosh, *UttarbangerItihas O Samaj*, Dipali publisher's, Malda, 2009, p. 37.

[32]Durga, Das Majumdar, *West Bengal District Gazettears*, Koch Behar, Calcutta-27, 1977, p. 32.

[33]Abdus, Samad, *BanglarMusalmanJanajati*, (*in Bengali*), Ashirbad Publiser, Malda, 2008, pp. 30-39.

[34]Ibid. p. 40.

[35]Pasharul, Alam, *UttarbangerAnagrasar Muslim Samaj*, (in Bengali), Sahajpath, Islampur, 2008p. 30.

[36]*West Bengal commission For Backward Classes Report-8, 29th Oct, 1997.*

[37]Ibid.

[38]Bajlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj*, (in Bengali), Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, pp. 30- 36.

[39]Ibid. p. 20.

[40]Upendra, Nath Barman, *Rajbangsh iKhatriya Jatir Itihas,* (*in Bengali*), SridurgaPublisher, Jalpaiguri, 1973, p. 1.

[41]Bajlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj*, (in Bengali), Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, p. 21.

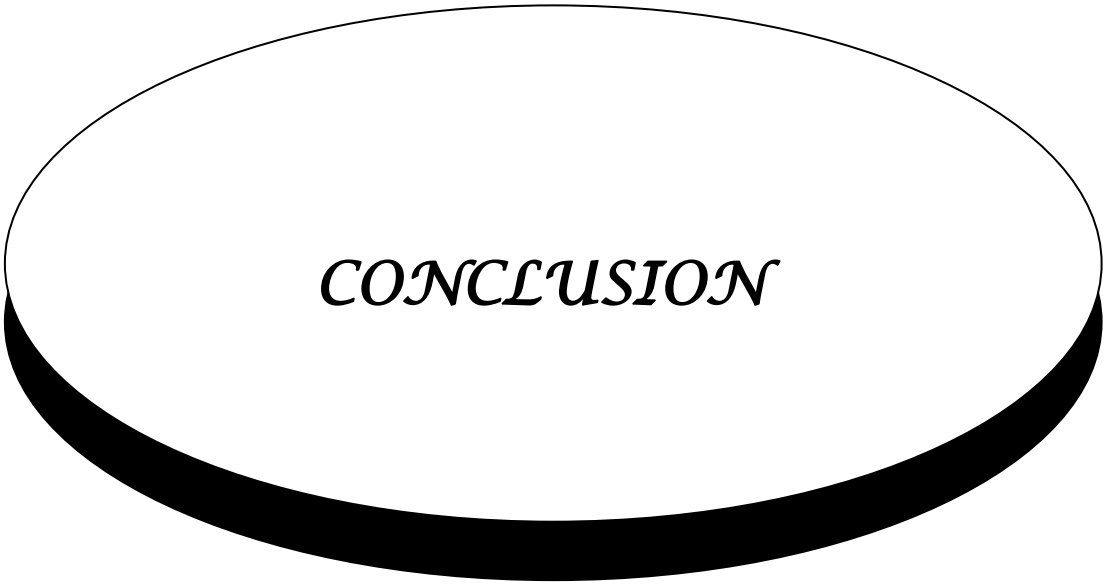
[42]Atul, Sur, *Hindu Sabhyatar Nritatwik Bhashy,* (in Bengali), Sahityalok, Kolkata, 1988, p. 94.

[43]W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans,Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen,* Premier Book House, Lahore, 1871, Reprinted from the, 1970, p. 119.

[44]Bajlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj*, (in Bengali), Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, p. 26.

[45]W. W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[46]Bajlay, Rahaman, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj, (in Bengali),* Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996, p. 32.


CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION:

The spread of Islam and the development of Muslims in India were a multilayered phenomenon and followed different patterns in different regions of the country. The bulk of the Muslims in India have been drawn from the diverse segments of the Indian population. It was spread by other means rather by the sword and the conversion to the faith (Islam) was not a sudden switchover of faith. It was a process of two ways, in one way, Islam itself undergoes a change in the process of converting the Hindus or others and on the other the former changed to suit the latter. The Muslim rulers in India took both the militant method and peaceful proselytizing way for conversion of the people to the Muslim faith. During the total period of Islamic rule, thousands of Muslim immigrants settled all over the India and their numbers were swelled by local converts. Trade served an important passage for the spread of Islam in Indian peninsula. Much before the era of Muslim rule, west Asia merchants came to Malabar Coast and other Indian coastal parts to purchase spice and aromatic woods. They were not only enterprising merchants but also had devotion and responsibility to spread the message of Islam in India. The building of Muslim society in Bengal was a long process of gradual growth. The composition of the society quite naturally differed from century to century with the immigration of foreign Muslim and the conversion of local people. At the initial period, the propagation of Islam was not strictly guided by the principles of Islamic rules in Bengal and some wrong explanations influenced the socio-religious life of the Muslim to a great extent. The general ignorance of Islam and pre-Islamic cultural traditions constituted a complex cultural pattern among the Muslim of Bengal and moreover, the traditions of the immigrant Muslim groups enriched the Muslim society of Bengal during the course of time. Islam, which came in the wake of the Turkish conquest, changed the socio-religious pattern of Bengal. Politically, it sowed the needs of Muslim rule,

but socially it planted the Muslim society, opening the gate of Bengal to several immigrants from the then Muslim world. The Muslim rulers and officials played a great role to spread Islam and to constitute the Muslim society either by establishing marriage alliances with local people or by mass conversion of the indigenous communities.

Thus, we see that Chapter- I discuss about the growth and development of Muslim society in Bengal. After the conquest of Muslims, Bengal had become a healthy, brave and individual nation. In the age of pre-Muslims, mainly the commoners of Bengal were Hindu, Buddhist and members of inferior classes and some Jains. Although residential people were a great part of this nation but at that time they did not count as citizens. There were Buddhists in large numbers, but after the decline of the Pal Dynasty, the Sen Dynasty conquered the Gaur throne. The Brahmins were arduous to the Buddhists and they gradually became fewer in numbers. In majority, political power, social respect and economic power were enjoyed only by the Hindus. However, Hindus in due course of time lost their vitality of life because of the curse inherent caste system.

The conquest of Bengal by the Muslims was more important than military victory. The political establishments that emerged as an outcome of new victory upheld the ideals of peace, discipline, equality in religious, cultural and social life. Thus, as a matter of fact, they did not only come as a warrior tribe but also brought some new ideologies in this land. For this new ideology, a great revolution emerged in Hindu society and it was the renaissance era in Bengal history. The demographic structure was revamped with the coming of the Muslims in Bengal. The Hindu population was in majority even though a great number of Buddhists and low caste Hindus got converted into Islam. This can be established by the fact that the Census report of 1872 revealed that the number of Muslims were only 1crore 70lakhs in Bengal. However, in the census report of 1881, Muslim population rose dramatically and it surpassed the Hindu population by 5lakhs and emerged as a major community.

The initial researches in this chapter looks into the formation of Bengali Muslim identity in colonial Bengal and post-colonial Bengal focusing on the period from 1870 to 1920.Muslim identity formation in colonial Bengal have repeatedly focused on the chasm between this rural, peasant *atrap* (non-elite) majority that comprised the bulk of the Muslim population in the province and the Urdu-speaking *ashraf* (elite) who traced their descent from Persia or Arabia or to the Mughal center of power in North India. The Bengali Muslim identity that emerged was a predominantly non-elite, peasant-based identity whose site of formation was the Bengali countryside. There was a critical link between the Urdu speaking *ashraf* and the non-Urdu speaking *atrap* among the Bengal Muslim intellectuals whose emergence can be traced to the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Muslim identity in Bengal was essentially a class-based identity that transmuted into the self-consciousness of being Muslim through the waves of reformist Islamic movements that swept across the Bengal countryside in the mid nineteenth century for example the Faraizi Movement and the late nineteenth.

The colonial censuses of Bengal were instrumental in creating new identities for the Bengali Muslims. It can be argued that due to categories invented by the colonial censuses for defining people, the Bengali Muslims in response to categorization developed a new narrative of themselves in which their '*Muslimness'* became central to their identity. This was a break from pre-colonial Bengali Muslim identity, where religion was the only boundary for the purpose of self-definition. The colonial project of categorizing people heightened religious awareness in contrast to other cultural commonalities between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. The Bengali Muslims increasingly started identifying with Islam only, foregoing other cultural markers as part of the Bengali Muslim identity. The opposition between Bengali and Islam was to a large extent a fall out of the operations of colonial census, which set the limits of the discourse of defining Bengali and Muslim identities. The tension between

Bengali and Muslim as projected in the census had to be addressed, which in turn led to new definitions of what it meant to have a Bengali Muslim identity. The Bengali Muslim identity was constructed with religion as the locus of the community. New definitions of Muslims emerged in response to census enumeration, and how the debates and responses these descriptions generated altered the people's understanding of community identity.

The chapter one is followed by Chapter- II, which discusses about the *Nashya Sheikh* community of North Bengal in historical perspectives**.** Looking into the *Nashya sheikh* of North Bengal, the principal theme of the research, it has been discovered that the great number of Muslims of North Bengal was *Nashya Sheikh*. The *Nashya Sheikhs*, a numerically dominant Muslim group resided in the sub-Himalayan North Bengal. It has synonymous names like *Nashya or Rajbansi Musalman*. They are mainly distributed over the northern districts of West Bengal, particularly in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur districts. Some of them are also found in Chachol and Gajol as well as in Malda district and all-over North Bengal. This community in general were local converts of Rajbangsi, Polia, Koch, Mech community etc. Due to lack of census data, it is very difficult to state the exact population figure of Nashya sheikhs of North Bengal. They are also designated as *Babe Musalman*. It was only a few decades before the Independence that the *Nashyas* were in masse exposed to and influenced by the process of Islamization. As a result, in recent times, they are integrated with the structural framework of Muslim society in Bengal. But they still retain many elements of their pre-Islamic past (tradition) which gave them a unique identity. Considering their ethnic origin, social history, cultural attributes and retention of many elements of per-Islamic traditions the *Nashya* are not favorably looked upon by other Muslims (Asraf or Khas) of the region. In this regard it may be noted that there is a Persian word '*Nosb'* meaning a drinker. The *Nashya* perhaps had the drinking *habit* which is forbidden in Islam. Hence, they were treated as a fallen Muslim. But the empirical

reality of such a view of the higher status Muslims is difficult to establish. The *Nashya Sheikh* community is endogamous in character. These communities are further subdivided on the lineage which is reflected by the use of their surnames. The most popular surnames among the *Nashya* are Ahmed, Rahman, Islam, Mia, Hoque, Uddin, Bapari, Pramanik, Sarkar, Sardar, etc. Intermarriages take place among them hence there is no social differentiation on the basis of surnames.

The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims of the North Bengal are not very different from the indigenous Rajbanshi's or Paliyas but they are undoubtedly Muslims who show signs of foreign extracts. There are many other observations which go to show that the physical features, socio-cultural characteristics of the Koch, Rajbanshi (Scheduled Caste) resemble with those of their Muslim counter-parts here, majority of whom have been converted from the Rajbanshi's. Deeds of land produced show the names recorded as Saban Nashya, Jamir Nashya, Sayam Nashya etc. All the above records and evidences to show that they are an identifiable low social caste Muslim community who in the past centuries have emerged as a result of conversion from the low ranked communities (Rajbanshi, Mech, Koch and Paliya). The ideas discussed in this chapter two are further convoluted in the next chapter number three which studies on how Islam was perceived in popular culture and society of the *Nashya sheikh* community?

Chapter-III, looks into the approach on how Islam was practiced by the *Nashya Sheikh* Community. The *Nashya Sheikh* use *kamtapuri or Rajbangsi* language and use Rajbangsi customs and manners. They like to carry on their life as same as Rajbangsi use to only different *Roza*(Fasting), *Namaz* (Prayer) and later on there have been introduced some Urdu word such as *Abba*, *Amma*, *Chacha, Gosul* etc. There is no any special feature in their House or cottage making this are same as Rajbangsi, some House are in Aligned and some are scattered manners. Previously they use to make their House with bamboo and jutes trick.

But at present they use make their House with Tin on the roof and wall and Bricks Houses also noticeable. Though at present Earthen House are found in Malda and Dinajpur district among the *Nashya sheikh* community. They give more important to the northern side cottage of a House. It is revealing that they are not confined by the rules of *Shariat,* Islamic customs and Islamic rules. They always maintain the Hindu Rajbangsi culture but need not to justified the culture in following as same as Muslims or not. Even they used to follow the Hindu good day in these special days for their marriage, birth ceremony etc. They always avoid the Hindu evil month for their occasion such as *Poush mash* (month), *Chaitra mash*, *Bhadramash* etc and they also avoid the *Ramjan* month (Fasting) and *Maharam* month for their marriage. They also make bargaining in their marriage for dowry. Brides wear red sharee in their marriage like Hindu. So, they are not lagging behind to maintain the Hindu customs and culture. Apart from few educated *Nashya Sheikh* Family most of the family who are comparatively less educated or illiterate do not subscribe to the notion of birth control. They follow the four obligatory acts of *Ohju*: washing the face with clean water, washing both hands up to the elbows, wiping a quarter of the head with wet hands and washing both feet including the ankle. Of all the rituals in the life cycle, *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims especially extol their funeral rites as very distinctive and sophisticated. They maintain that they are very dissimilar to the Hindu and tribal in treating their dead. They wash the body of the dead person with perfumed soap, taking special care to wash the mouth, clean the teeth, nostrils and lower parts of the body, dress it in new clothes, smear scented oil (*atar*) on it and then, instead of burning the body as most Hindu do, put it in a grave. Close relatives of the dead person perform the task of washing and dressing the body. Villagers co-operate with the relatives in washing or *gosol*. There are always a few persons in the village especially skilled in such jobs. They take special care in digging the grave, so as to keep the walls inside smooth. In fact, there are always certain experts among the villagers whose help is sought for

this kind of work. The grave has to be deep enough that one can comfortably sit upright inside. They believe that after the grave is filled in and the mourners have left the cemetery, an angel of God awakens the dead person and makes him sit up in his grave. One of the reasons for washing and perfuming the dead body is to ensure that the angel may not abominate the dead person seeing dirt on his body. The corpse is carried on a bier to the graveyard by pallbearers who have to bathe before touching it. Before entering the dead all the assembled Muslims say *janajanamaz* for the dead person, facing westward. The body is placed inside the grave with its head to the north and feet to the south, its feet turned towards the west. All *Nashya Sheikhs* Muslims, irrespective of any social and class status, come and join *Janaja* and throw fistfuls of earth on the grave. Even *Nashya Sheikh* passing by on such occasions are supposed to join in the *janaja* and throw earth on the grave. This is considered a meritorious act. Before putting earth on the grave, they make a flattened roof of bamboo and boundless of paddy stalks, the object being to leave sufficient space within for the dead to sit up. The roof is constructed level with the ground. On this roof or platform, they put earth and raise a mud plastered tomb in the shape of a triangular prism. Women never accompany a dead body to the graveyard. *Nashya Sheikh* keeps a dead body for twelve or thirteen hours before burying it. It takes a long time to arrange all the paraphernalia connected with burial-digging a grave, washing and dressing the corpse and so on. Moreover, they often wait for the relatives, who are immediately informed of the death, to come and pay their last respects. Villagers and relatives of the dead within the village go to other villages where close kin of the deceased live to inform them of the death. Hindu low caste villagers often act as messengers for their *Nashya Sheikh* co-villagers, conveying such news.

Thus, in retrospect the *Nashya* are *Sunnis* and they follow the tradition of *Hanafi* School. In social-religious matters they trail the guidelines of the Barelvi School (Madrasha) of thought. But in recent times the *Deobandi* School (Madrasha) of thought through the

Tableau activities has made a significant impact on them. The belief in *Pirism* is still a typical feature among them. Thus, they are affiliated to the Muslim saints or Pirs. The *Nashyas* celebrate all the major Muslim festivals and perform the basic religious rites and ceremonies. But they tend to accept without much criticism the traditional social customs, which have passed to them from the previous generation. This continuity of little traditions facilitates them to integrate and assimilate the local society dominated by the Hindu Rajbansis. On the socio-religious level the *Nashya* cultivate the traits of Islamic great tradition to operate within the framework of wider Muslim society. The process of Islamization helped them in achieving a social position within the structure of a Muslim Society in Bengal. Local Moktabs, madrasas and masjids (mosques) which are either associated with the Barelvi or the Deobandi traditions play a very significant role in Islamizing the *Nashya* community.

Chapter-IV, discusses the social life of the *Nashya Sheikh* and special emphasis is given to education, literacy and women of this community**.** In any society the system of education plays an important role in training, development and allocation of its manpower resources. A few numbers of people are educated in the *Nashya sheikh* society. Before the independence the changes of Govt. service were uncertain in the community. They could not realize the value of education because they were confined to agriculture. The average educational standard of the *Nashya Sheikh* class is also very low. The materials on record goes to indicate that their participation in the field of education is not up to the mark; about 10% read up to primary stage, 8% up to secondary level, and 3% up to Higher secondary level, percentage of Higher secondary Education among them is quite negligible, (Graduation-2%, Law-0.5% and post Graduate-0.5%). The spread of education among the female is extremely low; primary -6%, secondary -4% and Higher secondary -1%. One percent only reached up to Graduation level. Due to poor socio-economic conditions the percentage of dropouts at different stages of education is quite high. It is 50% at the stage of

primary level, 80% at the secondary stage, 90% at higher secondary level, 95% at the Graduation level and 99% percent at the post Graduate level. Their poor economic condition forces the children to join either their family occupation or other then family occupations and thereby assist their parents in managing the family. The sample survey conducted reveals that out of the surveyed population, 9% of the females were literate against 23% of the males. About 17% of the children (5-14 years) had school education. The sample survey further revealed that the dropout rate was as high as 89% at the primary stage and 80% at the secondary stage. Abbasuddin Ahmed is one of the prominent people of this community in the field of culture. He has always been remembered as the Bhavaya emperor. His daughter Firdausi Rahman has gained a special reputation in Bangladesh as a musician. Naib Ali (Tepu) was another well-known artist in Bhavaiya music. It is to be noted that the abode of the above three refers to Balarampur. Other members of this community who have made or are making significant contributions in other areas of society especially in education, literature, culture, sports etc. are educationist Bajle Rahman (well known as a writer-essayist), former athlete Maqsoodar Rahman (played at Calcutta Mohammedan Sporting), journalist poet M. Akshar Ali (Editor, Meghla Akash), Helen Nuri Azad (writer), Mastira Chini (Poet-Storyteller), Moinuddin Chisti (Journalist), Azizul Haque (Essay), Poet Aminur Rahman (Editor, Handwritten Magazine). 'Baitha' drama personalities such as journalist Fazlul Haque (Haldibari), Azimuddin Mia (renowned Dotra musician and radio artist), Muha Abdur Rahman (writer and author), Jinat Aman (folk Singer).Literacy rates are low among the *Nashya sheikh* in the state and it is worse in those areas where it constitutes half or more of the population of the North Bengal. The study also reflects that educational attainment of this minority community is much less as compared to the state average. The study found that as the level of educational level increases the percentage of *Nashya sheikh* educational attainment decreases sharply. This trend of course puts an impediment in the development of

the community as education is supposed to be the main instrument for bringing about social, economic and political inclusion and durable integration of people particularly those 'excluded', from the mainstream of any society.

The women in *Nashya Sheikh* Community are suffering from several social disabilities. The girls are mostly married at a very early age, immediately after puberty. Unilateral from of divorce and polygamy etc. are also prevalent. The education had been a serious problem among the *Nashya Sheikh* women in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur districts and as well as Malda. The literacy rate of women among the *Nashya Sheikh* Community is still very poor. Women are under their father at their childhood stage at the younger age under their husband and at the older age under their sons. The women could not come out of the social structure to forward. However, a little number of Muslim girls goes to the school but they have lack of mentality be educated. Firstly, they have no educational environment in their home. Secondly, they could not purchase books for the lake of many. Not only the problem is found in Muslim girls but also, it's found the enter *Nashya Sheikh* Students. The thesis is incomplete without discussing the economic life and the political participation of the Nasya Sheikh community. The next chapter underscores these aspects.

Chapter-V, draws attention to economic life and political participation of the *Nashya Sheikh* community. The bulk of the *Nashya sheikh* populations 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 govt. Service. In spite of that agriculture is the prime source of income for this community. 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 extremely poor. Apart from that another interesting feature of their income is their deep engagement in cow and goat trading across North Bengal especially in the districts i.e., Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda districts as well as whole North Bengal. Economic roles of the *Nashya Sheikh* women were very significant in nature. They were basically engaged in domestic works and child rearing, keeping of fowls, ducks, cows and goats was a common practice of the *Nashya Sheikh* households and the women were mostly engaged in such activities. A few of the *Nash*ya women were also engaged in certain craft works such as weaving, cane basket making etc. The women who belong to the Nashya *Sheikh* community are mostly in isolation. They were ignorant, illiterate and confined in their homes due to strict rules of *Purdha* or seclusion. Instead of equality and justice, their position in society was exploitative in nature for various reasons such as performance of excessive labour, negligence, avoidance, Fremantle fortune and separation or divorce even in sexual matters. However, widow remarriage was allowed and usually practiced by the people. The birth of the girl was looked down upon as very unfortunate and their opinion in family matters and other social affairs. The system of dowry though prevalent was not very high and compulsive as at present. The sample survey reveals that 53% of the males married before the age of 17 as against 89% of the females in that age group. The materials on record go to indicate that the rites and rituals followed by them at different stages of life cycle (birth, marriage, death (excepting burial) are similar to those prevalent prior to their conversion, i.e., these are still followed in accordance with their traditional heritage.

It may once again be emphasized that socio-economic backwardness and political alienation have given rise to some important questions as far as this minority community is concerned. After Seven decades of independence, *Nashya sheikhs* in West Bengal are lagging behind other communities in terms of socio-economic condition and political representation.

Being a rural community in the context of West Bengal, they are bound to be socio-economically and politically are very poor. Balance sex ratio is an indicator of equal status of men and women. Moreover, it also indicates the level of socio-economic development in a society or within a community.

Their political participation in mainstream politics is minimal. *Nashya sheikhs* are under-represented in the parliament and state legislature. Their participation in the political process did not increase to the extent that it should have since the inception of the first general election. Their political participation is also less in proportion with their population share in the state. Democracy has no meaning if minorities are not secure and also do not get proper share in economic, social and political development in proportion to their population. However, it needs to be pointed out that without political empowerment, socio-economic development of Muslims will be a utopian approach and vice versa.

Individuals from the *Nashya Sheikh* community who later played are playing significant roles in politics, 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 Behar district council from 1978 to 1983. He later died in a road accident. Tamser 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.

The contribution of *Nashya Sheikhs* or *Bhumijo* Muslim community in the formation of society in the state-ruled Kochbihar 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 Kochbihar (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. 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 neighboring

Bangladesh. Ahmed Hossain Pradhan (Naib Ahilkar or Sub-Divisional Ruler), Maulvi Fakiruddin Ahmed (Naib Ahilkar), Kashimuddin Mohammad (Tufanganj) Municipality Chairman, etc.

The last chapter number VI tries to make a comparative study of Nashya Sheikh and other communities. The socio-economic condition of the *Nashyas* is miserable and deplorable in compared to the other Muslim communities. Gradually under the pressure of a dominant culture and lack of consciousness their (*Nashyas*) own culture, tradition, beliefs, rituals etc. were pushed to the verge of endangerment rendering them socially, economically, 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. Other dogmas of this community are *purdah* system (veil), child marriage etc. The marriage between *Nashya Sheikh* and another upper-caste Muslim group is prohibited and strictly followed.

Thus, in retrospect this thesis adds new knowledge by making an in-depth micro study of *Nashya Sheikh* Community. Methodologically it discusses about rooting of Islam in the rural fringes of North Bengal and empirically it looks into the *Nashya Sheikh* community of North Bengal.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Select Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Unpublished Official Documents:

- *Drop-Out Statement of Nashya Sheikh Students (Primary Education),* Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity, Jalpaiguri District, on 29.10.1997.
- *Educational Survey on Nashya Sheikh Community of North Bengal*, Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity, Jalpaiguri District, on 29.10.1997.
- *Land document of Tungru Nashya, Asaru Nashya, Piyar Mamud Sheikh,* (Koch Behar State in 1901).
- *Letter of Amar Roy Pradhan, M. P. (Lok Sabha) to include Nashsya Sheikh Community as OBC, on 27.02.1997.*
- *Official Letter, National Commission for Backward Classes*, S.R.Sharma, on 02.02.2001.
- *Official Letter, Under Secretary to the Govt. Of India,* Kashi Ram, on 16.05.2002.
- *Report to include Nashya Sheikh Class as OBC,* Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity Uttar Banga, on 18.04.1998.
- *Socio-Economic Condition of Nashya Sheikh Community of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts*, Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity, Jalpaiguri District, on 19.11.2015.
- *West Bengal commission for Backward Classes-Report-8, 29th Oct, 1997.*

District Gazetteers:

- Chowdhury, Harendra Narayan, *The Cooch Behar State*, Chap. II, 1930.
- Das, Majumdar Durga, I. A. S Retd. Koch Behar, *West Bengal District Gazetteer*, West Bengal District Press,Calcutta, 1977.

- Gruning, J. F., District *Gazetteers of Eastern Bengal and Assam: Jalpaiguri*, Jalpaiguri 1910, (ed)., By Gupta, J. N., Allahabad,.
- Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal* (Vol. viii).
- Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal: Dinajpur*, First Published by Trubner & Co., London, 1876, Reprinted by N. L. Publishers, 2012.
- Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal: Darjeeling*, First Published by Trubner & Co., London, 1876, Reprinted by N. L. Publishers, 2012.
- Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal: Jalpaiguri*, (First Printed by Trubner and Co. London, 1876), National Library, Siliguri, Reprinted, 2012.
- Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal: Maldah*, First Published by Trubner & Co., London, 1876, Reprinted by N. L. Publishers, 2012.
- Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Kuch Behar*. First Published by Trubner & Co., London, 1876, Reprinted by N. L. Publishers, 2012.
- Kisori, Abani Mohon., *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Jalpaiguri*, Calcutta, 1981.
- Koch Behar *Gazette*- 14th Aswin Sombsar (1st September 1945).
- Pemberton, J. J., *Geographical and Statistical Rep[ort of the District of Maldah*, First Published by Thos Jones, "Calcutta Gazette" Office, Culcutta, 1854, Reprinted by N. L. Publisher, Shivmandir, 2011.
- Taylor, H., *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of D*acca, 1971.
- Taylor, H., *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of D*acca, 1971.
- Vas, J. A., *W. B. District Gazzatteers, Rangpur*, (ed.), Allahabad, 1911.
- Vas, J. A., *District Gazetteers of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Rangpur*, Allahabad, 1911.
- *West Bengal District Gazetteers*, Jalpaiguri, 1971.
- *West Bengal District Gazetteers*, West Dinajpur, 1965.

Census Report:

- Adam, W., *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835-8*), Calcutta University, 1941.
- Beverly, H., *Report on the Census of Bengal*, 1872, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1872.
- *Census Report of India*, 1961.
- *Census Report of India*, 1971.
- *Census Report of India*, 1981.
- *Census Report of India*, 1991.
- *Census Report of India*, 2001.
- *Census Report of India*, 2011.
- Gait, E. A., *Bengal Census Report*, 1901.
- Malley, L.O., *Census of Bengal*, 1911.

Secondary Sources:

English Books:

- Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Translated by Wheeler M. Thackston, Harvard University Press, New York, Reprinted 2015.
- Adam, W., *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835-8*), (ed.), Basu, A. N., Calcutta University, 1941.
- Ahmad, Aziz, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964
- Ahmed, Imtiaz, *Caste and social Stratification among the Muslims*, (edited), Monohar Book Service, New Delhi, 1972.

- Ahmed, Rafiuddin, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1981.
- Ahmed, Sufia, *Muslim Community in Bengal: 1884-1912,* Oxford University Press, Dacca, 1974.
- Ahmed, Wakil, 'Abbsuddin Ahmed, In Islam', Sirajul; Jamal, Ahmed A. eds., Banglapedia: *National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Second ed., Bangladesh, 2012.
- Barai, Sukumar, *Local History of North Bengal,* progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2016.
- Bhattachaya, Ranjit, *Moslems of Rural Bengal: A study in Social Stratification and Socio-Cultural Boundary Maintenance,* Subarnarekh, Calcutta, 1991.
- Buchanan, Hamilton, A *New· Account of the East Indies etc,* vol. 2, *(ed), Forster, W,* London, 1930.
- Carol A Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer., 'Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament,' in Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectiveson South Asia,* (ed.), University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993.
- Chakraborty, Ashok, *Bengali Muslim Literati and the Development of Muslim Community in Bengal,* Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, 2002.
- Chatterjee, Partha, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993.
- Chatterji, Joya, *Bengal Divided: Hindu communalism and partition, 1932-1947,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.
- Chatterji, Joya., 'The Bengali Muslim: A Contradiction in Terms? An Overview of the Debate on Bengali Muslim Identity', Hasan, Mushirul, *Islam, Communities and the Nation: Muslim Identities in South-Asia and Beyond,* (ed.), Manohar, New Delhi, 1998.

- Chowdury, H.N., *The Cooch Behar State' and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Cooch Behar State Press, 1930.
- Cohn, Bernard, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays,* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987.
- Dani, A.H., *Early Muslim contact with Bengal,* proceeding of the Pakistan Historical conference, Pakistan, 1951.
- Dasgupta, Ranjit, *Economy, Society and Politics in Bengal: Jalpaiguri 1869-1947,* Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1992.
- Datta, P. K., *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth-century Bengal,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.
- Debnath, Sailen, *Essay on Cultural History of North Bengal,* N.L Publishers, Shibmandir, Siliguri, 2008.
- Dewan, Khan Bahadur, Rubbie Fazle, *The Origin of the Musulmans of Bengal,* Calcutta, 1895.
- Dirks, Nichola, *Castes of Minds: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India,* Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2001.
- Eaton, Richard M, *Essay on Islam and Indian History,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000.
- Eaton, Richard, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier: 1204-1760*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993.
- Edward, Said, *Orientalism,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1978.
- Fazle, Rubbie, Dewan, Khan Bahadur, *The Origin of the Musulmans of Bengal,* Calcutta, 1895.
- Ghosh, S.K., *Muslims in Indian Democracy,* Ashes Publishing House, New Delhi, 2001

- Ghoshal, S. C., *A History of Cooch Behar* (Translated from original Bengali) Chudhary, Khan Amanatullah, 'Coochbeharer Itihas',(*Ed*) Hiten Nag, National Library, Siliguri, Reprint, 2005.
- Gill, S.S., *Islam and the Muslims of India-Exploring History, Faith and Dogm*a, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2008.
- Hunter, W. W., *Indian Musalmans, Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* Premier Book House, Lahore, 1871, Reprinted from the, 1970.
- Islahi, S., *Islam at a Glance*, Markazi Maktaba Islami,Delhi, 1978.
- Khwajah Nizamuddin, Ahmad, *Tabaka-E-Akbari*, 1st volume, Translated by Brajendranath De, Low price Publications, Unbridged, 1990.
- Majumdar, R. C., *History of Bengal*, vol-1, Dhaka University, 1943.
- Mill, James Stuart., *History of British India*, Ludden, Orientalist Empiricism, London, 1820.
- Mondal, S.R., 'Muslim Minority in Koch Behar: Their History and Culture', in P. K. Bhattacharyya (Ed.), *The Kingdom of Kamata Koch Behar in Historical Perspective*, Ratna Prakashan in Association with University of North Bengal, 2000.
- Mondal, Sk Rahim, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya shaik of North Bengal,' of Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mira, (Ed.), *Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007.
- Mondal, Sk Rahim, *Educational status of Muslims Problems Prospects and Priorities*, Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1997.
- Mondal, Sk. Rahim, *Dynamics of Muslim Society*, Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1999.
- Mujeeb, M., *The Indian Muslims*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1967.

- Nainar, M.H., *Arab Geographer's knowledge of southern India*, other Books, Calicut, 1st published 1942, Reprinted 2011.
- Pramanik, Bimal, *Endangered Demography Nature and impact of demographic changes in West Bengal 1951-2001*, Kolkata, 2005.
- Rahaman, Bajlay, *Koch Behar Zilar Muslim Porichiti*, in Hossain, Amjat (ed.), *Kamrup Theke Kochbehar*, Sudhir publication, Kolkata, 2014.
- Ray, Rajat Kanta, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal: 1875-1927*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984.
- Risley, Herbert, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, 2 vol*., Calcutta, 1891.
- Roy, Ashim, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1983.
- Roy, Subhrayoti, *Transformation on Bengal Frontier: Jalpaiguri 1765-1948*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2002.
- Sanyal, Charu Chandra, *The Rajbansis of North Bengal,* The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1965.
- Sarkar, Sumit, *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Relocating Postmodernism, Hindutva, History*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002.
- Siddique, M.K.A., (Ed,) *Marginal Muslim Communities in India*, Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, 2004.
- Sinha, Surajit, 'Social and culture constraints in Agriculture in Three Villages (Hindu, Moslem and Tribal) of West Bengal' in *Science, Techology and Culture*, (edited), Research Council for Cultural Studies, New Delhi, 1970.
- Stewart, Charles, *History of Bengal*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1st Published 1913 and Reprinted 2013.

- Sunder, D.H.E., *Final report on the survey and settlement of the Western Dooars in the district of Jalpaiguri*, 1889-95, Edited by D.C. Roy, N.L. publisher, Shivmandir, 2013.
- Tarafdar, M.R., *Husain Shahi Bengal,* University of Dhaka: Dhaka 1965, reprint, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, 1999.
- Titus, Murray T., *Islam in India: A Religious History of Islam in India and Pakistan,* YMCA Publishing House, Culcutta, 1959.
- Uddin, M. Sufia., *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language in an Islamic Nation,* The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2006.

Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis:

- Chatterjee, Rajib, *Muslims of Darjeeling Himalaya: Aspects of their Economy, Society, Culture and Identity*, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Department of Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, West Bengal, 2014.
- Dutta, Papia, Caste, *Society and Politics of North Bengal, 1869-1977,* Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History, University of North Bengal, West Bengal, 2011.
- Hossain, Shahadt Mahmud, *Muslim Women education in some villages of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department Of Sociology, North Bengal University, West Bengal, 2001.
- Islam, Nabiul, *Examining a Marginalised Muslim Group in Historical Perspective: Dynamics of Socio-Economic Life of the Nashya Sheikhs of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts in West Bengal,* Unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation, Department of History, North Bengal University, West Bengal, 2016.
- Roy, Ashim, *Islam and Environment in Medieval Bengal*, Ph. D. Thesis, National University Canberra, 1970.

Bengali Books:

- Alam, Pasarul, *Uttarbanger Anagrasar Muslim Samaj,* Sahajpath, Uttardinajpur, 2004.
- Alam, Pasharul., *Islampur na Iswarpur?*, Sahajpath, Islampur, 2019.
- Bajlay, Rahaman, *Koch Behar Zilar Muslim Porichiti*, Suhrid publication, Kolkata, 2014.
- Barma, Sukhbilash, 'Uttorbanger Lokogaane Muslim Somaj jibon', *Uttorbanger Muslim Somaj o sankriti, Srijoni Dhara,* Editer by Parthaprotim Mallick, jalpaiguri, 1913.
- Barman, Upendranath, *Rajbanshi Khatriyo Jatir Itihas- Bhasa Khando*, 1361.
- Basu, Nirmal Kumar, *Hindu Samajer Gadan*, Calcutta, reprint 1391.
- Ghosh, Ananda Gopal, *Uttarbanger Itihas O Samaj*, Dipali publishers, Malda, 2009.
- Hoque, Najsul, *Uttorbanger Loksahityar Nritarthik o Samajtarthig Somikha*, Bangla academy, Decca. 2013.
- Hossain, Abul, 'Jug Nayak Jughal Kishor', *Samatabadi Jughal Kishor Raybir*, Edited by Ganga Prasad, Samata Kendro, Alipurduar, 2020.
- Hossain, Sohabar, 'Arthoporichoyer Songkot: Musolman Bangalir Muktir Poth', *Uttorbanger Muslim o Samaj Sanskriti,* Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick, *Sreejoni Dhara*, Sahitya o Sanskriti Bishoyok Patrika, Jalpaiguri, 1913.
- Humayun, Abdul Hai, *Muslim Sonskarok o Sadhok,* Bangla Accademy, Decca, 1976.
- Islam, Nazrul, *Banglay Hindu-Musolman Samporko*, 1401.
- Islam, Nazrul, *Musolmander Koronio*, Mitra and Ghosh Publisher, Kolkata, 2019.
- Karim, A., *Prachin Puthir Biberon*, Bangiyo Sahitta prakason, Kolkata, 1909.
- Khudiram Smriti Rakha Commettee, (Edited*), Uttorbaner Swadhinata Sangramider Jebanalekha, Part-I, (Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling,* Ganadebi Printers and Publishes P.L.T., Kolkata, 2014.

- Khudiram Smriti Rakha Commettee, (Edited), *Uttorbaner Swadhinata Sangramider Jebanalekha, Part-II, (Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda),* Ganadebi Printers and Publishes P.L.T., Kolkata, 2014.
- Majumdar, Rameshchandra, *Bangladesher Itihas, Prothom Porba-Prachinyug*, Kolkata, 1943.
- Mandal, Bipul, *Uttorbanga Charcha,* Bangiya Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 2015.
- Milon, Dutta, *Chalito Islami Sabdokosh:* An Encyclopadic dictionary of common Muslim terms and word, Sudhangshu Shekhar Dey, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata, 2008.
- Minaj-uddi-Siraj, *Tabaqat-e-Nasiri,* translated by A.K.F., Jakariya, Bangla Accademy, Decca, 1864.
- Mohammad Saduzzaman, *Bangalar Samajik O Sangskritik Itihas*- Vol-1, (Bengal Translation of 'Social and Cultural History of Bengal' By Dr. M. A., Rahim.) Bangla Academy Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1995.
- Mukhopadhyay, Sukhomay, *Bangla Muslim Adhikare Adiparba*, Sahityalok, Kolkata, 1988.
- Prasad, Ganga, *Samatabadi Jugolkishor Raybir*, Samata Kendro, Alipurduar, 2020.
- Rahaman, Bajlay, Uttorbonger 'Muslim Somroday: Pochichoy Sondhan', *Oitije o Itihase Uttorbanga,* Edited by Ichamuddin Sarkar, N.L. Publishash, Assam, 2002.
- Rahaman, Bajlay, *Mondal Commissioner Report o Uttarbanger Muslim Somaj*, Classic Printing, Jalpaiguri, 1996.
- Rahaman, Bajlay, *Mondal Kamishaner Report O Uttar Banger Muslim Samaj*, Anagrasar Muslim Sangrami Mancha, Uttar Banga, 1996.
- Rahaman, Siddiqe, Abdur, *Barendrabhumir Chirachorito Basinda-Bangladeh*, Bangla Accademy, Decca, 1985.

- Roy, Anirudha, and Ratnabali, chattapardhay, By *Madhyoyuger Banglar samaj o Sanskriti*, K. P. bagchi, Kolkara, 2001.
- Saduzzaman, Mohammad, *Bangalar Samajik O Sangskritik Itihas*- Vol-1, (Bengal Translation of Social and Cultural History of Bengal By Dr. M. A., Rahim.) Bangla Academy Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1995.
- Samad, Abdus, *Banglar Musalman Janajati*, Badiya Bartha Prakashan, Malda, 2008.
- Sannyal, Durgadas, *Banglar Samajik Itihas*, Bangiya Sahitta Parichoy, Kolkata, 1906.
- Sharma. Umesh, *Jalpaigurir Roybahadur-Khanbahadur*, Granthatirtha, Kolkata, 2001.

Articles:

- Ahmed, Imtiaz, 'The concept and Ideology of Caste among the Moslems of Rural Bengal', *Modern Asian Studies*, no. 43, vol. 6, 2009.
- Aiyar, Sana, Fazlul Huq, 'Region and Religion in Bengal: The Forgotten Alternative of 1940-43', *Modern Asian Studies*, no. 42, vol. 6, 2008.
- Alam, Mahabub-ul, 'Uttorbanger Muslim Nari Somaj: Poschadpod jonopoder ek poschad Jonogosthi', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Muslim Somaj o sankriti*, Srijoni Dhara, Editer by Parthaprotim Mallick, jalpaiguri, 2013.
- Barman, Fulchad, 'Uttarbanger Rajbansi Muslim Samaj: Prosango Nashya Sekh, (in Bengali), *Angikar,' (Sharad Sangkhaya),* Arbinda Press, Cooch Behar, 1417, (Bengali Year).
- Bhagat, R. B., 'Census and the Construction of Communalism in India,' *Economic & Political Weekly* vol. 36, No. 46/47, Nov. 24-30, 2001.
- Bhattacharya, Ranjit, 'Kingship among the Sunni Sheik Moslem of Birbhum', *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, Vol-20, No-2, West Bengal, July 1985.

- Bhattacharya, Ranjit, 'Marriage among the Sunni Sheik Moslem of Birbhum', *Human science,* Vol-35, No-1, West Bengal, 1986.
- Bhattachaya, Ranjit, Muktan Snan, 'Notes on Methods and Interpretation of field Data', *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, Vol-2, No-1, 1967.
- Carol A Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament,* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993.
- Chaki, Debabrata, '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.
- Das, Abhijit, 'Sufibad o Haldibarir Huzur Sahed', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Musolman Samaj o Sanskriti*, Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick, Sreejani Dhara Sahitya Bishoyok Patrika, Jalpaiguri, 2013.
- David, Gilmartin, 'Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 57, no. 4, 1998.
- Ghosh, Ananda Gopal, 'Jalpaiguri Zelar Musalman Samaj', (in Bengali), in Ajitesh Bhattachayay, *Madhuparni*, Jalpaiguri Jela Sangkha, Balurghat, 1394, (Bengali year).
- Guha Roy, 'Goutam, Uttorer Musolman Jonosamaj: Abhinno Utsoho', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Musolman Samaj o Sanskriti*, edited by Parthapratim Mallick, Sreejoni Dhara Sahitya o Sanskriti Bisoyok Patrika, Jalpaiguri, 2013.
- Hossain, Amjad, 'Uttorbaner Masjid', (in Bengali), *Uttorbanger Musolman Samaj o Sanskriti,* Edited by Parthaprotim Mallick, Sreejani Dhara Sahitya Bishoyok Patrika, Jalpaiguri, 2013.
- Islam, Nabiul, 'Nashya Sheikhs of North Bengal in Historical Perspectives: A study of Ethnicity & Identity Danamic', *Karatoya, North Bengal University Journal of History,* Vol-10, March 2017.

- Islam, Nabiul, 'The Economic Life of the Nashya Sheikhs of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts: A Study of the Historical Perspective', *Karatoya, North Bengal University Journal of History,* Vol-9, March 2016.
- Minault, G., 'Some Reflection on Islamic Revivalism vs Assimilation among Muslims in India', in *contributions to Indian Sociology,* Vol. 18, 1984.
- Mondal, Sekh Rahim, 'Muslims of Nepal: Aspects of their Economy', *Society and Culture in Relation to Habit in Islam and the Modern Age*, Vol. Xxviii No 3, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, 1997.
- Mondal, Sk Rahim, 'Sachar Committee Report and Beyond:' *A Critical Appraisal of Socio-Economic Condition of Indian Muslim's in Islam and Muslim Societies, vol. 3, No. 1,* 2007.
- Mukhopadhyay, Bishnu Prasad., 'Uttarbanger Muslim Janagosthir Samajik Baichitra Abang Nashya Sekh Sampradyaya ekti Alochona', *Itihas Anusandhan-15,* Paschim Banga Itihas Samsad, Kolkata, 2001.
- Riyajul, 'Simante Pachim Dinajpurer Musolman Samaj O Sanskriti', (In Bengali), *Madhuporni,* Poschim Dinajpur Jela Songkha-7, 1399.
- Roy, Jyotimay, '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.
- Sinha, Surajit and Bhattacharya, Ranjit, 'Bhadralok and Chhotolok in a Rural Area of Bengal', *Sociological Bulletin,* Vol-18, No-1, March 1969.
- Sinha, Surajit, 'Fieldwork Report, Religion in an Affluent Society', *Current Anthropology,* Vol-7, No-2, April 1966.

News Papers:

- Biswas, Tapan Kr., *'Nashya* Sekh Namak Musalman Samaj ki Agiyea Jete Parbe*?'*, *Uttar Banga Sambad,(in Bengali)* in 27th August 2015.
- *Ganoshakti* (Bengali News paper), date 29/12/1992.
- *Uttarbanga Sambad* (Bengali News Paper), date 27/08/2015.
- *Uttarbanga Sambad* (Bengali News Paper), date 31/01/2020.

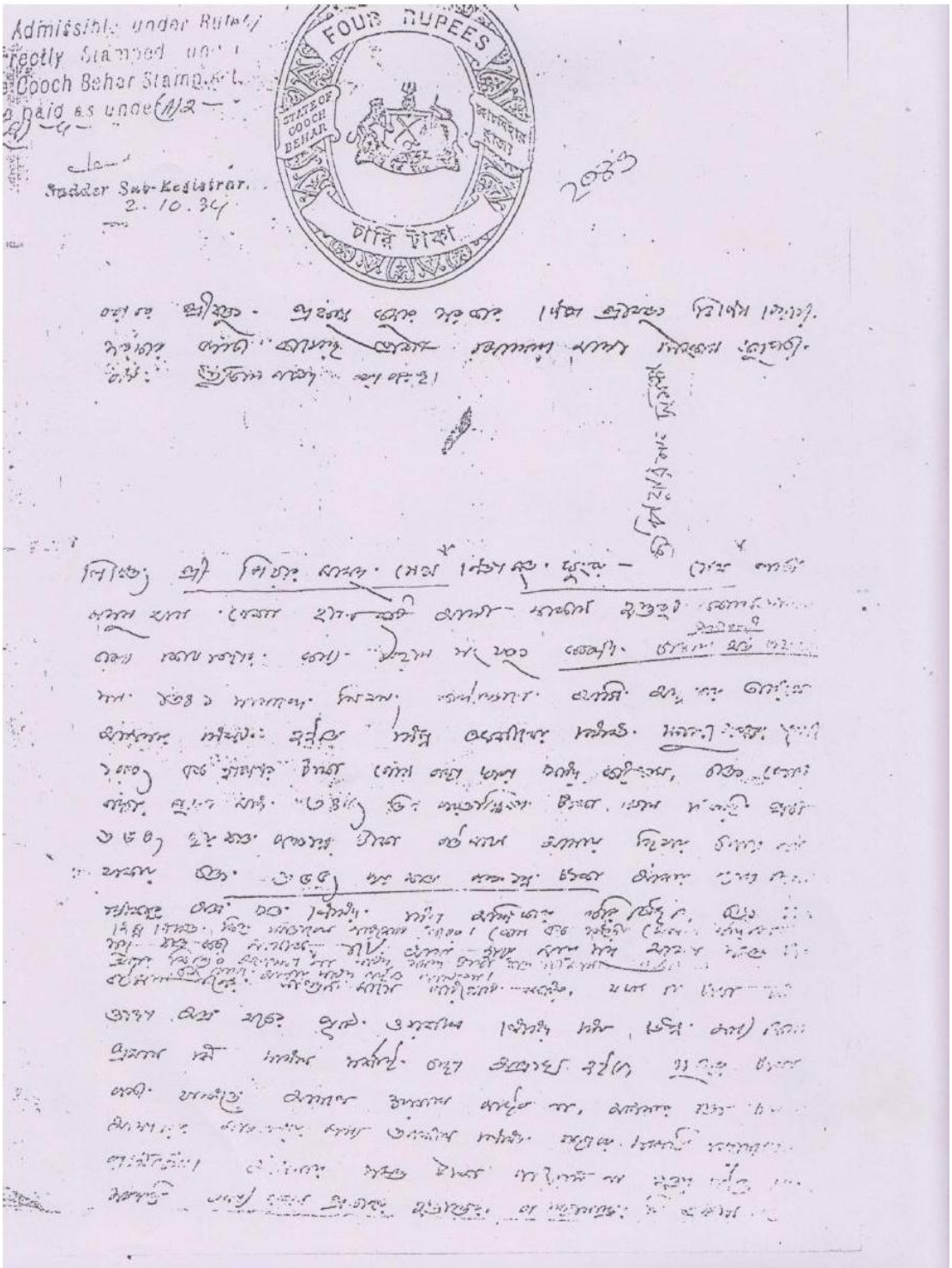
Interview:

- *Abul Hossain,* (President, Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti), Age 65, on 26-10-2015, 12.00 noon, at, Joteswar.
- *Amjad Hossain,* (Assistant professor of Siliguri College), Age 47, on 19.06.2018, 11.00 a.m., at Shivmandir.
- *Bazole Rahaman,* (Chairman, Kamata Puri Bhasa Accademy), Age 64, on 20.08.2019, 2.00 p.m., Cooch Behar.
- Kochimuddin, Age 64, on 15.06.2015, 11.30 a.m., at Nathua.
- Tachiruddin, Age 71, on 16.06.2015, 11.30 a.m., at Duramari.
- Rahimuddin, Age 70, Muklechar Rahaman, on 17.06.2015, 11.30 a.m., at Duramari.
- *Aminur Rahaman, (*Primary School Teacher), Age 67, on 25-10-2015, 12.00 noon, at Dewmali.
- *Amjat Hossain,* Age 45, *Sahidul Islam* Age 62, on 29-10-2015, 11.00 a.m., at Dhupguri, Gadum.
- *Bulbul Rahaman,* (Teacher), Age 58, on 05-11-2015, 2.00 p.m., at Shisabari.
- *Abdul Karim,* Age 65, on 07-11-2015, 10.30 a.m., at Duramari.
- *Hashen Ali, (Imam,)* Age 75, on 08-11-2015, 11.00 a.m., at Duramari.
- *Mahhamad Abas*, on 10.11.2015, 10.30 a. m., at Banarhat.

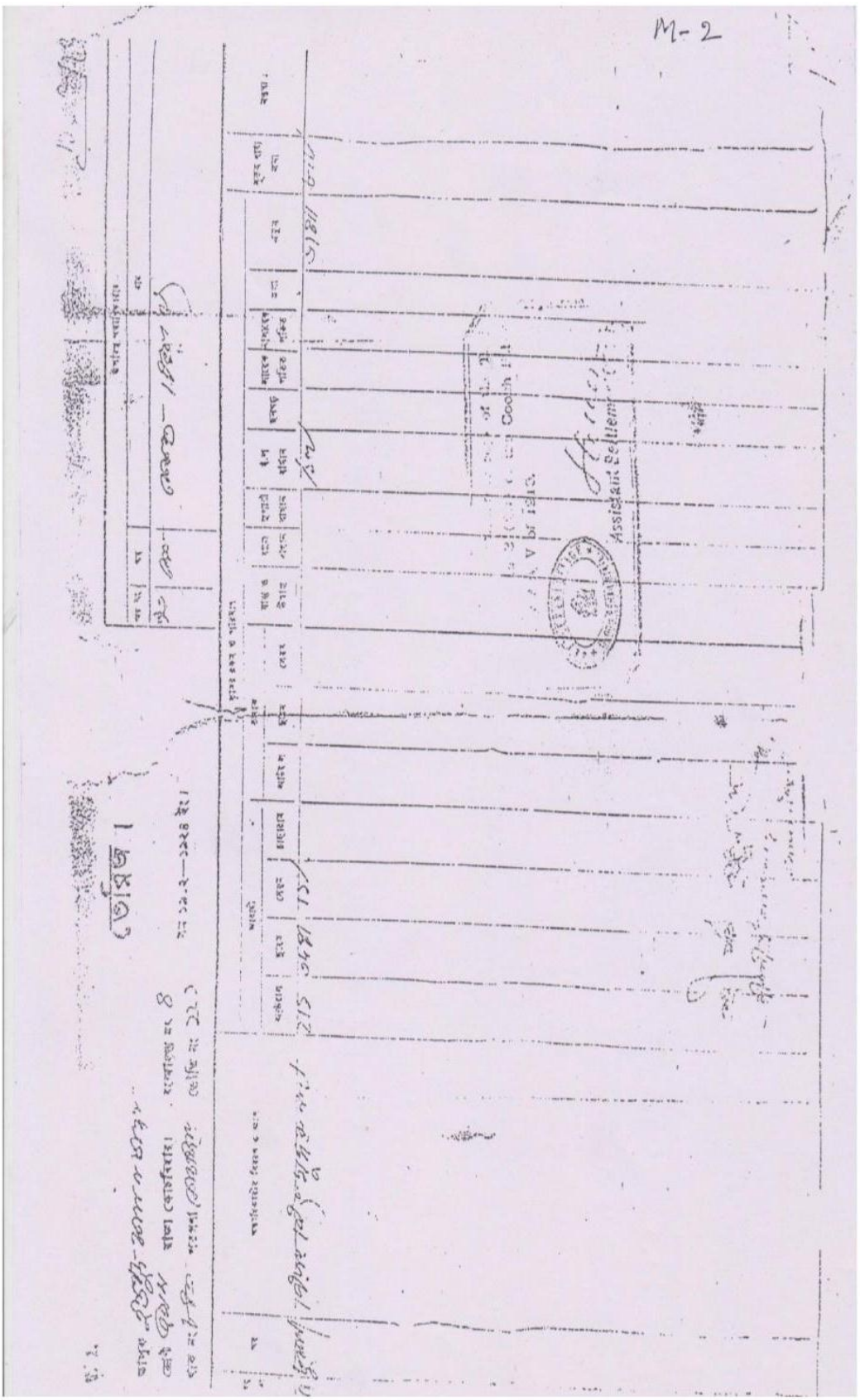
- *Kutubuddin Rahaman*, on 12.11.2015, 11.00 a.m. at Nathuahat.
- *Dobiruddin Miya*, Age 72, *Domashu Rahaman,* Age 69, on 15-11-2015, 03.00 p.m., at Duramari.
- *Azima Bewa,* Age 61, on 17-11-2015, 01.00 p.m., at Khattimari.
- *Hamidul Islam*, Age 61, on 19-11-2015, 12.00 noon, at Dhupguri.
- *Pasharul Alam*, (Writer), Age 60, on 12.08.2018, 11.30 a.m., at Islampur.

APPENDICES

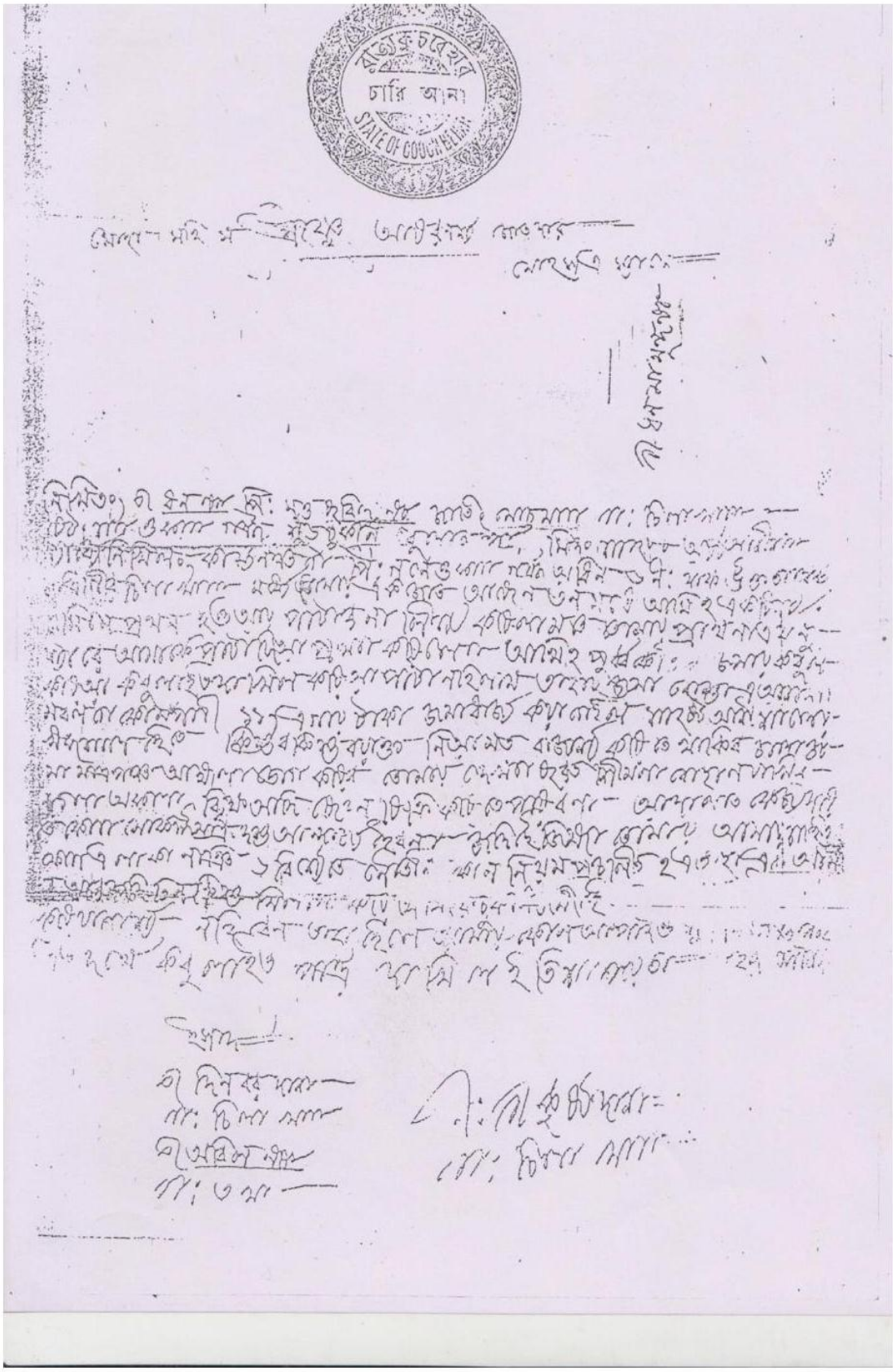
Appendix-I



Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity.



Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity.



Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity.

Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti.(U.B.)

Central Committee

P.O JATESWAR, Dt: —JALPAIGURI

ESTD.- 1995 ★ Regn. No .....

Ref.No... 09/98 ... Date ... 18.4.98 ...

09/98 18.4.98

To,
The Hon'ble Minister,
Backward classes Welfare Deptt.
Govt. of West Bengal.
Circuit House, Cooch Behar.

From,
Secretary,
Central Committee,
Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samit
(Uttarbanga)
P.O. Jateswar, Jalpaiguri.

MEMORANDUM

Sub:- Claim to include 'Nashya-Sekh' class as O B C.

Sir,

The undersigned beg to state the following statement in supporting his above claim.

1. Criteria of Backwardness as per col.11.23, chapter XI, M.C. (Mondal Commis. Report-1980, publication-Akalank publication -1991, page-57.

Social:-

i) Socially backward.

ii) Dependence on mannual labour.

iii) Marriage age below 17 years.

iv) Participation of Female in work.

Educational:-

v) Percentage of children never going school is more.

vi) Number of dropout more.

vii) Less number in Matriculation.

Contd...p/2

Continue

Economical:-

(viii) Value of family asset less.

(ix) More percentage living in kuccha house.

(x) Less familiity of drinking water.

(xi) More number of consumption loan.

Condition of "Nashya-Sekh" as per survey Report.
in connection with above criteria –

Social:-

i) Dominant Hindu society consider as backward as the Nashya-Sekh holds lower profession of Mannual Labour and sometimes consider as untouchable.

ii) People of the class comprises with -

a)	Agriculture labour	- 52%
	Marginal unskilled labour	- 26%
		Total-78%
b)	Bargadar, Small Farmer	17%
c)	Solvent group including service	5%
		Total-100%

iii) Marriage below 17 yrs. - Male 53%
Female 89%

iv) Reports not available

Educational

Literate	Male -	23%
~~Female~~	Female -	09%
	Children - (5-14 yrs.)-	17%

(VI+VII) Drop out:- Primary - 89%
Secondary- 80%

Contd...p/3

Continue

Economical:

(viii) Report not available

(ix) Living in Kuccha house- 87%

(x) Drinking water dependent-90%

(xi) Not available

2nd Criteria of Backwardness as per M.C.Report - 1980
Col. No- 12.18 page 61-

(i) All untouchables converted to any non-Hindu Religion.

(ii) Such occupational communities which are known by the name of their traditional hereditary occupation and whose Hindu counterpart has been included in thelist of Hindu OBC's.

Statement of Above criteria:

1. That, "Nashya-Sekh" class is generally called local or native Muslims of North Bengal. Just a few generation ago people of this class are converted to Islam from "Rajbanshi" 'Koch', 'palia', Except religious belief the people of this class remains same in profession, culture, language, morphological appearance, food, dress, customs as maintained by the Rajbangshi, Koch, Palia. The class 'Nashya Sekh' has distinct class identity like Rajbanshi, Palia.

Paper documents on this point are as follows:- (Enclosed herewith)

1. West Bengal District Gazzatteers, Jalpaiguri 1971- page No. 86.
2. W.B. District Gazzatteers, W. Dinajpur 1965, page no. 88
3. A Statistical Account of Bengal (Vol. VIII) - by W.W. Hunter - page No- 49, 50.
4. Astatistical Account of Kuch Behar - by W.W-Hunter - page no - 359
5. The Cooch Behar State, Chap. II 1903 - page No. 120, - by Harendra Narayan Choudury.

Contd...p/4

Continue

6. Some deeds, Kabla, Khatian of land to prove title Nashya/ Sekh/Nashta.

Therefore, under above context of above fact and circumstances setforth relating to backward socio-economic educational status and convertion criteria of Mandal Commission's Report (Col. 18, 12), The honourable Minister may graciously be pleased to look into the case and issue kind directions for the welfare of this class or community.

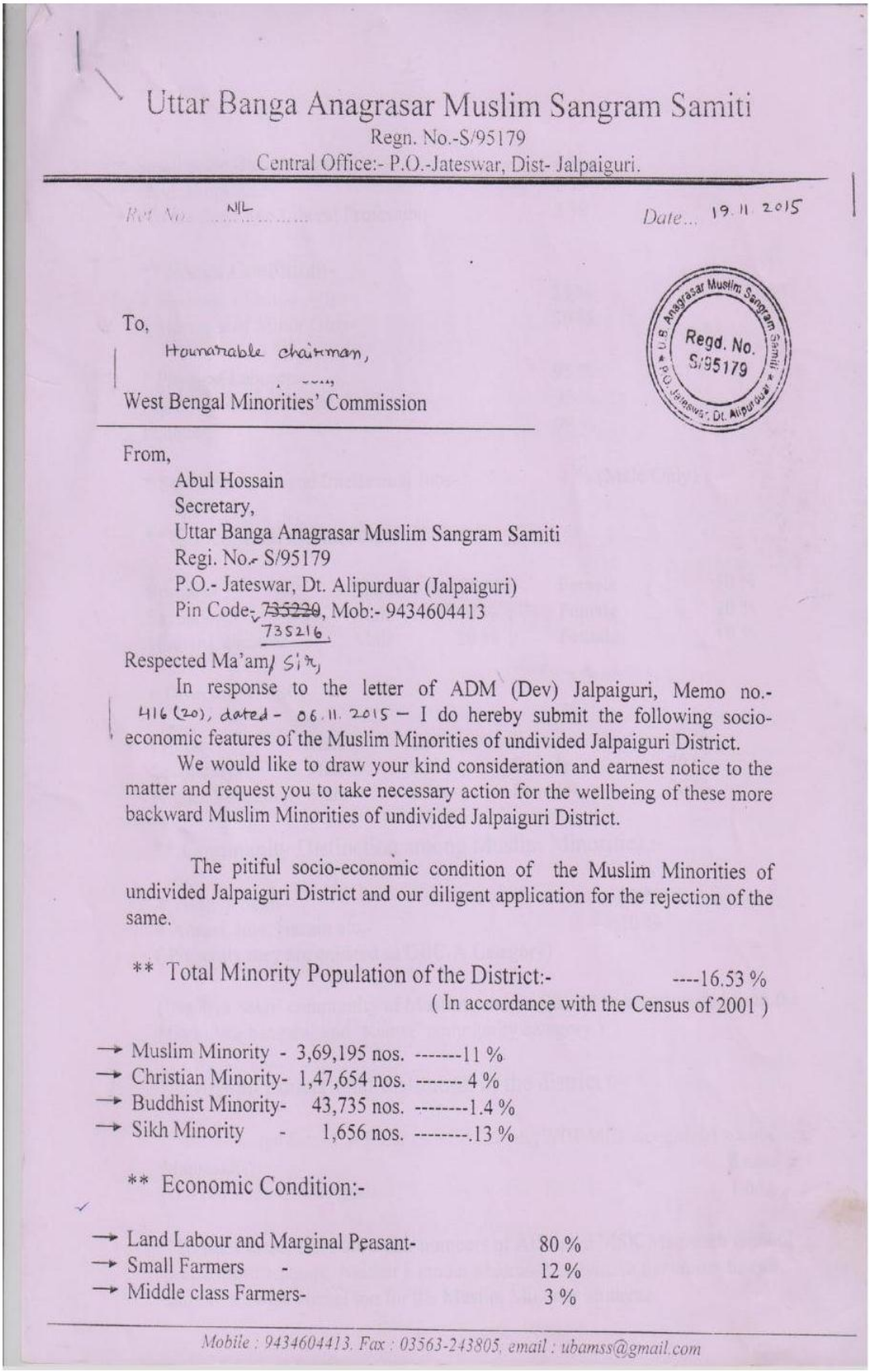
Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

Abul Hossain
Secretary 18.4.98.
Central Committee
Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U. B.)

Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.)
Central Committee
P. O. Jateswar
Dist. Jalpaiguri

Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity



Uttar Banga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti

Regn. No.-S/95179

Central Office:- P.O.-Jateswar, Dist- Jalpaiguri.

Ref. No. NIL Date... 19.11.2015

U.B. Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti * Regd. No. S/95179 * P.O. Jateswar, Dt. Alipurduar

To,

Hounarable chairman,

West Bengal Minorities' Commission

From,

Abul Hossain
Secretary,
Uttar Banga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti
Regi. No.- S/95179
P.O.- Jateswar, Dt. Alipurduar (Jalpaiguri)
Pin Code- ~~735220~~ 735216, Mob:- 9434604413

Respected Ma'am/ Sir,

In response to the letter of ADM (Dev) Jalpaiguri, Memo no.- 416 (20), dated - 06.11.2015 – I do hereby submit the following socio-economic features of the Muslim Minorities of undivided Jalpaiguri District.

We would like to draw your kind consideration and earnest notice to the matter and request you to take necessary action for the wellbeing of these more backward Muslim Minorities of undivided Jalpaiguri District.

The pitiful socio-economic condition of the Muslim Minorities of undivided Jalpaiguri District and our diligent application for the rejection of the same.

** Total Minority Population of the District:- ----16.53 %
(In accordance with the Census of 2001)

- Muslim Minority - 3,69,195 nos. -------11 %
- Christian Minority- 1,47,654 nos. ------- 4 %
- Buddhist Minority- 43,735 nos. --------1.4 %
- Sikh Minority - 1,656 nos. --------.13 %

** Economic Condition:-

- Land Labour and Marginal Peasant- 80 %
- Small Farmers - 12 %
- Middle class Farmers- 3 %

Mobile : 9434604413. Fax : 03563-243805. email : ubamss@gmail.com

Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity.

→ Small scale Businessman- 2 %
→ Govt. Employee- 1 %
→ Private firms and Liberal Profession- 2 %

** Social Condition:-

Marriage of Minor boys- 25 %
Marriage of Minor Girls- 50 %

* Physical Laborers- 95 %
Male (Including Migrated Labours)- 95 %
Female- 98 %

* Service Sectors and Intellectual Jobs- 1 % (Male Only)

** Educational Condition :-

Primary-	Male	80 % ;	Female	50 %
Secondary-	Male	50 % ;	Female	30 %
Higher Education-	Male	20 % ;	Female	10 %

Drop out/ OOSC –

Primary-	Male	20 % ;	Female	50 %
Secondary-	Male	50 % ;	Female	70 %
Higher Education-	Male	80 % ;	Female	90 %

** Community Distinction among Muslim Minorities :-

Nashya Sekh- 90 %
Ansari, Jola, Hazam etc.- 10 %
(Presently they are enlisted as OBC-A Category)

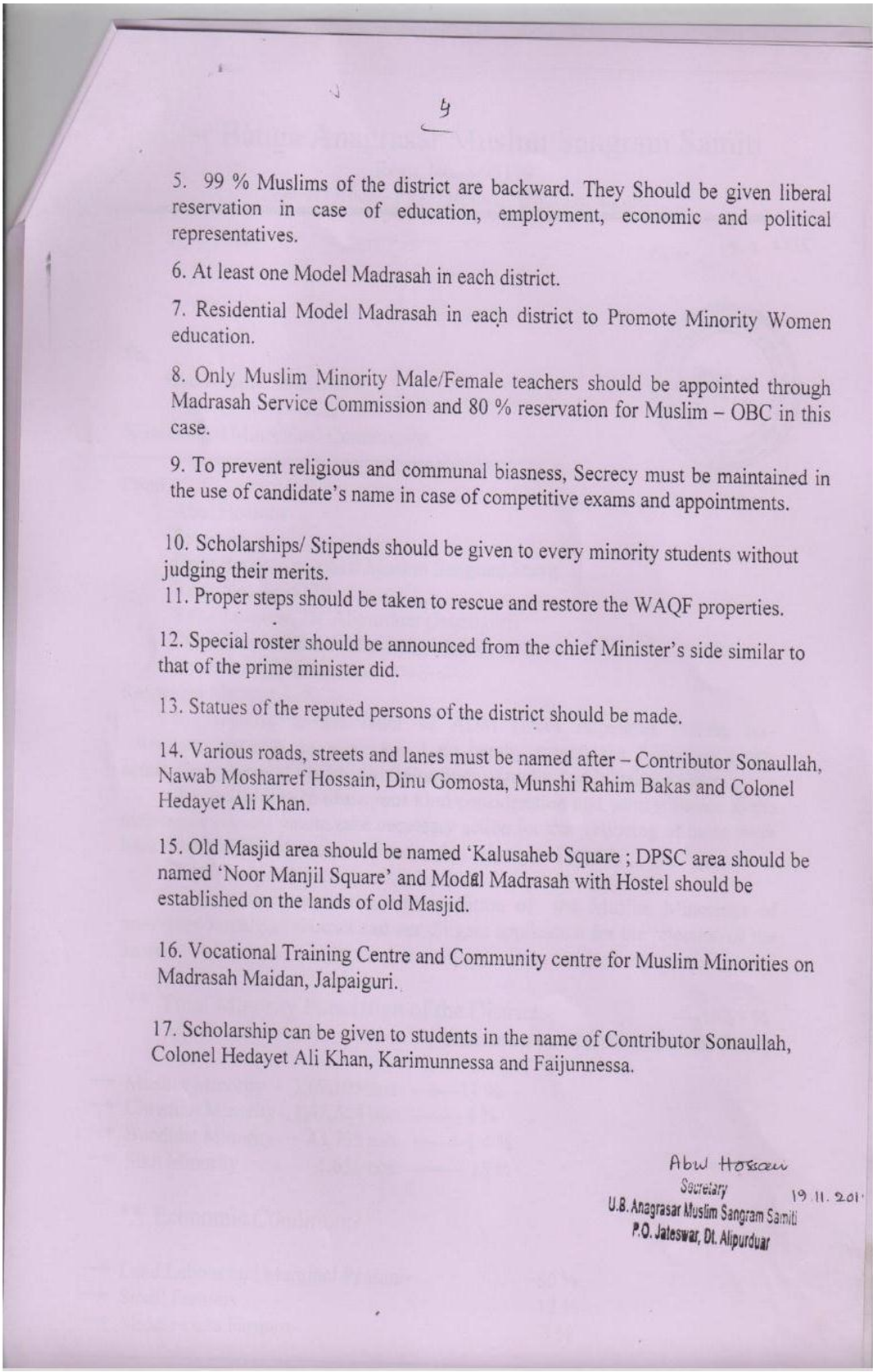
('Nashya Sekh' community of Muslims are considered to be converted from the Hindu 'Rajbangshi' and 'Kamta' community category.)

** Muslim Educational Institution of the district :-

West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education (WBBME) recognized secondary Madrasah- 8 nos.
And old scheme Madrasah- 1 no.

* Besides these, there are a few numbers of Affiliated MSK Madrasah without proper infrastructure. Neither a model Madrasah is there in the entire district and nor a single Hostel too for the Muslim Minority students.

Continue



4

5. 99 % Muslims of the district are backward. They Should be given liberal reservation in case of education, employment, economic and political representatives.

6. At least one Model Madrasah in each district.

7. Residential Model Madrasah in each district to Promote Minority Women education.

8. Only Muslim Minority Male/Female teachers should be appointed through Madrasah Service Commission and 80 % reservation for Muslim – OBC in this case.

9. To prevent religious and communal biasness, Secrecy must be maintained in the use of candidate's name in case of competitive exams and appointments.

10. Scholarships/ Stipends should be given to every minority students without judging their merits.

11. Proper steps should be taken to rescue and restore the WAQF properties.

12. Special roster should be announced from the chief Minister's side similar to that of the prime minister did.

13. Statues of the reputed persons of the district should be made.

14. Various roads, streets and lanes must be named after – Contributor Sonaullah, Nawab Mosharref Hossain, Dinu Gomosta, Munshi Rahim Bakas and Colonel Hedayet Ali Khan.

15. Old Masjid area should be named 'Kalusaheb Square ; DPSC area should be named 'Noor Manjil Square' and Modal Madrasah with Hostel should be established on the lands of old Masjid.

16. Vocational Training Centre and Community centre for Muslim Minorities on Madrasah Maidan, Jalpaiguri.

17. Scholarship can be given to students in the name of Contributor Sonaullah, Colonel Hedayet Ali Khan, Karimunnessa and Faijunnessa.

Abul Hossain
Secretary
19.11.201
U.B. Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti
P.O. Jateswar, Dt. Alipurduar

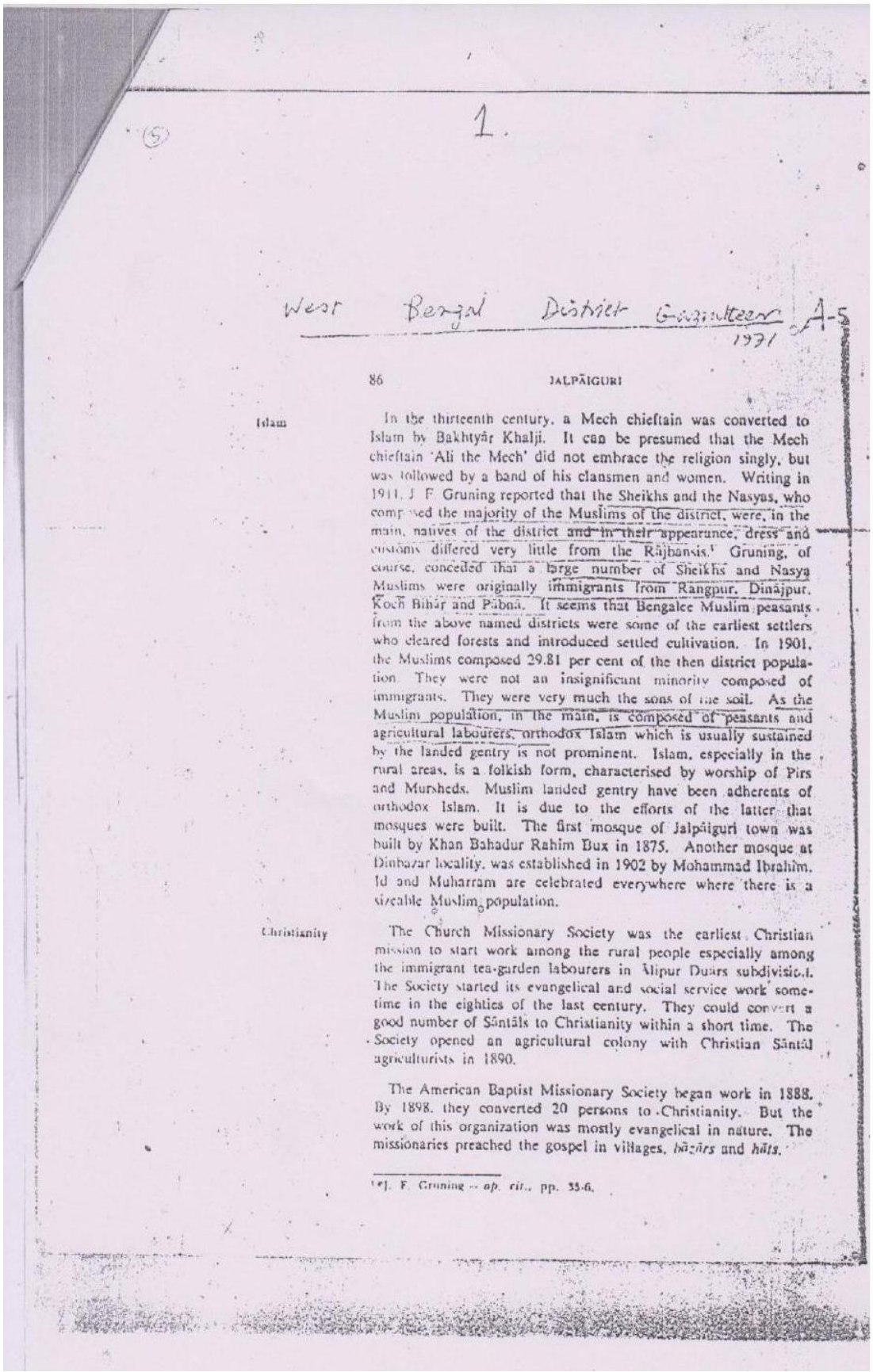
Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity.

DROP-OUT STATEMENT OF "NASHYA SEKH" STUDENTS
(PRIMARY EDUCATION)

Sl. No.	Name and address of the school.	Category of students.	Year & class. 1994 - 95 I - II - III - IV	Year & class. 1995 - 96. I - II - III - IV	Year & class. 1996-97. I - II - III - IV	Year & class. 1997-98. I - II - III - IV	Percentage of Drop-out.
1.	Hedayet Nagar Primary School. P.O. Jateswar, Dist. Jal.	Total :— Muslim (N.S.).	68 - 29 - 25 - 21 46 - 13 - 15 - 07.	75 - 35 - 29 - 25 45 - 19 - 13 - 10.	82 - 42 - 31 - 26 43 - 24 - 17 - 12	80 - 44 - 35 - 29 43 - 25 - 21 - 16	57 % 65 %
2.	Jigatari Pry. School. P.O. Balimpur. Dist. Jal.	Total :— Muslim (N.S.).	95 - 26 - 19 - 09 27 - 06 - 06 - 01.	128 - 28 - 22 - 14 42 - 04 - 07 - 04.	130 - 41 - 28 - 18 46 - 07 - 08 - 06	120 - 50 - 40 - 20 35 - 24 - 05 - 02.	79 % 92 %
3.	Kachna Bari F.P. School Raigary North Circle P.O. Bhatghat, Dt. U. Dinajpur	Total Muslim (N.S.)	— 37 - 17 - 10 - 09	— 36 - 10 - 13 - 10	— 104 - 31 - 10 - 10	— 102 - 32 - 19 - 07	— 81 %

Abul Hossain
29.10.97.
Secretary
Central Committee
Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.)

Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity.



1.

West Bengal District Gazetteer A-5
1971

Islam

In the thirteenth century, a Mech chieftain was converted to Islam by Bakhtyār Khalji. It can be presumed that the Mech chieftain 'Ali the Mech' did not embrace the religion singly, but was followed by a band of his clansmen and women. Writing in 1911, J. F. Gruning reported that the Sheikhs and the Nasyas, who comprised the majority of the Muslims of the district, were, in the main, natives of the district and in their appearance, dress and customs differed very little from the Rājbansis.[1] Gruning, of course, conceded that a large number of Sheikhs and Nasya Muslims were originally immigrants from Rangpur, Dinājpur, Koch Bihār and Pābnā. It seems that Bengalee Muslim peasants from the above named districts were some of the earliest settlers who cleared forests and introduced settled cultivation. In 1901, the Muslims composed 29.81 per cent of the then district population. They were not an insignificant minority composed of immigrants. They were very much the sons of the soil. As the Muslim population, in the main, is composed of peasants and agricultural labourers, orthodox Islam which is usually sustained by the landed gentry is not prominent. Islam, especially in the rural areas, is a folkish form, characterised by worship of Pirs and Murshids. Muslim landed gentry have been adherents of orthodox Islam. It is due to the efforts of the latter that mosques were built. The first mosque of Jalpāiguri town was built by Khan Bahadur Rahim Bux in 1875. Another mosque at Dinbazar locality, was established in 1902 by Mohammad Ibrahim. Id and Muharram are celebrated everywhere where there is a sizeable Muslim population.

Christianity

The Church Missionary Society was the earliest Christian mission to start work among the rural people especially among the immigrant tea-garden labourers in Alipur Duars subdivision. The Society started its evangelical and social service work sometime in the eighties of the last century. They could convert a good number of Sāntāls to Christianity within a short time. The Society opened an agricultural colony with Christian Sāntāl agriculturists in 1890.

The American Baptist Missionary Society began work in 1888. By 1898, they converted 20 persons to Christianity. But the work of this organization was mostly evangelical in nature. The missionaries preached the gospel in villages, *bāzārs* and *hāts*.

[1] J. F. Gruning — *op. cit.*, pp. 55-6.

Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity.

2.

A-7

WEST BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS
WEST DINAJPUR
By
Jatindra Chandra Sengupta

April - 1965

Page No.88

Muslim :- The muslims are conventionally divided into four classes - sakh, Saidd, Mughal and Pathan - but, according to Mr. Gait, who conducted the census of Bengal 1901, such divisions have very little significance. According to him, the shekhs should be Arabs, and the saiads doncendents of Ali, Muhammad's Son-in law, but in Bengal both groups include a number of persons of purely local origin. He was, however, of the opinion that the shekhs in many parts of the country, instead of connoting foreigners, did exactly the reverse. According to him, there are two main social divisions among the muslims; one is Ashraf or Sharif and the second Ajlaf. The first means 'Noble' or persons of high extraction" and include undoubtedly descendents of foreigners and higher castes of Hindu. All other Muslims are considered to belong to the second category, irrespective of the funcitional groups to which they belong. Ethnically, most of the muslims of the disbricts are not very different from the indigenous Rajbanshis or Paliyas but there are undoubtedly muslims who show signs of foreign extraction.

Marriage and inheritance among members of the upper caste Hindus are governed by the provisions of the Hindu law and those among muslims by the provisions of the Muhammadan law. Local variation , if they exist, are not very significant. The muslims of the district are mostly sunnis.

(An earlier page):—

Population (according to 1961 census report).
(1961) - of west Dinajpur district.

Total — 13,=?.794

Hindu — 59·9%

Muslim — 39·4% (Urdu Speech 10·14%)

Christian — 0·6%

Source: Personal Library of Abul Hossain, Secretary of the Uttarbanga Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity.

সমর্থনে মত প্রকাশ করেন।

সেই মাঠেই আসল চিত্রটা এরকম হালবাকল ওঠা। ছবি : প্রাতঃবেলা

নস্য শেখ নামক মুসলমান সমাজ কি এগিয়ে যেতে পারবে ?

তপন কুমার বিশ্বাস

ইসলামপুর ঃ উত্তরবঙ্গের ধর্মান্তরিত মুসলিম সমাজ সামাজিক, রাজনৈতিক ও অর্থনৈতিক দিক থেকে অন্যান্য জাতির মতো উন্নত হতে পারেনি। ধর্মান্তরিত এই মুসলিম সমাজ প্রকৃত শেখ সমাজে ঠাঁই না পেয়ে নিজেদের দেশি শেখ হিসাবে পরিচয় দিতে শুরু করেন। তখন বর্ণহিন্দু সমাজ নতুন ধর্মান্তরিত মুসলিম সমাজকে নস্য শেখ হিসাবে আখ্যায়িত করে। আরোপিত নস্য শেখ উপাধি মোচনের জন্য দেশি মুসলিম সমাজ নানা উপায় খুঁজতে লাগল। কেউ কেউ কোনো পিরের সঙ্গত নিয়ে নস্য শেখ পরিকাঠামোতে নিজেকে উচ্চ স্তরীয় মনে করলেন। তারা সমাজে আংশিক মর্যাদা পেতে থাকেন। এছাড়া কেউ কেউ সরকারি কর্মচারীদের দলে নাম লিখে নানা উপাধি ধারণ করেন, যেমন– সরকার, খাঁ ইত্যাদি। এত কিছু চেষ্টার পরেও সংস্কৃতির ধারা পারিবারিক ও সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রে থেকেই যায়।

এখন প্রশ্ন কারা এই নস্য শেখ ? এ বিষয়ে পর্যালোচনা করতে গেলে নৃতাত্ত্বিক জাতিসত্তার দিকে আলোকপাত করতে হয়। উত্তরবঙ্গের ছয় জেলা (তৎকালীন) ও বিহারের পূর্ণিয়া জেলা এবং বাংলাদেশের দিনাজপুর ও রংপুর জেলায় মোঙ্গলয়েড জনগোষ্ঠীই মানুষের আধিক্য বর্তমান। এতদঞ্চলে রাজবংশী সমাজ ও মোঙ্গলয়েড জনগোষ্ঠীর মূল কেন্দ্র বিন্দু। এই রাজবংশী সমাজের মধ্যে চারটি ভাগ দেখা যায়– কোচ, পলিয়া, রাজবংশী ও দেশীয়া। ব্রাহ্মণ্যবাদী শোষণ ও শাসনের কারণে, সামাজিক অস্পৃশ্যতা, রাজনৈতিক ও অর্থনৈতিক কারণে এই চার জনগোষ্ঠীর ব্যাপক সংখ্যক মানুষ ইসলাম ধর্ম গ্রহণ করেন। এই প্রক্রিয়া সেন আমল থেকে ইংরেজ আমল পর্যন্ত ধারাবাহিকভাবে চলতে থাকে। ধর্মান্তরিত মুসলিম সমাজ নিজেদের দেশি বলে পরিচয় দিতে ভালোবাসতেন। তার কারণ রাজবংশী সমাজে দেশিরা নিজেদের মর্যাদাসম্পন্ন মনে করতেন।

ব্রাহ্মণ্যবাদী শোষণ ও শাসনের কারণে, সামাজিক অস্পৃশ্যতা, রাজনৈতিক ও অর্থনৈতিক কারণে এই চার জনগোষ্ঠীর ব্যাপক সংখ্যক মানুষ ইসলাম ধর্ম গ্রহণ করেন। এই প্রক্রিয়া সেন আমল থেকে ইংরেজ আমল পর্যন্ত ধারাবাহিকভাবে চলতে থাকে। ধর্মান্তরিত মুসলিম সমাজ নিজেদের দেশি বলে পরিচয় দিতে ভালোবাসতেন।

উত্তরবঙ্গে ধর্মান্তরিত মুসলিম সমাজের একটি বড়ো অংশ অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক দিক থেকে বিভিন্নভাবে শোষণের শিকার হয়েছে। সামাজিক অবজ্ঞায় বিকল্প পেশার কথা তারা ভাবতে পারেননি। ফলে অর্থনৈতিকভাবে স্বাবলম্বী হয়ে সমাজের উচ্চকোটিতে প্রবেশ করাও তাদের পক্ষে সম্ভব হয়নি। কৃষি ছিল নস্য শেখ সমাজের একমাত্র অবলম্বন। বর্তমানে নানা কারণে এই জনগোষ্ঠীর হাত থেকে জমি বেরিয়ে গেছে। এর ফলে বড়ো কৃষক হয়েছেন প্রান্তিক চাষি আর প্রান্তিক চাষি শ্রমিকে পরিণত হয়েছেন। অর্থনৈতিক পরিবর্তনশীল সমাজে দারিদ্র্যসীমার নীচে বসবাসকারী জনগোষ্ঠীর এই বৃহৎ অংশই নস্য শেখ সমাজ।

এই সমাজে শিক্ষার হার যৎসামান্য। স্বাধীনতার পূর্বে সরকারি চাকুরি পাওয়ার সুযোগ মুসলিম সমাজের কম ছিল। বংশানুক্রমিকভাবে কৃষি পেশায় আবদ্ধ থাকার কারণে শিক্ষার গুরুত্ব এরা আগে উপলব্ধি করতে পারেননি। শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানও সেভাবে গড়ে না ওঠার ফলে ইংরেজ আমলে যৎসামান্যই শিক্ষার আলো প্রবেশ করে। চাষির ছেলেকে চাষ করে খেতে হবে, লেখাপড়া করে কী লাভ ? এই রকম ভাবনায় ও সুযোগের অভাবে এই সমাজ পেছনে পড়ে থাকে। অতীতের এই ভাবনা আজ তেমন প্রকট নয়, কিন্তু মানুষ আজ তাদের সামর্থ্য হারিয়েছে। নারী শিক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে উত্তরবঙ্গের মুসলিম সমাজ দারুণভাবে পিছিয়ে আছে। এতে রক্ষণশীলতার থেকেও বেশি কাজ করছে আর্থ-সামাজিক দূরবস্থা। ইসলামীয় দর্শনে শিক্ষা আবশ্যিক হলেও নস্য শেখ সমাজে এই বিধান কার্যকরী হয়নি। এখানকার নারী কুমারী অবস্থায় পিতার অধীন, যৌবনে স্বামীর অধীনে আর বার্ধক্যতে পুত্রের অধীন থেকেছে। এই সামাজিক কাঠামো ভেদ করে নারী সমাজ এগিয়ে আসতে সক্ষম হয়নি। ইদানীং বেশ কিছু মুসলিম পরিবারের মেয়েরা স্কুলে গেলেও তাদের শিক্ষিত হওয়ার মানসিকতায় প্রচণ্ড অভাব লক্ষ করা যায়। প্রথমত, এরা বাড়িতে পড়াশোনার পরিবেশ পায় না। দ্বিতীয়ত, আর্থিক কারণে বইপত্রও কিনতে পারে না। তবে খালি মেয়েদের ক্ষেত্রে নয়, এই সমস্যা সামগ্রিকভাবে নস্য শেখ সমাজের ছাত্রছাত্রীদের মধ্যেই দেখা যায়। এই কারণে আধুনিক শিক্ষায় এদের অংশগ্রহণ আশানুরূপ নয়। তাই নস্য শেখ সমাজের কচিকাচাদের সিংহভাগই গ্রামীণ মক্তব, মাদ্রাসা কিংবা প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের গণ্ডি পেরিয়ে উচ্চ শিক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারে না।

এখানকার নারী কুমারী অবস্থায় পিতার অধীন, যৌবনে স্বামীর অধীনে আর বার্ধক্যতে পুত্রের অধীন থেকেছে। এই সামাজিক কাঠামো ভেদ করে নারী সমাজ এগিয়ে আসতে সক্ষম হয়নি। ইদানীং বেশ কিছু মুসলিম পরিবারের মেয়েরা স্কুলে গেলেও তাদের শিক্ষিত হওয়ার মানসিকতায় প্রচণ্ড অভাব লক্ষ করা যায়।

২০০৫ সালে ৯ মার্চ কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার এক বিজ্ঞপ্তি দ্বারা ভারতের মুসলমানদের সামাজিক, অর্থনৈতিক ও শিক্ষাগত অবস্থার উপর অবসরপ্রাপ্ত বিচারক শ্রী রাজেন্দ্র সাচার নেতৃত্বে একটি কমিটি গঠন করে। তারা যে রিপোর্ট প্রদান করেছেন তাতে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অবস্থান সবচেয়ে করুণ।

২০০৫ সালে ৯ মার্চ কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার এক বিজ্ঞপ্তি দ্বারা ভারতের মুসলমানদের সামাজিক, অর্থনৈতিক ও শিক্ষাগত অবস্থার উপর অবসরপ্রাপ্ত বিচারক শ্রী রাজেন্দ্র সাচার নেতৃত্বে একটি কমিটি গঠন করে। তারা যে রিপোর্ট প্রদান করেছেন তাতে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অবস্থান সবচেয়ে করুণ। উত্তরবঙ্গের অনগ্রসর মুসলিম সমাজের আর্থ-সামাজিক অবস্থার কথা বিবেচনা করে নস্য শেখ ও শেরশাবাদী মুসলিম সমাজকে কেন্দ্র ও রাজ্য সরকার ওবিসি তালিকাভুক্ত করেছে। সরকারের ওই সিদ্ধান্ত ইতিবাচক। সরকারি সুযোগ সুবিধা দিয়ে ওই জনসমাজকে এগিয়ে নিয়ে আসা সম্ভব বলে আশাবাদী এই জনগোষ্ঠী।

Source: Uttarbanga Sambad, 27. 08. 2015.

দ্বাদশ লোকসভা নির্বাচন—১৯৯৮

পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বিজয়ী প্রার্থী তালিকা

কেন্দ্র	প্রার্থীর নাম	দল
১। কোচবিহার (তফসিলি)	অমর রায়প্রধান	সারা ভারত ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লক
২। আলিপুরদুয়ার (তফসিলি উপজাতি)	জোয়াকিম বাস্কলা	বিপ্লবী সমাজতন্ত্রী পার্টি
৩। জলপাইগুড়ি	মিনতি সেন	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৪। দার্জিলিং	আনন্দ পাঠক	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৫। রায়গঞ্জ	সুব্রত মুখার্জি	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৬। বালুরঘাট (তফসিলি)	রথেন বর্মণ	বিপ্লবী সমাজতন্ত্রী পার্টি
৭। মালদহ	আবু বরকত আতাউল গনি খানচৌধুরী	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস
৮। জঙ্গীপুর	আবুল হাসনত খান	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৯। মুর্শিদাবাদ	মইনুল হাসান	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
১০। বহরমপুর	প্রমথেশ মুখার্জি	বিপ্লবী সমাজতন্ত্রী দল
১১। কৃষ্ণনগর	অজয় মুখার্জি	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
১২। নবদ্বীপ (তফসিলি)	অসীম বালা	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
১৩। বারাসাত	ডাঃ রঞ্জিতকুমার পাঁজা	পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস
১৪। বসিরহাট	অজয় চক্রবর্তী	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি
১৫। জয়নগর (তফসিলি)	সনৎকুমার মণ্ডল	বিপ্লবী সমাজতন্ত্রী দল
১৬। মথুরাপুর (তফসিলি)	রাধিকারঞ্জন প্রামাণিক	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
১৭। ডায়মণ্ডহারবার	শমীক লাহিড়ী	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
১৮। যাদবপুর	কৃষ্ণা বসু	পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস
১৯। ব্যারাকপুর	তড়িৎবরণ তোপদার	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
২০। দমদম	তপন শিকদার	ভারতীয় জনতা পার্টি
২১। কলকাতা উত্তর-পশ্চিম	সুদীপ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়	পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস
২২। কলকাতা উত্তর-পূর্ব	অজিতকুমার পাঁজা	পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস
২৩। কলকাতা দক্ষিণ	মমতা ব্যানার্জি	পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস
২৪। হাওড়া	ডঃ বিক্রম সরকার	পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস
২৫। উলুবেড়িয়া	হান্নান মোল্লা	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
২৬। শ্রীরামপুর	আকবর আলি খন্দকার	পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস
২৭। হুগলি	রূপচাঁদ পাল	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
২৮। আরামবাগ	অনিল বসু	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
২৯। পাঁশকুড়া	গীতা মুখার্জি	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি
৩০। তমলুক	লক্ষ্মণ শেঠ	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৩১। কাঁথি	সুধীর গিরি	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৩২। মেদিনীপুর	ইন্দ্রজিৎ গুপ্ত	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি
৩৩। ঝাড়গ্রাম (তফসিলি উপজাতি)	রূপচাঁদ মুর্মু	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৩৪। পুরুলিয়া	বীর সিং মাহাতো	সারা ভারত ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লক
৩৫। বাঁকুড়া	বাসুদেব আচার্য	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৩৬। বিষ্ণুপুর (তফসিলি)	সন্ধ্যা বাউড়ি	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৩৭। দুর্গাপুর (তফসিলি)	সুনীল খান	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৩৮। আসানসোল	বিকাশ চৌধুরী	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৩৯। বর্ধমান	নিখিলানন্দ সর	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৪০। কাটোয়া	মেহবুব আহেদী	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৪১। বোলপুর	সোমনাথ চ্যাটার্জি	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)
৪২। বীরভূম (তফসিলি)	রামচন্দ্র ডোম	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)

Lok Sabha Election 1996

Name of the winning candidates, party affiliations and winning margin.

No. & Name of the Parliamentary Constituency	Name of the winning candidate	Party affiliation	Winning margin
1. Cooch Behar (SC)	Amar Roy Pradhan	A.I.F.B.	89,034
2. Alipurduars (ST)	Joachim Baxla	R.S.P.	1,37,810
3. Jalpaiguri	Jitendra Nath Das	C.P.I.(M)	1,12,462
4. Darjeeling	Ratna Bahadur Rai	C.P.I(M)	77,124
5. Raigunj	Subrata Mukherjee	C.P.I.(M)	10,956
6. Balurghat (SC)	Ranen Barman	R.S.P.	1,43,707
7. Malda	A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury	I.N.C.	89,822
8. Jangipur	Md. Idris Ali	I.N.C.	13,122
9. Murshidabad	Masudal Hossain Syad	C.P.I.(M)	37,185
10. Berhampore	Pramothes Mukherjee	R.S.P.	44,357
11. Krishnagar	Ajoy Mukherjee	C.P.I.(M)	38,910
12. Nabadwip (SC)	Ashim Bala	C.P.I.(M)	39,068
13. Barasat	Chitta Basu	A.I.F.B.	35,347
14. Basirhat	Ajay Chakraborty	C.P.I	86,016
15. Joynagar (SC)	Sanat Kumar Mondal	R.S.P.	1,43,927
16. Mathurapur (SC)	Radhika Ranjan Pramanik	C.P.I.(M)	16,068
17. Diamond Harbour	Samik Lahiri	C.P.I.(M)	22,526
18. Jadavpur	Krishna Bose	I.N.C.	13,038
19. Barrackpore	Tarit Baran Topdar	C.P.I.(M)	50,894
20. Dum Dum	Nirmal Kanti Chatterjee	C.P.I.(M)	58,291
21. Calcutta North-West	Debi Prasad Pal	I.N.C	64,951
22. Calcutta North-East	Ajit Kumar Panja	I.N.C	64,985
23. Calcutta South	Mamata Banerjee	I.N.C.	1,03,261
24. Howrah	Priya Ranjan Das Munsi	I.N.C.	33,931
25. Uluberia	Hannan Mollah	C.P.I.(M)	27,842
26. Serampore	Pradip Bhattacharya	I.N.C.	5,463
27. Hooghly	Rupchand Pal	C.P.I.(M)	38,497
28. Arambagh	Anil Basu	C.P.I.(M)	2,26,333
29. Panskura	Geeta Mukherjee	C.P.I.	1,11,388
30. Tamluk	Jayanta Bhattacharyya	I.N.C.	7,910
31. Contai	Sudhir Giri	C.P.I.(M)	24,042
32. Midnapore	Indrajit Gupta	C.P.I.	2,10,649
33. Jhargram (ST)	Rupchand Murmu	C.P.I.(M)	3,47,264
34. Purulia	Bir Singh Mahato	A.I.F.B.	1,09,870
35. Bankura	Basudeb Acharia	C.P.I.(M)	2,28,987
36. Bishnupur (SC)	Sandhya Bauri	C.P.I.(M)	2,65,846
37. Durgapur (SC)	Sunil Khan	C.P.I.(M)	1,81,713
38. Asansol	Haradhan Roy	C.P.I.(M)	46,950
39. Burdwan	Balai Ray	C.P.I.(M)	2,62,714
40. Katwa	Mahaboob Zahedi	C.P.I.(M)	1,06,202
41. Bolpur	Somnath Chatterjee	C.P.I.(M)	2,53,646
42. Birbhum (SC)	Ramchandra Dome	C.P.I.(M)	1,11,020

Table showing the elected members from different districts of North Bengal in the Bidhan Sabha Election in 1977.

Cooch Behar:

Constituency	Name of Candidates	Name of Party
Mekhliganj (SC)	Sadakanta Roy	FB
Sitalkuchi (SC)	Sudhir Pramanik	CPM
Mathabhanga (SC)	Dinesh Chandra Dakua	CPM
Cooch Behar north	Aparajita Goppi	FB
Cooch Behar west	Bimal Kanti Basu	FB
Sitai	Dipak Sengupta	FB
Dinhata	Kamal Guha	FB
Natabari	Sibendra Narayan Chowdhury	CPM
Tufanganj (SC)	Manindra Nath Barman	CPM

Japaiguri:

Constituency	Name of Candidates	Name of Party
Kumargram (ST)	John Arther Baxla	RSP
Kalchini (ST)	Manohar Tirkey	RSP
Alipurduars	Nani Bhattacharya	RSP
Falakata (SC)	Jogendranath Singha Roy	CPM
Madarihat (ST)	A.H. Besterwitch	RSP
Dhupguri (SC)	Banamali Roy	CPM
Nagrakata (ST)	Punai Oraon	CPM

Mainaguri (SC)	Tarakhandhu Roy	RSP
Mal (ST)	Mohan Lal Oraon	CPM
Kranti	Parimal Mitra	CPM
Jalpaiguri	Nirmal Kumar Bose	FB
Rajganj (SC)	Dhirendranath Roy	CPM

Darjeeling:

Constituency	Name of Candidates	Name of Party
Kalimpong	Subba Renuluna	GL
Darjeeling	Deoprakash Rai	GL
Kurseong	Dawa Narbula	Cong
Siliguri	Biren Bose	CPM
Phansidewa	Patras Minz	CPM

West Dinajpur:

Constituency	Name of candidates	Name of party
Chopra	Moha Baccha Munsi	CPM
Islampur	Abdul Karim Choudhury	IND
Goalpokhar	Ramjan Ali	IND
Karandighi	Hazi Sajjad Hussain	Cong
Raiganj (SC)	Khagendra Nath Sinha	CPM
Kaliaganj (SC)	Nabakumar Roy	Cong
Kusmandi (SC)	Dhirendra Nath Sarkar	Cong
Itahar	Dr. Zainal Abedin	Cong
Gangarampur	Ahindra Sarkar	CPM

Tapan (ST)	Nathaniel Murmu	RSP
Kumarganj	Jamini Kishore Majumdar	CPM
Balurghat	Biswanath Chowdhury	RSP

Malda:

Constituency	Name of Candidates	Party
Habibpur (ST)	Sarkar Murmu	CPM
Gajol (ST)	Sufal Murmu	CPM
Kharba	Golam Yazdani	IND
Harishchandrapur	Birendra Kumar Maitra	JAN
Ratua	Mahammad Ali	CPM
Araidanga	Habib Mustafa	CPM
Malda (SC)	Suvendu Kumar Chowdhury	CPM
Englishbazar	Sailen Sarkar	CPM
Manikchak	Subodh Chowdhury	CPM
Suzapur	Abdul Barkat Ataul Gain Khan Chowdhury	Cong
Kaliachak	Samsuddin Ahmed	Cong

Members of the Parliament representing North Bengal districts after the Election in 1971:

Constituency	Members	Party
Cooch Behar (SC)	Binoy Krishna Das Choudhury	Cong.(R)
Jalpaiguri (ST)	Tuna Oraon	Cong (R)
Darjeeling	Ratanlal Brahman	CPM
Raiganj	Siddhartha Shankar Roy	Cong (r)
Balurghat (SC)	Rasendra Nath Barman	Cong (r)
Malda	Dinesh Chandra Joardar	CPM

Members of the Parliament representing North Bengal districts after the Election in 1977:

Constituency	Members	Party
Cooch Behar (SC)	Amarendra Nath Roy Pradhan	FB
Alipurduar (ST)	Pijus Tirkey	RSP
Jalpaiguri	Khagendra Nath Dasgupta	IND
Darjeeling	Krishna Bahadur Chhetri	Cong
Raiganj	Md. Hayat Ali	BLD
Balurghat (SC)	Palash Barman	RSP
Malda	Dinesh Chandra Joardar	CPM

দ্বাদশ লোকসভা নির্বাচন ১৯৯৮

পশ্চিমবঙ্গের চূড়ান্ত ফলাফল

প্রার্থীর নাম	দলের নাম	প্রাপ্ত ভোট ও শতকরা হার
১। কোচবিহার (তফঃ)		**ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১০,৯৭,১৯৩**
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৯,১৬,৬৪২ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৯,০৫,০৭৮ ● বাতিল ভোট= ১১,৫৬৪		
১। অমর রায়প্রধান	সারা ভারত ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লক	৩,৯৬,১৪০ (৪৩.৭৬৯)
২। পাপিয়া বর্মণ	বহুজন সমাজ পার্টি	১৩,৪৮০ (১.৪৮৯)
৩। কর্ণেশ্বর বর্মণ	আমরা বাঙালি	৪,৩৯১ (০.৪৮৫)
৪। গোবিন্দ রায়	ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লক (সোসালিস্ট)	২,৭২,৯৭৪ (৩০.১৬০)
৫। প্রসেনজিৎ বর্মণ	পঃ বঃ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস	২,১৮,০৯৩ (২৪.০৯৭)
২। আলিপুরদুয়ার (তফঃ উপঃ)		**ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১০,২৩,৫৬৭**
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৮,২৭,৩৬২ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৮,০৬,২৪৭ ● বাতিল ভোট= ২১,১১৫		
১। জোয়াকিম বাস্কলা	বিপ্লবী সমাজতন্ত্রী পার্টি	৪,১৫,০০৬ (৫১.৪৭৪)
২। ধীরেন্দ্র নারজিনারাই	ভারতীয় জনতা পার্টি	২,১৯,৪০৭ (২৭.২১৩)
৩। ভুলুরাম প্রধান	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস	১,৬২,১৬৮ (২০.১১৪)
৪। ফাবিয়ানাস তিরকে	সমাজবাদী গণ পরিষদ	৬,৬৯৯ (০.৮৩১)
৫। সমরেন্দ্র এক্কা (পিন্টু)	নির্দল	২,৯৬৭ (০.৩৬৮)
৩। জলপাইগুড়ি		**ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১০,৮৫,২৫৭**
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৮,৮৬,১৭৫ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৮,৬৮,৬৭২ ● বাতিল ভোট= ১৭,৫০৩		
১। অনিল রায়	বহুজন সমাজ পার্টি	৪,৩৮৭ (০.৫০৫)
২। মিনতি সেন	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)	৪,২৬,৬৭২ (৪৯.১১৮)
৩। শুভ্র পাত্র	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস	১,৬৫,৮৪৫ (১৯.০৯২)
৪। কল্যাণ চক্রবর্তী	পঃ বঃ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস	২,৫১,৬৯৭ (২৮.৯৭৫)
৫। জয়গোপাল দাস	নির্দল	৬,১১৩ (০.৭০৪)
৬। ললিত বর্মণ	নির্দল	৩,১৭১ (০.৩৬৫)
৭। সনিকা মুণ্ডা	নির্দল	৫,৪৭৭ (০.৬৩০)
৮। শঙ্কর গাঙ্গুলি	নির্দল	৫,৩১০ (০.৬১১)

প্রার্থীর নাম	দলের নাম	প্রাপ্ত ভোট ও শতকরা হার
৪। দার্জিলিং		ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১২,৩৮,৫৮৭
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৬,৪১,২৮১ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৬,২৬,৯৬৯ ● বাতিল ভোট= ১৪,৩১২		
১। **আনন্দ পাঠক**	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)	২,৮০,৫৮৯ (৪৪.৭৫৩)
২। প্রশান্ত নন্দী	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস	১,৫৮,০৩৩ (২৫.২০৬)
৩। সুরজিৎ রাসিলী	বহুজন সমাজ পার্টি	৩,৭২৭ (০.৫৯৪)
৪। দাওয়া নরবুলা	পঃ বঃ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস	১,১৪,৬৮৮ (১৮.২৯৩)
৫। এল বি পারিয়ার	নির্দল	৩,০৪৮ (০.৪৮৬)
৬। পরেশ রায়	নির্দল	১২,৬০৯ (২.০১১)
৭। মতিয়ুর রহমান	নির্দল	২,৫৯৪ (০.৪১৪)
৮। আর বি রাই	নির্দল	৫১,৬৮১ (৮.২৪৩)
৫। রায়গঞ্জ		ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১১,২৬,৩১০
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৮,৯৮,৩০১ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৮,৮২,৪৮৮ ● বাতিল ভোট= ১৫,৮১৩		
১। প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাসমুন্সী	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস	৩,৪৪,৬১৬ (৩৯.০৫১)
২। রাহুল সিনহা (বিশ্বজিৎ)	ভারতীয় জনতা পার্টি	১,৬০,২৩৯ (১৮.১৫৮)
৩। **সুব্রত মুখার্জি**	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)	৩,৫০,৮৯৭ (৩৯.৭৬২)
৪। সুভাষ বালা	বহুজন সমাজ পার্টি	২,৮১২ (০.৩১৮)
৫। অজিতকুমার দাস	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ লেঃ) (এল)	৮,৪৮১ (০.৯৬১)
৬। ডাঃ মহম্মদ সালিমুদ্দিন	সমাজবাদী জনতা পার্টি (রাষ্ট্রীয়)	১,১৬৭ (০.১৩২)
৭। আধেশ্বর প্রসাদ সিনহা	নির্দল	৭৬৫ (০.৮৭)
৮। ডাঃ আবেদিন শায়েস্তা	নির্দল	৬,৫৮২ (০.৭৪৬)
৯। মহম্মদ ইলিয়াস চৌধুরী	নির্দল	৮৩৪ (০.০৯৪)
১০। উদয় দুবে	নির্দল	১,২১৮ (০.১৩৮)
১১। গোলাম ইয়াজদানি	নির্দল	৩,৮৮১ (০.৪৪০)
১২। দেবাশিস মিত্র	নির্দল	৯৯৬ (০.১১৩)
৬। বালুরঘাট (তফঃ)		ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১০,৮৮,১০৫
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৮,৯১,৩৮০ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৮,৭৬,৬৪৫ ● বাতিল ভোট= ১৪,৭৩৫		
১। পূর্ণচন্দ্র সরকার	বহুজন সমাজ পার্টি	৩,৮৮৮ (০.৪৪৪)
২। মোহিনীমোহন রায়	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস	১,৮২,৮৪৬ (২০.৮৫৭)
৩। **রঞ্জেন বর্মন**	বিপ্লবী সমাজতন্ত্রী পার্টি	৪,২৮,৭১০ (৪৮.৯০৩)

প্রার্থীর নাম	দলের নাম	প্রাপ্ত ভোট ও শতকরা হার
৬। বালুরঘাট (তফঃ)		
৪। ননীগোপাল রায়	পঃ বঃ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস	২,৫৬, ৫৩৫ (২৯.২৬৩)
৫। ধীরেন্দ্রনাথ সিনহা	নির্দল	২,৭৫৩ (০.৩১৪)
৬। নীরেন মণ্ডল	নির্দল	৬৬২ (০.০৭৬)
৭। মলিনচন্দ্র বর্মন	নির্দল	১,২৫১ (০.১৪৩)
৭। মালদা		ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১০,৩০,৩৪৩
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৮,৪৫,৩৬৭ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৮,৩২,৪৬৯ ● বাতিল ভোট= ১২,৮৯৮		
১। এ বি এ গণি খানচৌধুরী	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস	৩,৫৩,১১৭ (৪২.৪১৮)
২। জীবন মৈত্র	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)	৩,০৪,০৩৫ (৩৬.৫২২)
৩। মহেন্দ্রনাথ হাঁসদা	বহুজন সমাজ পার্টি	৪,২২৪ (০.৫০৮)
৪। মুজফ্ফর খান	ভারতীয় জনতা পার্টি	১,৬৯,২৬০ (২০.৩৩২)
৫। আকবর হোসেন	নির্দল	৯১৪ (০.১১০)
৬। মাজিজুর রহমান	নির্দল	৯১৯ (০.১১০)
৮। জঙ্গীপুর		ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১০,৭১,১৮৯
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৮,৪০,০৩২ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৮,২৭,৬২৫ ● বাতিল ভোট= ১২,৪০৭		
১। আবু হাসান খানচৌধুরী	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস	৩,২৪,২৬০ (৩৯.১৭৯)
২। আবুল হাসান খান	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)	৩,৯৬,৭৬১ (৪৭.৯৪০)
৩। সেখ ফুরকান	পঃ বঃ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস	৯৯,০২৮ (১১.৯৬৫)
৪। মোসারফ হোসেন	মুসলিম লিগ কেরালা কমিটি	৬,০১৩ (০.৭২৭)
৫। রফিক সেখ	নির্দল	১,৫৬৩ (০.১৮৯)
৯। মুর্শিদাবাদ		ভোটার সংখ্যা= ১১,৫৪,১০৭
প্রদত্ত ভোট= ৯,৩৯,২৪০ ● বৈধ ভোট= ৯,২৭,৫৯৮ ● বাতিল ভোট= ১১,৬৪২		
১। আনারুল হোসেন খান	ভারতীয় জাতীয় কংগ্রেস	২,৭২,৯৩৫ (২৯.৪২৪)
২। মইনুল হাসান	ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি (মাঃ)	৪,৬৩,৪০১ (৪৯.৯৫৭)
৩। সাইমুদ্দিন সরকার	মুসলিম লিগ কেরালা কমিটি	১৬,২৫৪ (১.৭৫২)
৪। সাগির হোসেন	পঃ বঃ তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস	১,৪৯,০৬১ (১৬.০৭০)
৫। আবদুস সালাম	নির্দল	১৯,০৫৪ (২.০৫৪)
৬। কাদের মণ্ডল	নির্দল	৫,৫৪২ (০.৫৯৭)
৭। নৃপেন্দ্রনাথ মণ্ডল	নির্দল	১,৩৫১ (০.১৪৬)

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
BACKWARD CLASSES WELFARE DEPARTMENT
Writers' Buildings

No. 2928-BCW/MR-436/99 Dated, Kolkata, the 10th July, 2001

NOTIFICATION*

Whereas by this department notification No. 1179-TW/EC, dated the 1st day of December, 1995 (hereinafter referred to as the said notification), 9 (nine) more backward classes for the purposes of the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 (West Ben. Act I of 1993) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act) were specified;

And whereas the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes (hereinafter referred to as the said Commission) was set up under the said Act to examine requests for inclusion of any class of citizens as a backward class in the lists and hear complaints of over-inclusion or under-inclusion of any class in such lists and tender such advice to State Government as it deems appropriate;

And whereas the said Commission has now recommended that the names of two sub-classes 'Rana' and 'Thapa' shown in brackets against the existing entry of 'Mangar' at serial 3 of the said notification should be omitted so that the 'Mangar' class as a whole is treated as a backward class;

And whereas the State Government have accepted the said recommendation of the Commission;

Now, therefore, in pursuance of the provisions of clause (a), read with clause (c), of section 2, and sub-section (2) of section 9, of the said Act, the Governor is pleased hereby to make the following amendment in the said notification:

Amendment

In the list to the said notification, in serial number 3, after the word "Mangar" *omit* the brackets and words "(Thapa, Rana)".

By order of the Governor,
S. Barma
Principal Secy. to the Govt. of West Bengal.

RECOGNIZED OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES OF WEST BENGAL

Recognized by Govt. of West Bengal			Recognized by Govt. of India	
Sl. No.	Name of the Caste W.B.	Particulars of connected orders	Sl. No.	Name of the Caste
1.	Kapali	Notification No. 346-TW/EC dt. 13.07.94 * read with Notification No. 92-TW/EC dt. 11.02.1997	1.	Kapali
2.	Baishya Kapali		2.	Baishya Kapali
3.	Kurmi		3.	Kurmi
4.	Sutradhar		4.	Sutradar
5.	Karmakar		5.	Karmakar
6.	Kumbhakar / Kumar		6.	Kumbhakar
7.	Swarnakar		7.	Swarnakar
8.	Teli / Kalu		8.	Teli
9.	Napit		9.	Napit
10.	Yogi-Nath		10.	Yogi-Nath
11.	Goala-Gope (Pallav Gope, ballav Gope, Yadav Gope, Gope, Ahir and Yadav.) *		11.	Goala-Gope ^(Pallav Gope, ballav Gope, Yadav Gope, Gope, Ahir and Yadav.)
12.	Moira-Modak (Halwai)		12.	Moira-Modak (Halwai)
13.	Barujibi / Baruri		13.	Barujibi
14.	Satchasi		14.	Satchasi
				(Notification No. 12011/9/94-BCC dt. 19.10.1994.)
15.	Malakar	Notification No. 705-TW/EC dt. 13.12.94	15.	Malakar
16.	Jolah (Ansari-Momin)		16.	Jolah (Ansari-Momin)
17.	Kansari		17.	Kansari
18.	Tanti / Tantubaya		18.	Tanti, Tantubaya
19.	Dhanuk		19.	Dhanuk
20.	Shankakar		20.	Shankakar
21.	Keori/Koiri			(Notification No. 12011/96/94/BCC dt. 09.03.1996)
22.	Raju		21.	Keori/Koiri
23.	Nagar		22.	Raju
24.	Karani		23.	Nagar
25.	Sarak		24.	Karani
26.	Tamboli/Tamali		25.	Sarak
27.	Kosta/Kostha	Notification No. 370-TW/EC dt. 12.5.1995	26.	Kosta/Kostha
28.	Roniwar			
29.	Christians converted from Scheduled Castes. ¥			(Notification No. 12011/44/96/BCC dt. 06.12.1996)
30.	Lakhera/Laahera	Notification No. 183-TW/EC dt. 8.3.1995	27.	^Chitrakar
31.	Fakir/Sain		28.	#Jogi
32.	Kahar		29.	^Fakir, Sain.
33.	Tamang X		30.	#Nembang
34.	Betkar (Bentkar)			
35.	Chitrakar			

Recognized by Govt. of West Bengal			Recognized by Govt. of India	
Sl. No.	Name of the Caste N.B.	Particul... connec... order...	Sl. No.	Name of the Caste
36.	Bhujel	Notification No.1179-TW/EC dt. 01.12.1995 read with Notification No. 2028-BCW dt. 10.07.2001	31.	#Sampung
37.	Newar (नेवार)		32.	#Turha
38.	Mangar		33.	#Bungcheng
39.	Nembang		34.	#Bhujel
40.	Sampang		35.	^Kahar
41.	Bungchheng		36.	^Betkar
42.	Thami		37.	#Sukli *(Excluding Solanki Rajputs who claim themselves to be Sukli.)*†
43.	Jogi			
44.	Dhimal		38.	#Churihar *[Not in the State list]*
45.	Hawari	Notification No. 93-TW/EC dt. 01.02.1997	39.	**Thami
46.	Bhar		40.	#Dhunia
47.	Khandait		41.	#Dhimal
48.	Gangot		42.	#Bhar
49.	Turha		43.	#Lakhera/Lahera
50.	Dhunia		44.	#Rangwa *[Not in the State List]*
51.	Patidar		45.	**Kasai-Quraishi*
52.	Kasai		46.	**Kalwar *[Not in the State List]*
53.	Hela/Halia/Chasi-Kaibartha	Notification No. 1054-BCW/EC dt. 06.11.1997	47.	**Hawari, Dhobi (Other than those included in the list of SCs.)*
54.	Bansi-Barman	Notification No. 84-BCW/RC dt. 01.03.1999	48.	**Tamboli/Tamali
55.	Nashya-Sekh		49.	**Tamang
56.	Pahadia-Muslim		50.	Khen (Non-Bania category)*
57.	Khen		51.	**Chamling
58.	Sukli		52.	*Hele/Helia/Chasi Kaibartta/Das Kaibartta
59.	Sunuwar			
60.	Bharbhuja			
61.	Dewan	Notification No. 2927-BCW/MR-436/99 dt. 10.07.2001	53.	*SC Converts of Christianity and their progeny
62.	Rai (including Chamling)		54.	*Rayeen
62	Rayeen (Kunjra)	Notification No 5001-BCW/EC dt. - - - -		^Amended/Inserted vide Resolution No.12011/68/98-BCC dt 27th Oct. 1999 of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
63	Shershabadia			**Inserted Vide Resolution No.12011/36/99-BCC dt. 4th April, 2000 of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
64	Devanga	Notification No 861-BCW/EC dt.		†Bracketed portion not in the State list
65	Hajjam	Notification No 3230-BCW-dt.20/2/64/BCW-28/01/09		*Bold portion not in the State list
66	Chowdhli	Notification No 485/BCW dt. 20/2/09		#Inserted vide Resolution No.12011/88/98-BCC dt.6th Dec. 1999 of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
				*Inserted vide Resolution No.12011/44/99-BCC dt. 21st September 2000.
67. Charsatti (Chamling)		Notification No 771-BCW/MR-436/1999 dt. 5/3/2010		
68. Baldar Muslim				
69. Khotta Muslim				
70. Sarder				

Government of West Bengal
Backward Classes Welfare Department
Writers' Buildings, Kolkata - 700 001,
Website: www.anagrasarkalyan.gov.in / www.bcwdwb.gov.in

No. 6309 - BCW/MR-84/10 Date: 24/09/2010

NOTIFICATION

WHEREAS "backward classes" have been defined in clause (a) of section 2 of the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 (West Ben. Act I of 1993) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), for the purposes of the said Act, to mean such backward classes of citizens other than the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes as may be specified by the State Government in the lists;

AND WHEREAS "lists" have been defined in clause (c) of section 2 of the said Act to mean lists prepared by the Government of West Bengal from time to time for purposes of making provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of backward classes of citizens which, in the opinion of that Government, are not adequately represented in the services under the Government of West Bengal, local and statutory authorities constituted under any State Act, Corporations in which not less than 51% of the paid up share capital is held by the State Government, Universities, Colleges affiliated to the Universities, primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and also other educational institutions which are owned or aided by the State Government and also establishments in public sector;

AND WHEREAS the Government of West Bengal has decided to categorise the backward classes included in the lists into two categories depending on their relative backwardness and make separate provisions for reservation in services and posts in favour of the two categories;

AND WHEREAS the Government of West Bengal has conducted a sample survey to ascertain the relative backwardness of the classes included in the lists of backward classes and the reports of the said survey has duly been received;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the report of the survey, the Governor is pleased hereby to categorise the lists of the backward classes notified for the purpose of the said Act into two categories as **'Category-A'** and **'Category-B'**, wherein the **Category-A** would mean the **'More Backward'** and the **Category-B** would mean 'Backward' within the 'backward classes' and to bring the backward classes so far enlisted into the two categories in the following manner :-

Sl.	MORE BACKWARD (Category-A)	Sl.	BACKWARD (Category-B)
1	Abdal	1	Baishya Kapali
2	Baidya Muslim	2	Bansi-Barman
3	Basni / Bosni	3	Barujibi, Barui
4	Beldar Muslim	4	Betkar (Bentkar)
5	Bepari / Byapari Muslim	5	Bhar
6	Bhatia Muslim	6	Bharbhuja
7	Bhatiyara	7	Bhujel
8	Chowduli	8	Bungchheng
9	Chutor Mistri	9	Chasatti (Chasa)
10	Dafadar	10	Chitrakar
11	Dhukre	11	Christians converted from Scheduled Castes
12	Dhunia	12	Devanga
13	Fakir / Sain	13	Dewan
14	Gayen	14	Dhimal
15	Ghosi	15	Gangot
16	Hajjam	16	Goala-Gope (Pallav Gope, Ballav Gope, Yadav Gope, Gope, Ahir and Yadav.)
17	Hawari	17	Hele / Halia / Chasi-Kaibartta

	A		B
18	Jamadar	18	Kahar
19	Jolah (Ansari-Momin)	19	Kansari
20	Kalander	20	Kapali
21	Kan	21	Karani
22	Kasai	22	Karmakar
23	Khotta Muslim	23	Kcori / Koiri
24	Laskar	24	Khen
25	Mahaldar	25	Kumbhakar, Kumar
26	Majhi / Patni Muslim	26	Kurmi
27	Mal Muslim	27	Malakar
28	Mallick	28	Mangar
29	Midde	29	Moira-Modak (Halwai)
30	Molla	30	Nagar
31	Muchi / Chamar Muslim	31	Napit
32	Muslim Barujibi / Barui	32	Nembang
33	Muslim Biswas	33	Newar
34	Muslim Haldar	34	Rai (including Chamling)
35	Muslim Mali	35	Raju
36	Muslim Mandal	36	Sampang
37	Muslim Piyada	37	Sarak
38	Muslim Sanpui/Sapui	38	Satchasi
39	Nashya-Sekh	39	Shankakar
40	Nehariya	40	Sunuwar
41	Nikari	41	Sutradhar
42	Patidar	42	Swarnakar
43	Penchi	43	Tamboli / Tamali
44	Rajmistri	44	Tanti, Tantubaya
45	Rayeen / Kunjra	45	Teli, Kolu
46	Sardar	46	Thami
47	Shershabadia	47	Turha
48	Siuli (Muslim)	48	Yogi-Nath
49	Tutia	49	Darji / Ostagar / Idrishi
50	Dhanuk	50	Dhali (Muslim)
51	Jogi	51	Pahadia-Muslim
52	Khandait	52	Tal-Pakha Benia
53	Kosta / Kostha		
54	Lakhera/Laahera		
55	Roniwar		
56	Sukli		

The Governor is further pleased to decide that henceforth any class included in the lists of Other Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal shall be added either to the Category-A or to the Category B depending on its degree of backwardness.

By order of the Governor,

Sd/-
[SK. NURUL HAQUE]
Pr. Secy. to the Govt. of West Bengal

LIBRARY
NBU, DARJEELING

Appendix-II:(Photographs)



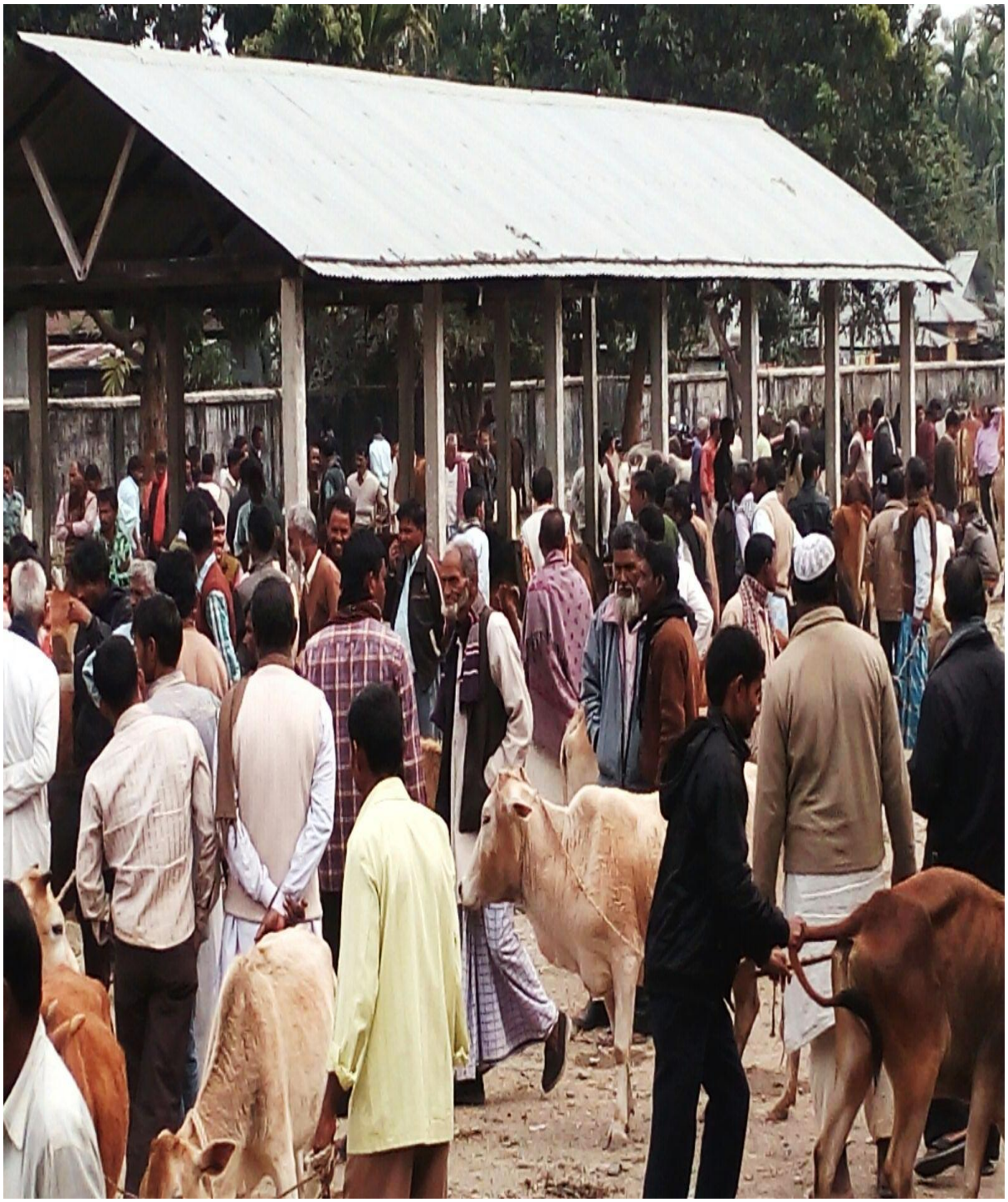
Nashya Sheikh Women labourer working with other communities in the field



Nashya Sheikhs women are working in the field



Nashya Sheikh Peasant picking up potato from the field



It shows a cow market, from which Nashya Sheikh People buy and sell cows



Shops of Nashya Sheikh people for selling meats



Fish market of Nashya Sheikhs



Handicraft industry of Nashya Sheikhs



Nashya Sheikh Groom is getting blessings from his in-laws.



Preparing turmeric for marriage bath



Nashya Sheikh Groom is taking sweets from his sister-in-laws.



Neshya Sheikh Bride's family is feeling sad sending their girl to her husband' house



Newly married couple of Nashya Sheikh Community



Abbasuddin Ahmed (1901-1959), Folk Singer of Nashya Sheikh Community

Source: https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q590844#/media/File:Abbasuddin_Full.jpg, 05/01/2021



Karimul Haque, Bike Ambulance Dada, (Padmashree) Great social worker of Nashya Sheikh Community.

Source; https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/book-on-ambulance-dada-karimul-haque/cid/1680704, 05/01/2021

INDEX

INDEX

Account	31, 61, 99, 111, 122, 134, 214, 215, 219, 273, 299, 301, 368, 365
Advocate	17, 141
Age	31, 43, 48, 98, 139, 149, 182, 183, 188, 216, 220, 237, 239, 248, 331, 349, 359, 375, 384, 386
Ali Mech	13, 93, 139, 147, 154
Analyse Bot	31
Apparent,	27, 241
Arab Merchants	3
Arab Traders	5, 9
Arabians Invasion,	5
Army	6, 7, 13, 63, 64, 93, 102, 108, 110, 113, 123, 125, 134, 151, 326, 392
Assam	13, 24, 33, 44, 107, 84, 110, 128, 123, 124, 154, 155, 156, 183, 188, 190, 211, 215, 217, 264, 278, 279, 303, 305, 318, 320, 343, 341, 363, 365, 366
Auspices	23, 127
Backward community	15, 229, 303
Bakhtiyar Khilji	9, 91, 95, 131, 217
Bangladesh	13, 19, 28, 33, 46, 51, 59, 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 76, 87, 104, 122, 124, 84, 86, 100, 124, 126, 129, 131, 137, 154, 178, 186, 194, 220, 211, 215, 217, 219, 255, 259, 260, 262, 264, 267, 276, 277, 279, 284, 285, 297, 309, 311, 327, 334, 331, 353, 355, 363, 383, 392
Behar	13, 20, 23, 123, 125, 127, 135, 155, 152, 195, 208, 215, 223, 237, 253, 255, 258, 264, 283, 289, 286, 287, 292, 293, 296, 298, 291, 296, 314, 318, 311, 313, 323, 325, 327, 331, 344, 349, 353, 355, 362, 363, 365, 373, 389, 390, 392
Bhadra	21, 152, 153, 188, 220, 263, 291, 293, 291, 344, 346, 371
Bhutan	12, 105, 123, 216, 221, 303, 304
Bihar	9, 12, 15, 23, 38, 57, 109, 113, 114, 118, 84, 89, 99, 110, 114, 125, 127, 137, 172, 173, 181, 211, 215, 217, 224, 240, 253, 251, 258, 260, 277, 314, 327, 321, 325, 331, 351, 353, 362, 364, 366, 370
Books	19, 69, 78, 91, 192, 238, 258, 260, 280, 384
Broad design	33
Buddhism	11, 55, 91, 98, 133
Caliphate	3, 7, 331
Career	17, 141, 262, 264, 319, 334

Census 15, 24, 20, 40, 42, 43, 48, 55, 80, 89, 93, 95, 97, 99, 100, 102, 104, 106, 118, 122, 85, 116, 124, 128, 113, 116, 143, 215, 217, 223, 227, 221, 297, 317, 323, 357, 360, 377, 379, 380
Coasta Areas, 5
Commercial Routes 5
Communities 22, 25, 33, 35, 20, 111, 124, 349, 353, 354
Community 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 20, 31, 40, 48, 67, 80, 85, 89, 95, 104, 112, 116, 121, 86, 99, 100, 102, 108, 114, 118, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 144, 147, 149, 143, 145, 147, 149, 156, 165, 164, 165, 167, 186, 195, 198, 199, 200, 201, 212, 216, 211, 213, 223, 225, 229, 221, 225, 229, 237, 231, 232, 233, 235, 241, 242, 251, 253, 255, 257, 251, 256, 267, 268, 272, 273, 275, 279, 283, 287, 289, 293, 295, 297, 299, 301, 303, 312, 318, 322, 313, 315, 317, 319, 324, 325, 327, 321, 323, 325, 327, 333, 343, 349, 351, 357, 351, 353, 354, 356, 362, 364, 377, 379, 380, 381, 383, 381, 383, 384, 385, 387, 388, 390, 392
Community 15, 21, 25, 33, 124, 133, 237, 289, 291, 317, 320, 313, 357, 376, 384
Comparative Study 27, 34, 349, 392
Comparative Study 35
Compendium, 19, 23
Complex Cultural Pattern, 11, 15, 374
Composition 14, 29, 100, 373
Composition 33
Continuity 35, 142, 165, 358, 387
Continuous Muslim rule 7
Conversion 1, 8, 12, 14, 17, 29, 33, 43, 53, 55, 95, 97, 99, 86, 91, 104, 107, 110, 112, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 130, 114, 120, 122, 123, 135, 137, 141, 151, 186, 212, 213, 239, 241, 256, 275, 297, 317, 360, 368, 361, 372, 373, 382, 386
Conversions 9, 53, 95, 317
Cooch Behar 13, 16, 19, 21, 23, 29, 38, 84, 86, 98, 102, 104, 108, 123, 125, 127, 134, 143, 145, 141, 155, 152, 154, 171, 175, 176, 181, 184, 181, 182, 195, 197, 203, 208, 214, 216, 218, 222, 223, 211, 213, 215, 216, 223, 226, 227, 223, 227, 231, 237, 239, 237, 251,253, 255, 257, 258, 261, 262, 264, 267, 263, 271, 283, 285, 287, 288, 289, 285, 287, 291, 295, 298, 295, 297, 314, 318, 320, 322, 324, 325, 326, 311, 313, 321, 323, 325, 327, 341, 342, 345, 348, 349, 351, 353, 355, 354, 356, 358, 362, 363, 374, 377, 379, 384, 386, 388, 390, 392
Crucial Role 9, 262

Culture 1, 9, 19, 21, 25, 29, 28, 29, 40, 52, 80, 85, 87, 92, 97, 106, 86, 88, 91, 98, 99, 120, 118, 129, 137, 142, 145, 143, 145, 164, 165, 176, 190, 213, 221, 223, 242, 257, 261, 263, 268, 274, 293, 311, 323, 331, 347, 356, 358, 360, 377, 383, 392
Custom 26, 48, 53, 114, 195, 239, 255, 261, 315, 321
Customs 33, 91, 99, 107, 124, 111, 139, 142, 151, 165, 240, 244, 253, 251, 261, 263, 268, 331, 366, 368, 361, 368, 383, 387
Darjeeling 1, 13, 16, 21, 29, 37, 108, 109, 113, 114, 118, 120, 121, 84, 86, 89, 106, 127, 123, 143, 141, 171, 211, 215, 223, 226, 227, 229, 223, 224, 227, 231, 257, 277, 281, 323, 343, 348, 362, 379, 384
Darjeeling Districts 21
Delhi Sultan Qutbuddin 9
Delhi Sultanate 7
Diet 27, 231
Dinajpur 13, 16, 29, 61, 108, 109, 113, 114, 116, 118, 120, 84, 86, 96, 100, 102, 104, 110, 114, 120, 127, 129, 132, 133, 136, 131, 137, 141, 143, 151, 154, 171, 182, 211, 216, 217, 219, 223, 227, 223, 224, 225, 228, 231, 235, 257, 251, 253, 255, 258, 272, 281, 283, 291, 293, 296, 297, 299, 301, 302, 303, 323, 332, 334, 344, 346, 348, 351, 353, 358, 361, 362, 364, 363, 365, 373, 374, 380, 383, 384, 386
Discourses 27, 29
Districts 13, 21, 27, 29, 61, 108, 109, 114, 116, 119, 120, 121, 84, 86, 100, 102, 104, 106, 116, 118, 127, 116, 120, 127, 131, 137, 171, 182, 183, 214, 211, 215, 217, 223, 225, 227, 229, 223, 226, 227, 229, 231, 237, 253, 257, 268, 275, 277, 283, 285, 289, 285, 295, 297, 302, 303, 316, 318, 322, 325, 311, 321, 323, 337, 349, 353, 354, 355, 356, 362, 364, 363, 372, 380, 384, 386
Diverse Backgrounds 1
Dominant Cultures 30
Dress 27, 232
Duration 21, 201, 316
Dynamics 25, 220, 291, 344, 346
Economic life 35, 293, 384
Economy 1, 25, 219, 242, 285, 313, 322, 355, 377
Education 15, 21, 24, 31, 22, 28, 29, 63, 74, 115, 116, 121, 141, 151, 172, 174, 182, 183, 190, 220, 228, 221, 225, 231, 233, 235, 237, 262, 272, 274, 275, 271, 273, 275, 276, 277, 279, 281, 283, 285, 283, 285, 301, 307, 309, 312, 318, 321, 311, 313, 315, 318, 327, 331, 336, 331, 345,

347, 349, 351, 368, 372, 374, 375, 376, 377, 381, 383, 384
Educational Backwardness 23, 25, 272, 361
Embraced Islam 13, 61, 106, 120, 368
Emergence 7, 82, 84, 87, 91, 232, 260, 377
Emerging Ethnicity Identity 21, 152, 153, 220, 291, 293, 291, 344, 346, 371
Eminent Rajbangsi leader 17, 141
Emphases 33
Entrance 3, 135, 210
Essay 21, 35, 73, 383
Ethnicity 21, 124, 151, 152, 153, 220, 291, 293, 291, 344, 346, 371
Europe 5
Evolve 19
Faith, 1, 5, 6, 8, 61, 91, 86, 87, 106, 114, 128, 114, 122, 124, 126, 127, 158, 160, 161, 186, 195, 199, 253, 267, 268, 373
First Muslim dynasty 7
First Muslim Invader 3
Foothills 20, 303
Foreign Muslim 14, 29, 44, 359, 373
Formulate 31, 233
Framework 17, 31, 120, 145, 143, 145, 161, 165, 205, 223, 225, 314, 327, 381, 388
Ganges 12, 25, 84, 86, 154, 225
Gender Relations 27, 28
General Ignorance 15, 374
General Unawareness 11
Globalisation 27, 29
Government Records 32, 141
Gradual Growth 9, 14, 29, 373
Heydays, 17, 141
Highlight, 19, 307, 334
Hijjaj bin Yasuf 7
Himalayas 1, 12, 20, 84, 100, 303
Hindu-Buddhist Country 11
Historical Perspectives 27, 33, 379
History 1, 2, 5, 17, 19, 21, 23, 20, 35, 42, 86, 88, 89, 91, 93, 102, 108, 114, 118, 114, 121, 127, 134, 145, 154, 171, 172, 181, 219, 221, 233, 260, 273, 353, 356, 363, 372, 375, 381
Identity Transformations 27, 29
Immigrant Muslim groups 11, 15, 374
Incipient Awareness 27, 29
Inconsonance 33
Independence 17, 104, 100, 232, 256, 275, 279, 286, 296, 303, 323, 329, 336, 337, 333, 351, 354, 355, 356, 360, 363, 381, 387
Independent India 27, 29
Indian Peninsula 9, 373

Indian Population 1, 46, 331, 373
Indigenous Muslim Community 30, 133
Invaded India 3, 7, 333
Islam 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 24, 27, 28, 29, 33, 35, 37, 20, 31, 38, 40, 52, 53, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 63, 65, 69, 78, 85, 89, 91, 95, 100, 123, 124, 125, 86, 89, 91, 93, 96, 98, 99, 106, 110, 112, 114, 118, 120, 122, 130, 111, 114, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 125, 126, 127, 121, 125, 134, 135, 139, 140, 141, 143, 145, 147, 153, 154, 156, 151, 154, 156, 158, 160, 161, 163, 165, 161, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168, 170, 172, 176, 178, 172, 176, 182, 184, 186, 194, 197, 201, 206, 212, 214, 220, 223, 224, 212, 213, 217, 219, 223, 221, 235, 237, 243, 242, 251, 257, 258, 259, 264, 266, 291, 293, 295, 296, 297, 299, 320, 317, 325, 335, 337, 339, 341, 342, 362, 366, 368, 372, 373, 375, 377, 379, 381, 383, 394
Islam Secured Victory 6
Islamic Rule 8, 10, 15, 149, 154, 178, 195, 239, 255, 263, 317, 373, 383
Islamic Rules 10, 15, 149, 195, 239, 255, 263, 373, 383
Jalpaiguri 13, 16, 21, 25, 29, 109, 113, 118, 84, 86, 89, 100, 102, 104, 106, 107, 110, 124, 127, 121, 141, 143, 154, 155, 156, 171, 184, 188, 192, 195, 197, 203, 205, 208, 214, 216, 218, 222, 211, 215, 221, 223, 226, 227, 223, 224, 227, 231, 237, 239, 237, 251, 253, 255, 257, 256, 258, 267, 263, 273, 274, 277, 281, 283, 285, 286, 287, 289, 285, 289, 291, 293, 295, 296, 295, 297, 305, 314, 318, 320, 322, 324, 326, 311, 313, 321, 323, 327, 336, 341, 342, 344, 345, 348, 349, 351, 353, 354, 355, 357, 351, 353, 354, 356, 358, 365, 361, 363, 365, 377, 371, 372, 373, 379, 384, 386
Kalapahar 13, 53, 108, 120
Kamata 23, 152, 292, 293, 344
Kerala 5, 318
Khalji, 7, 13, 30, 31, 36, 50, 51, 89, 93, 95, 114, 120, 111, 124, 126, 127, 139, 154, 217, 219
Kingdom , 23, 108, 145, 152, 292, 293, 304, 344
Koch 16, 19, 23, 40, 109, 113, 114, 118, 93, 98, 104, 106, 108, 112, 128, 116, 125, 127, 131, 133, 135, 137, 141, 143, 147, 151, 155, 152, 181, 211, 213, 215, 223, 224, 240, 242, 258, 260, 287, 292, 293, 296, 298, 291, 304, 313, 323, 344, 351, 358, 360, 366, 373, 380, 381, 383
Land Turkish Conquerors 9
Language, 27, 29, 33, 48, 80, 82, 97, 102, 88, 108, 137,

	139, 141, 142, 145, 147, 149, 146, 172, 174, 182, 211, 223, 241, 249, 257, 251, 253, 255, 256, 274, 275, 271, 273, 275, 277, 278, 279, 285, 316, 347, 356, 360, 362, 364, 366, 383
Literacy Rate	24, 109, 111, 114, 116, 118, 223, 227, 228, 229, 227, 229, 231, 237, 274, 293, 303, 374, 384, 392
Literature	18, 256, 309
Living	1, 5, 15, 26, 63, 86, 89, 93, 106, 137, 147, 163, 180, 185, 216, 225, 229, 225, 253, 255, 273, 297, 303, 322, 315, 337, 333, 370, 385
Local History	19, 341
Lodi	7, 38
Major Findings	35
Marginal Muslim Communities	22, 291
Mass Conversion	10, 11, 375
Mech Community	16, 380
Methodology	31
Militant Method	8, 373
Minority	1, 15, 17, 29, 48, 104, 106, 110, 117, 121, 85, 86, 100, 130, 221, 223, 229, 283, 287, 325, 321, 349, 351, 353, 357, 358, 377, 383, 387
Minority Religious Group	29, 85
Mira,	21
Miscellaneous	1
Missionary Religion	5
Mixed Method	31
Modern	23, 31, 82, 85, 95, 93, 96, 124, 123, 150, 156, 172, 178, 182, 183, 233, 259, 260, 262, 264, 267, 268, 271, 275, 281, 312, 320, 335, 337, 339, 349, 350, 356, 374
Monumental Work	25, 125
Mountain wall,	1
Muhammad Bin Qassim	3, 7
Muhammad Ghori	3, 7, 124
Multi-layered Phenomenon,	4
Musical Instruments	26
Muslim	3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 33, 37, 20, 22, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 36, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 71, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 109, 111, 113, 114, 116, 118, 120, 121, 122, 124, 126, 85, 86, 88, 89, 91, 93, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 112, 114, 115, 116, 118, 120, 122, 125, 127, 111, 113, 114, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 127, 123, 125, 131, 132, 135, 136, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 145, 146, 147, 149, 141, 143, 145, 147, 148, 149, 151, 154, 155, 151, 152, 154, 155, 156, 160, 163, 165, 161, 163, 167, 168,

173, 174, 171, 173, 182, 184, 186, 190, 193, 195, 198, 199, 201, 203, 205, 206, 208, 209, 210, 212, 214, 215, 216, 218, 219, 220, 222, 223, 211, 213, 217, 219, 221, 223, 225, 229, 221, 222, 223, 225, 227, 229, 230, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239, 231, 233, 235, 237, 240, 242, 244, 241, 242, 244, 246, 249, 251, 253, 254, 255, 257, 251, 253, 255, 256, 258, 260, 262, 264, 266, 267, 263, 270, 272, 275, 271, 273, 274, 275, 277, 279, 283, 285, 288, 289, 281, 283, 285, 287, 289, 291, 292, 293, 295, 296, 298, 291, 293, 297, 299, 301, 303, 314, 316, 322, 324, 311, 313, 315, 317, 319, 321, 322, 323, 325, 329, 321, 323, 325, 327, 329, 331, 332, 337, 331, 333, 335, 337, 339, 341, 343, 345, 347, 349, 341, 344, 345, 346, 348, 349, 351, 353, 355, 357, 351, 352, 353, 354, 356, 358, 360, 365, 370, 372, 374, 376, 377, 371, 372, 373, 375, 377, 378, 379, 381, 387, 381, 384, 390, 392

Muslim Arabian Traders , 5

Muslim Community 7, 19, 25, 55, 57, 67, 80, 97, 102, 111, 116, 118, 121, 86, 114, 125, 123, 136, 131, 133, 137, 141, 151, 182, 186, 190, 212, 216, 211, 217, 219, 223, 225, 229, 221, 223, 229, 230, 231, 242, 244, 251, 258, 267, 273, 275, 277, 279, 283, 289, 283, 285, 293,299, 301, 303, 316, 315, 317, 322, 325, 323, 331, 349, 351, 356, 377, 382, 390

Muslim Conquest 11, 26, 91

Muslim Society 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 23, 25, 28, 20, 55, 59, 80, 89, 98, 100, 104, 112, 114, 115, 111, 133, 139, 145, 143, 145, 165, 173, 190, 224, 225, 235, 240, 242, 244, 241, 242, 244, 246, 249, 251, 255, 266, 273, 275, 297, 300, 301, 303, 319, 325, 331, 332, 335, 347,358, 374, 373, 375, 381, 388

Muslims 1, 3, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 25, 29, 33, 35, 36, 37, 20, 22, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 40, 42, 44, 48, 51, 52, 53, 55, 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 69, 74, 76, 80, 85, 87, 89, 95, 97, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 109, 111, 114, 116, 121, 124, 126, 85, 86, 89, 93, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 106, 107, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 118, 122, 124, 125, 127, 128, 130, 111, 113, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 126, 121, 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 132, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 143, 145, 149, 151, 153, 156, 163, 161, 163, 165, 167, 168, 170, 172, 174, 176, 178, 182, 184, 181, 190, 194, 195, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 202, 203, 205, 206, 207, 208, 210, 212, 214, 216, 218, 211, 213, 215, 219, 221,

223, 224, 225, 221, 223, 225, 227, 229, 235, 239, 237, 240, 242, 255, 251, 253, 256, 260, 264, 266, 263, 270, 272, 274, 275, 271, 273, 275, 277, 279, 284, 289, 281, 291, 295, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299, 301, 302, 305, 308, 311, 316, 324, 326, 311, 313, 315, 317, 319, 321, 327, 328, 329, 321, 323, 325, 329, 332, 337, 331, 333, 335, 337, 339, 341, 343, 345, 347, 349, 344, 349, 351, 353, 355, 356, 358, 360, 361, 362, 364, 365, 366, 368, 361, 370, 372, 374, 375, 376, 377, 373, 375, 377, 379, 381, 383, 385, 388, 392

Muslims Population 15, 106, 329

Nashya 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 86, 89, 102, 104, 106, 110, 114, 124, 122, 123, 133, 135, 137, 141, 143, 144, 145, 147, 149, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153, 154, 151, 152, 153, 165, 161, 163, 165, 166, 172, 184, 185, 186, 195, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 201, 203, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 212, 214, 216, 218, 211, 213, 215, 221, 223, 225, 237, 239, 231, 232, 233, 235, 242, 244, 251, 253, 254, 255, 257, 251, 253, 255, 256, 258, 260, 262, 267, 261, 263, 265, 267, 268, 270, 272, 279, 281, 283, 285, 287, 289, 281, 283, 285, 289, 291, 293, 294, 295, 296, 298, 291, 293, 295, 297, 303, 312, 314, 316, 318, 320, 322, 324, 326, 311, 313, 315, 317, 321, 322, 327, 323, 325, 327, 329, 331, 333, 335, 341, 343, 345, 349, 341, 342, 344, 346, 349, 353, 360, 371, 379, 381, 383, 385, 387, 381, 383, 384, 386, 387, 388, 390, 392, 393, 394

Nashya Shaik 153, 293, 344, 346

Nashya Shaikh Community 21

Nashya Sheikh 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 86, 89, 104, 106, 122, 133, 134, 135, 141, 143, 144, 145, 147, 149, 151, 165, 161, 163, 165, 166, 172, 184, 185, 186, 195, 191, 193, 195, 197, 203, 206, 207, 208, 210, 212, 214, 216, 218, 211, 213, 221, 223, 237, 239, 233, 235, 242, 244, 254, 255, 257, 251, 253, 255, 258, 260, 262, 267, 261, 263, 267, 268, 270, 272, 281, 283, 285, 287, 289, 281, 283, 285, 289, 291, 296, 291, 293, 295, 303, 312, 314, 316, 318, 320, 322, 326, 313, 315, 317, 321, 322, 327, 323, 325, 327, 329, 331, 333, 335, 341, 343, 345, 349, 341, 342, 344, 349, 360, 379, 381, 383, 385, 387, 381, 384, 386, 388, 390, 392, 393, 394

Nashya Sheikh Community 19, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 149, 186, 237, 239,

263, 267, 268, 270, 291, 312, 314, 322, 313, 315, 327, 329, 379, 384, 386, 388, 394
Nashya Sheikh Community 17, 21, 31, 33, 34, 35, 122, 161, 166, 185, 213, 221, 237, 268, 272, 285, 287, 289, 285, 295, 303, 312, 314, 318, 319, 320, 321, 349, 383, 384, 393
Nashya Sheikh Society 27, 28
Nashya Sheikhs 25, 31, 33, 34, 104, 106, 143, 144, 145, 147, 149, 151, 165, 191, 193, 203, 208, 210, 212, 214, 216, 218, 219, 211, 213, 223, 291, 293, 295, 327, 329, 342, 379, 385, 390
Nature 27, 31, 36, 57, 59, 87, 89, 93, 91, 106, 122, 146, 163, 238, 239, 242, 266, 272, 274, 312, 313, 321, 322, 337, 334, 360, 370, 386
Non-Aryan elements 11
Non-Government Records 32
North Bengal University 1, 23, 151, 220, 291, 342
North Bengal Brief 27
North Dinajpur 13, 29, 84, 86, 102, 154, 211, 217, 223, 227, 223, 224, 227, 231, 277, 299, 302, 303, 323, 380, 384, 386
Northern Districts 16, 86, 143, 277, 379
Numerical Strength, 15
Numerically Dominant Muslim 15, 143, 379
Numerous Immigrants 11
Nbjectives 27
Occupation 4, 6, 7, 9, 13, 26, 29, 63, 114, 137, 147, 148, 151, 161, 213, 222, 283, 288, 293, 295, 322, 327, 349, 368, 381, 392
Offspring Spread 5
Open door 3
Opening 11, 375
Panchanan Barma 17
Papers 19, 23, 32, 347
Participation 15, 17, 34, 199, 281, 283, 285, 287, 312, 323, 330, 334, 381, 388
Peaceful Penetration 3, 4, 5
Peoples 5, 10, 13, 19, 22, 89, 135, 138, 139, 240, 272
Plains Stretching 12
Plenty 19, 233
Political Empowerment 18, 321, 388
Political participation 17, 35, 293, 317, 384, 388
Political phenomenon 19
Politics 17, 25, 31, 68, 87, 150, 141, 273, 285, 287, 303, 321, 322, 323, 327, 321, 336, 337, 388, 390
Population trends 27, 28
Portion 12, 86, 110, 139, 193, 197, 214, 215, 232, 239, 257, 271, 293
Pre-Islamic cultural traditions 11, 374
Priorities 23, 291

Profession 27, 88, 112, 114, 141, 142, 143, 240, 289, 295, 312, 316, 320, 326, 327, 336, 358, 360, 362, 364, 366
Profile 21, 149, 258, 289, 327
Prominent Empires 6
Propagate 10, 11, 59, 126, 147
Proper 18, 48, 113, 133, 180, 249, 303, 307, 309, 322, 337, 361, 388
Prophet Mahammad 7
Proportion 11, 17, 89, 116, 111, 114, 118, 120, 388
Proposed Research 31
Qualities 32
Quantitative Methods 31
Rajbangshi Muslims 16, 279
Rajbansi Musalman, 145, 379
Reasons 23, 48, 55, 91, 120, 111, 124, 134, 137, 147, 141, 145, 178, 172, 173, 195, 208, 217, 225, 229, 231, 237, 239, 244, 267, 268, 273, 279, 285, 295, 301, 321, 311, 313, 335, 372, 374, 376, 385, 386
Recommendations, 35, 303, 321, 323
Reference, 23, 27, 29, 97, 124, 114, 132, 135, 211
Regard, 16, 29, 80, 106, 128, 137, 141, 144, 145, 199, 206, 208, 224, 221, 253, 273, 275, 307, 311, 365, 381
Regional-local History 25
Reliable data Relevant 31
Religion 9, 23, 43, 55, 57, 59, 61, 63, 76, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 100, 102, 104, 93, 95, 96, 106, 108, 110, 124, 130, 131, 116, 122, 124, 129, 131, 134, 135, 139, 141, 156, 158, 161, 165, 166, 170, 182, 185, 190, 199, 216, 215, 219, 223, 231, 241, 251, 253, 258, 266, 263, 274, 275, 285, 299, 321, 337, 331, 335, 337, 339, 341, 344, 345, 349, 351, 356, 360, 368, 361, 372, 374, 379
Religious Minorities 1
Remote Past 21
Research Methodology 31
Research Questions 27
Research work 19, 27, 353
Researcher 35
Saints 5, 13, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 71, 74, 76, 77, 78, 80, 91, 90, 93, 95, 98, 99, 109, 110, 111, 123, 124, 127, 121, 123, 125, 127, 135, 139, 147, 141, 153, 165, 186, 187, 182, 183, 185, 194, 219, 387
Scientific Research 1
Sea 1, 3, 22, 24, 25, 26, 194
Sea Routes 2

Secondary Data 31
Sheikh Muslims 33, 106, 153, 163, 216, 235, 240, 242, 331, 335, 345, 349, 360
Siddique 21, 178, 291
Sikkim 12
Sind 5, 6, 7, 22
Social Differentiation Amongst 31
Social Life 34, 20, 93, 87, 160, 163, 217, 211, 375, 381
Social Structure 25, 95, 125, 200, 237, 280, 327, 384
Social Structure 34, 152, 153, 221
Socio-Economic Condition, 17, 19, 30, 116, 145, 148, 213, 221, 283, 288, 301, 327, 381, 392
Socio-Economic Life, 27, 28, 147
Socio-Religious Life, 11, 373
Solemn Religious Duty, 3
South Persia, 3
Special Reference, 27, 28, 128
Spread, 1, 4, 6, 9, 22, 29, 31, 35, 59, 61, 63, 65, 74, 106, 116, 91, 93, 95, 98, 106, 110, 118, 114, 116, 125, 127, 133, 139, 154, 156, 178, 182, 183, 186, 190, 219, 233, 274, 271, 275, 283, 305, 307, 309, 312, 315, 321, 331, 347, 372, 373, 375, 381
Stream Changes, 21
Stretches, 12, 76
Study Initiates, 33 12
Sub-Himalayan Areas, 14
Sufi Movement, 9
Sukumar Baraiby, 19
Thesis Aret, 27
Tradition, 17, 29, 52, 91, 86, 89, 106, 114, 137, 145, 141, 143, 145, 160, 165, 193, 194, 199, 206, 212, 221, 224, 229, 240, 241, 242, 243, 270, 293, 343, 347, 341, 362, 366, 381, 387, 392
Traditional Political Councils, 31
Tribe Groups, 26
Tughluq, 7
Turk Slave Qutub-Uddin-Aibak, 7
Unknown, 13, 19, 26, 59
Utopian, 18, 388
Uttar Pradesh, 15, 126, 339
Vice Versa, 18, 160, 388
Water , 9, 22, 102, 108, 112, 121, 133, 134, 165, 167, 176, 191, 215, 231, 232, 242, 244, 266, 261, 265, 370, 385


Publications

ISSN: 2229-4880

Karatoya

NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol. 9 March 2016

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal)

UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities, Serial No. 42512

ENLIGHTENMENT TO PERFECTION

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

Raja Rammohunpur, Dist. Darjeeling

ISSN: 2229-4880

Karatoya

NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol. 9 March 2016

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal Published Annually)

UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities, Serial No. 42512

Editor –in-Chief

Dr. Bijoy Kr. Sarkar

Associate Editor

Shri Varun Kumar Roy

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
RAJARAMMOHUNPUR, DIST. DARJEELING
WEST BENGAL, INDIA, PIN: 734013
PNONE: 0353-2580998

Karatoya: NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol. 9 March 2016

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal Published Annually)

UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities, Serial No. 42512

Editorial Office

Department of History,

University of North Bengal, P.O. North Bengal University

District: Darjeeling, West Bengal, India, Pin: 734013

Telephone: 0353-2580998

Email: historydept.nbu@gmail.com

Editor –in-Chief

Dr. Bijoy Kr. Sarkar

Associate Editor

Shri Varun Kumar Roy

Editorial Members

Dr. Sudash Lama, Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya

Note from the Editor-in-Chief

On behalf of the Department of History, University of North Bengal, it is my privilege to present to the readers the Volume 09 (2016) of the Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History. The journal has incorporated the research papers from ancient Indian History, Medieval Indian History and Modern Indian History and contemporary as well. The Volume 09 is being published after all the articles having been refereed and peer reviewed with the ISSN 2229-4880. The Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History is a UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities with Serial No. 42512

The editor of the journal do not judge for the facts stated, opinions expressed and conclusions reached is entirely that of the authors concern and the editor of the journal accepts no responsibility for the same.

It is my solemn duty to express my gratitude to our Honurable Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Finance Officer for their generous concern on 'Academic Endeavour'. I am thankful to my colleagues of the Department of History for their warm encouragement and necessary cooperation for publishing this journal. Mr Varun Kr. Roy, associate editor of this volume deserved huge appreciation for his constant help in publishing this volume.

I am also grateful to all the contributors for providing valuable research papers. Last but not least, the Officials and the Staffs of the North Bengal University Press deserve heartiest thanks for their cooperation in printing the journal within limited span of time.

Dr. Bijoy Kr. Sarkar

Contents

The Contai Massin the *Swadeshi* Movement (1905—1911) 1
- *Dr. Sankar Kumar Das*

From Forest Wealth to Timber Trade: A Trajectory of Change in Forest Policies under the Colonial Rule in North Bengal. 13
- *Dr. Sujit Ghosh*

Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose: A comparative study of ideology and its application in the perspective of Freedom Movement 23
- *Dr. Gaur Chandra Ghosh & Abhijit Datta*

A Historical Study of the Origin and Features of Some Selected Folk Games in North Bengal 34
- *Badal Roy*

The Economic Life of the Nashya Sheikhs of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts: A Study of the Historical Perspective 45
- *Md Nabiul Islam*

Malaria in Jalpaiguri: The History of an Epidemic Disease from 1869-1947 56
- *Monoranjan Sarkar*

Unravelling the Myth: Exploring State and Religion under Aurangzeb 74
- *Aniket Tathagata Chettry*

Contested Spaces: Population Dynamics, the Refugees and Changing Social Landscape of Siliguri (1835 To 2011 C.E.) 86
- *Minakshee Kumari*

Popular Protest Movements of Dinajpur in Post-Colonial Bengaland the Role of Left Political Parties: A Micro Level Study 96
- *Swapan Kumar Pain*

The Changing Status of Women in Modern Bhutan With Relation to Education (From 1914 to 2003 A.D.) 104
- *Ratna Paul*

The *Memsahib's* in Tea Industry: A Study of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri Districts in Nineteenth and twentieth Century. 115
- *Supam Biswas*

Understanding the Transformation of Colonial Darjeeling Hills Through the Study of South Asian Environmental History 123
- *Tahiti Sarkar*

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Partition of India 132
- *Dhananjoy Bhattacharjee*

Rajmahal: A Medieval Town in Subah Bengal 146
- *Varun Kumar Roy*

The Trade and Trading Items of Colonial Bengal: A survey of Imported and Exported Trade Items (1602-1757 A.D.) 153
- *Dr. Sudash Lama & Prodip Mandal*

Karatoya: NBU J. Hist. Vol. 9 ISSN: 2229-4880

The Economic Life of the Nashya Sheikhs of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts: A Study of the Historical Perspective

Md Nabiul Islam[1]

Abstract:

The economic 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, culturally, educationally extremely backward. This paper we will attempt to show the economic life of the Nashya Sheikhs of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. Their main occupation is cultivation, but cattle farming, small scale business, selling of fish, mutton, chicken etc. are also other source 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.

Keywords: Nashya Sheikh, Rajbangsi Muslim, Economic Backwordness, Jotedars, Masoning etc.

Economic life of the Nashya Sheikhs:

A big portion of the converted Muslim community in North Bengal are being victimised in terms of economic stability. They could not think the alternative source of income within the social dieseling. Now a central question emerges that – "who are the *Nashyas*?" The Muslims who resided in Koch, Mech, Polia, and Rajbangsi societies etc. were basically converted in Muslims from these communities, who later on were known as *Nashyas*. It is these *Nashyas* who are popularly known as *Nashya Sheikh.*[1] During the period of 13th to 17th century Muslims attack occurred frequently in Kamrup, Kamtapur and Koch Behar. Perhaps for this might be the reasons for which Islam entered in North-Eastern part of India? The Brahmans, who were the holder and protector of the society, announced the indigenous peoples as a fallen group for the untouchability problem with Muslims. Sometimes the villages become fallen by the entrance way of Muslims soldiers.[2] These outcaste peoples become spoiled *(Nasto)* and religion less. These peoples were compelled to convert into Islam. Still they were spoiled (*Nasto)* and religion less to the upper castes people. Gradually the word 'Nashya' had originated from the above mentioned term '*Nasto*' as a distorted pronunciation.[3] We found the name of "Panbor Nashya" as a recipient, fathers name "Asaru Nashya", caste Muslim from a reference of

[1] ***Md Nabiul Islam*, UGC Research Fellow, Department of History, University of North Bengal.**

ISSN: 2229-4880

document in 1901(Koch Behar state). Now I would like to shed light on "Sheikh". The word Sheikh means "Greatest". The Sufi saints like Sheikh JalaluddinTabrizi who came to the undivided Bengal from Afganisthan, used the word Sheikh in front of their name. The Nashya Muslims protested about their dishonourable title and after refusing that title they introduced them self as Sheikh as the disciples of "Sheikh" and used the title Sheikh. For an example we can say that we found the name of Mamud Sheikh whose father name was Tangru Nashya, caste Muslim.[4] But here it's noticeable that the migrated Sheikh use the title Sheikh in front of their name and the Nashya used title after their name. For an example we can say the name of Jalaluddin Tabrazi and Piyar Mamud Sheikh. With this respect it may be mention that after the conversion into Islam, the Nashya Sheikh started ideological struggle with Sufism by the influence of Shariatism and got change their names and title. After changing the names like Tangru, Sandu, Domashu, Pedda, Tonda which belongs to Rajbansi community, they started to use the name like Hajrat, Suleman, Abubaquar, Osman which belongs to Arabian origin. Vis a Vis they started to refuse their title Nashya and also they refuse their title sheikh as the title of "Shia community". They started to use of surnames like Rahaman, Ali, Main, Hussain, Sarkar, Islam, Ahmed, Uddin, Hoque, Abedin etc. At present simultaneously they are also using their previous surnames.[5] If we look for the answer for this, then we have to go through the anthropological study of the community. The similarities we find among the people of six districts of North Bengal, Purnia district of Bihar and Dinajpur and Rungpur districts of Bangladesh with Nashya sheikh to some extent reflect their old connection with each other. The Mongoloyed community and Rajbangsi community people had been living in this particular area. There are four kinds of people like Koch, Mech, Polia and Rajbangsi indigenous people. The various kind of reason were responsible for the conversation of huge numbers of people four community such as oppression and suppression of Brahmanism, social untouchably and economic and political. This process of conversion in Bengal continued from Sen. Period to British period. The new converted Muslim community wanted to prove them self as an indigenous community. Because the indigenous community felt themselves as a upper class within Rajbangsi society.[6]

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 depended 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. Now a day's various kind of factor is responsible for loosing up their land. Within the economically changing society a back 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 labourers[7]. Once there was

ISSN: 2229-4880

many *Nashya Jotedars*. Once there were many rich Jotedar from Nashya Sheikh Community in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts, such as Meehua Doni.....but now a day for various reasons they have lost their big holdings. For different monetary urgencies the land holding of the big and rich Nashya Sheikhs have gradually became fragmented.[8] A few decade back cultivation was mainly curried out through the conventionally means which mean that it was entirely depended on manual skill and organic fertilizer. Naturally the production was less in comparison with the present time. Now it is the scenario has been changes. Today the rich Nashya Sheikh cultivator prefers to used tractor, tilling machines, chemical fertilizer, genetically muted 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.[9] There are few a 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 Dinhata are considered to be the best tobacco cultivators of Cooch Behar district. Beside cultivation, some *Nashya sheikhs* are engage in making agricultural tools and other materials of domestic use.[10]

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 the 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 Jalpaiguri[11].

Industry:

In general, it can be said that there is 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 numbers of people were there, who has taken this job as their profession and they had to do this for the rich families. But now a day, the situation has been changed; it is hardly possible to see this technique even into 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 Pisiculture as their profession. In order to do this job female were also involved with the participation of males. Since the time immemorial to till now, most of the people of this community has 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.[12]

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 has been with these professions are not strong share holder rather they had many small business. 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 sectored Cow and Mosh. Because Cow and Mosh vastly could use for ploughing the land. In the markets of Booch 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, M\athabhanga ,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.[13]

Apart from these businesses, the people of *Nashya Sheikh* Community are also attached with some other business 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 are low in comparison to other communities. These small businessmen sell their good to the big *mahajanas* for their small profit. They are forced to sell their goods not keeping into store because they have the luckiness of capital. Hence, highest profit on these goods comes only by the big *mahajans*. Because they stores +the goods and in later when the crisis arise they sells their stored goods to the market. Besides these business 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 benefit. The businessman buys the betel-nut and then boils these and at the end they export their goods outsides the districts and even outside of west Bengal for the shake to make more benefit. Here also the producers of the betel-nut also to make less benefit than the big *mahajans* (or businessmen). The maximum benefit from this business got 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 type of vegetables.[14]

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 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, Kodaler Kaj*, Jute cutting, Paddy cutting, soil digging etc. They were used to wear share and frequently it was not possible to recognize that who are the Hindu and who are the Muslims. There dress up and language is same. Without wearing *shaya* (lower long innerwear) and *blouse* (upper innerwear). They were to do their word outside their own house. If someone makes rice from paddy of 10 Kilogram then he/she had 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 that were uneducated, they had no knowledge of family plan that is why until and unless has to give birth of the child. This has made a very horrible situation in the society, although there were no restrictions provided by the authority of the village.[15]

Most of the people of the Nashya Sheikh Community of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts are labours. During the period of the second half of the 20th century many families had huge amount of land. But through the passes of time this situation has been changed. And most of them lost their stable economic identity. The lack of education and social consciousness were 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.[16] After being jobless they have arrived to different towns and they forced to take the work of ricksaw poller, some works 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 number of tea garden getting stopped in which generally the tribal people involved. As a result the tribal people are migrate 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

ISSN: 2229-4880

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. [17]

Service:

The numbers of the Government service holder 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. On the major important factor behind this static situation was they keep 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 superstitions belief. What will be the benefit to take higher studies? As they are the sons of the farmer so they are have to take agriculture as their profession.[18] Even if we look after into the modern situation we can easily find out this situation among the people of Nashya Sheikh Community. This situation can severally seen not only in the cases in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts but alos in other regions. There are very few candidates who got the Governments service as the representative of Nashya Sheikh Community.. For instance , few names of the people of the Nashya Sheikh Ccommunity who got the Government service are as follow- Abdul Karim of Duramari (Retired serviceman of Governmet Hóspital 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.[19]

There hardly possible to find out the woman candidates of Nashya Sheikh Community in the sector of Government service. The main reasons are that they are usually did not get 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 lives in town or such proper location. But the situation has been different in the case of villages. Here it can be say 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 Nathua Hat , 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

ISSN: 2229-4880

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 able to get the job under SSS 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 reservation 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 are being changed.[20]

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.[21]

Quite a number importance services are rendered by the *Nashya sheikhs* living in urban and rural areas of this 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* (trailors) 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 expert in mechanical works, electrical works, and masonry and colouring activities.[22]

TABLE-1.1

Occoputional 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 famour-	17%
D)	Solvent groups including service-	5%
	Total	**100%**

Source: Occoputional Condtition of Nashya sheikh Muslims as per survey report: Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B).[23]

ISSN: 2229-4880

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 jalpaigurri districts. Total populatioin cover was 6471. Data represent reveal 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 Farmars 17% and 5% were Solvent groups including Service.[24]

According to the West Bengal Commission for Backward classes Report- 8, the economic condition of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri district in general of this 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, ricksaw pooler, mason, unskilled day-labour, craftsmen etc. There females are also completed to work in the field to assist in the running 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 share cropper and about 50% service as agricultural labourers. Only 5% of them are engage in businesses; petty family businesses 3% and small trader /businessman 2%.[25]

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

TABLE-1.2

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%
1st 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%

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

ISSN: 2229-4880

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%.[26]

Due to lack of adequate education among them, their representation 'services are also very significant'. The percentage with regard to doctors, engineers', chartered accountants, other professionals etc from their class is almost 'Nil'. [27]

In recent timers 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.[28]

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 micro scopes few *Nashya sheikhs* who are known to be higher status service holder. They are least organize 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 ricksaw poolers of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri town reveal that seventy percent of ricksaw-walas of the town were of *Nashya sheikh* community. [29]

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 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.[30]

Notes and References:

1. Fulchad Barman, 'UttarbangerRajbansi Muslim Samaj: Prosango Nashya Sekh,(in Bengal) *'Angikar'(Sharad Sankhya),* Arbinda Press, Cooch Behar, 1417(Bengali Year), pp.181-184.
2. Suraj Chandra Ghoshal, *'A History of Cooch Behar'* (Translated from original Bengali) Chudhary,Khan Amanatullah, 'Coochbeharer Itihas' ,(*Ed*) Hiten Nag, National Library, Siliguri, Reprint, 2005, pp. 257-259.

ISSN: 2229-4880

3. *Ibid.*
4. *Land document of Tungru Nashya, Asaru Nashya, Piyar Mamud Sheikh,* (Koch Behar State in 1901).
5. Fulchad Barman,*op. cit.*
6. Bishnu Prasad Mukhapadhaya, *op. cit.*
7. Tapan Kumar Biswas, ' Nashya sekh namak Musalman samaj ki agiyea jete parbe?', '*Uttar Banga Sambad,'(in Bengali)* in 27th August 2015, p. 7.
8. Umesh Sharma, *Jalpaiguri Raybahadur-Khanbahadur*, Granthatirtha, Kolkata, 2001, p. 56.
9. Personal interview of *Amjat Hossain, Sahidul Islam* by the author, on 29-10-2015, 11 a.m., at Dhupguri, Gadum.
10. Personal interview of Kochimuddin, Tachiruddin, Hachen Ali, Rahimuddin, Muklechar Rahaman by the author, On 15.06.2015 at Duramari,Nathua,Falakata, Cooch Behar
11. Pasarul Alam, *Uttarbanger Anagrasar Muslim Samaj*(in Bengali), Sahajpath, Uttardinajpur, 2004, p.21.
12. Personal interview of Kochimuddin, Tachiruddin, Hachen Ali, Rahimuddin, Muklechar Rahaman by the author, On 15.06.2015 at Duramari,Nathua.
13. Personal interview of *Bulbul Rahaman* (Teacher) by the author, on05-11-2015, 2 p.m., at Shisabari.
14. Personal interview of *Mahhamad Abas* by the author, on10-11-2015, 10.30 a. m.,at Banarhat.
15. Umesh Sharma, *op. cit.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. Personal interview of *Amjat Hossain, Sahidul Islam* by the author, on 29-10-2015, 11 a.m., at Dhupguri, Gadum.
18. Personal interview of *Bulbul Rahaman* (Teacher) by the author, on05-11-2015, 2 p.m., at Shisabari.
19. Personal interview of *Aminur Rahaman, Abul Hossain* by the author, on25-10-2015, 12 noon, at Dewmali, Joteswar.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Sheikh RahimMondal, *Dynamics of Muslim Society,* Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1999, p. 186.
22. Sheikh Rahim Mondal, 'Muslim Minority in Koch Behar: Their History and Culture', in 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.
23. *Occoputional Condtition of Nashya sheikh Muslims as per survey report: Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.).*
24. *Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (U.B.),* 1998,p. 3.

ISSN: 2229-4880

[25]. *Ibid.*

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

[27]. *West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes-Report-8, op. cit.*

[28]. *Ibid.*

[29]. Sheikh Rahim Mondal, 'Muslim Minority in Koch Behar: Their History and Culture', in 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.

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

ISSN: 2229-4880

Karatoya

NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol. 10 March 2017

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal Published Annually)

UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities, Serial No. 42512

Editor –in-Chief

Dr. Sudash Lama

Associate Editor

Mr. Varun Kumar Roy

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
RAJARAMMOHUNPUR, DIST. DARJEELING
WEST BENGAL, INDIA, PIN: 734013
PHONE: 0353-2580998

Karatoya: NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol. 10 March 2017

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal Published Annually)

UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities, Serial No. 42512

Editorial Office

Department of History,
University of North Bengal, P.O. North Bengal University
District: Darjeeling, West Bengal, India, Pin: 734013
Telephone: 0353-2580998
Email: historydept.nbu@gmail.com

Editor –in-Chief

Dr. Sudash Lama

Associate Editor

Mr. Varun Kumar Roy

Editorial Members

Prof. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar, Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya, Dr. Amrita Mondal

Note from the Editor-in-Chief

On behalf of the Department of History, University of North Bengal It is my privilege to present to the readers the Volume 10 (2017) of the Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History. The journal has incorporated the research papers from ancient Indian History, Medieval Indian History and Modern Indian History and contemporary as well. The Volume 10 is being published after all the articles having been refereed and peer reviewed and with the ISSN 2229-4880. The Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History is a UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities with Serial No. 42512

The editor of the journal do not judge for the facts stated, opinions expressed and conclusions reached, it is entirely that of the authors concern and the editor of the journal accepts no responsibility for the same.

It is my solemn duty to express my gratitude to our Honurable Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Finance Officer for their generous concern on Academic Endeavour. I am thankful to my colleagues of the Department of History for their warm encouragement and necessary cooperation for publishing this journal. Mr Varun Kr. Roy, associate editor of this volume deserved huge appreciation for his constant help in publishing this volume.

I am also grateful to all the contributors for providing valuable research papers. Last but not least, the Officials and the Staffs of the North Bengal University Press deserved heartiest thanks for their cooperation in printing the journal within limited span of time.

Dr. Sudash Lama

Contents

Buddhists and Buddhist Legacies in Modern Bengal 1

Dr. Karubaki Datta

History of Buddhism: Its Advent and Spread in Darjeeling Hills 20

Dr. Sudash Lama and Gyamit Lepcha

Comparative Study of Nagara and Vesara/Chalukyan Style of Temple Architecture 41

Arka Acharjee

Situating the Historical Chronicles of Tripura in Traditional Indian Historiography 60

Deepayan Chakraborty

Historical Assessment of Floral and Faunal Representation of Ancient Indian Sculpture 82

Dr. Sudash Lama & Anamika Choudhury

Nashya Sheikhs of North Bengal in Historical Perspectives: A Study of Ethnicity& Identity Dynamic 95

Md Nabiul Islam

Islamization of the Kamarupā Text *'Amritkundā'* 113

Chanchal Adhikary

Urbanisation, Trade and Markets in Colonial Bengal: A Case Study of Murshidabad (C. 1757-1857) 122

Varun Kumar Roy

Colonial Penetration, Land Revenue Reforms and Transition of Cooch Behar from a benevolent to a Predatory State 1772-1923 135

Shelly Das

Sarojini Naidu and the Cause of Indian Women 142

Roshani Rai

Partition and the Saga of Uprooted Women in West Bengal: A Review 150

Madhuparna Mitra Guha

A Glance on the Movement for Democracy in Sikkim (1947-1975) 164

Anira Phipon Lepcha

Bengal-Bihar Merger Movement of 1956: A Glance of West Dinajpur, A District of West Bengal 175

Arun Ghosh

Lepcha-Bhutia Relations in Sikkim from Mid-Seventeenth Century to Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Study of Its Historiography 200

Rupan Sarkar

From Obscurity to a Sub-Divisional Headquarter: Siliguri in Colonial Period 210

Minakshee Kumari

Meghnad Saha: Scientist and Crtique 232

Gourav Lama

Role of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Combating Women Trafficking in Darjeeling Hills 251

Dr. Ujjwal Bhui and Persis Mukhia

Fifty Years of Naxalbari Uprising: Looking Back 270

Dr. Swapan Kumar Pain

Exploring Roots of Ethnic Convergence of the Indigenous and the Exogenous Hill People: A Historical Study of Colonial Darjeeling. 281

Tahiti Sarkar

Crime, Criminality and Punishment in Colonial Darjeeling District 298

Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya

Karatoya: NBU J. Hist. Vol. 10

ISSN: 2229-4880

NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY OF ETHNICITY& IDENTITY DYNAMICS

Md Nabiul Islam[1]

Abstract

North Bengal comprises of Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Alipurduar and Kalimpong districts. The residential Muslim population is one of the most important indigenous people of this region and all together as per census encompasses 25 percent of the total population in North Bengal. In this context the Muslims are the most important minority religious group in this region. They have been living in this region, even before their conversion to Islam and a large portion of indigenous Hindu population converted to Islam in 15th to 18th century. This research paper deals with the Nashya Sheikh of North Bengal with special reference to their ethnicity and Identity dynamics.

Keywords *: Nashya, Nasto, Gentiles, Bhabe Musalman, Rajbanshi Muslim.*

Now a central question emerges that – "who are the *Nashyas*?"The Muslims who resided in Koch, Mech, Polia, and Rajbangsi societies etc. were basically converted in Muslims from these communities, who later on were known as *Nashyas*. It is these *Nashyas* who are popularly known as *Nashya Sheikh.*[1] During the period of 13th to 17th century Muslims attack occurred frequently in Kamrup, Kamtapur and Koch Behar. Perhaps for this might be the reasons for which Islam entered in North-Eastern part of India? The Brahmans, who were the holder and protector of the

[1] Md Nabiul Islam, PhD scholar, Dept. of History, North Bengal University

ISSN: 2229-4880

society, announced the indigenous peoples as a fallen group for the untouchability problem with Muslims. Sometimes the villages become fallen by the entrance way of Muslims soldiers.[2] These outcaste peoples become spoiled *(Nasto)* and religion less. These peoples were compelled to convert into Islam. Still they were spoiled (*Nasto)* and religion less to the upper castes people. Gradually the word 'Nashya' had originated from the above mentioned term '*Nasto*' as a distorted pronunciation.[3] We found the name of "Panbor Nashya" as a recipient, fathers name "Asaru Nashya", caste Muslim from a reference of document in 1901(Koch Behar state). Now I would like to shed light on "Sheikh". The word Sheikh means "Greatest". The Sufi saints like Sheikh JalaluddinTabrizi who came to the undivided Bengal from Afganisthan, used the word Sheikh in front of their name. The Nashya Muslims protested about their dishonourable title and after refusing that title they introduced them self as Sheikh as the disciples of "Sheikh" and used the title Sheikh. For an example we can say that we found the name of Mamud Sheikh whose father name was Tangru Nashya, caste Muslim.[4] But here it's noticeable that the migrated Sheikh use the title Sheikh in front of their name and the Nashya used title after their name. For an example we can say the name of Jalaluddin Tabrazi and Piyar Mamud Sheikh. With this respect it may be mention that after the conversion into Islam, the Nashya Sheikh started ideological struggle with Sufism by the influence of Shariatism and got change their names and title. After changing the names like Tangru, Sandu, Domashu, Pedda, Tonda which belongs to Rajbansi community, they started to use the name like Hajrat, Suleman, Abubaquar, Osman which belongs to Arabian origin. Vis a Vis they started to refuse their title Nashya and also they refuse their title sheikh as the title of "Shia community". They started to use of surnames like Rahaman, Ali, Main, Hussain, Sarkar, Islam, Ahmed, Uddin, Hoque, Abedin etc. At present simultaneously they are also using their previous surnames.[5] If we look for

ISSN: 2229-4880

the answer for this, then we have to go through the anthropological study of the community. The similarities we find among the people of six districts of North Bengal, Purnia district of Bihar and Dinajpur and Rungpur districts of Bangladesh with Nashya sheikh to some extent reflect their old connection with each other. The Mongoloyed community and Rajbangsi community people had been living in this particular area. There are four kinds of people like Koch, Mech, Polia and Rajbangsi indigenous people. The various kind of reason were responsible for the conversation of huge numbers of people four community such as oppression and suppression of Brahmanism, social untouchably and economic and political. This process of conversion in Bengal continued from Sen. Period to British period. The new converted Muslim community wanted to prove them self as an indigenous community. Because the indigenous community felt themselves as a upper class within Rajbangsi society.[6]

In this regard the famous politician and social worker Upendranath Barman wrote that, 'originally the Rajbangsi Muslims were converted from Hindu society and they entitle Nashya Sheikh. In this regard we have to mention another eminent writer's view about Nashya Sheikh. Panchanan Barma an eminent Rajbangsi leader in colonial North Bengal also noticed the conversion of Rajbangsi into Nashya Sheikh in large number, since the heydays of his career as an advocate. The term Nashya was came from the word '*Nasto*' as such kind of community were converted from conservative Hindu society that's why they were announced by the Hindu as diluted or *Nasto,* even in the government records, Gazette, *Dalil* etc. Nashya Sheikh however speaks in Rajbangsi language. Not only in language their food habits, dress up, culture, profession etc. are very much similar that of the Rajbangsi's. Nashya Sheikh are peace loving and has a cordial relation with their neighbours. Religiously

ISSN: 2229-4880

they are also liberal and less orthodox, even they are also very much close to Hindu Rajbansi people and it is remarkable that among them the Purdha system was very rare. But economically Nashya Sheikh were dependent on village Cultivation, very few among them were service holder as the same time they were not interested in business, Small handicraft Industry. Though cultivation was their main profession yet they were mostly landless. As a result most of them are below the poverty line.[7]

To Risley goes the credit of first making anthropometric studies that strengthened the hands of sociologists, anthropologists and historians concerned with Indian phenomena, Risley took special interest in the Bengal situation. Among other things he contended, on the basis of anthropometric data on a limited scale, that the Muslims of Bengal were primarily local converts from the lower rungs of the Hindu caste ladder. It is understandable, if undeniable, that Ripley's pioneering venture is not above criticism. But there is little sense in treating his work as a mere scrap of paper, as both Fazle Robbie and Rahim would have us do. It would be a mistake to think that Riley made a generalisation about the whole Muslim community in intended to do was to show that the Bengal. All that he lower strata of both the Muslim and the Hindu society of Bengal sprang from the same ethnic stock. This is why he relied on the anthropometric data regarding Muslims collected from some one hundred and eighty-five jailed convicts belonging to lower echelons of the social structure. This again is Risley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal is a monumental work in two volumes, each volume being further sub-divided into two parts. Vol- I contain the Ethnographic Glossary and the second one contains detailed tables of Anthropometric Measurements. the reason for the corresponding measurements of the Hindus being taken caste wise to establish the identity of the former group not with the upper section of the Hindu society but the lower one, which is quite evident

from his figures" This resolves the doubt raised by Rahim as he points out: Risley took the measurement of the nose of very lower [sic] class Muslims, while, on the other hand, he had the nasal examination of the persons of all classes of the Hindus, The real point of weakness in Risley's work lies in the extreme meagreness of his data and the lack of adequate scientific method and equipment necessary for such investigations. Risley, however, had set the a process of inquiry which was carried on and stage for applied to the Bengal situation by P.C. Mahalanobis, B.S. Guha and others. he most systematic and adequate study has, however, been made through the collaboration of an anthropologist, D.N. Majumdar, and a statistician, C.R. Rao, under the auspices of the Indian Statistical Institute. The result of their work has been computed, analysed and incorporated into a quantitative study entitled Race Elements in Bengal. The most important feature of this investigation is that they proceeded independently on the basis of common data and arrived at similar conclusions. Among other problems, which they set themselves, one was whether Muslim and non-Muslim groups can be said to belong to two different populations Beverley, and if n0t, what was the relative place of Muslim groups, vis-a-vis the Hindu castes and tribes. It is not our purpose to go into the main lines of their investigations. We content ourselves with certain broad conclusions with closest bearing on our problem, which vindicate the position of Risley. To quote from the Report: As regards the relative position of Muslim groups, we notice that nine groups out of a total of fifteen fall within a narrow range of mean nasal height (21.80 to 22.20). All these nine groups have almost identical mean values as the two Namasudra groups, five have lower mean values and stand very close to tribal cluster and only one, i.e. Muslim of Dacca [the name applied to a group under study] occupies a position close to the caste groups. The Report proceeds: If we agree as to the competence of nasal height in defining group divergences, I feel that we should

ISSN: 2229-4880

look among the tribal and scheduled caste non-Muslim groups of Bengal for a possible origin of Muslim population of Bengal, and not in the high caste groups, a fact which differentiates the Muslims of U.P., who cluster with the higher castes in nasal height from those of their co religionists in Bengal. The serological data collected by Majumdar from practically all the districts of Bengal lead to the same. The Candalas have changed their caste name to Namasudra since the'census of 1901.[8]

Referring to the Koch women of north Bengal with special reference to Rangpur, Glazier observes: the women of the common people wear the old Kamrup dress, which offers a marked contrast to the common Saree of Bengal. It consists of a square piece of coloured cloth, indigo-striped, passing under the arms and round the back, so as to cross in front where the upper corners are tucked in, leaving the head and shoulders bare, and reaching to the knees below. All women, Hindus and Muhammadans alike, dress in this fashion; and they also attend the markets and transact the buying and selling, to the almost total exclusion of men. Shihab ud-Din Talish writes, The Muslims whom we met in Assam are Assamese in their habits and Muhammadans but in their name, In fact they liked the Assamese better than us.[9]

Foreign elements must be looked for chiefly in the ranks of the Saids, Pathans and Mughals. Even here there are many who are descended from Hindus, and ... high caste converts are often allowed to assume these titles, and, in some cases, to intermarry with those who are really of foreign descent, their number, however, is possibly only a small proportion of the total, and may be neglected. If the above estimates be taken as a basis, it would appear that the strength of the foreign element amongst the Muhammadans of Bengal cannot, at the most, exceed four millions, or say, one-sixth of the total number of persons who profess the faith of Islam, Besides

ISSN: 2229-4880

local conversion, the other aspect of the question, concerning the social and cultural background of the majority of the indigenous converts, is also a very complex one. History does not help dispel the mist surrounding the actual process of conversion of such a vast number of people in the country, beyond a few recorded sporadic case; these are quite inadequate for making generalizations on their basis. Besides, those cases have elusive reference to the upper sections of the Hindu society. Not much can be made out of this. Common knowledge and impressions, backed up by ethnological facts, point strongly to a conclusion about which history maintains an unfortunate silence, this need not take us by surprise nor drive us to wrong premises. If the conversion of the masses does not Gait, find place in history, the history of the masses is of recent development. The affinities of the Muslim masses of east Bengal have been observed with the Chandalas and the Pods, and those of north Bengal with the Rajbansis and Koces. The conclusion is based not only on their striking physical resemblance, but also on the fact that the proportion of Hindus of other castes in these parts of the country has always been very small. The Koces are generally supposed to have spread in any numbers only as far westward as the Mahananda, which runs through the Purnia district. East of that river, where the bulk of the population was Koch, no less than two-thirds were Muslims, while to the west of it, where the Koch element was weak, less than one-third of the population was returned under the religion. The main castes were the Rajbansis (including the Koces) in north Bengal, and the Caalas, 3rd and others in east Bengal. It may also be recalled that the Report of Maunder and Rao points out that nine out of the fifteen Muslim groups spread over the different districts of Bengal studied by them have almost identical mean values in the matter of nasal height as the two Namasdra groups, and five have lower mean values and stand very close to the tribal cluster. The Muslims belonging to this social and economic level constituted, at the census

ISSN: 2229-4880

of 1901, about five-sixths of the total Muslim population of Bengal. Here again Rahim as his own statistical figures and oonclusions. We quote him without comment: of the 70 per cent converted Muslims, at least half of them came from the upper strata of the Hindu and the Buddhist communities and the rest was recruited from the lower class. Thus the Bengali Muslim population was formed of about 30 per cent converts from the upper class non-Muslims and 35 per cent converts from the lower strata of the Hindu society. This explodes the theory that the Bengali Muslims were converts mostly from the low caste people of the Hindus. No society of the sub-continent could claim to represent a larger percentage of the immigrant Muslims and converts from the upper class Hindus as well as the Buddhists.[10]

If the indigenous element was a significant constituent in the forces of change and adjustment, the fact that the character of the Muslim masses in Bengal was predominantly rural was not less consequential for the development of Islam in the land. Islam may be characterized as 'a religion of the townspeople', and to the Muslim, 'a town was a settlement in which his religious duties and his social ideals could be completely fulfilled. While discussing the question of Indian Muslims from this standpoint, Mujeeb notes: Islam has, in all countries, promoted urban life, and Muslim civilization has everywhere been essentially urban in character ... the standards of life and culture have been urban: the ideally good life has been life 'among men', in habitations where the variety of habits, tastes and conditions has provided sufficient opportunity for cultural and spiritual experience. Educated Indian Muslims have, therefore, thought of their community as consisting primarily of city-dwellers, and judged themselves as a people setting up and conforming to standards of city-life; the Uneducated, uninformed population of the countryside has not been given the consideration to which it is entitled by the very fact of its existence. This is

ISSN: 2229-4880

understandable, because, almost the whole contribution of the Muslims in manners, in literature, in art, is seen in the cities. Bengal marks a significant departure from this pattern of Islamic culture.[11] In Bengal the Muslims appear to take less readily to a town life than the Wolf, E.R., passim; Watt, W.M. Muhammad at Mecca, passim; also, his Islam and the Integration of Society[12]

There is considerable controversy regarding origin and ethnic identity of the Nashyas. It is usually believed that they are the converts to indigenous ethnic groups of North Bengal and bear a mixed ancestry. Actually they are considered to be the descendant of those Muslims who entered the fold of Islam from some indigenous groups, namely, Mech, Koch, Rajbansi and Polia. History reveals that the Pirs and Fakirs as well as some ruling personality's of late Medieval era made a significant contribution to the growth of Nashya community in North Bengal.[13]

The etymological meaning of the word Nashya is rooted in Bengali word 'Nasto'. The Rajbansi Hindus and others Hindu caste groups of the locality regard the Nashyas as their fallen (degraded of converted) section thus called them as Nasto-jati, which in local colloquial popularized is as Nashya Jyati. Since the Nashyas are converts of recent past they also known as Nao-Musalman, i.e., the new Muslim. They are highly integrated with the local population, i.e., Rajbansis, particularly in respect to their language and little traditions. Thus, at first sight they appear to be Rajbansis (a local Hindu caste group), but are really an indigenous Muslim group. Considering their ethnic origin and social culture history the Nashya are popularly known as Rajbansi Musalman or Rajbansis.[14]

They are also designated as Bhabe Musalman. It was only a few decades before the Independence that the Nashyas were en masse exposed to and influenced

 ISSN: 2229-4880

by the process of Islamization. As a result, in recent times, they are integrated with the structural framework of Muslim society in Bengal. But they still retain many elements of their pre-Islamic past (tradition) which gave them a unique identity. Considering their ethnic origin, social history, cultural attributes and retention of many elements of per-Islamic traditions the Nashya are not favourably looked upon by other Muslims (Asraf or Khas) of the region. In this regard it may be noted that there is a Persian word 'Nosb' meaning a drinker. The Nashya perhaps had the drinking habit which is forbidden in Islam. Hence they were treated as a fallen Muslims. But the empirical reality of such a view of the higher status Muslims is difficult to establish.[15]

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 labourers. Once there was many Nashya Jote-dars, but nowadays for various reasons they have lost their big holdings. 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 Nashyas of both the rural and the urban areas are poor. The Nashya community is endogamous in character. The community is further sub-divided on the lineage which is reflected by the use of their surnames. The most popular surnames among the Nashya are Bapari, Pramanik, Sarkar, Sardar, etc. Intermarriages take place among them. Hence there is no social differentiation on the basis of surnames.[16]

As a community the Nashya are endogamous. Marriage between Nashya with other Muslim groups, particularly with so called higher social status is not a usual

ISSN: 2229-4880

practice. Monogamy is the most common type of marriage among them, but polygamy may occasionally be found (3%). The average age at marriage of Nashya males and females are 23 years and 17 years respectively. Marriage by negotiation is a traditional practice. Widow Remarriage is allowed among them. Both surrogate and levirate systems are also followed. Payment of bride price was once prevalent among the Nashyas, but nowadays, it is completely replaced by the dowry system. The marriages are solemnized as per Islamic rules, but rites and rituals in marriage are very much governed by the local traditions. Simple nuclear families are in prevalence among the Nashyas. However, joint families are still noticed among the landowning families. The average family size of the Nashyas is of 5 members. The Nashyas follow both classificatory and denotative types of kinship terminology. Their kinship terms show a mixture of Bengali, Arabic and Urdu terms mixed with the local language. An important feather that occurs among the Nashyas as a result of Islamization is in the realm of kinship and marriage alliances with the cross-cousins (FSD and MBD) and are normally avoided the parallel cousins (FBD and MSD). But in the present time Nashya Muslims are adopting both the parallel and cross-cousin marriages.[17]

Traditionally, the Nashya are organized among themselves at the village and local level through elder's council locally known as paich, had multifarious roles to govern the community and to look after their socio-religio-cultural issues. But today it has lost many of its traditions due to influence of formal statuary panchayats and party politics. The Nashya today participate in modern political process, but their position in power politics is of peripheral significance. The representation of the Nashya in different political bodies at local, regional, state and national level is

however very low. The socio-economic backwardness of the Nashyas is considerate to be the primary reasons of their political marginalization.[18]

The state of education among the Nashyas is very disheartening. For historical, situational and socio-cultural reasons the educated middle class has not been properly developed among the Nashyas. Since the content of the middle class among them is significantly very small, the Nashyas do not figure in any significant number either in white-collar jobs or in politico-administrative matters of their locality. A case study among the Nashyas of a Village in Darjeeling district reveals that, among them 40.27 percent was illiterate and 59.73 percent literate and educated. Among the literate and educated 27.82 percent had primary education, 24.86 percent had secondary education and only 7.05 percent had higher secondary and college education. Another case study of a Cooch Behar village shows that among the Nashya 48 percent was illiterate and 52 percent was literate and educated. Of the literate 24 percent and 5.38 percent had higher secondary and college education.[19]

The Nashya are Sunnis and follow the tradition of Honafi School. In social-religious matters they follow the guidelines of the Barelvi School (Madrasha) of thought. But in recent times the Deobondi School (Madrasha) of thought through Tableau activities has made significant impact on them. The belief in Pirism is still a typical feature among them. Thus they are affiliated to the Muslim saints or Pirs. The Nashyas celebrate all the major Muslim festivals and perform the basic religious rites and ceremonies. But they tend to accept without much criticism the traditional social customs, which have passed to them from previous generation. This continuity of little traditions facilitates them to integrate and assimilate the local society dominated by the Hindu Rajbansis. On the socio-religious level the Nashya cultivate the traits of

ISSN: 2229-4880

Islamic great tradition to operate within the framework of wider Muslim society. The process of Islamization helped them in achieving a social position within the structure of a Muslim Society in Bengal. Local Moktabs, madrashas and masjids (mosques) which are ether associated with the Barelvi or the Deobondi traditions play a very significant role in Islamizing the Nashya community. The major life-cycle rituals observed by the Nashya are on the occasions of birth, circumcisions (in case of boy), marriage and death. The basic rites in respect of all these events are followed and performed according to local traditions. The Nashya women do not follow the strict seclusion or Purdah system, which is a characteristic feature of Muslims belonging to the upper strata. The women folk of poor Nashya families participate in agriculture and other economic activities to support their family. The Nashya enjoy ambiguous social position. The Muslims of upper social strata usually keep a social distance from them on the ground of their pride being 'high-born' and attributes of Islamic culture. But the Nashya believe themselves as a part of Muslim Umma (community) and strongly condemn the ethno centric views of other Muslim groups of so-called higher status who accorded the lower social position to them.[20]

For achieving higher social status Nashya followed the path of Islamization in various aspects of their social-cultural life even in naming and designating their own community. They claimed themselves as Nashya-Sheikhs to elevate their social position within the larger framework of the Muslim society. They have adopted the title sheikh in the ground of their affiliation to Pirs who happened to be the said social (ethnic) category. Apropos the Sufi sheikh they named their community Nashya Sheikhs and thereby justified their social position in the local society. But the high status Muslims in general are not ready to accept the Nashya Sheikhs at their par. This is because of the fact that the Nashyas used the title 'Sheikh' as suffix,

ISSN: 2229-4880

but not as a prefix, which has been a normal practice among the higher status Sheikhs of India. This debate and counter-debate lead to a very complex social situation and it motivated the Nashya community to think about themselves in respect to their social position in Muslim Society.[21]

A cultural-duality is extremely visible in Nashya community. As a Muslim group, the Nashya have been Islamizing some of their cultural traits to get a social status (recognition) within the larger framework of Muslim society, and for this they interact with the other Muslim groups of their locality. On the socio-religious level the Nashyas cultivate the traits of Islamic great tradition for achieving a wider Muslim identity. The institutions through which they cultivate the Islamic great tradition are the Mosques and Madrashas. In recent times the most important organization of the Nashyas is Tablique-Jamat. This is purely a religious mission and a movement, and its basic goal is religious devotion rather than Jehad. While on the other hand, the backward socio-economic condition of the Nashyas and the ethno-political situation of the region have made them ethnicity conscious, and forced them to sink into the cell. As a matter of fact on the politico-cultural level the Nashya emphasized to revive and cultivate the traditional cultural traits of their pre-Islamic past as a mark of their ethno-cultural identity and community solidarity. The media through which they revitalize their tradition are dialect, material culture, food habit and various elements of the little tradition. These they follow along with their non-Muslim neighbours. For various reasons an ethnic trend is getting prominence in the Nashya society. A very small section of their leadership has been demanding Kamatapuri language as their mother tongue. These two social processes of different nature i.e. universalistic Islamization (Muslimization) and particularistic traditionalization among the Nashya of the present times. These unique features of

ISSN: 2229-4880

social organization and cultural dualism are maintained by them through the process of compartmentalization.[22]

The socio-economic life of the Nashya which we have examined in the foregoing sections clearly reveals that they have been suffering from the stigma of backwardness. Their low social position, lack of educational advancement, political marginalization and inadequate representation in the fields of trade, commerce and government service have put them in to a precarious social position and emerging ethno-political situation of the country made the Nashya Sheikhs ethnic as well as class conscious. This mind-set has motivated them to sink into the cell. As a result, socio-politically the Nashyas have been emphasizing to revive their indigenous cultural traits of pre-Islamic past as a mark of their ethnic identity and community-based class solidarity. The media which they follow along with their neighbouring non-Muslim communities are the Rajbansis. The emerging ethno-political movement of North Bengal and neighbouring areas of North-East India as well as other parts of the country have made a great impact on the Nashya community. The backward class movement and the State recognition of the OBCs have also influenced the said society. In recent times the Nashya Sheikhs living in different parts of North Bengal are very much aware of their ethnic, social, economic and political positions. Various obstacles to social uplift gradually strengthening their 'in-group' ('we') feeling. This has made them ethnic as well as class conscious. Consequently ethnicity is getting prominence in the Nashya society.[23]

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

ISSN: 2229-4880

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). The Samiti is Government Registered Social Organization of OBC Muslim in West Bengal (Reg. No. S-95179).The community leader of the Nashya Sheikh sans many other Muslim groups are now the active members of UBAMAA 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 network 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 leader of the Samity are ended very successful in scheduling the Nashya Sheikh as one of the Muslim OBC group in West Bengal (Notification No. 84-BCW/RC-302/97, dated 1 march 1999). 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 benefits. The activities of the Samiti have created an atmosphere, which encourage 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.[24]

Ethnically, most of the Muslims of the district are not very different from the indigenous Rajbanshis or Paliyas but they are undoubtedly Muslims who show signs of foreign extracts" (Page -88). There are many other observations which go to show that the physical features, socio-cultural characteristics of the Koch, Rajbanshis (Scheduled Caste) resemble with those of their Muslim counter-parts here, majority of whom have been converted from the Rajbanshis. Deeds of land produced show the names recorded as Saban Nashya, Jamir Nashya, Sayam Nashya etc. All the above records and evidences to show that they are an identifiable low social Muslim community who in the past four centuries have emerged as a result of conversion from the low ranked communities (Rajbanshi, Koch, Paliya). They speak the local Rajbanshi dialect in North Bengal. Their life style resembles in every respect, such as, dress, food, occupation, physical features, beliefs, customs, socio cultural and economic activities etc. with the Rajbanshi and the Paliyas. Although the Nashya Sheikhs are Muslims they have still retained their traditional customs, rites and rituals followed in connection with birth, marriage, death and in different festive occasions. Majority of them live in villages. A few, who reside in town due to their employment there, still have close connection with their relatives and fellow people in villages.[25]

ISSN: 2229-4880

REFERENCES

1. Fulchad Barman, 'UttarbangerRajbansi Muslim Samaj: Prosango Nashya Sekh,(in Bengal) *'Angikar'(Sharad Sankhya),* Arbinda Press, Cooch Behar, 1417(Bengali Year), pp.181-184.
2. Suraj Chandra Ghoshal, *'A History of Cooch Behar'* (Translated from original Bengali) Chudhary,Khan Amanatullah, 'Coochbeharer Itihas' ,(*Ed*) Hiten Nag, National Library, Siliguri, Reprint, 2005, pp. 257-259.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Land document of Tungru Nashya, Asaru Nashya, Piyar Mamud Sheikh,* (Koch Behar State in 1901).
5. Fulchad Barman,*op. cit.*
6. Bishnu Prasad Mukhapadhaya, *op. cit.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
17. Herbert Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, vol. 1*, 1892, pp. 45-65.
18. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-138.
22. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, pp. 122-130.
23. *Ibid.*
30. Sheikh Rahim Mondal, *op. cit.*, p. 315.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*,p.317.
34. Sheikh Rahim Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya shaik of North Bengal,' of Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mitra(Ed.) *Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, pp.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 320-321
40. *Ibid.*,p. 321.
41. *Ibid.*, p.322
42. *West Bengal commission forBackward Classes-Report-8, 29th Oct, 1997.*