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## **CONTENTS**

<b>DECONSTRUCTING THE ‘NATIONALIST’ CONSTRUCTION OF ‘INDIANISATION’ OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: ISSUES IN CONNECTIVITY AND CULTURE (up to CE-1300)</b>	
Aksadul Alam	121
<b>BANGLADESH AND UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS: THE QUEST FOR A NATIONAL POLICY TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF UNCERTAINTY</b>	
Rashed Uz Zaman and Niloy Ranjan Biswas	155
<b>THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN BANGLADESH: JUSTIFYING HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH</b>	
Asma Binta Shafiq and Sharmin Afroz	183
<b>UNPUBLISHED UMAYYAD AND ABBASID SILVER COINS IN THE BANGLADESH NATIONAL MUSEUM</b>	
Shariful Islam and Muhammad Manirul Hoque	205
<b>WOMEN’S MOBILITY, MENTAL MAPPING AND MARGIN OF FREEDOM IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACE: CASE OF WOMEN WORKING IN NEW SERVICE SECTORS OF DHAKA CITY</b>	
Wasifa Tasnim Shamma	233
<b>Book Reviews</b>	
<b>MAHBUBA NASREEN, <i>WOMEN AND GIRLS: VULNERABLE OR RESILIENT?</i></b>	
Sajal Roy	251
<b>ZAHID UL AREFIN CHOUDHURY, SAMINA LUTHFA, KABERI GAYEN, VULNERABLE EMPOWERMENT: CAPABILITIES AND VULNERABILITIES OF FEMALE GARMENT WORKERS IN BANGLADESH</b>	
Fahima Durrat	255

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## **DECONSTRUCTING THE ‘NATIONALIST’ CONSTRUCTION OF ‘INDIANISATION’ OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: ISSUES IN CONNECTIVITY AND CULTURE (up to CE-1300)**

Aksadul Alam\*

### **Abstract**

The paper focuses on one of the ‘popular’ academic discourses of ‘Indianisation’, ‘Hinduisiation’ or ‘Sanskritisation’ of Southeast Asia. Indian intelligentsia developed all these counter-hegemonic academic notions against the colonial construction that India, in her early days, was ‘uncivilised land of savagery’ and the British came to this land with a mission of civilizing India. But the approaches of the ‘nationalist’ scholars ultimately boasted up the ‘cultural imperialism’ of India over Southeast Asia. And, the megalomaniac notion of *Pax Britannica* became a counter-hegemonic *Pax Indiana*. Thus, the paper sheds light on the academic ‘scramble’ over the issue of designating Southeast Asia as an ‘extended sphere of influence’ or ‘cultural colony’ of either India or China and offers reinterpretation of early connectivity issues and cultural interactions between these regions by using geographic lens with special reference to the geographical-cultural territory of Bengal.

### **Introduction**

The aim of the paper is to raise question against one of the ‘popular’ academic issues of ‘Indianisation’ of Southeast Asia that developed as a landmark in Indian historiography over the decades. In support of the question, the paper offers an interpretation of deconstructing this ‘colonial’ and ‘nationalist’ construction of ‘cultural hegemony’ of India over Southeast Asia as an extended ‘sphere of influence’. The paper also sheds light on connectivity issues and mutual interactions in commercial and cultural spheres of India and mainland-maritime Southeast Asia in the ancient period with special reference to ‘Bengal’<sup>1</sup> by using geographical lens.

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<sup>1</sup> The name ‘Bengal’, in the period with which I am concerned in this paper, did not exist, nor does it exist today. But from the practical point it is much more convenient to use that name and it should be taken to denote present-day Bangladesh, plus the States of West Bengal and Tripura of India, some parts of Assam – a territorial unit in the historical sense, and often recognised by geographers as a ‘region’ within the South Asia. Apart from them, I am also aware of the fact that the adjacent territory of Bihar, mainly Bhagalpur, Monghyr and Gaya districts and the lower Brahmaputra basin, which was more or less in the common orbit of historical process with Bengal in the ancient period, should be taken into consideration as well. To be more precise, the land inhabited by the linguistic Bangla-

Therefore, ‘geographical factors in history’ shall be the interpretive strategy to establish the argument. After analysing all these aspects in brief, the paper deconstructs the hegemonic discourse of ‘Greater India’<sup>2</sup> or ‘Indianisation’<sup>3</sup> of Southeast Asia in a section before the concluding remarks. At first, it is necessary to clarify the use of the term ‘deconstruction’. The clarification of the idea of deconstruction is the ‘analytic examination of something (such as a theory) often in order to reveal its inadequacy’.<sup>4</sup> This definition has been consciously taken to prove the intention of using the term not as a ‘critical methodology’ following Derridian modality.

The paper is, by and large, based on primary and secondary sources. The mentionable primary sources are epigraphic documents, contemporary literary documents and traveller’s accounts. But the paucity of source materials, their limited and somewhat ‘peculiar’ nature makes the task of such reconstructions difficult. There are some relevant books and articles which can be used in this paper as secondary sources. Among these, important discussions made by Nihar Ranjan Ray<sup>5</sup>, RC Majumdar<sup>6</sup>, Amitabha Bhattacharyya<sup>7</sup>, G Coedes<sup>8</sup>, HG Quaritch Wales<sup>9</sup>, Anjana Sharma<sup>10</sup>,

speaking group during Iliyas Shahi and Husain Shahi dynasties in the medieval age, is being implied as the land of ‘Bengal’ here.

<sup>2</sup> RC Majumdar, *India and Southeast Asia*, New Delhi: BR Publishing, 1979, Chapter 1, pp. 1-15; ‘Ancient Indian Colonization in Southeast Asia’, *The Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad Honorarium Lecture 1953-54*, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1963 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition); *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, Calcutta: Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, Agents, 1963 (2<sup>nd</sup> Revised and Enlarged Edition).

<sup>3</sup> G. Coedes, “Indianisation must be understood essentially as the expansion of an organised culture that was founded upon the Indian conception of royalty, was characterised by Hinduist or Buddhist cults, the mythology of the Purāṇas and the observance of the Dharmasāstras, and expressed itself in the Sanskrit language. It is for this reason that we sometimes speak of ‘Sanskritisation’ instead of ‘Indianisation’.” G Coedes, *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: East West Center Press, 1968, pp. 15-16; *The Making of Southeast Asia*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966; HG Quaritch Wales, *The Indianization of China and of Southeast Asia*, London: Bernard Quaritch, Ltd, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deconstruction>.

<sup>5</sup> Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Bangalir Itihas Adiparva*, (in Bangla), Kolkata: Dej Publishing, Enlarged 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1402 BS.

<sup>6</sup> RC Majumder, *India and Southeast Asia*, Delhi: BR Publishing, 1979; ‘Ancient Indian Colonization in Southeast Asia’, *The Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad Honorarium Lecture 1953-54*, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1963 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition); *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, Calcutta: Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, Agents, 1963 (2<sup>nd</sup> Revised and Enlarged Edition).

<sup>7</sup> Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Ancient and Early Medieval Bengal*, Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1977.

<sup>8</sup> G Coedes, *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: East West Center Press, 1968; *The Making of Southeast Asia*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966;

<sup>9</sup> HG Quaritch Wales, *The Indianization of China and of Southeast Asia*, London: Bernard Quaritch, Ltd, 1967.

Ranabir Chakravarti<sup>11</sup>, Suchandra Ghosh<sup>12</sup>, Rila Mukherjee<sup>13</sup> and Abdul Momin Chowdhury<sup>14</sup> can be valuable primers.

The scholars mentioned above have brought to light data regarding the broader issue of South and Southeast Asian Inter-connections, trade and commercial interactions and cross-cultural exchanges, though more comprehensive study and research need to be conducted in many areas. One area to be investigated is how and to what extent geographical factors played roles in the socio-cultural and religious processes in the pre-1300 days in these regions and why Bengal was the 'strongest' part and one of the major gateways<sup>15</sup> of this entire chain of contacts and communications that brought two geographically distant lands in close association. Geographical factors, cultural assimilative processes and syncretistic traditions made the issue unique for the region. Therefore, Bengal's role as a geographical and cultural territory in this whole academic discourse can be re-examined in relation to the question of deconstructing the nationalist approach to the discourse of 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia.

#### **Landmark Geographical Features<sup>16</sup>:**

Bengal termed as *āsamudrahimāchala* (lying between the Himalayas and the sea) land in ancient epigraphic documents. Nihar Ranjan Ray gives a very fascinating description of this land and its geographical location. According to him, the Himalayas surrounding Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in the north; the Brahmaputra river and valley in the north-east; the northern parallel plain land of Bhagirathi in the

<sup>10</sup> Anjana Sharma (ed), *Civilizational Dialogue: Asian Interconnections and Cross-cultural Exchanges*, New Delhi: ICCR, 2013

<sup>11</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, 'Befriending the Bay: Maritime Trade and the Eastern Seaboard of the Subcontinent (Prior to C 1500)', *52<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day Lecture*, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 3 January, 2004; 'The Bay of Bengal Network: Commercial and Cultural Interactions between South and Southeast Asia up to c. 15<sup>th</sup> Century', First Lecture (under UPE II Public Lecture Series), Calcutta University, 2 October, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Suchandra Ghosh, *Exploring Connectivity: Southeastern Bengal and Beyond*, Kolkata: Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Rila Mukherjee, *Pelagic Passageways: The Northern Bay of Bengal before Colonialism*, Delhi: Primus Books, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Abdul Momin Chowdhury, 'Bengal and Southeast Asia: Trade and Cultural Contact in the Ancient Period', *Ancient Trade and Cultural Contacts in Southeast Asia*, Bangkok: The Office of the National Culture Commission, Thailand, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Aksadul Alam, 'Bengal: the Gateway of Contacts and Communications between India and Southeast Asia – Early Phase', *The Dhaka University Studies*, Vol. 67, No 1, June 2010, pp. 89-104.

<sup>16</sup> Aksadul Alam, 'Geographical Factors in Connecting 'Bengal' with South and Southeast Asia: Issues in Trade and Culture (up to CE-1300)', *Special Lecture* at the Red Fort Complex in Delhi: Institute of Archaeology, Archaeological Survey of India, 14 July, 2016.

north-west till Darbanga; Garo-Khasia-Jayantia-Tripura-Chittagong hilly tracts in east extending up to the sea in the south; the mountainous highland and forest-laden plateau of Rajmahal-Santhal districts-Chhota Nagpur-Manbhum-Dhalbhum-Keonjhar-Mayurbhanj in the west; and the Bay of Bengal in the south. Gaud-Pundra-Varendra-Rādha-Sumha-Tāmrālipti-Samataṭa-Vāṅga-Vāṅgāla-Harikela – the *janapadas*; the villages, hills, fields, arid lands, dense and inaccessible forests drenched by Bhagirathi-Karotowa-Brahmaputra-Meghna-Padma of ancient Bengal are situated within the aforementioned physically bounded land. This geo-physically bounded land is the historic cradle of the multiple activities of the delta dwellers.<sup>17</sup>

Bengal, the largest delta in the world, is located at the easternmost part of Indian Subcontinent. Surrounded on the north, west and east by disconnected mountains or hill systems, thick forests and on the south by the sea, Bengal can be termed as ‘frontier zone’.<sup>18</sup> Some of its ‘unique’ geographical features are old and new alluvial land, many rivers and their tributaries, ‘open-door’ in south constituted by the Bay of Bengal, distinct climatic conditions and rainy season. As Bengal is situated in a ‘transition zone’ between India and mainland Southeast Asia, it forms the capstone of the arch formed by the Bay of Bengal. It is a comparatively narrow land-bridge between the subcontinent of India and Southeast Asia because of the Tibetan massif in the north. Enjoying this geographically strategic location, Bengal entered into commercial and cultural contacts with the lands beyond her geographical territory from the beginning of the Common era/ Circa era, if not earlier, both by land and sea. It is to be mentioned here that the Bengal delta is the only outlet to the sea for the land locked Gaṅgā Valley. With all these geo-features Bengal had to become an integral part of the ‘Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere’ (BBIS). Sunil Gupta proposed to express the Indo-Southeast Asian exchange dynamic in terms of its core functional area: The Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere (BBIS). Within this maritime area fundamental techno-cultural processes are observed – movements of ethnic-linguistic communities, opening of land-sea routes and ports, innovations in boat building and navigational technologies. The BBIS comprises littoral tracts surrounding the Bay of Bengal. Its hinterland includes Sri Lanka, the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent (the Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam and Bangladesh), the Chinese Province of Yunnan and the western part of Southeast Asia (Myanmar, coastal Thailand, coastal Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java). Major land and Sea routes connecting various areas of the

<sup>17</sup> Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Bangalir Itihas Adiparva*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>18</sup> Richard M Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204-1760*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

'hinterland' passed through the Bay of Bengal.<sup>19</sup> In this connection, Bengal got an opportunity of participating in sea-borne trade and commerce and consequent cultural contacts with coastal Indian territories, maritime Southeast Asia, maritime Arab and Mediterranean world.

The region roughly East of India and South of China (but excluding Australia and the Pacific Islands) has been generally called Southeast Asia, the separate entity and distinct in many ways from rest of Asia. It is a transitional area between East Asia and South Asia and is sometimes called as the 'Tropical Far East'.<sup>20</sup> In the context of geographical framework, Bengal and Southeast Asia have some close resemblances especially both regions are under the influence of same monsoonic wind system. Thus, scholars have found justification in grouping together the countries of 'Monsoon Asia' as opposed to Western and Central Asia.<sup>21</sup> Bengal has lot of common traits with Southeast Asia: rice and fish is the staple diet, chewing of betel nut and betel-leaf is common, and there are similarities in the way many tropical articles, such as bamboo, are used.

#### **Ancient Connectivity: Mainland and Maritime Contacts:**

The mainland as well as maritime and internal as well as external communication system has to be regulated by the geography of the region. Deep forests, highlands, rivers and mountainous barriers made the overland movements difficult for Bengal to keep contacts with the lands beyond. But the sea in the south has given her an opportunity for open communications with the maritime world from the antiquity. According to Amitabha Bhattacharyya, since the very remote past, different corners of Bengal were accessible to one another both by land and riverine courses, while Bengal itself was connected with the rest of India and extra-Indian territories by mainland and maritime routes.<sup>22</sup> There were an intense commercial and consequent religious and cultural contacts and exchanges between Bengal and other regions of the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and China. Far away areas, like

<sup>19</sup> Sunil Gupta, 'Early Indian Ocean in the Context of Indian Relationship with Southeast Asia', in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Vol. 1, Part-3 (India's Interaction with Southeast Asia), Chapter 7, eds. GC Pande, Centre for Studies in Civilization, Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 2006, pp. 111-12.

<sup>20</sup> RC Tiwari, 'Geography of Southeast Asia', in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Vol-1, Part-3 (India's Interaction with Southeast Asia), Chapter 7, eds. GC Pande, Centre for Studies in Civilization, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 2006, pp. 17-33.

<sup>21</sup> AL Basham, *The Civilizations of Monsoon Asia*, New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, 1974, pp. 8-10.

<sup>22</sup> Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Ancient and Early Medieval Bengal*, Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1977, p. 103.

the eastern Mediterranean regions, were also linked with the Bengal coast, though perhaps only indirectly.

**Overland/ Mainland Contacts:** Some external land routes have been documented in the *digvijaya* section of the *Sabhāparva* of the *Mahābhārata*<sup>23</sup>, the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa<sup>24</sup>, travelling accounts by Fa-Xian, Xuan Zang and I-Xing, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva<sup>25</sup>, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj-ud-din bin Siraj-ud-din al-Juzjani<sup>26</sup> and some inscriptions.<sup>27</sup> The existence of overland routes from Pāṭaliputra to Puṇḍravardhana, Puṇḍravardhana to Kamrupa, Kamrupa to Samataṭa, Samataṭa to Tāmralipti, Tāmralipti to Karṇasuvarna, Karṇasuvarna to Kaliṅga, Tāmralipti to Bodhgaya, Tāmralipti to Ayodhyā, Tāmralipti to Mithilā and Tāmralipti to Andhra has been acknowledged by the academia.<sup>28</sup> These routes which were changing their directions time to time served the purpose of intra-regional mobility and communication within Bengal and extended deep into some other regions of the Indian subcontinent and mainland Southeast Asian countries.

Three main land routes extending from Bengal to the west were the gateways of communications with North India and Central Asia. One of these land routes expands over the vast region from Puṇḍravardhana to Vārāṇasī and Ayodhyā, through Mithilā or northern Bihar, through Champā (near Bhagalpur), and Pāṭaliputra, near Bodhagayā. This particular route stretched all the way to the ports of Sind, Saurashtra and Gujarat. There are suggestions in the 15<sup>th</sup> century's *Puruṣaparikṣā* by Vidyāpati of a trade route between Gaud and Gujarat.<sup>29</sup> Hints of this road may also be gleaned from the account of Xuan Zang (first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE) and the stories of the

<sup>23</sup> There is a story in the *Mahābhārata*, as to how Bhīma subjugated eastern India and conquered Vaṅgas and the neighbouring coastal region. Panchanan Tarkaratna (ed & tr), *Mahābhārata*, in Bangla, Vol-1, Chapter XIV, Calcutta, 1830, p. 230.

<sup>24</sup> Following the accounts given by Kālidāsa it appears that Vaṅga was situated at the coastal areas of Bengal as the Vaṅgas are referred to as *nau-sādhanodyatān* and *garīgā śrotontareṣu*. Narayanram Acharya Kavyatirtha (ed.), *The Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa*, Canto. IV, pp. 33-36, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Bombay: Sanskrit Series, 1948.

<sup>25</sup> The *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva refers to merchants travelling from Puṇḍravardhana to Pāṭaliputra. *Kathāsaritsāgara*, tr CH Tawney, Vol. 2, Calcutta: JW Thomas, 1880.0

<sup>26</sup> *Tabakat-I Nasiri* of Minhaju-s Siraj, in *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, edited by HM Elliot and John Dowson, Delhi: Low Price Publications, reprinted, 2008, pp. 259-383.

<sup>27</sup> Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Ancient and Early Medieval Bengal*, Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1977, pp. 103-107; Niharranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, pp. 66-72.

<sup>28</sup> Niharranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 67; Anil Kumar, *Trade in Early Medieval Eastern India (c. A.D. 600 – A.D.1200)*, New Delhi: Janaki Prakashan, 2001, p. 89; Himansu Bhushan Sarkar, 'Bengal and Her Overland Routes in India and Beyond', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, vol-16, 1974, pp. 92-119.

<sup>29</sup> Niharranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 68.

*Kathāsaritsāgara* (a collection of popular stories composed by Somadeva between 1063 and 1082 CE).<sup>30</sup> The second land route running north from Tāmralipti to Pāṭaliputra through Karṇasuvarna to Rājmahal and Champā. The third route also ran directly northwest from Tāmralipti by way of Bodhgayā to Ayodhyā. The Dudhpani inscription (found at Hazaribagh area) records that three merchant brothers – Udayamana, Sridhautamana, and Ajitamana – enjoyed considerable success in trade at Tāmralipti from where they intended to return to Ayodhyā.<sup>31</sup> This connectivity between Tāmralipti and Ayodhyā must have been overland in nature. It will be logical to assume that the overland route between Tāmralipti and Ayodhyā in Uttar Pradesh ran through the forest areas of the modern Jharkhand. Xuan Zang suggested about the above-mentioned second route and I-Xing's account, together with an eight century inscription, gives an idea about the third one.<sup>32</sup> These were the roads that maintained contacts and communications between Bengal and north India. The railway tract between Bengal and north India is believed to have been constructed along with this early overland route.

At the beginning of the millennium era, the importance of these three routes attracted scholars' attention on the trade in war horses. War horses of fine quality were rare in India and needed to be imported from West and Central Asia through the north-western frontier of the subcontinent. BN Mukherjee<sup>33</sup> and Ranabir Chakravarti<sup>34</sup> proved on the basis of the distinct archaeological evidences, the shipping of horses from a port in Bengal, Chandaketugarh, going back as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Most probably by using the above-mentioned land routes the horses seemed to be imported to the deltaic Bengal from north and north-western part of the subcontinent, a region well known for the availability of excellent horses from Central and West Asia. Some of the imported horses appear to have been shipped out from

<sup>30</sup> *Kathāsaritsāgara*, tr. CH Tawney, Vol-2, Calcutta: JW Thomas, 1880, p. 86; Niharjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> F Kielhorn, 'Dudhpani Rock Inscription of Udayamana', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol-2, No-27, pp. 343-344.

<sup>32</sup> Niharjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> BN Mukherjee, 'Khoro□□ī and Kharoṣṭī-Brāhmī Inscriptions from West Bengal, India', *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Vol- XXV, 1990, pp. 1-80; 'The Coinage of Daravati in Southeast Asia and the Kharosthi-Brahmi Script' in Debala Mitra, ed, *Explorations in the Art and Archaeology of South Asia: Essays Dedicated to NG Majumdar*, Kolkata: Directorate of archaeology and museums, Government of West Bengal, 1996, pp. 527-34.

<sup>34</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 113-141, 160-186; 'Maritime Trade in Horses in Early Historical Bengal: A Seal from Chandaketugarh', *Pratna-Samiksha* (Journal of the Directorate of Archaeology, West Bengal), Vol-1, 1992, pp. 155-164; 'Early Medieval Bengal and the Trade in Horses: A Note', *JESHO*, 42.2, Leiden, 1999, pp. 194-211; 'Befriending the Bay: Maritime Trade and the Eastern Seaboard of the Subcontinent (Prior to C 1500)', *52<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day Lecture*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 3 January, 2004.

Chandraketugarh to overseas destinations. By analysing a terracotta seal impression which shows a figure of a horse on board a sea-going ship, found from Chandraketugarh, Ranabir Chakravarti stated of transaction in horses in early Bengal. The discovery of Kharoṣṭī-Brāhmī inscriptions from Chandraketugarh and Oceo (Thailand) and Sembiran (Bali) led Chakravarti to conclude that coastal Bengal had linkages with these areas in Southeast Asia. One of the commodities of this long-distance trade could have been the horse.<sup>35</sup> BN Mukherjee provided explanation on the basis of the contemporary Chinese account of Kang Tai (249-50 CE) who mentioned about the exports of horses from India to Ko-ying country (Malay Peninsula or the east coast of Sumatra) continually by sea.<sup>36</sup>

Like India, China has also had a very close contact with the mainland Southeast Asia through land routes.<sup>37</sup> And Bengal was also well connected to China and Tibet through the same. It might be concluded that the land routes which connected Bengal with China and Tibet extended further to Southeast Asian countries forming a long chain of roads eventually connecting Bengal with the mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>38</sup> Adhir Chakravarti talked about a road extending from South China by way of north Myanmar, Manipur and Kamrupa to Afghanistan.<sup>39</sup> In ancient times, the silk and bamboos of China were believed to have been exported to Afghanistan across Bengal. As he (Adhir Chakravarti) has pointed out, it has been mentioned in ‘Hsien Han-Shu’ by Pan Ku and ‘Sse-ke’ or ‘Shi-Ki’ by Tsu-ma-Kuang (1084 CE) that the Chinese diplomat Chang Chhien on his diplomatic mission to Bactria in 138-126 BCE discovered that the bamboo artefacts and cotton clothes of South-west China were being exported to Bactria via the land route that cuts across Szechwan and Yunan of China and north India and Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> From this Chakravarti assumed that these

<sup>35</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, ‘Bengal and the Trade in Horses’, p. 207; *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, pp. 120-21.

<sup>36</sup> BN Mukherjee, ‘Coastal and Overseas Trade in Pre-Gupta Vanga and Kalinga’, *Trade in early India*, edited by Ranabir Chakravarti, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 207-08; *Banga, Bangala O Bharat*, in Bangla, Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 2000, pp. 19-20; Adhir Chakrabarty, ‘Bangla o Bohirbishva’, *Itihas Anusandhan-4*, in Bangla, pp. 56-57.

<sup>37</sup> DK Chakrabarti, and Nayanjot Lahiri, ‘The Assam-Burma Route to China’, *Man and Environment*, Vol-X, 1986, Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies, Deccan College, Pune, pp. 123-135.

<sup>38</sup> RC Majumdar, *Ancient Indian Colonization in Southeast Asia*, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1963 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Adhir Chakravarti, ‘Bangla o Bahirbishwa (Pragaponibeshik Kal)’, *Itihas Anusandhan 4*, in Bangla, Calcutta, 1989, p. 53; Nripendra Bhattacharya, *Banglar Arthanotik Itihas*, in Bangla, Calcutta, 1390 BS, Second Edition, p. 19; Niharjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 68.

<sup>40</sup> PC Chaudhury, *The History and Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Gauhati: University of Gauhati, 1959, p. 381; Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Bengal*, pp. 106-07.

commodities reached Bactria across the land routes of north Bengal, Kamrupa and upper Myanmar.

It has also been evidenced by the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj-ud-din bin Siraj-ud-din al-Juzjani (written in 1260 CE and containing the earliest account of the invasion of Bengal by Ikhtiyar ud-din Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji) and in the very famous stone inscription (Kanai Barsi Inscription, dated 1205-06 CE)<sup>41</sup> regarding the expedition into Assam and Tibet of Bakhtiyar Khalji that Bengal had contacts with Assam and Tibet through a land route that runs north-eastwards across north Bengal and Kāmrūpa. At the last stage of his career, Bakhtiyar Khalji made an expedition to Tibet. There is no clear explanation about the motives underlying his project. But it is to be said that his inordinate ambition or desire was to secure mastery over trade route from Tibet to Kāmrūpa and thence to Bengal or his intention was to discover a short-cut route to Turkistan.<sup>42</sup> About the horses importation from Tibet to 'Bengal', *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* tells us that *kohi* or *tanghan* types of mountain horses were used to bring by the merchants into the territory of Lakhnauti (of Bengal) from Tibet. Marco Polo in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century CE also mentioned that the north-east emerged as the supply area of horses to eastern India. Polo speaks of a westward route connecting Aniu (it lay somewhere to the south of Carajan which is identified with Yunan) with Caugigu that was linked with 'Bengala' by an overland route. Horses from Yunan could therefore reach 'Bengala' through Pagan, which was connected with south-eastern Bangladesh and the Lusai and the Tripura hills. According to Polo, the overland journey from Carajan to 'Bengala' could be completed between 45 to 55 days.<sup>43</sup>

Another land route have been extensively used in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries CE that extended from Tonkin to Kamrupa; from Kamrupa this road crossed the Karatoya, passed through Pundravardhana, running across the Ganga to Kajaṅgala, reached Magadha.<sup>44</sup> In the 10<sup>th</sup> century about three hundred Chinese missionaries followed

<sup>41</sup> Maheswar Neog, *Prāchya Śāsanāvalī*, Gauhati: Assam Prakashan Parishad, 1974, pp. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Abdul Karim, 'Tabaqat-i-Nasiri', *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, 2006, [http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/T\\_0002.HTM](http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/T_0002.HTM)

<sup>43</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders*, pp. 174-75; 'Horse Trade and Piracy at Tana (=Thana, Maharashtra, India): Gleaning from Marco Polo', *JESHO*, Vol-33, 1991, pp. 159-82; H Yule and H Cordier, trs., *Travels of Ser Marco Polo*, Vol. 2, London: J. Murray, 1903, 106-09, p. 120.

<sup>44</sup> The references of this route are available from a valuable source like Kia-Tan (composed in 8<sup>th</sup> century CE). I-Xing also stated that in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE Chinese priests came to India from Szechuan via Upper Myanmar. PC Raychaudhury, *History and Civilisation of Assam*, p. 381; Nihar Ranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, pp. 68-69; Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Bengal*, p. 107.

this route to India.<sup>45</sup> In this connection it may be noted here that Ibn Battuta (1303-1377 CE)<sup>46</sup> refers to a route leading to China from Kamrupa.<sup>47</sup>

Another significant land route that originated in south-eastern Bengal (it began in the Lalmai-Mainamati area of present Comilla district in Bangladesh) extended up to the Pagan. This route ran from Samataṭa/Paṭṭikerā through the valleys of Surma and Kachhar (Sylhet and Silchar of present days), over the Lusai hills, through Manipur and northern Myanmar to Pagan in central Myanmar.<sup>48</sup> It is being assumed that this link was instrumental in fostering close matrimonial ties and political connections between the Paṭṭikerā<sup>49</sup> and the rulers of Pagan in Myanmar. Xuan Zang also mentioned about the same route from Szechuan to Kamrupa which ran from Bengal to southern portion of China through Assam, Manipur and upper Myanmar.<sup>50</sup>

A second land route connected Chittagong with lower Myanmar (ancient Śrīkṣetra or Prome of southern Myanmar) through Arakan. It was through these two routes the trade and cultural relationship between Pagan-Śrīkṣetra and Chittagong-Comilla was maintained in early times. Traditions on both sides bear ample testimony to this contact.<sup>51</sup> The significance of the ‘Chittagong-Arakan-Prome’ land route is being increasingly articulated in recent days also.

<sup>45</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1963, p. 226.

<sup>46</sup> H.A.R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Batuta in Asia and Africa*, translation of the *Rihala* of Ibn Batuta, London: Routledge, 1929.

<sup>47</sup> Batuta describes that from ‘Kāmru’ (Kamrupa?) he went to China and that he proceeded as far as the city of Khānsā. Ichhimuddin Sarkar, *Aspects of Historical Geography of Pragjyotisa-Kamrupa (Ancient Assam)*, Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1992, p. 179.

<sup>48</sup> Nihar Ranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 69; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, ‘Bengal and Southeast Asia’, pp. 96-97.

<sup>49</sup> The location of Paṭṭikera, according to Morrison, was in the Lalmai-Mainamati hills (Comilla district, Bangladesh), more likely on the eastern side near the northern end of the range. The earliest reference to it (11<sup>th</sup> century CE) occurs in a manuscript of Aśāsāhasrikā Prajnāpāramitā preserved in the library of the Cambridge University. The copperplate of Raṭṭavaṭṭakamalla clearly establishes that Paṭṭikera was the head quarters of Samataṭa (*Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol-XI, p. 282). In one of the plates of Laṭṭahachandra found at Mainamati lands were granted in Paṭṭikera in the Samataṭa maṭṭala of the Paundra Bhukti (D.C. Sircar, *Epigraphic Discoveries in East Pakistan*, Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1973, 47). Devaparvata was also situated in this area. B.M. Morrison, *Political Centers and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal*, Jaipur-Delhi: Rawat Publication, 1980, 52; R.C. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, Calcutta: G. Bharadwaj, reprinted 1974, pp. 278-79; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal*, Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967, p. 163.

<sup>50</sup> Nihar Ranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 69; Haroun-Er-Rashid, ‘Ancient Association between Bengal and Thailand’, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, XIX, No. 1, 1974, pp. 25-39.

<sup>51</sup> B. Bhattacharya, ‘Bengali Influence in Arakan’, *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. XXXIII, 1927, pp. 134-44; G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1925, p. 42; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, ‘Bengal and Southeast Asia’, p. 97; Nihar Ranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 69.

Apart from these, mention must be made of one more land route that started from Karnasuvarna to Tāmralipti and then ran directly towards south, connecting Bengal with south India. Xuan Zang claimed to have travelled this road from Karnasuvarna.<sup>52</sup> It is proved that Rājendra Chola of Chola Dynasty (1012-44 CE)<sup>53</sup> and Vikramāditya VI (1076-1126 CE) of the western Chālukya family of Kalyāna<sup>54</sup> entered into Bengal through this route. Rajendra Chola's expedition (roughly between 1021 and 1024 CE) to Bengal clearly shows that an existence of a land route from the south along the eastern coast of India right up to Bengal. These are the clear indications of overland routes between Bengal and South India. According to Niharjan Ray, Chatanyadeva (1486-1533 CE) went to Nilachala and South India along the same road, which presently leads the railway to Chennai.<sup>55</sup>

Before concluding this account of land route contacts, special mention must be made once again of Xuan Zang.<sup>56</sup> The account left by him furnishes us with accurate details regarding the routes connecting different parts of Bengal in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. Not only Xuan Zang speaks of the places he visited, but he also mentions the distances he covered during each sector of this journey. According to *HSI-YU-CHI*, Xuan Zang started his eastward travels to 'Bengal' from kie(ka)-chu-wen(?) -k'i-lo (Kajaṅgala) to pun-na-fa-tan-na (Puṇḍravardhana) by crossing the river Ganga and above 600 *li*<sup>57</sup>. From Puṇḍravardhana he went to ka-mo-lu-po (Kamarupa). After travelling 900 *li* and also crossed another large river the pilgrim reached Kamrupa from where he started southward journey towards san-mo-ta-t'a (Samataṭa). Xuan Zang reached Samataṭa after travelling 1200 or 1300 *li* and then respectively he travelled to tan-mo-lih-ti (Tāmralipti) and kie(ka)-lo-na-su-fa-la-na (Karṇasuvarna). From Samataṭa to Tāmralipti Xuan Zang travelled west for over 900 *li* and from Tāmralipti to Karṇasuvarna he travelled north-west for over 700 *li*.

<sup>52</sup> Niharjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 70.

<sup>53</sup> E. Hultzsch, 'Tirumalai Rock Inscription of Rajendrachola I', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol-IX, No-31, 1907-08; Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Bengal*, p. 105; DC Ganguly, 'Vaṅgāla-deśa' *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol-XIX, No-4, December 1943, p. 297-98.

<sup>54</sup> *Vikramankadevacharita* of Bilhana.

<sup>55</sup> Niharjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 70.

<sup>56</sup> Samuel Beal, *SI-YU-KI Buddhist Records of the Western World*, London: Trubner and Co Ltd, 1983 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. 193-204; Samuel Beal (tr), *The Life of Hiuen Tsiang by the Shaman Hwui Li* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, reprint, 1973; Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1973 (2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Edition), pp. 182-193; D Devahuti, *The Unknown Hsuan Tsang*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001; Abu Imam, 'Chinese Accounts', *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2006, [http://banglapedia.net/HT/C\\_0201.HTM](http://banglapedia.net/HT/C_0201.HTM).

<sup>57</sup> 6 *lis* make a mile.

Finally he went to wu-t'u (Odra, Orissa).<sup>58</sup> It should also be noted here that there is another version of his travels in 'Bengal'. The Life of Xuan Zang<sup>59</sup> states that he reached Karṇasuvarna from Puṇḍravardhana rather than from Tāmralipti. However, Cunningham identified most of these places at the time of his archaeological survey<sup>60</sup> and the identifications of the places mentioned by Xuan Zang would indicate that a route ran from Kajangala to Kamrupa through Puṇḍravardhaṇa. Another route connected Assam with southeast Bengal, while a third route through coastal Bengal was a link between southeast and southwest Bengal.

**Maritime Contacts:** Enjoying the deltaic characteristic features and geographically strategic location, Bengal was connected from the early centuries of the Common Era by the sea with the Indian coastal regions as well as the extra-Indian territories comprising maritime Southeast Asia in general. At this point mention must be made about the waterways of river and sea on the basis of the archaeological, literary, epigraphic and numismatic evidences. The maritime trade routes connecting Bengal in the chosen period were Tāmralipti, Gangabandar<sup>61</sup>/ Chandraketugarh, Wari-Bateshwar, Savar (Vaṅgasāra-sambhāndāriyaka/ Navyāvakāśika) and Samandar/ Sudkawan<sup>62</sup>.

Some archaeological artifacts belong to different periods (Northern Black Polished Ware, Rouletted Wares, Knobbed Wares, Stamped Wares, Footed Wares and Indo-Pacific glass beads) indicate the existence of the maritime trade network between Bengal (Gangabandar/ Chandraketugarh<sup>63</sup>, Tāmralipti and Wari Bateshwar) and

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1973 (2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Edition), pp. 182-193.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel Beal (tr), *The Life of Hiuen Tsiang by the Shaman Hwui Li* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, reprint, 1973.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India, the Buddhist Period, including the Campaigns of Alexander and the Travels of Hwan-Thsang*, London, 1871 (First Published), Delhi: Low Price Publications, Reprinted 2006, pp. 421-425.

<sup>61</sup> It should be noted here that we are using the name 'Gangabandar' though the Romans called the port as 'Gange' or 'Ganges'. Niharranjan Ray added the suffix 'bandar' (port) to 'Ganga' (the river) and coined the name 'Gangabandar' for the port. Since the name denotes location of the port on the river Ganga, we must remember that the name is provisional and we have no way (as yet) of ascertaining what the port may have actually been called by its local residents.

<sup>62</sup> From the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries CE Samatata and Sudkawan were the principal outlets of the Bengal coast to the sea. Arabic texts and Ibn Battuta often mentioned these port names and their connections with the maritime world.

<sup>63</sup> There is no unanimous agreement among scholars about the location or the identification of 'Gange' or Gangabandar. Murray locates Gangabandar at Chattagrama but Tailor in the neighbourhood of Sonargaon. Cunningham believes it was at Jessore. DC Sircar suggested that the port-site was at Gangasagar, the Hugli River (Gaṅgā) and the Bay of Bengal (Sāgar). Schoff has identified Ganges as Tāmralipti. Kalyan Rudra and MK Mukherjee

Orissa (Śiśupālgarh and Manikpatna), Tamil Nadu (Kanchipuram, Karaikadu, Alagankulam and Sengamedu), and Sri Lanka (Kantarodai, Mantai and Anuradhapura) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.<sup>64</sup> Bengal's contact with Sri Lanka, the farthest points on the Bengal-Orissa-South India-Sri Lanka route, must have begun somewhere in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, if the story of Vijaya's maritime voyage to the island is taken into consideration.<sup>65</sup>

Archaeological artifacts, particularly etched semi-precious stone beads also indicate a definite contact and maritime routes between Bengal and Myanmar (Beikthano), Thailand (Ban Chiang, Kok Samrong and U Thong), Malaysia (Tanjong Rawa and Kuala Selinsing), Indonesia (Leang Buldane cave in Salebabu Island), the Philippines (Palawan Island) and China (Shi Zhai Shah and Lijiashan).<sup>66</sup> The *Ch'ien-Han-shu* records an account of a maritime enterprise from Tonkin (China) to *Huang-che* during the time of Han Wu-ti (141-87 BCE). The pronunciation of *Huang-che* in ancient Chinese was as Gwang-zie which certainly reminds the Gange<sup>67</sup>. However, a large number of scholars prefer to equate the port of Gange with the well-known archaeological site of Chandraketugarh (about 35 km north-east of Kolkata).<sup>68</sup> Chandraketugarh, located on the moribund delta of the Ganga-Brahmaputra river system adjacent to the almost dried up course of the river Vidyadhari, once a large tributary of the Bhagirathi appears to have functioned as an inland riverine port with an access to the sea.<sup>69</sup>

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have suggested that Harinarayanpur was Gange. KG Goswami proposed for the first time that 'the site of Chandraketugarh seemingly represents the ancient market town of Gange of the *Periplus* ('Chandraketugarh and its Archaeological Importance', *Indian Museum Bulletin*, 1966, p. 43). This proposition then subsequently have supported by Nihar Ranjan Ray, Gautam Sengupta and Ranabir Chakravarti.

<sup>64</sup> Sunil Gupta, 'Early Indian Ocean in the Context of Indian Relationship with Southeast Asia', *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Vol-1, Part-3 (India's Interaction with Southeast Asia), Chapter 7, eds. GC Pande, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 2006, pp. 119-129; VD Gogte, 'The Chandraketugarh-Tamluk Region of Bengal: Source of the Early Historic Roulettes Ware from India and Southeast Asia', *Man and Environment*, Vol-XXII, No-1 (January-June 1997), pp. 69-85.

<sup>65</sup> Wilhelm Geiger, *The Mahāvamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986, pp. 51-54, 62-64; Shahnaj Husne Jahan, *Excavating Waves and Winds of (Ex)change- A Study of Maritime Trade in Early Bengal*, England: John and Erica Hedges Ltd., British Archaeological Reports, 2006, pp. 161-62.

<sup>66</sup> Shahnaj Husne Jahan, *Excavating Waves and Winds of (Ex)change*, 2006, p. 162.

<sup>67</sup> Brian Colless, 'Han and Shen-tu: China's Ancient Relations with South Asia', *East and West*, New Series 30 (1-4), 1980, p. 164; Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Bengal*, pp. 108-09.

<sup>68</sup> BN Mukherjee, 'Kharoṣṭī and Kharoṣṭī-Brāhmī Inscriptions in West Bengal (India)', *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Vol- XXV, Calcutta, 1990, p. 24.

<sup>69</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, 'Befriending the Bay: Maritime Trade and the Eastern Seaboard of the Subcontinent (Prior to C 1500)', 52<sup>nd</sup> *Foundation Day Lecture*, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 3 January, 2004, pp. 11-12.

Pliny testifies that during his time there were both land and sea routes connecting Rome with Asian countries. The Ganga delta was especially noted for the availability of excellent textiles, the Gangetic muslin of the *Periplus*.<sup>70</sup> The *Periplus* also informs of the transportation of nard (a fragrant oil) along with the textiles, two Gangetic luxuries in considerable demand in the Roman Empire, by coastal voyages to ports on the Tamil coast from where these were possibly taken to Muziris (Cannanore or Caranganore) in the Cera country, the premier port in Malabar, figuring prominently in the *Periplus*.<sup>71</sup> The shipping of the Gangetic nard (fragrant oil) is now confirmed by a maritime loan contract document of c. mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.<sup>72</sup> It speaks of the loading of 60 containers of Gangetic nard on board the ship, Hermapollen, lying at anchor at Muziris from where it reached through different stages of overseas, overland and fluvial journeys Alexandria in Egypt. From there these were finally shipped to Rome. From the account of *Periplus* it appears that although some such region Khryse was known to the author, where it lay was not clear to him. It may be Myanmar and the immense gold mines regions of the Malay peninsula, comprising the states of Pahang, north of Malacca. The same distinction between a ‘golden region’ and a ‘golden island’ as seen in *Periplus* occurs in Indian texts. The names ‘Suvarṇabhūmi’ and ‘Suvarṇadvīpa’ occurs in ancient texts like the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Jātaka* stories, *Arthaśāstra* and many other texts. These names had become so familiar that beginning from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE besides many Indian and Graeco-Roman authors, Arabs, Chinese and Tibetans have also referred to them. Many Greek and Arab authors believed in the ancient tradition that the soil of the Khryse island and Khryse land was made of gold.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Niharranjan Ray, BD Chattopadhyaya, Ranabir Chakravarti, and VR Mani, (eds), *A Sourcebook of Indian Civilization*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2000, reprinted 2002, pp. 298-99; *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century*, by WH Schoff, (1<sup>st</sup> published in 1912 by Longmans, Green and Co, London.), New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1995, pp. 44-48.

<sup>71</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, ‘Early Historical India: A Study in its Material Milieu (c. 600 BC-AD 300)’ in *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, Delhi: Manohar, 2002, pp. 54-55.

<sup>72</sup> For the translation and study of this extremely significant document see, Lionel Casson, ‘New Light on Maritime Loans: P Vindob G 40822’, *Trade in Early India*, edited by Ranabir Chakravarti, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford India Paperbacks, 2005, pp. 228-243; Niharranjan Ray, BD Chattopadhyaya, Ranabir Chakravarti, and VR Mani, (eds), *A Sourcebook of Indian Civilization*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2000, reprinted 2002, pp. 607-09.

<sup>73</sup> Udai Prakash Arora, ‘Greek Geographers on the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia’, *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Vol-1, Part-3 (India’s Interaction with Southeast Asia), chapter 10, edited by GC Pande, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 2006, p. 180; Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Bengal*, p. 109; Ranabir Chakravarti, ‘Befriending the Bay: Maritime Trade and the Eastern Seaboard of the Subcontinent, p. 11, 17.

Some Kharoṣṭī/Kharoṣṭī-Brāhmī seals and seal impressions with the picture of ships/boats on terracotta found from Chandraketugarh, strongly suggest that it was a major port of early historic period in Bengal.<sup>74</sup> This area was well connected with the maritime networks particularly with maritime Southeast Asia. The discovery of Kharoṣṭī and Kharoṣṭī-Brāhmī documents in Thailand and Vietnam and the Roulettes Wares (RW) and etched semi-precious stone beads from Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia adds to the dimension of our knowledge of Bengal's oversea contacts and communications with the maritime Southeast Asia.<sup>75</sup> VD Gogte has claimed, on the basis of XRD (X ray diffraction) analysis of the RW, that the clay for the manufacturing of the fine RW was available only in the Lower Ganga Plain with the epicenter in the Chandraketugarh-Tāmralipti zone<sup>76</sup> and nowhere else. He therefore argues that Chandraketugarh-Tāmralipti was the principal manufacturing zone of the RW. From this area RW is said to have been sent to various places along the entire length of the eastern sea-board<sup>77</sup> and also to distant places like Buni culture sites in north Java, Sembiran (on the north coast of Bali) and at sites in Vietnam (Tra Kieu) in maritime Southeast Asia.<sup>78</sup> This clearly speaks, once again, regular coastal network of communication between Bengal littorals and Southern part of the Indian subcontinent and maritime Southeast Asia.

<sup>74</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, pp. 129-30.

<sup>75</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders*, p. 134; Shahnaz Husne Jahan, *Excavating Waves and Winds of (Ex)change- A Study of Maritime Trade in Early Bengal*, Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd., British Archaeological Reports, 2006 p. 163.

<sup>76</sup> Vishwas D Gogte, 'The Chandraketugarh-Tamluk Region of Bengal: Source of the Early Historic Roulettes Ware from India and Southeast Asia', *Man and Environment* (Journal of the Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies), Vol-XXII, No-1, January-June 1997, p. 83.

<sup>77</sup> The eastern sea-board experienced coastal communications and linkages that are indicated by the distribution of a particular type of pottery, the RW, all along the eastern littorals. The find spots of the RW (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to CE 3<sup>rd</sup> century) are located close to the coasts in Tamilnadu (most importantly Arikamedu near Pondicherry), in Andhra Pradesh (Amaravati), in Orissa (Sisupalgarh and Manikpatnam), in West Bengal (Chandraketugarh and Tamluk) and in Bangladesh (Wari-Bateshwar and Mahasthan).

<sup>78</sup> HP Ray, 'The Archaeology of Bengal: Trading Networks, Cultural Identities', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient (JESHO)*, 49.1, Leiden, 2006, p. 80.

Considering the geographical location of Wari-Bateshwar<sup>79</sup>, Dilip Kumar Chakrabarti predicted that the region had Southeast Asiatic and Roman contacts. The discovery of yielded Rouletted Ware, Knobbed Ware and Punched-marked coins from excavation and on the basis of the findings of high-tin Bronze Knobbed Ware, sandwiched glass beads, gold-foil glass beads and Indo-Pacific Monochrome glass beads Chakrabarti tried to identify Wari-Bateshwar with Ptolemy's *Sounagoura* port in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE though this claim is yet to get acceptance to the academia. This port was earlier identified with modern Sonargaon by C. Schwartzberg's historical atlas of India. Because of its location on the bank of an ancient course of the Brahmaputra and the Indo-Pacific Monochrome glass beads were found here, Chakrabarti assumed that it was possibly of the earliest urban centres in the region, it was a port city and it might have had trade relations within Bengal and the lands beyond.<sup>80</sup>

After the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, regular traffic between Tāmralipti and Sri Lanka appears to have continued. Fa Xian arrived at Tamralipti by land route from Champa and then sailed from Tāmralipti to Sri Lanka in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century CE in a large merchant-vessel with a favourable wind during the season of winter.<sup>81</sup> It is very likely that the voyage was undertaken during the season of north-eastern monsoon wind. After spending two years in Sri Lanka receiving instruction from teachers and copying a number of manuscripts Fa Xian embarked on another merchant ship. After a long and stormy passage he reached Java.<sup>82</sup> Over two and a quarter centuries after Fa Xian, another Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE

<sup>79</sup> Wari and Bateshwar are two adjacent villages in Amlabo Union under Belabo police station in Narsingdi district (Bangladesh). The location of Wari-Bateshwar on the bank of an ancient course of the Brahmaputra can only mean that it was an estuarine port. The cultural materials found from this site are roughly dated between c. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE also indicative of maritime contacts with the maritime world. E Haque, SSM Rahman and SMK Ashan, 'A Preliminary Report on Wari-Bateshwar Trial Excavation by ICSBA', *Journal of Bengal Art*, 5, Dhaka, 2000; MM Hoque and SS Mostafizur Rahman, 'Wari-Bateshwar', *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2006, [http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/W\\_0022.HTM](http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/W_0022.HTM).

<sup>80</sup> Dilip Kumar Chakrabarti, 'Archaeological Studies – From Prehistoric Age to Pre-Medieval Period', *Cultural Survey of Bangladesh: Archaeological Heritage*, edited by Sufi Mostafizur Rahman, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2007, pp. 5-6.

<sup>81</sup> Samuel Beal (tr.), *Travels of Fah-hian and Sung-yun, Buddhist Pilgrims from China to India (400 AD and 518 AD)*, London: Trübner and Co., 1869, pp. 147-48; *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms. Being An Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hsien of Travels in India and Ceylon (AD 399-414) in Search of the Buddhist Books Discipline*, translated by James Legge, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1991.

<sup>82</sup> HG Quaritch Wales, *The Indianization of China and of South-East Asia*, London: Bernard Quaritch Ltd., 1967, pp. 10-11.

was advised by a south Indian priest that such voyages were extremely perilous<sup>83</sup> because of the cyclones in the Bay of Bengal during the time of north-eastern monsoon wind. He described Tāmralipti was well connected by land as well as water. The coast of this country is formed by a recess of the sea.<sup>84</sup> By the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when I-Xing visited south Asia, it is known from some records on maritime contacts between Bengal, Southeast Asia and China that I-Xing sailed on a Persian merchant ship from Canton in 671 CE. After crossing the South China Sea he arrived at Bhoga (southeastern Sumatra), then he travelled to Malayu (eastern coast of Sumatra), and then proceeds to Ka-cha (Kedah of the Malay Peninsula). His ship sailed via the Nicobar Islands and finally arrived at Tāmralipti.<sup>85</sup> There can be a little doubt that the Tāmralipti-Ka-cha (Kedah) transoceanic route was a continuation of Tāmralipti-Chu-li (Takkola) route. Sea routes from Tāmralipti, south India and Sri Lanka converged at the Nicobars, from where the route to Ka-cha was well connected.

The Buddhagupta inscription<sup>86</sup> also proved a maritime trade network of Bengal-Malay Peninsula which was in operation even in 400 CE. This interesting Sanskrit inscription (wish-inscribed document) comes from the northern part of Province Wellesly in Malay Peninsula. It is written in a 5<sup>th</sup> century script, and records the gift of a *mahānāvika* (the captain of *mahānau*, large ship or a senior mariner) Buddhagupta, an inhabitant of a Raktamṛttikā, and a prayer for his successful voyage.<sup>87</sup> Xuan Zang's account, discovery of archaeological remains (clay seals etc.)<sup>88</sup> and the identification of Raktamṛttikā<sup>89</sup> would indicate Buddhagupta's origin

<sup>83</sup> Samuel Beal (tr), *The Life of Hiuen Tsiang by the Shaman Hwui Li with an Introduction Containing an Account of the Works of I-tsing* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., first published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., London in 1911), New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1973 (Reprint), p. 133.

<sup>84</sup> Samuel Beal (tr), *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol-2, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1906, pp. 200-01.

<sup>85</sup> J. Takakusu (tr), *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695) by I-tsing*, translated by J. Takakusu, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Edition, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1982, appended map, pp. xxx, xxxiv, 211.

<sup>86</sup> DC Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, Vol-1, Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1965, p. 497; Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Bengal*, pp. 110-11.

<sup>87</sup> DC Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 497.

<sup>88</sup> DC Sircar, 'Inscribed Clay Seal from Raktamṛttikā', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol-XXXVII, 1967-68, p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> *Raktamṛttikā* can now be identified on good grounds in the region of Murshidabad district of West Bengal. Recent evidence from archaeological excavations leaves a little doubt about the identification of Karṇasuvārṇa, capital city of Bengal king Śaśāṅka (late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> century CE) and *Raktamṛttikā*, *mahāvihāra*, the Buddhist monastery which stood on its suburb bears the description left by Xuan Zang. Karṇasuvārṇa and *Raktamṛttikā* have

was definitely in India, and particularly in ‘Bengal’. And through Bhāgirathī, the channel of the Ganga linking up to the Tāmralipti, ‘Bengal’ established its maritime contact with Southeast Asia and Archipelago.<sup>90</sup> So it leaves very little doubt about the maritime contacts between Bengal littorals and the Malay Peninsula.<sup>91</sup>

Tāmralipti, the port par excellence and the earliest one in Bengal,<sup>92</sup> was at its height when Fa Xian and Xuan Zang visited respectively in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. This port was well connected with the distant lands of China and different islands of Southeast Asia and was the outstanding port in the Ganga delta, the chief outlet of the entire landlocked Ganga Valley to the Bay of Bengal.<sup>93</sup> Mainly three maritime routes starts from Tāmralipti: one of which led to the West, while the other to the East and Southeast directions. Firstly the south-westward route that led to West till eastern Mediterranean regions,<sup>94</sup> over the south and west coast of India, across Sri-Lanka; secondly, the route that along the Bay of Bengal penetrating the narrow Isthmus of Kra reaching the mainland or islands of Southeast Asia and to the distant region of China; and thirdly, the south and south-eastward route that extends towards the coastal Palora (or Paloura?)<sup>95</sup> of Gopalpur in Ganjam district of Orissa and from there across the Bay of Bengal till the archipelago of the Southeast Asia.<sup>96</sup> Niharranjan Ray

been identified with places called Rangamati and Kansona on the right back of the Bhāgirathī near Chirutti Railway Station in the Murshidabad district. Sudhir Ranjan Das, *Rajbāḍīāṅga: 1962 (Chiruti, Jadupur). An Interim Report on Excavations at Rājbāḍīāṅga and Terracotta Seals and Sealings*, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1968, p. 57.

<sup>90</sup> *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (AD 671-695) by I-tsing*, translated by J. Takakusu, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Edition, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1982; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, ‘Bengal and Southeast Asia’, p. 100.

<sup>91</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders*, pp. 127-28.

<sup>92</sup> It is beyond doubt that Tāmralipti, generally equated with Tamluk (in the Medinipur district, West Bengal) situated on the right bank of the river Rupanaraya. This identification has been reinforced by *Tāmraliptimāhātya* portion of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. Paresh Chandra Dasgupta, ‘Some Early Indian Literary References to Tāmralipta’, *Modern Review*, 1953, pp. 31-34; Haroun-Er-Rashid, *JAS Bangladesh*, XIX, No. 1, 1974, p. 28; Hosne Ara Motahar, ‘Bangladesher Prachintama Bandar Tamralipti ebong Prachin Banglar Byabsa-Baṇijya’, *Bangladesh Asiatic Society Patrika*, June-December, 1993, pp. 15-23; Shahnaj Husne Jahan, *Excavating Waves and Winds of (Ex)change*, pp. 9-18, 163-68; Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, pp. 129-135, 164-169.

<sup>93</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, ‘Befriending the Bay’, p. 11.

<sup>94</sup> Romila Thapar, ‘Great Eastern Trade: Other Times, Other Places (Maritime Trade in the First Millennium AD)’, *The Fourth Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Lecture*, Mumbai: The Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Foundation, January 10, 2002, pp. 3-10.

<sup>95</sup> Palora has been identified by Yule as Jelasur near the mouth of the Suvarnarekha in Orissa.

<sup>96</sup> R.C Majumdar, *Ancient Indian Colonization in South-East Asia*, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1963, pp. 4-5; *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, Calcutta: Firma K.L.

has also clearly mentioned three sea routes in his work: (1) Tāmralipti-Arakan-Brahma-Malaya-Jabadvipa-Subarnadvipa route; (2) Vaṅga-Siṁhal route; and, (3) Tāmralipti-Palora-Malay-Subarnabhumi route.<sup>97</sup> The voyages described in the three Jātaka tales (*Mahājanaka Jātaka*, *Śaṅkha Jātaka*, and *Samudda-vānija Jātaka*)<sup>98</sup>, in the Ceylonese Pāli chronicles of *Mahāvaṇiśa*<sup>99</sup> and *Dīpavaṇiśa*,<sup>100</sup> the Kharoṣṭī and Kharoṣṭī -Brāhmī Inscriptions,<sup>101</sup> and in the accounts of Fa-Xian, Xuan Zang and I-Xing<sup>102</sup> clearly give an indication about these routes.

The merchants setting out from Vārānasī or Champā by boat, sailing along the Ganga-Bhagirathi to Tāmralipti, and from there following the coast of the Bay of Bengal to Ceylon or Sumatra or Suvarṇabhūmi (land of gold,<sup>103</sup> possibly lower Myanmar) and some other places in the maritime Southeast Asian archipelago. On the basis of the earliest reference to transoceanic voyages across the Bay of Bengal by Geographer and Astronomer Ptolemy,<sup>104</sup> Niharranjan Ray described the third

Mukhopadhyay, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1963, p. 13; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, 'Bengal and Southeast Asia', p. 99.

<sup>97</sup> Niharranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, pp. 68-70.

<sup>98</sup> EB Cowell (ed), *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (translated from the Pāli by various hands), six volumes, London: Luzac and Co., 1957, Vol-4: pp 9-13 and 98-104, Vol-6: pp 19-37.

<sup>99</sup> Wilhelm Geiger, *The Mahāvamśa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986, XIX: pp. 1-8, 11, 22-23.

<sup>100</sup> Hermann Oldenberg, *The Dīpavamśa: An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982, pp. 160-62.

<sup>101</sup> BN Mukherjee, 'Kharosti and Kharostī-Brahmi Inscriptions in West Bengal (India)', *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Vol- XXV, Calcutta: Indian Museum, 1990, pp. 17-18, 34, 38.

<sup>102</sup> Fa-Xian, Xuan Zang and I-Xing visited Tāmralipti respectively in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Fa-Xian began his return voyage to China from this port in a merchant ship in CE 414. The voyage took him straight to Sri Lanka, then to Java from where he reached Chinese coast. The direct connectivity of Tāmralipti with Sri Lanka and in an indirect manner with Java in maritime Southeast Asia is proved from this account. Xuan Zang described that 'the water and land' embraced each other at Tāmralipti and it was very well connected by both land and sea routes within and the lands beyond Bengal. I-Xing arrived in Tāmralipti in 673 CE and mentioned it, according to Takakusu, as a 'port on the coast of Eastern India'.

<sup>103</sup> G Coedes, *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: East West Center Press, 1968, p. 29; RC Majumdar, *Champa (History and Culture of an Indian Colonial Kingdom in the Far East: 2<sup>nd</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD)*, Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1985 (reprint), p. XI.

<sup>104</sup> Ptolemy (Klaudios Ptolemaios) in his *Geographike Hyphegesis* (An Outline of Geography) composed in around the middle of the second century CE says, "[t]he passage across it [i.e., the Gangetic Gulf] from Palora to Sada in a direct line from west to east is 1,300 stadia.... The voyage is continued onward from Sada to the city of Tamala, a distance of 3,500 stadia in a south-eastern direction". Surendranath Majumdar Sastri, *McCrinde's Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy*, a facsimile reprint edited with an introduction, notes and an additional map, Calcutta: Chatterjee & Co, 1927, p. 24.

route (Tāmralipti-Palora-Malay-Subarnabhumi route). RC Majumdar also talked about this particular sea route in his books.<sup>105</sup>

When we consider Bengal in the context of the trade networks of the mid-7<sup>th</sup> to the mid-8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, it is clear that the trade routes leading to and from Bengal were only subsidiary lanes. After the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, Gangabandar had ceased to function and Tāmralipti seems to have declined gradually around the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>106</sup> It is generally believed that Tāmralipti declined because of hydrographical changes in the western part of the Ganga delta, resulting in the gradual silting of the river Rupnarayana on which it stood.

In the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE Xuan Zang visited Samataṭa, an area contiguous with Harikela. Samataṭa was known at that time to have contacts with several areas in Southeast Asia. Valuable indications are gleaned from Xuan Zang in this regard. It is explicitly mentioned in the accounts of Xuan Zang that there was commercial linkage between Samataṭa (Southeastern Bengal) and Southeast Asian countries and archipelago. He has given valuable indications that strongly suggest, for the first time that around 7<sup>th</sup> century CE Samataṭa area gradually began to emerge as point of contact for coastal as well as long-distance voyages in the Bay of Bengal. Hsuan Tsang drew our attention by mentioning the names of six countries of mainland Southeast Asia which had contact with Samataṭa. He did not visit those countries but gathered information about them at Samataṭa. Watters has identified the six countries as 1. Shi-li-cha-ta-lo (Śrīkṣetra in Myanmar with its capital at Prome on the Irrawaddy); 2. Kia-mo-land-kia (Kāmalaṅka, identified with Pegu and the Irrawaddy delta in Myanmar); 3. To-lo-po-ti (Dvāravati, the famous kingdom of Myanmar in Sandwe region); 4. I-shung-na-pu-lo (Iśānapura to the east of Dāravati); 5. Mo-ho-chēn-po (Mahāchampā in Vietnam; and 6. Yen-nio-na-chen (Yamanadvipa, identification uncertain).<sup>107</sup> There is a clear hint that contacts between Samataṭa and these regions in mainland Southeast Asia had already started by the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, probably by maritime voyages.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> RC Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, 346; *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, Calcutta: Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised and enlarged edition, 1963, pp. 13-14.

<sup>106</sup> The last known reference to Tāmralipti is furnished by the Dudhpani inscription, palaeographically assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE (F Kielhorn, ‘Dudhpani Rock Inscription of Udayamana’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol-2, No-27, pp. 343-346). According to this record, three merchant brothers came to Tāmralipti from Ayodhyā and earned money by trading. This once again points to the long-distance connection between the port and its hinterland. Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, p. 133.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1973 (2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Edition), pp. 187-88, 200.

<sup>108</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, pp. 134-35; Samuel Beal (tr), *The Life of Hiuen Tsiang by the Shaman Hwui Li with an Introduction Containing an Account of the Works of I-tsing*, pp. 132-33.

During the last quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE I-Xing reported about the voyage to Ho-lai-ka-lo (Harikela)<sup>109</sup> from Sri Lanka. I-Xing started on a voyage from China to South Asia. After a month's journey he reached Śrī-vijaya (Palembang in Sumatra), then Kedah via Mo-luo-yu (eastern coast of Sumatra). From there he sailed to south India and finally to Sri Lanka. He sailed again from Sri Lanka by ship and after about a month's sail I-Xing reached Ho-lai-ka-lo (Harikela) in eastern Bengal.<sup>110</sup> Harikela maintained contact not only with Sri Lanka but also with some ports in Southeast Asia countries and archipelago.

The decline of Tāmralipti in 8<sup>th</sup> century CE immensely enhanced the importance of Samataṭa/Harikela.<sup>111</sup> From the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards the major area of seaborne contacts between Bengal and other countries in the Indian Ocean shifted to Samataṭa/Harikela where Samandar emerged as a port<sup>112</sup> and started playing a vital part of the maritime contacts and communications in the early medieval period. The Arab and Persian geographers, merchants and travelers provide us with valuable information regarding maritime trade contacts in 'Bengal' from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.<sup>113</sup> The importance of these maritime trade routes has been described in the writings of Sulayman (compiled in 851 CE)<sup>114</sup>, Ibn Khurdadhbih (death, 912

<sup>109</sup> Identified with the Noakhali, Comilla, Chittagong and adjacent areas in Bangladesh. Harikela was an important commercial zone since the late 7<sup>th</sup> century CE is clear from the Chinese evidence of I-Xing. Adhir Chakravarti, 'Harikela's Contacts with Outside World', *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, Vol-XIX, Parts 1-2, 1989-90, pp. 1-53.

<sup>110</sup> Latika Lahiri, *Chinese Monks in India: Biography of Eminent Monks Who Went to the Western World in Search of the Law during the Great T'ang Dynasty*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Dass, 1986, pp. 94-96.

<sup>111</sup> The important point to note is that from the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE onwards the major seaborne outlet of the Bengal coast shifted from the western sector (Rādhā-Vāṅga) to the south-eastern (Samataṭa-Harikela) zone. Ranabir Chakravarti, 'Seafaring in the Bengal Coast: The Early Medieval Scenario', in *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, pp. 160-186; DC Bhattacharya, 'Harikela and the Ruins at Mainamati', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol-20 (1-4), 1944, pp. 1-8; ABM Husain, et al, *Mainamati-Devaparvata*, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1997.

<sup>112</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders*, p. 135; Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Down to AD 1538)*, Chittagong: Baitush Sharaf Islamic Research Institute, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition, 1985, pp. 27-32.

<sup>113</sup> From the writings of Sulayman, Ibn Khurdadhbih, the anonymous author of *Hudud al-Alam*, and Idrisi we can easily get to know the Arab and Persian maritime link with Bengal. Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal*, Chittagong: Baitush Sharaf Islamic Research Institute, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition, 1985, pp. 25-36; *Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China*, translated from Original Arabic with Commentaries by S. Maqbul Ahmad, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1989, pp. 3-87.

<sup>114</sup> Sulayman wrote his *Silsilat-ut-Tawarikh* in about the year 851 CE. This Arabic text was first published by Langles in 1811 and a French translation with a commentary was published by M Reinaud from Paris in 1854 under the title: *Relation des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et à la Chine*. In 1922, Gabriel Ferrand published

CE)<sup>115</sup>, Al-Masudi (death, 956 CE)<sup>116</sup>, and Al-Idrisi (birth, end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE)<sup>117</sup>. Among the geographers, Ibn Khurdadbih was the first to discuss the trade-route from the Arabian Sea coast to the Chinese coast in his book. Al-Masudi and Al-Idrisi have done the same thing chiefly following the accounts of Khurdadbih. The importance of this maritime route and contacts was widely considered not only in Bengal but also in the history of the ‘Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere’<sup>118</sup> world which drew within its fold the countries of Southeast Asia also – Thailand, coastal Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra.

An elaborate description of the sea-route to and from Bengal is furnished by the account of Ibn Battuta (arrived Bengal in 1334 CE).<sup>119</sup> From the Maldivian islands Ibn Battuta was sailing and reached Sudkawan via Serendib and Ma’bar (Coromandel coast).<sup>120</sup> On his return trip he sailed from Sudkawan for Java in a Chinese junk.<sup>121</sup> His journey by a Chinese junk is a further pointer to the connections between the Bengal coast and Chinese harbours via the Malacca Straits and Southeast Asia. Atīṣā Dīpaṅkara, whose name is famous for the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, is known to have visited Suvarṇadvīpa (traditionally referring to the maritime Southeast Asia)

another French translation under the title *Voyage du Marchand Arabe Sulayman en Inde et en Chine*. In 1948, M Jean Sauvaget published a fresh Arabic text with a French translation and an exhaustive commentary. Maqbul Ahmad translated the Account into English based on Sauvaget’s Arabic text. For details see S Maqbul Ahmad (tr), *Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China*, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1989; SH Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History* (A Critical Commentary on Elliot and Dowson’s History of India as Told by its Historians), Bombay: SH Hodivala, 1939.

<sup>115</sup> The name of the book of Ibn Khurdadbih (b 820 CE; d. 912 CE) is *Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik* (Roads and Kingdoms) translated from original Arabic with commentaries by S Maqbul Ahmad, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1989.

<sup>116</sup> Al-Masudi (d. 956 CE), *Muruj adh-dhabab*. For details see Ahmad MH Shboul, *Al-Masudi & His World: A Muslim Humanist and His Interest in non-Muslims*, London: Ithaca Press, 1979; HM Elliot and J Dowson, *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1956.

<sup>117</sup> Al-Idrisi (b end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE), *India and Her Neighbouring Territories*, translated by S Maqbul Ahmad, Leiden: EJ Brill, 1960.

<sup>118</sup> Sunil Gupta, ‘Early Indian Ocean in the Context of Indian Relationship with Southeast Asia’, in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, pp. 111-142.

<sup>119</sup> Ibn Battuta visiting Bengal in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE gives some important information. The first town of Bengal, he entered, was Sudkawan. It was a great city, situated on the shore of the vast ocean. The description of Sudkawan that it was very close to the great sea and that the two rivers (Gāṅgā and Jun) have united before falling into the sea. Ibn Battuta undertook a northerly riverine journey from Sudkawan to Habang or Habiganj (in Bangladesh) by a boat along the Blue river (generally identified with the river Meghna) would strongly suggest that it was located near Chittagong.

<sup>120</sup> HAR Gibb (tr), *Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa*, London: Broadway House, 1929, p. 246.

<sup>121</sup> HAR Gibb (tr), *Ibn Battuta*, p. 271.

during the years 1011 to 1023 CE.<sup>122</sup> Atīśa took a voyage to Suvarṇadvīpa by a merchant vessel. This vessel, after several months' strenuous journey, brought him to that island (Suvarṇadvīpa). On his return journey he sailed from Suvarṇadvīpa to Tāmradvīpa (Sri Lanka) and finally to the Bengal coast.<sup>123</sup> These highlights the maritime routes and linkages between south-eastern Bengal (Samandar/ Sudkawan) and South India, Maldives, Southeast Asian countries and China in the early medieval times.

A study of available Chinese evidence and the epigraphic documents strongly suggests that around 7<sup>th</sup> century CE Samatāṭa area<sup>124</sup> began to emerge as point of contact for coastal as well as long-distance voyages in the Bay of Bengal. Devaparvata was the capital of Samatāṭa<sup>125</sup> and emerged as a lively inland riverine port of prominence from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> and to the first quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, identified with Mainamati-Lalmai in Comilla district (Bangladesh).<sup>126</sup> The Kailan Copperplate of Śrīdhāranarāṭa (665-75 CE), the Asiatic Society copperplate of Bhavadeva Abhinavamrgāṅka (765-80 CE), the Paschimbhag copperplate of Śrīchandra (925-75 CE), dated 930 CE,<sup>127</sup> leave an image that

<sup>122</sup> Sarat Chandra Das (tr), *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow*, Calcutta: SK Lahiri, 1893, p. 50.

<sup>123</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders*, 181; RC Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, p. 585.

<sup>124</sup> The territory to the east of the river Meghna ie Noakhali-Comilla area in Bangladesh. Md Mosharraf Hossain, *Mainamati-Lalmai: Anecdote to History*, Dhaka: Dibyaprakash, 2006.

<sup>125</sup> So far five successive capitals of Samatata datable from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries CE are known. These are 1. Kripura (identified with a small town about 18 km north of Mainamati in Comilla. Gunaigarh grant stated that Vainyagupta was ruling Samatata from his capital at Kripura, most probably as an independent local ruler, in 507/508 CE); 2. Karmanta Vasak (identified with a village in Chaudhogram police station, about 23 km south of Comilla. King Devakhadga was issued two copperplates at his 7<sup>th</sup> regnal year, i.e., c. 665 CE, found at Ashrafpur village in Comilla, from *jayaskandhavāra Jayakarmantavasaka*; 3. Devaparvata; 4. Vasantapura (yet to be identified); and 5. Paṭṭikera – the location of Paṭṭikera, according to Morrison, was in the Lalmai-Mainamati hills (Comilla district, Bangladesh), more likely on the eastern side near the northern end of the range.

<sup>126</sup> ABM Husain, et al, *Mainamati-Devaparvata*, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1997, pp. 1-75, 93-124, 233-75; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, 'Devaparvata (A Stronghold in Southern Bengal)', *Journal of the Varendra Research Museum*, Vol-1, 1972, pp. 60-67; Ranabir Chakravarti, 'Vaṅgasāgara-sambhāndāriyaka: A Riverine Trade Centre of Early Medieval Bengal', in *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, pp. 142-159.

<sup>127</sup> DC Sircar, *Epigraphic Discoveries in East Pakistan*, Culcutta Sanskrit College Research Series No. LXXVII, Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1973, pp. 19-40; Kamalakanta Gupta Chaudhury, 'The Paschimbhag Copperplate of Srichandra', in *NK Bhattacharyya Commemoration Volume*, Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1966, pp. 166-99; DC Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, Vol-2, pp. 36-40, 363-77; 'The Kalian Copperplate Inscription of King

Devaparvata had a distinct orientation to riverine communications and its intimate and lively association with inland riverine network and maritime connection with the Bay of Bengal till the first quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE is beyond doubt.

In the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century Śrīchandra issued a charter (Madanpur copperplate inscription of Śrīchandra)<sup>128</sup> to record the gift of a plot of land from the *jayaskandhavāra* of Vikramapura. The land was donated at a place called *Vaīgasāgara-sambhāndāriyaka* in Yolāmaṇḍala (about 24 km to the north-west of Dhaka, areas around modern Savar). This area, though not situated in a littoral tract, had an intimate association with the eastern sea through inland riverine routes. The word, *Vaīgasāgara*, may indicate the early medieval name of the eastern sector of the Indian Ocean, ie the Bay of Bengal and Vaīgopasāgara (in Bangla).<sup>129</sup>

Now we may sum up by noting that the above mentioned maritime contact routes connected the territory of Bengal with a number of overland and over-sea destinations during our time frame till 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. The importance of the maritime routes of early Bengal for maritime voyages along the eastern seaboard and also with maritime Southeast Asia is enormous. Tāmralipti, the port par excellence, played an important role in the early maritime route networks. Then Samataṭa was gradually making its presence felt, in the communication networks, since the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The decline of Tāmralipti immensely enhanced the importance of the Samataṭa/Harikela in the eastern maritime space. From the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE onwards the major area of seaborne contacts between Bengal and other countries in the Indian Ocean became Samataṭa/Harikela where Samandar/Sudkawan (near Chittagong in Bangladesh) emerged as a great port and played a vital part in the eastern seaboard maritime networks.

#### **Extended ‘Sphere of Influence’: ‘Bengalisation’(!) of Southeast Asia?**

There are a few epigraphic documents that clearly indicated the role of Bengal territory in the commercial and religio-cultural activities in the mainland-maritime Southeast Asia. Bengal even linked up with some parts of Southeast Asia because of

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Sridharanarata of Samatata’, *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, 1947, pp. 221-41;

<sup>128</sup> The plate was first edited and partly translated by Basak and was later commented upon by Sircar. The plate was issued, according to Basak, in the 44 regnal year of Srichandra’s reign, ie CE 969, while Sircar dated it to the 46 regnal year, ie CE 971. RG Basak, ‘Madanpur Plate of Srichandra, Year 46’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol-XXVIII, 1949, pp. 51-59; DC Sircar, ‘Madanpur Plate of Srichandra, Year 46’, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol-XXVIII, 1949, pp. 337-339.

<sup>129</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, ‘Vangasagara and Other Related Terms: An Examination’, in *History and Archaeology of Eastern India*, edited by Asok Datta, Delhi: Book and Books, 1999, pp. 254-64.

a few similarities in the scripts.<sup>130</sup> With the help of three structural tables, Harun-Er-Rashid<sup>131</sup> has illustrated the similarities that Thai scripts bear with that of Bengali script during its evolutionary stage. He also points out the similarities in pronunciation between Thai alphabets on one hand, and the Bangla alphabets on the other<sup>132</sup>.

It appears from one later period inscription, the Kalyani inscription (1478 CE)<sup>133</sup>, that the settlement in Suvarṇabhūmi (Lower Myanmar) was apparently colonized by the people from Bengal, the Golas (Gauḍas). Their name has become the Mon and the ‘Burmese’ appellation for all foreigners from the west.<sup>134</sup> Two Sanskrit inscriptions found in Cambodia (Phnom Penh Stone Inscription of Bhavarman, dated 639 CE and Prah That Kvan Pir Inscription of Puṣkara, dated 716 CE)<sup>135</sup> exhibit so completely all the peculiarities of the Gauḍa style that G Coedes expressed the view that the records were composed by a *Pandit* who either belonged to Bengal or was trained there.<sup>136</sup> Another Sanskrit inscription comes from the Northern part of Province Wellesly in Malay Peninsula written in a 5<sup>th</sup> century script proves maritime voyages and close association of Bengal coastal territories with the maritime Southeast Asia.<sup>137</sup> One of the best instances of Bengal’s cultural relations with Southeast Asia during the early medieval times is seen in the request from the Śailendra ruler of Java and Sumatra, Bālaputradeva, to the Pāla emperor Devapāla (CE 821-61) to grant some land in favour of a Buddhist monastery at Nalanda. The

<sup>130</sup> For the development of the Bangla script in early times see Amitabha Bhattacharyya, ‘Some Aspects of the Development of Bengali Script’, *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, Vol-XIX, Parts 1-2, 1989-90, pp. 97-110.

<sup>131</sup> Harun-Er-Rashid, ‘Ancient Association’, pp. 36-38.

<sup>132</sup> Haroun-er-Rashid, *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>133</sup> In Myanmar there are many stone inscriptions in Mon, Pyu, Burmese and Pali. Kalyani Inscription was written in Pali and Mon. It was erected by king Dharmaceti of Ramasnadesa in 1478 CE on the ten sand stones of which three are in Pali and the last are in Mon. The main purpose of this Kalyani inscription was to record the execution of king Dharmaceti’s sasana purification though it partly dealt with history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, India and Myanmar.

<sup>134</sup> Taw Sein Ko, ‘Some Remarks on the Kalyani Inscriptions’, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol-23, 1894, pp. 256-57; RC Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, p. 582.

<sup>135</sup> Radhavallabh Tripathi, ‘Southeast Asia Through Epigraphical Records in Sanskrit’, *Sanskrit in Southeast Asia: The Harmonizing Factor of Cultures*, Bangkok: Sanskrit Studies Centre of Silpakorn University, 2003, p. 272.

<sup>136</sup> RC Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, p. 582; G Coedes, *Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, p. 30.

<sup>137</sup> Amitabha Bhattacharyya, *Historical Geography of Bengal*, p. 10; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, ‘Bengal and Southeast Asia’, p. 100; G Coedes, *Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, p. 51.

request was upheld by Devapāla by granting five villages for maintaining the monastery<sup>138</sup> and this shows the close connection between these two regions.

The popularization of the Mahayana Buddhism in Southeast Asia is in all probability an extension of the Buddhist school which gained ground in Eastern India (Bengal and Bihar). The close connection with Nalanda facilitated the diffusion.<sup>139</sup> The discovery of images and sanctuaries of various manifestations of the Bodhisathvas in Myanmar, in Malay Peninsula (Ligor), in Java (Kalasan, Kelurak) and in Cambodia (Prasat Ta Keam) prove that Mahayana Buddhism gained grounds in Southeast Asia in the last quarter of 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE probably under the influence of Pāla dynasty and the teachers of the university of Nalanda.<sup>140</sup> Two Buddhist texts in Java *Sang hyang Ka mahayanikan* and *Kamahayanan Mantranaya*, contain exposition of the Mahayana form transcending to Tantrayana or Vajrayana.<sup>141</sup> Similar was the case in Bengal. It is quite natural that the initial epicentre of Buddhist culture, Bengal, had played a significant role in the expansion of Buddhism and Buddhist culture towards the east. Buddhism imbibed adoration of images in Bengal, most probably due to the influence of Bengal's distinct regional 'personality' or territorial 'individuality'. Though fundamentally, it was a direct rejection of beliefs and practices that the Buddha himself had preached his original creed.<sup>142</sup> This transformation has been termed as 'mystic forms generally referred to as Vajrayana and Tantrayana or Sahajayana and Kalachakrayana'.<sup>143</sup> These broad similarities in the fate of Buddhism may not indicate anything positive, but may be taken to be suggestive of Eastern flow of Buddhist thought and practices from the territory of Bengal to the mainland-maritime Southeast Asia.

<sup>138</sup> Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, p. 181; RC Majumdar, *Ancient Indian Colonization*, pp. 40-43; *History of Ancient Bengal*, p. 582.

<sup>139</sup> Radhavallabh Tripathi, 'Southeast Asia Through Epigraphical Records in Sanskrit', *Sanskrit in Southeast Asia: The Harmonizing Factor of Cultures*, Bangkok: Sanskrit Studies Centre of Silpakorn University, 2003, p. 272; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, 'Bengal and Southeast Asia', pp. 101-02.

<sup>140</sup> G Coedes, *Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, pp. 89-96; Niharranjan Ray, *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma*, Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1936, p. 100; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, 'Bengal and Southeast Asia', p. 103.

<sup>141</sup> Gopinath Mohapatra, 'Migration of Buddhism to Southeast Asia', *Sanskrit in Southeast Asia: The Harmonizing Factor of Culture*, Bangkok: Sanskrit Studies Centre, Silpakorn University, 2003, pp. 64-75; RC Majumdar, *India and Southeast Asia*, New Delhi: BR Publishing, 1979, pp. 192-99.

<sup>142</sup> Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya in Lama Chimpaand A Chattopadhyaya (tr), *Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India*, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1970, Vol. XII-XIII.

<sup>143</sup> RC Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, p. 527.

In this way Buddhism spread to some parts of Southeast Asian countries and archipelago after being modified in Bengal through the overland and maritime routes. Many Buddhist scholars during this time went to Java and influenced the transformed Buddhism. It is on record that eminent Buddhist scholars like Atiśadīpa-kara of Bengal (11<sup>th</sup> century CE), who was a teacher of Nalanda, visited Suvarṇadvīpa to teach Mahayana school of Buddhism.<sup>144</sup> As a result the Mahayanist gods became popular and made their appearance in Java like Ādibuddha, Prajñāpāramita, Bodhisattvas, Tārās and Avalokiteśvara etc.<sup>145</sup>

The cultural expansion from Bengal to Southeast Asia has been most prominently and explicitly discerned in different spheres of art and architecture.<sup>146</sup> Scholars have noted in examples of subsequent periods influences of Gupta art, then of Pāla and Sena art of Bengal<sup>147</sup> as well as the influence of Orissa on the images of Myanmar, Thailand and Java. The source of Gupta influence in some parts of Southeast Asia must have been essentially from the Gangetic valley through the ports of Bengal and Orissa.<sup>148</sup> The development of bronze technique of Nalanda, most of which belong to the Pāla school of art, had definite influence on ancient Javanese art.<sup>149</sup> It may be true that the Hindu-Javanese bronzes in general have not developed from Pāla art, but Pāla images have enriched the art of Java with a number of motifs and types. There is much similarity in the composition and in the dress of these two kinds of images.

<sup>144</sup> RC Majumdar, *Suvarṇadvīpa*, Vol-2, Dacca: University of Dacca, 1938, p. 117; Sarat Chandra Das, *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow*, Calcutta: Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, 1965 (first published in 1893, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press), p. 50.

<sup>145</sup> Gopinath Mohapatra, 'Migration of Buddhism to Southeast Asia', p. 71.

<sup>146</sup> The earliest evidence of artistic influence from eastern India or 'Bengal' dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, on the basis of two bronze statues, one found at Phong Tuk in the Chao Phraya valley and the other near Khorat in north-east Thailand. The Phong Tuk statue at first considered belonging to the Amaravati school by A Foucher, but later it was classed by AB Griswold as a copy of a Pāla sculpture. On the basis of the two books written by Foucher (*L'Art Greco-bouddhique du Gandhāra*) and D Rajanubhab (*Monuments of the Buddha in Siam*) Haroun er Rashid made this comment. Haroun er Rashid, 'Ancient Association between Bengal and Thailand', p. 30; Kalipada Lahiri, 'Prachin Banglar Gaurab', *Bharatbarsha*, in Bangla, 49<sup>th</sup> year, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1368 BS, p. 307.

<sup>147</sup> RD Banerjee, 'Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture', *ASI: New Imperial Series*, Vol-XLVII, Delhi, 1933. B Sahai and JC French, *The Art of the Pal Empire of Bengal*, New Delhi: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1983; SK Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, Calcutta: Samyukt Publications, 1962.

<sup>148</sup> Sri Lanka (Ceylon) seems to have been an important source of Gupta-like art. The ports of western India may also have been responsible for some Gupta influence. Le May observed 'if colonists could and did come from India in the days of Amaravati, then there is no reason why their successors should not follow them in the times of the Gupta emperors, though possibly from the port of Tāmralipti'. R Le May, *A Concise History of Buddhist Art in Siam*, Tokyo: Charles E Turtle, 1963, p. 24.

<sup>149</sup> AJ Bernet Kempers, *The Bronzes of Nalanda and Hindu-Javanese Art*, Leiden: Late EJ Brill Ltd, 1933, p. 77.

Most probably, the Javanese casters knew Pāla representations and took them as their model.<sup>150</sup>

It is quite likely that Buddhist monks and travelers from Southeast Asian countries to Nalanda and some other famous Buddhist places in Bengal carried Pāla small bronze images and thus the art style and designs of Bengal became popular in Java, Sumatra and Myanmar.<sup>151</sup> A collection of bronze sculptures from Mainamati-Chittagong area of Bangladesh, the Jhewari collection, attracts scholars' special attention.<sup>152</sup> These are assigned to post-Gupta, but pre-Pāla period and proved the existence of a local centre of Buddhist art in southeastern Bengal.<sup>153</sup> This distinct style of art formed a valuable link with some parts of Southeast Asia (Southern Thailand, Java and Myanmar) because of the geographical proximity. Susan L. Huntington<sup>154</sup> suggests about a bronze Vishnu that was brought to Java at an early date to serve as a model for Javanese artists. She has argued in favour of its south-eastern Bengal origin.

We may delineate a few points of influence regarding the architectural style, ground plan and design which clearly shows the close association of Bengal with some parts of Southeast Asia, more specifically Myanmar and Indonesia (Java). A 'unique' form of temple architecture (cruciform pattern) developed in early Bengal which is being appraised by the scholars as the most magnificent and distinct expression of architectural style and design that constitute Bengal's individuality in the realm of architecture. The excavations at Paharpur<sup>155</sup> and at Mainamati<sup>156</sup> unearthed the

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<sup>150</sup> Kempers, *The Bronzes of Nalanda*, pp. 72-77.

<sup>151</sup> AKM Shamsul Alam, *Sculptural Art of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Dept. of Archaeology and Museums of Bangladesh, 1985, p. 35.

<sup>152</sup> The discovery of a hoard of 66 metal figures from Jhewari village in 1927, however, necessitated a re-consideration of import-imitation hypothesis. Slowly, but steadily, art historical studies have come to accept the importance of Jhewari bronzes in the domain of early medieval art of Eastern India.

<sup>153</sup> Gautam Sengupta, 'Art of Southeastern Bengal: An Overview', *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, Vol-XIX, Parts 1-2, 1989-90, pp. 127-29; Debala Mitra, *Bronzes from Bangladesh – A Study of Buddhist Images from District Chittagong*, New Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1982; Asok K Bhattacharya, *Jhewari Bronze Buddha – A Study in History and Style*, Calcutta: Indian Museum, 1989.

<sup>154</sup> Susan L Huntington and Jhon C Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pala India (8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*, Seattle and London: The Dayton Art Institute, 1990, p. 173.

<sup>155</sup> Paharpur an important archaeological site in Bangladesh, situated in a village named Paharpur under the Badalgachhi Upazila of Naogaon district. KN Dikshit, 'Excavations at Paharpur, Bengal', *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No.-55, Delhi, 1938.

<sup>156</sup> Mainamati an isolated ridge of low hills in the eastern margins of deltaic Bangladesh, about 8 km to the west of Comilla town is a very familiar name in Bengal's cultural heritage, where archaeological excavations have revealed very significant materials. *Bangladesh Archaeology*, No-1, Dhaka: Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Bangladesh, 1979; ABM Husain (ed), *Mainamati-Devaparvata*, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1997;

examples of this type of temples. Recent archaeological excavations in the Mainamati area clearly established the preponderance of the ‘cruciform’ type of central shrine built in the centre of the large courtyard of the square monastic establishments where the numerous cells are arranged systematically on all four arms of the square with massive back walls and only one fortified entrance set in an attractive projection in the middle of the northern side.<sup>157</sup>

This typical form seems to have been evolved in the Samataṭa area in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE and many early and intermediary stages of this experiment are in evidence here. The Mainamati excavations, carried out intermittently since 1955, have brought to light the Salban Vihara,<sup>158</sup> the Ananda Vihara<sup>159</sup> and the Rupban Mura Vihara<sup>160</sup> with its typical cruciform plan of the central shrine. This ‘unique’ type is not seen in any other parts of India nor is its further development traceable in India beyond the adjacent parts of Bihar. Its full and final development is found in the giant establishment at Paharpur (Somapura Mahavihara)<sup>161</sup> and at Antichak in

Md Mosharraf Hossain, *Mainamati-Lalmai—Anecdote to History*, Dhaka: Dibyaprakash, 2006.

<sup>157</sup> Abdul Momin Chowdhury, ‘Bengal and Southeast Asia’, pp. 105-09.

<sup>158</sup> Shalban Vihara of Bhavadeva (last quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE) is among the most important excavated sites in Mainamati. It lies about the middle of the Lalmai ridge in the vicinity of the present day Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) at Kotbari near Comilla in Bangladesh. Debala Mitra, *Buddhis Monuments*, Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1971, pp. 243-46; BM Morrison, *Lalmai: A Cultural Centre of Early Bengal*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974, p. 23; Sufi Mostafizur Rahman (ed.), *Cultural Survey of Bangladesh Series-1: Archaeological Heritage*, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2007, pp. 293-94.

<sup>159</sup> Ananda Vihara situated in the Kotbari area near Comilla, is the largest of the Mainamati monuments. It also has the largest water tank in the area. This Vihara complex was built by Anandadeva, the third ruler of the Early Deva Dynasty, at the end of the 7th or the beginning of 8th century CE. AK Shamsul Alam, *Mainamati*, Dhaka: Dept. Of Archaeology and Museums of Bangladesh, 1975, pp. 28-30; Md Mosharraf Hossain, *Mainamati-Lalmai*, pp. 28-31.

<sup>160</sup> Rupban Mura lying on a hillock just beside the modern BARD in the Kotbari area on the south of the Comilla-Kalirbazar road. Deep diggings have revealed three main periods of building and repairs and rebuilding, the earliest corresponding to 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century CE and 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. ABM Husain (ed), *Mainamati-Devaparvata*, pp. 95-105; AK Shamsul Alam, *Mainamati*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>161</sup> Somapura Mahavihara was one of the most famous Buddhist monastic institutions of ancient Bengal which was alluded by the expression of *jagatāṅg netraika viśrāma bhūḥ* (a singular feast to the eyes of the world). It is situated in a village named Paharpur under the Badalgachhi Upazila of Naogaon district in Bangladesh and built by the second Pāla king Dharmapāla (781-821 CE). Tibetan works (Tibetan translations of *Dharmakāyavidhi* and *Madhyamaka Ratnapradīpa*, Tāranatha's history and *Pag-Sam-Jon-Zang*) record the glory of Somapura Mahavihara. Many Tibetan monks visited the monastery during the period between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. KN Dikshit, *Excavations At Paharpur*, 1938; RC Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, pp. 613-16; Sufi Mustafizur Rahman, *Cultural*

Bihar (Vikramasila Mahavihara),<sup>162</sup> both built during the reign of the Pāla emperor Dharmapāla in the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. There is hardly any doubt now that this peculiar cruciform plan of the central shrine of the Buddhist viharas profoundly influenced that of ancient Myanmar, Java and Cambodia. The nearest approximation to this form is afforded by some of the ancient Buddhist temples of Pagan in Myanmar, of Kalasan and Prambanan in Central Java particularly by Chandi Sevu and Chandi Lora Jongrang temples.

The nearest example is furnished by the temple of Ananda (Ananta Panna, infinite wisdom) at Pagan, at great achievement of Kyanzittha (1086 to 1112 CE).<sup>163</sup> It is beyond doubt that the plan and execution of the Ananda temple speak of its Eastern origin. It may differ in details of execution, the character and tone may also not be the same, but the inspiration could very well be linked with similar edifices in Bengal.<sup>164</sup> Dikshit refers to Chandi Loro Jongrang and Chandi Sevu of Prambanan in central Java offering the nearest approximation to the plan and superstructure of the Paharpur temple. He also claimed that the inner plan of the Chandi Sevu shrine strikingly resembles that of the central shrine and the second terrace at Paharpur.<sup>165</sup> Chandi Sevu, the biggest Buddhist sanctuary after Borobudur, was constructed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE when this region had a close connection with Bengal.<sup>166</sup> We have discussed this connection earlier. In general terms, it may be a legitimate hypothesis

*Survey of Bangladesh Series-1*, pp. 294-95; Aparna Bandyopadhyay, ‘Sompuri Mahabihar’, *Bharatvarsha*, in Bangla, Vol. 2, No.2, 1364-1365 BS, pp. 197-200.

<sup>162</sup> Vikramasila Mahāvihara was founded by the Pāla King Dharmapāla (775-810 CE) and the location has now been established archaeologically at the site of Antichak in the Bhagalpur district of Bihar, covered the period from the early 9<sup>th</sup> century to the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. Frederick M. Asher, ‘Vikramasila Mahavihara’, *Bangladesh Lalitakala*, Vol-1, No-2, Dhaka, 1975, pp. 108-10; Krishnendu Ray, ‘Vikramasila Mahavihara’, [http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/V\\_0046.HTM](http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/V_0046.HTM)

<sup>163</sup> The period of Kyanzittha could very well be the period of Eastern expansion, either voluntary or forced, of Buddhism from ‘Bengal’ towards Southeast Asia. Charles Duroiselle, ‘The Ananda Temple at Pagan’, *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No-56, Delhi, 1937.

<sup>164</sup> The plain around Pagan, about one hundred square miles in area, is full of ruins of temples. A few of them, in fair state of preservation and having similar plan as that of Ananda, prove that the inspiration from ‘Bengal’ in this area was fairly widespread and dominant. Abdul Momin Chowdhury, ‘Bengal and Southeast Asia’, p. 106.

<sup>165</sup> KN Dikshit, *Excavation at Paharpur, Bengal*, p. 7.

<sup>166</sup> SM Imamuddin comments correctly that the Buddhist religion brought these two regions together and bound them by the ‘same cultural chain’: ‘The Buddhist monasteries of Paharpur and Lalmai (Mainamati) of Bangladesh, the Ananda Vihara at Pagan in Burma and the Great Borobodur in Java are the embodiments of the historical and architectural links of the same cultural chain’. SM Imamuddin, ‘Bengal’s Maritime Trade with the Far East upto the Sultanate Period’, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, Vol-XXVII, 1982, p. 10; Aksadul Alam, ‘Bengal: the Gateway of Contacts and Communications between India and Southeast Asia’, p. 109.

that the shrines in the territory of Bengal of 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE may be considered to be an influencing factor for these Southeast Asian Buddhist edifices and no doubt the geographical location – the geographical and physical proximity – the extensive contacts and communications – confrontation between internal and external socio-cultural and religious elements and the synthesis – played the determinant role.

### **Deconstructing the ‘Nationalist’ Construction of ‘Indianisation’ of Southeast Asia!**

Contacts and communications between India and mainland-maritime Southeast Asia in early times emerged as an academic issue during the colonial milieu in India. The emergence of this discourse generated the intellectual and academic counter-hegemony to the colonial construct that India, in her ancient days, was a land isolated from the rest of the ‘civilized world’. Then some historians advocated that India had an exemplary cultural influence over Southeast Asian countries and archipelago since the antiquity. The counter-hegemonic academic discourse of ‘Greater India’ and ‘Indianisation’ gradually developed as a landmark in Indian Historiography.

‘Bengal’, a geo-cultural territory, was one of the strongest parts in the entire chain of contacts and communications between India and Southeast Asia that brought two geographically distant lands in close Association. Empirical evidence now shows beyond doubts that Bengal and Southeast Asia had intimate trade and consequent cultural contacts. Modified and moderated sometimes by Bengal’s regional ‘personality’,<sup>167</sup> different cultural and religious elements of Indian sub-continent as a whole, as well as her own individual styles of art and architecture went to mainland and maritime Southeast Asia. The Bay of Bengal, monsoonal wind, climate and agriculture had made this contact easy and meaningful.<sup>168</sup>

The question of contacts and communications between Bengal and Southeast Asia is not only bearing a preponderant academic weightage, but this entire issue has an immense emotive appeal to the Indian historians, especially the ‘nationalist’ historians: the elating ‘pride’ and ‘glory’ associated with the entire notion of ‘Greater India’ or ‘Indianisation’ which is an outcrop of the intense researches on the extensive contacts and communications between India and Southeast Asia since ancient antiquities, and the subsequent ‘soul-searching’. However, this matter reserves greater relevance due to the academic debate concerning ‘Greater India’ or ‘Farther India’.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ahmad Hasan Dani, ‘Individuality of Bengal Art’, *Journal of Bengal Art*, Vol. 2, 1997, pp. 9-16; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, ‘Aspects of Ancient Bengal Society and Socio-religious Attitude: Tradition and Continuity’, *Dhaka University Studies*, Vol. XXXVII, December, 1982, pp. 148-160.

<sup>168</sup> Aksadul Alam, ‘Bengal: the Gateway of Contacts and Communications between India and Southeast Asia’, p. 89.

<sup>169</sup> G Coedes, *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*, pp. xv-xxi.

This contentious issue of ‘Indianisation of Southeast Asia’ or ‘Indianised States of Southeast Asia’ as an epiphenomenon of the intimate contacts and communications with the distant lands of Southeast Asia needs to be contextualized against the backdrop of the colonial construction of the theory which posited India as an ‘uncivilized land of savagery’, steeped into ‘bottomless abyss of ignorance’, where the first elements of civilization were implanted by the British themselves. Thus, the British mission of civilising India became a ‘white man’s burden’. Against this backdrop, the construction of the notion of ‘Greater India’ by the nationalist Indian intelligentsia may be considered as an attempt at deconstructing the ‘colonial myth’.

This nationalist trend imported Antonio Gramsci’s terminology and notion (particularly the theory of cultural hegemony)<sup>170</sup> which can be considered as an intellectual counter-hegemony, originally and conceptually aimed at deconstruction of the colonial myth and stereotypes which had hitherto sustained the British ‘illusion of permanence’ of their continued hegemony over ‘Indian psyche’ and intellect. Thus, the destructive force of malign, exploitative ‘political imperialism’ was juxtaposed against a constructive force of benign, creative ‘cultural imperialism’. The Eurocentricism begot its theoretical and conceptual adversary and counter-notion, Indocentrism. The megalomaniac notion of *Pax Britannica* came under intellectual attack of the concept of a counter-hegemonic *Pax Indiana*. The original aim and purpose of the construction of this conceptual and intellectual counter-hegemony was to debunk the British complacency that military and political subversion sufficed to sustain the colonial hegemony in India. Against this, was being illustrated how the cultural colonisation of India in mainland-maritime Southeast Asia has been perpetual with its enduring cultural legacies.

The ‘academic exaggeration’ (which tends to downplay the process of syncretism giving overdue credence to superimposition of Indian culture over the local culture of Southeast Asia, ignoring the local individuality) should be debunked, it should also simultaneously be established that India definitely had intimate commercial, and subsequent cultural contacts with the mainland and maritime Southeast Asia. These extensive contacts and communications, in reality, aided and facilitated cultural syncretism between two regions, rather than a vertical superimposition of one over the other. In this regard, Bengal played roles as a geographical-cultural territory in establishing and enduring these contacts, catalysing the eventual cultural syncretism.

However, the paper intended to underscore, geographical factors of these regions in general and Bengal in particular influence the socio-cultural efflorescence in some parts of Southeast Asian countries and archipelago. But the academic ‘scramble’ over

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<sup>170</sup> Joseph A Buttigieg (ed), *Prison Notebooks* of Antonio Gramsci, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, pp. 233–238.

the issue of designating Southeast Asia as an 'extended sphere of influence' or 'cultural colony' of either India ('Indianisation'), or China might also beget the question as whether it is in that case justified to call this cultural influence of Bengal in Southeast Asia as a pervasive 'Bengalisation'(?). We argue that the outflow of cultural elements or traits from the territory of Bengal in particular and the territory of India in general, were actually moderated and modified mainly by the local elements in mainland-maritime Southeast Asia. Thus, the result was a cultural syncretism.

**BANGLADESH AND UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING  
MISSIONS: THE QUEST FOR A NATIONAL POLICY  
TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF UNCERTAINTY**

Rashed Uz Zaman and Niloy Ranjan Biswas\*

**Abstract**

This paper attempts to discuss a major research question—to what extent and why a national peacekeeping policy is significant for a top peacekeeping contributing nation, such as Bangladesh, to address the global and local challenges of UN peacekeeping missions? In doing so, the paper offers a review of the national policies of different states and its importance in the international peacekeeping discourse. Later, it unfolds the trends of Bangladesh's contribution to UN peacekeeping missions and analyzes the challenges in the changing patterns of global peacekeeping. In the final section, the paper prescribes the critical aspects that a prospective national policy may need to address in the context of Bangladesh. The paper argues that Bangladesh will eventually need a national policy to effectively utilize its resources, to coordinate the role of different institutions, and to fulfill its normative visions in international peacekeeping endeavours. It suggests that the process of formulating a national policy needs to be inclusive of actors and issues relevant to the changing future patterns of global peacekeeping.

**Introduction**

Since the early 1990s, there has been a significant increase in the number of peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the United Nations (henceforth known as UN) as well as expansion of their scope. While the origins of UN peacekeeping can be traced back to late 1940s, the exigencies of Cold War politics kept such missions under a tight lid. From 1948 to 1978, the UN deployed thirteen peacekeeping missions, while over the next ten years not a single mission materialized due to the tension between the superpowers. Following the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping missions dramatically increased, with the UN authorizing more missions between 1991 and 1994 than in the previous forty-five years combined.<sup>1</sup> As of 31 March 2017, the United Nations has deployed 82,712 troops, 11,944 police and 1,821 military observers, a total of 96,477 personnel, in 16

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Schori, "UN Peacekeeping", in Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine and Ramesh Thakur (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 782.

missions.<sup>2</sup> Of the 124 contributing countries, Bangladesh with 6,904 uniformed personnel is one of the top suppliers of UN peacekeepers and has been so over the past three decades<sup>3</sup>

While participation in UN peacekeeping missions has emerged as an important aspect of Bangladesh's foreign policy in a changing world, it is imperative that Bangladesh approaches the issue in a pragmatic manner and gives it the importance it deserves. It is a matter of concern that Bangladesh, in spite of being involved with peacekeeping since 1988, has not yet formulated a national policy document on how to face the challenges of present and future peacekeeping missions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the absence of a national peacekeeping policy, the concerned stakeholders often find it difficult to tackle matters related to peacekeeping in a coordinated manner. Some scholars of International Security may assume that national peacekeeping policy is unlike other areas of public policymaking, and that such policy is insulated from societal pressures and parochial interests. Yet much is to be taken into cognizance or ignored during the process of negotiating new deployments in UN peacekeeping missions, in particular because they have a major impact upon the articulation of new threat scenarios, identification of national security and foreign policy objectives as well as the size of defense budget and force planning requirements.<sup>4</sup> Of course, a skeptic may ask how one can plan prudently for peacekeeping missions in future that in a large part one do not understand. It is always wise to be ready, but ready for what? Planning needs a context, because it cannot navigate itself. A national peacekeeping strategy paper may go to some extent in providing guidelines and identify signposts which may give one an understanding of the context. It is true that the fog which obscures the future is not dispersible, though to a helpful degree it may be compensated for by far-sighted planning.<sup>5</sup>

This article focuses on various national peacekeeping policy documents adopted by countries contributing personnel to peacekeeping missions. The discussion highlights that peacekeeping challenges are myriad and Bangladesh needs to formulate a clear

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Peacekeeping Fact Sheet*, available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml> (accessed 01 May 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Jacob M. Kathman and Molly D. Melin, "Who Keeps the Peace? Understanding State Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Operations", *International Studies Quarterly*, November 2016, DOI: 10.1093/isq/sqw041

<sup>4</sup> Alexandra Holomar, "How to Last Alone at the Top: US Strategic Planning for the Unipolar Era", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2011, p. 213.

<sup>5</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 1.

and far-sighted national peacekeeping strategy paper, which will help guide the different stakeholders involved in peacekeeping to approach the issue in a planned manner and allow the country to derive the maximum benefit. For Bangladesh, peacekeeping has become too important a subject to be approached in an *ad hoc* manner. This paper has conducted a qualitative survey of both primary and secondary documents that include national policies of peacekeeping and international policy documents of the United Nations. Further, it has analyzed the data into a few categories, which would help to define a set of significant components for a potential national policy of peacekeeping.

The paper is arranged in four sections. In the first section of the article, a study of national peacekeeping strategy documents of various countries are made with an objective of identifying what may or may not be included in such documents. The second section provides a brief overview of Bangladesh's participation to understand the trends and current process of decision-making in UN peacekeeping missions. The changing characteristics of peacekeeping in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and what this may entail for peacekeepers is discussed in the third section. In the concluding part of the paper, a case is made for Bangladesh having a national peacekeeping policy and discusses various issues, which may be considered for inclusion in such a document.

### **I. International Case Studies of National Peacekeeping Policies**

This section discusses the national policy instruments of different countries on their participation in peacekeeping missions. It analyzes the trends of inclusion of standard international norms and practices in various national peacekeeping policies of the contributing states. National governments formulate these policy documents to offer a vision in line with their broader security and foreign policies, and a set of practical guidelines for their armed forces, police and civilian observers to ensure an effective participation in peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, the policy intention is to make a collaborative national response framework to address issues of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Broadly, the national policies cover provisions on (a) institutional roles; (b) the process of conflict prevention, mediation and mitigation; and (c) approaches of the post-conflict recovery and stabilization. It is imperative to note, however, that the narrative of developing a national peacekeeping policy has been increasingly contested due to the significance of Eurocentric and neo-liberal understanding of peacekeeping, which is often oblivious to the local contexts of the

contributing state.<sup>6</sup> The assessment of national policies in this section is relatively representative and is arranged with diversified case studies that are mainly categorized across the regions, such as: Asia (Japan), Europe (Sweden and Serbia), South America (Brazil), and Africa (South Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia).

The national policies across the states describe the rationale behind the enactment of such a national instrument to administer their involvement in peacekeeping missions. For example, the 1999 *White Paper* describes South Africa's approach to peacekeeping endeavour. It suggests:

It was necessary to invest in peacebuilding processes in addition to short-term interventions such as peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Peacebuilding, as such, would include addressing such issues as respect for human rights and political pluralism, building state capacity and mechanisms of good governance (the latter being particularly important within the context of African interventions), building the capacity of civil society, and ensuring meaningful growth and development.<sup>7</sup>

The 1999 South African *White Paper* underlines the importance of securing a clear international mandate for participation in peace missions. It mentions that participation would only occur if such missions would be authorized by the UN. Furthermore, it also emphasizes that participation should be linked to concrete political solutions and should only occur in the event of "a clear threat to and/or breach of international peace and security and/or a disaster of major humanitarian proportions and/or endemic causes of conflict which, unless addressed, may cause long term instability".<sup>8</sup> This particular approach was borrowed, virtually verbatim, from the US policy document on American participation in peace- support operations.<sup>9</sup>

From South America, Brazil emerges as a major peacekeeping contributor to UN missions in Africa, which remains a significant region in Brazil's plan of action both in strategic and in normative terms.<sup>10</sup> During the tenure of President Lula da Silva

<sup>6</sup> Philip Cunliffe, "Still the Spectre at the Feast: Comparisons between Peacekeeping and Imperialism in Peacekeeping Studies Today", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2012, pp.426–442.

<sup>7</sup> Rocky Williams, "From peacekeeping to peacebuilding? South African policy and practice in peace missions", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2000, p.89.

<sup>8</sup> Rocky Williams, *op. cit.*, p.89.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of State, *The Clinton Administration's Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations*, May 1994, p.4, available at <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB53/rw050094.pdf> (accessed 26 April 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Kai Michael Kenkel, "Brazil's Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Policies in Africa", *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 17, 2013, p. 273.

(2003-2010), Brazil mainstreamed its peacekeeping policies by strengthening a revisionist international agenda to sustain peace and advocating solidarity with the global South. It has proposed a linkage between security and development issues by transforming its own development successes into a more prominent contribution in international security issues. Nevertheless, Brazil's policy of aversion to the use of force in peace operations has kept it out of the African continent where robust operations are prevalent.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Brazil has maintained a separate trend of engagement in peacekeeping in Africa, and compared with other emerging powers such as India and China, Brazil is a newcomer to the strategic scenario in Africa and particularly to peace operations in the region.

In Kenya, *National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management*<sup>12</sup> highlights that the lack of norms, values and principles to guide interventions has in certain situations exacerbated conflicts. The Kenyan policy aims to advocate for a sustainable peace in the African region through a collaborative institutional framework between state and non-state actors and communities. It also aims that the policy document will ensure the peace infrastructure<sup>13</sup> for Kenya and elaborates on cooperation between national and international actors in areas of conflict prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response framework. The policy offers a clear institutional framework where the government coordinates and underpins processes, functions, roles and responsibilities of different actors, and institutional components.

Serbia from Europe is a relatively smaller state, but is a significant contributor to the UN peacekeeping operations. In October 2009, the Serbian Assembly voted to adopt the *Law on Participation of the Serbian Armed Forces and Other Defense Forces in Multinational Operations Outside the Borders of the Republic of Serbia* (hereafter, MNO).<sup>14</sup> This Law regulates the area of participation of the armed forces outside the territory of the Republic of Serbia. It sets forth that Serbian defense forces and police may be used in the following missions: (a) Operations of peacekeeping, peace

<sup>11</sup> Kenkel, *ibid.*, pp. 273-5.

<sup>12</sup> Office of the President, *National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management*, Kenya: Ministry of State for Provincial Administration and Internal Security. December 2011, pp. 5-14.

<sup>13</sup> To understand the concept of Infrastructure for Peace in Africa, read: Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, *Infrastructures for Peace*, Working Paper, March 2010. Also, *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Defense (2009) *Law on Participation of the Serbian Armed Forces and Other Defense Forces in Multinational Operations Outside the Borders of the Republic of Serbia*, Belgrade, Off. Register 88/2009 Article 3, paragraph 1, subsection 1 and Article 5, paragraph 1.

maintaining, and peacebuilding in the world; (b) Conflict prevention and peace-enforcing operations; (c) Joint defense operations in accordance with the regulations on defense; (d) Operations providing assistance in removing the impact of the international terrorism and large-scale terrorist attacks; and (e) Participation in humanitarian operations in cases of large-scale natural, technical – technological, and ecological accidents and assistance in crisis situations. The Law further provides a clear guideline on the decision-making process and the responsibility of the governmental organs in it. It says:

The Annual Plan is prepared by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior and they present it to the Government. The National Assembly reviews and adopts the Annual Plan, and then decides on the Serbian Armed Forces participating in the MNO. As based on this decision, the President decides on dispatching to MNO. On the other hand, the Government decides on participation and dispatching of the members of the police and other defense forces to MNO.<sup>15</sup>

Sweden, another important contributor to UN peacekeeping missions, formulated a national strategy in 2007 to streamline its participation in peacekeeping endeavors by linking foreign, development, security and defense policies more closely together. It suggests:

Swedish involvement in international peace-support operations is ultimately intended to contribute to maintaining international peace and security and consequently to facilitate fair and sustainable global development. Swedish participation in peace-support operations is also concerned, in the longer term, with promoting national security and Swedish interests.<sup>16</sup>

The principal requirement is that Swedish participation in peace-support operations will be based on a mandate from the UN Security Council. This applies in particular to peace-enforcing operations in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In addition, the strategy also mentions that it requires an approval of the UN Security Council to participate in peacekeeping operations in accordance with Chapter VI of the UN Charter.<sup>17</sup> It emphasizes the significance of the acquiring the consent of the host state and other relevant parties as per the regulations of international law.

In Asia, Japan is one of the few peacekeeping contributors that have adopted a national strategy to contextualize its understanding of international peacebuilding.

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<sup>15</sup> Marko Miloseic, “The Law on Serbia’s Participation in the Multinational Operations”, *Western Balkans Security Observer*, No.15, October-December 2009, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Government of Sweden, *National Strategy for Swedish Participation in International Peace-Support and Security-building Operations*, 2007/08:51, Stockholm, 13 March 2008, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

During 1990s, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi administration was particularly interested in developing and promoting the concept of human security as one of the key pillars of Japan's post-Cold War foreign policy.<sup>18</sup> Later, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's administration also developed the idea of peacebuilding which is reflected in Japan's national policies. Koizumi defined peacebuilding as activities that were "designed to consolidate peace and build basic foundations in countries suffering from such conflicts".<sup>19</sup> One of the key factors of Japan's peacebuilding concept is a long-term commitment to state-building in troubled regions. State-building, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of Japan, consists of activities for rebuilding the political, legal, economic and social frameworks in conflict-affected or politically transitional countries.<sup>20</sup> It also suggests that the building of political framework encompasses the development of the governance infrastructure through the improvement of democratic political, electoral, administrative, police and judicial systems. The reconstruction of economic and financial systems as well as the basic economic infrastructure to sustain these systems such as roads, ports, bridges and telecommunication facilities, is also considered vital in state-building.<sup>21</sup>

National peacekeeping policies of many countries have emphasized issues related to the capacity building of individual peacekeepers and peace-providing institutions, which are often identified as important tools for sustainable implementation of the policy. For example, the Kenyan national strategy suggests that the government and concerned institutions will offer regular training to various stakeholders in relevant areas, such as, conflict prevention resource mobilization, peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity and alternative conflict resolution mechanisms.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Serbian Law on the participation of armed forces and police in the multinational operations (MNOs) delves on the rights of the participants in the missions. These rights as elaborated in the Law states that "requests for exercising the rights and duties of the participants dispatched to MNO without a decision of the competent body until such date this Law has gone in effect, will be resolved in accordance with the regulations according to which they have been acquired, or if more favorable for them, according

<sup>18</sup> Tadashi Iwami, "Understanding Japan's Peacebuilding in Concept and Practice", *East Asia*, Vol. 33, 2016, p. 116. Also, Government of Japan, *Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations*, Act No. 79 of 19 June 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Iwami, *ibid*, p.117.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>22</sup> Office of the President, Kenya, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

to the provisions of this Law.”<sup>23</sup> The rights of the peacekeepers incorporate the provisions for advanced training and capacity building for the armed forces. In a similar fashion, the Swedish legislation suggests that the armed forces will be made capable to take part in international operations with a broad range of different types of units. It puts an emphasis on the combined operations of various forces and hence advocated for joint exercises and training for the peacekeepers.<sup>24</sup> It also seeks to enhance the capacity of the peacekeepers as first responders on the scene in the area of operations who are able to carry out critical tasks for the operation.

A United Nations Development Program (UNDP)-led assessment for Ethiopian participation in peacekeeping operations urges for a coherent policy with clear guidelines for capacity development of armed forces and police.<sup>25</sup> The report suggests that Ethiopia requires a peacebuilding policy to improve coordination and effectiveness of its interventions in promoting peace and human security. It further criticizes the ongoing Ethiopian interventions that have mostly been *ad hoc* to arrest onsets of violence and prevent humanitarian crises. The *ad hoc* policies do not provide clear guidelines on capacity development. Therefore, the UNDP report suggests:

A need exists to develop strategies for skills training in conflict peacebuilding. Community readiness to embrace constructive conflict management and peace building would be fostered by requisite skills and knowledge in the field. Such skills include conflict analysis, conflict early warning and response, disaster preparedness, and conflict resolution among others.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of Ethiopia, the analysis suggests that while some disjointed efforts were made to offer different aspects of capacity building for peace, there are no strategic efforts to offer broad based skills training in peace-building especially targeting people and structures involved in peace-building initiatives. It highlights the importance of a coherent national policy on peacekeeping for contributing states.

A majority of the national peacekeeping policies highlights regional cooperation that aims to elaborate on a regional approach to address conflict management and streamline peacebuilding activities with the involvement of the regional stakeholders.

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<sup>23</sup> Miloseic, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Government of Sweden, *op. cit.*, pp.12-13.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Towards a Comprehensive Peace-building Policy and Strategy for Ethiopia*, Development Brief No. 4, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the UNDP brief suggests in keeping a focus on the local level gatekeepers (elders, religious leaders and traditional chiefs). See UNDP, *ibid.*, p.10.

South Africa clearly sees the involvement of a sub-region as an essential prerequisite to the success of its peace mission strategy.<sup>27</sup> It proposes the involvement of the regional institutions in the contemporary robust peace missions and urges that the national strategy will need to take cognizance of a range of sub-regional sensitivities and realities of conflict and peace. The Kenyan National Policy also endorses the engagement of African regional and sub-regional initiatives in a collaborative effort to mitigate conflict and promote peace.<sup>28</sup> In addition, Kenyan policy urges for a civil society intervention which would include dialogue, negotiations and problem-solving workshops, information, education and communication. Media's role is also highlighted in the policy. In particular, the Kenyan policy acknowledges that social media has a significant role to play in peacebuilding and conflict management.<sup>29</sup>

Sweden supports regionalism in two perspectives. First, Sweden promotes its peacekeeping endeavor within an effective multilateral system, which, it identifies as a crucial factor to a successful peace-support work. Sweden's legislation highlights the role of multilateral institutions, such as the UN, the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>30</sup> The legislation also suggests that Sweden aims to be active in developing close cooperation with these multilateral peace-support organizations, and intends to perform in accordance with the principles of international law. Second, Sweden also provides financial and technical support to the construction of a strong and sustainable African Union (AU). The legislation clearly mentions that capacity building of the AU should be a key element in Swedish cooperation with the region. Such capacity building can be conducted with "an intensified dialogue with the AU and additionally contribute financial and technical support to the AU Commission and, where appropriate, other AU bodies".<sup>31</sup> Further, Swedish legislation also suggests that it would respect the principle of African ownership in maintaining peace and development in the region.

In South Asia, although it hosts four major troop and police contributors in UN peacekeeping operations, none of the countries possess a national policy on peacekeeping or peacebuilding endeavors. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal conduct their decision-making on training and recruitment of peacekeepers on the

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<sup>27</sup> Williams, *op. cit.*, p.96.

<sup>28</sup> Office of the President, Kenya, *op. cit.*, p.23.

<sup>29</sup> Office of the President, Kenya, *op. cit.*, p.24.

<sup>30</sup> Government of Sweden, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

basis of *ad hoc* decisions and based on the demands placed by the UN through the permanent mission of the respective countries at the UN in New York. These countries have their own training facilities that offer necessary training modules to the troops and police to prepare them for UN missions. For example, Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operations Training (BIPSOT) is a state of the art training facility that offers intensive training programs for Bangladeshi peacekeepers and other troops from foreign countries. However, it is yet to be identified that to what extent and how this institution and its activities will shape the national peacekeeping policy of Bangladesh and contribute to the shaping of a Bangladesh's foreign and security policy.

The lack of a national policy also influences the avenues of cooperation with the regional organizations that are significant actors in the contemporary UN peacekeeping missions. For example, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has not been able to enhance its foreign relations with some African states despite the fact that a majority of its peacekeepers are deployed in the African continent. However, it should be noted that Bangladesh recently has upgraded its diplomatic channels with important regional powers in Africa.<sup>32</sup> It is also significant that Bangladesh requires a clear guideline to establish cooperation with the regional contributing bodies, such as the African Union (AU). On the other hand, no South Asian states have adopted a national policy which would advance regional cooperation among themselves. There have been some *ad hoc* moves by the South Asian states in the UN in calling attention to the issue of pay hike for peacekeepers.<sup>33</sup> It is argued that India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have raised a collective voice for policy changes at the UN to ensure greater participation in the formulation of mission mandates.<sup>34</sup> However, this approach did not yield to a sustainable regional mechanism that would enhance the collective capacity of the South Asian troop and police contributing states. It is important to note that a few civil society initiatives were undertaken to promote a

<sup>32</sup> Deepak Acharjee, "New embassies in Ethiopia, Nigeria soon", *The Independent*, 13 November 2015, available at <http://www.theindependentbd.com/printversion/details/22858> (accessed 27 April 2017).

<sup>33</sup> Rashed Uz Zaman and Niloy Ranjan Biswas, "South Asian regionalism and UN peacekeeping missions: a case of 'and never the twain will meet'?", *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 19, No. 3-4, p. 253.

<sup>34</sup> Soumitra Basu, "South Asian Peacekeeping: Regional Possibilities," *The Round Table*, 2017, p.5, available at DOI: 10.1080/00358533.2016.1272949 (accessed 23 April 2017).

track-II dialogue between the stakeholders of South Asian nations.<sup>35</sup> These were disjointed efforts that failed to produce any concrete outcomes.

The discussion in this section highlights the significance of national policies on peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the context of various contributing states across the continents. It shows how the peacekeeping policies set vision and strategies for their contribution, recruitment, capacity building and regional cooperation. Furthermore, the discussion on South Asia also suggests that the problem of not having a national policy would impact on the patterns of cooperation among the regional contributors. From this discussion of international case studies, this paper draws a set of significant factors, which may be deemed essential for national policies of peacekeeping and makes an attempt to contextualize these for Bangladesh. In so doing, the next section (II) analyzes the trends contribution of Bangladeshi troops and police in the UN peacekeeping missions. In section III, this paper set forth the challenges of contribution in the context of global changes. These two sections set the context to discuss the proposed national policy for Bangladesh.

## **II. Bangladesh's Contribution to UN Missions: Trends and Decision-making Process**

Bangladesh is one of the leading contributors in the UN peacekeeping missions. As of 2016, it has participated in 54 missions in over 40 countries. In March 2017, Bangladesh had 5,821 troops, 73 military experts and 1,010 police personnel deployed in various UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>36</sup> The armed forces contributed 85% of this figure and the police 15% (see Table 1). 130 Bangladeshi uniformed peacekeepers have died while serving under the UN flag (see table 1). To fulfill one of its recent commitments, Bangladesh Army provided a battalion of 850 soldiers in response to a UN request to fill the gap in the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Xenia Avezov, "The new geopolitics of peace operations: a dialogue with emerging powers", South Asia Regional Dialogue, available at [http://www.sipri.org/research/conflict/pko/other\\_publ/ NGP-South-Asia.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/research/conflict/pko/other_publ/ NGP-South-Asia.pdf) (accessed 28 April 2017).

<sup>36</sup> See: UN Peacekeeping Statistics at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml> (accessed 26 April 2017).

<sup>37</sup> Kevin Kelly, "Bangladesh troops replace Kenyans pulled from S. Sudan", *The Eastern African*, 4 December 2016, available at <http://www.theeastfrican.co.ke/news/Bangladesh-troops-replace-Kenyans-pulled-from-South-Sudan/2558-3474836-nuvb7wz/index.html> (accessed 27 April 2017).

**Table : Bangladesh in UN Peacekeeping Operations (54 missions in 40 countries)<sup>38</sup>**

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Police	Total
No. of Peacekeepers (completed missions)	119,452	3,875	5,218	16,798 <sup>39</sup>	145,343
Deceased peacekeepers <sup>40</sup>	103	3	4	20	130

Since 1989 UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia, the Bangladesh Police have contributed in UN peacekeeping operations and it turns into one of the top police-contributing countries. Between 2000 and 2016, there has been a 1500% increase in the number of Bangladeshi police personnel in UN missions, surpassing 2,000 officers in 2011.<sup>41</sup> The members of the police force are deployed as individual police experts and Formed Police Units (FPU) in East Timor, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, South Sudan, and Haiti. As of March 2017, Bangladesh contributed 201 female police officers and is considered to be the top performer in this regard.<sup>42</sup> The first Bangladeshi female police contingent and the first of its kind from a Muslim-majority nation was deployed in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in May 2010.<sup>43</sup> Prior to that, the only all-female FPU was deployed in Liberia (UNMIL) in January 2007 by India. The goal of sending a female FPU in Haiti was to provide humanitarian services in the post-earthquake areas—ensuring primary education, healthcare, and preventing violence against women. In May 2012, a Bangladeshi FPU made up of 120 police personnel received the United Nations

<sup>38</sup> Rashed Uz Zaman and Niloy Ranjan Biswas, *Bangladesh Country Profile*, New York: Providing for Peacekeeping, 16 December 2016, p.2, available at <http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/2014/04/03/contributor-profile-bangladesh/> (accessed 27 April 2017).

<sup>39</sup> See: Bangladesh Police, UN Peacekeeping, available at <http://www.police.gov.bd/AtAGlanceDeployment.php?id=134> (accessed 27 April, 2017).

<sup>40</sup> See: Armed Forces Division, available at <http://www.afd.gov.bd/index.php/un-peacekeeping/our-supreme-sacrifices> (accessed 27 April 2017).

<sup>41</sup> Zaman and Biswas, *Bangladesh Country Profile*, *op. cit.*, p.2.

<sup>42</sup> See: United Nations, Peacekeeping Statistics, Ranking of Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2017/mar17\\_2.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2017/mar17_2.pdf) (accessed 27 April 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Selim Mia, “Bangladesh deploys female UN peacekeepers,” *BBC News Online*, 12 May 2010, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8678561.stm> (accessed 27 April 2017).

Medal for significant contribution in MINUSTAH.<sup>44</sup> Bangladesh Navy and Air Force also contributed significantly in UN missions in Africa and Asia.<sup>45</sup>

In Bangladesh, the GoB, Armed Forces Division (AFD), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Bangladesh Police play crucial roles in taking the decision of sending troops and police personnel to UN missions on the basis of a generic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in December 2007 as part of the UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS).<sup>46</sup> There is no central authority or a coordination commission/committee in the current framework of decision-making in this regard. However, in observing the general trends of participation, it is significant to note that the Bangladesh Army tends to monopolize tactical decisions about Bangladesh's participation in UN peace missions and the civilian authority has not challenged this prerogative.<sup>47</sup> The decision-making process begins with the requests for peacekeepers from the UN Secretariat. Bangladesh's Permanent Mission at the UN receives this request on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and examines the mandate in light of Bangladesh's broader foreign policy priorities and existing international commitments. The Defense Attaché in the Permanent Mission in New York deals with the bureaucratic procedures and subsequently forwards the requests to the relevant agencies in Bangladesh. Requests relating to troops are directed to the Armed Forces Division, which is the coordinating headquarters of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Overseas Operations Directorate deals with peacekeeping operations in the Army Headquarters in Dhaka.<sup>48</sup> Requests for naval and air force components are transferred to the respective Navy and Air Force Headquarters in Dhaka, which then issue necessary directives for the upcoming operations. For troops, the Overseas Operations Directorate issues the necessary instructions to all other concerned branches of the armed forces for the requisite preparations. This involves the selection of personnel and the provision of equipment and training. The

<sup>44</sup> The New Age. "Bangladeshi peacekeepers get UN medal in Haiti", 16 May 2012, available at <http://www.newagebd.com/detail.php?date=2012-05-16&nid=10477> (accessed 27 April 2017).

<sup>45</sup> For details of their deployment, see: Bangladesh Navy, available at <http://www.bangladeshnavy.mil.bd/un.html> and Bangladesh Air Force, available at [http://www.baf.mil.bd/?page\\_id=49](http://www.baf.mil.bd/?page_id=49) (accessed 27 April 2017).

<sup>46</sup> Rashed Uz Zaman and Niloy Ranjan Biswas, "Bangladesh" in A. J. Bellamy and P. D. Williams (eds.) *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges, and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Contribution* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). pp. 183–203.

<sup>47</sup> See: Zaman and Biswas, 2013, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

MHA receives requests related to the deployment of the police personnel for the UN missions. After the initial notification, the MHA transfers the order to Police Headquarters in Dhaka to take decisions on the selection of personnel.

The capacity development of the peacekeepers is a significant component in the decision-making process. BIPSOT provides specialized training to potential UN peacekeepers.<sup>49</sup> BIPSOT was established in 1999 as Peacekeeping Operations and Training Centre (PKOTC) to address the skills required for new generation peacekeepers, which would be different than the routine combatant skills of military personnel. In 2002 it was remodeled and renamed with more capacities and resources. BIPSOT conducts regular pre-deployment training for the selected contingent members.<sup>50</sup> Although the Bangladesh Police does not have a separate specialized training center, the Police Staff College at Dhaka and Police Academy at Rajshahi offer specialized and tailor-made training programs to the members of the police force for peacekeeping missions.

The above discussion offers the readers an understanding of the trends of contribution and process of decision-making by the concerned stakeholders in Bangladesh. To suggest which factors Bangladesh need to consider as components of a proposed national policy on peacekeeping and peacebuilding, it is imperative to understand the nature of challenges and opportunities for Bangladesh as a crucial contributor in the multilateral peacekeeping endeavor. The following section elaborates on the nature of global challenges and how these may influence the trends of Bangladesh's contribution in the UN missions.

### **III. Challenges for Bangladeshi Peacekeepers in the International Context**

Despite the emergence of terrorist threats with global reach in the form of Al Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century marked a low in the number and severity of armed conflicts worldwide. This trend was epitomized by the decline in inter-state conflict: once the dominant pattern of war, only three such conflicts occurred during the

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<sup>49</sup> For details, see: BIPSOT's website, [www.bipsot.net](http://www.bipsot.net).

<sup>50</sup> Some of the main subjects of Pre-Deployment Training are: an overview of the mission area; handling of situations they are likely to face; the UN mandate for that mission; details regarding Rules of Engagement; personnel safety; health and hygiene; and a language course.

decade.<sup>51</sup> The traditional means of waging of such warfare appear increasingly alien from modern battlefield realities.

Yet the past six to seven years have raised serious doubts about the durability of apparent gains in peace and security that followed the initial, bloody aftermath of the Cold War when a wave of conflicts spread across the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa. Vicious, intractable, high-casualty conflict has reappeared, most evidently in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Central African Republic, South Sudan and east Ukraine. Furthermore, such wars have occurred in a way that tend to elude mediators and military and peace operations to terminate conflict, bypasses the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution and results in new patterns of human rights abuses and humanitarian concerns.<sup>52</sup>

Studies of ‘new wars’ in the wake of the disappearance of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War have highlighted the characteristics of hybrid conflicts, in which ethnic mobilization, various transnational connections (such as to crime) and state failure tend to be constituent elements.<sup>53</sup> While conflicts today tend to exhibit these features, two interconnected characteristics, which are shared to a greater or lesser degree across today’s warzones, represent something of an emerging pattern. These are a slow but inexorable descent into armed fragmentation and the variegated internationalization of internal conflicts. Conflicts in Syria, Mali, Libya and South Sudan have shown groups are splintered and pursuing varied objectives. Such a situation is compounded by the fact that often such groups are supported by foreign state and non-state actors, which mean conflicts, are confusing and difficult to solve. Indeed, the need for diverse actors to appeal to fragmented ‘strategic audiences’ in multiple domains and countries challenges the notion that military victory followed by peace can now be achieved in a straightforward manner, since not every audience will be satisfied with a domestic political settlement.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2012. Armaments, Disarmaments and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 67.

<sup>52</sup> Global Peace Index 2016, available at <http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/> (accessed 27 April 2017).

<sup>53</sup> Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Herfried Munkler, *The New Wars* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Jair van der Lijn and *et al.* (eds.), *Peacekeeping Operations in a Changing World*, Clingendael Strategic Monitor Project (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, 2015), p. 13.

As conflicts tend to become intractable and spiral into a vortex of unending brutality, the idea of peacekeeping itself is expanding and currently it emerges with more robust mandates, such as, use of force under Chapter VII, interventions in more perilous operational environments, and like. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko point out that the setbacks suffered by UN peacekeepers in Rwanda and Bosnia led to a strong sentiment of ‘never again’ and a commitment to use lessons learned to strengthen UN’s capacity for peacekeeping. One lesson, above all, appeared to enjoy broad support: UN peacekeepers would henceforth need to prepare for, and be ready to engage in, more ‘robust’ or ‘muscular’ peacekeeping.<sup>55</sup>

As a manifestation of this new resolve, the UN Security Council in March 2013 approved an explicit mandate to favor the robustness of its missions that would allow peacekeepers to use force. The mandate authorized a newly-created ‘Force Intervention Brigade’ for the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo to “carry out targeted offensive operations...in a robust, highly mobile and versatile manner...to prevent the expansion of all armed groups, neutralize these groups and to disarm them.”<sup>56</sup> Coupled with the increasing emphasis on robustness, a greater proclivity to experiment with the use of force has been a growing importance of protection of civilians as a mandated task for UN peacekeepers.<sup>57</sup>

The scenarios arising out of such policies adopted by the UN have raised questions about the challenges and limitations of the organization’s role as a third-party actor in intractable conflicts. As the UN operation in Democratic Republic of Congo has unfolded, doubts have been expressed as whether the UN, as an intergovernmental, intensely political and bureaucratically fragmented organization, can or will ever be structurally equipped and politically suited to take on a coercive measure in such wars.<sup>58</sup> While arguments have been made about the efficacy of such a proactive role by the UN,<sup>59</sup> misgivings have been voiced about resource constraints, ethical conundrum and the lack of clarity of the political and strategic purposes under which

<sup>55</sup> Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, “The United Nations and the Use of Force: Between Promise and Peril”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5, 2014, p. 667.

<sup>56</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2098, 28 March 2013, p. 34.

<sup>57</sup> Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 337-358.

<sup>58</sup> Mats Berdal, “The State of UN Peacekeeping: Lessons from Congo”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2016.1215307, 2016, p. 3; also, Alan Doss, “In the Footsteps of Dr. Bunche: the Congo, UN Peacekeeping and the Use of Force”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5, 2014, pp. 703-735.

<sup>59</sup> James Sloan, “The Evolution of the Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5, 2014, pp. 674-702.

UN peacekeepers operate in such missions.<sup>60</sup> Such missions would hamper the safety and security of peacekeepers. Moreover, there may appear a commitment gap between the UN and the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs)/Police Contributing Countries (PCCs) due to their involvement in risky robust missions.<sup>61</sup> While the developed countries are involved in drafting ambitious mandates for future missions, they are neither involved in taking the risks, nor do they provide sufficient technical and financial support to shoulder the responsibilities.<sup>62</sup> Under such circumstances how Bangladesh will deal with the exigencies of ‘robust missions’ including the ability and will to resort to force in defense of the mandate, namely beyond force protection, remains to be clarified.<sup>63</sup> The debate touches upon Bangladesh’s capacities in key areas of complex operations such as rapid reactions, logistics, communication, intelligence, and also upon its own conception of the use of force.

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<sup>60</sup> Berdal and Ucko, *op. cit.*, pp. 668-669; also, Thierry Tardy, “The Reluctant Peacekeeper: France and the Use of Force in Peace Operations”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5, 2014, pp. 770-792; James Cockayne, “The Futility of Force: Strategic Lessons for Dealing with Unconventional Armed Groups from the UN’s War on Haiti’s Gangs”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5, 2014, pp. 736-769; John Karlsrud, “The UN at war: examining the consequences of peace-enforcement mandates for the UN peacekeeping operations in the CAR, the DRC and Mali”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2015, pp. 40-54; Ortrun Merkle, “Arming the Peacekeepers: Dilemmas of New Military Technology”, UNU-CPR, available at <http://www.merit.unu.edu/arming-the-peacekeepers-dilemmas-of-new-military-technology/> (accessed 28 April 2017); Elodie Convergne and Michael R. Snyder, “Making Maps to Make Peace: Geospatial Technology as a Tool for UN Peacekeeping”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 22, No. 5, 2015, pp. 577-581; Charles T. Hunt, “All necessary means to what ends? the unintended consequences of the ‘robust turn’ in UN peace operations”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2017, pp. 108-131, available at DOI:10.1080/13533312.2016.1214074 (accessed 11 August 2017).

<sup>61</sup> Emily Paddon, “Partnering for Peace: Implications and Dilemmas”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18, No. 5, 2011, pp. 516-533.

<sup>62</sup> This issue was highlighted by Paul D. Williams in a report where he makes the case for more U.S. involvement in peacekeeping missions in Africa. See: Paul D. Williams, *Enhancing U.S. Support for Peace Operations in Africa*, Council Special Report, no. 73 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, May 2015), pp. 1-56; also Geraint Hughes, “The United Kingdom and International Peacekeeping: 1960-2014”, *The Round Table*, 2017, pp. 1-11, online version available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2017.1352148> (accessed 11 August 2017).

<sup>63</sup> The challenges of ‘robust missions’ experienced by Bangladeshi contingents are described in Rashed Uz Zaman & Niloy Ranjan Biswas, “The Contribution of Commonwealth Armed Forces in UN Peacekeeping: The Case of Bangladesh”, *The Round Table*, 2017, pp. 9-10, online version available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2017.1352152> (accessed 11 August 2017).

A key challenge for peacekeeping operations planners is reorienting the focus of such missions to two megatrends that are shaping and defining conflict climate. These are population growth (the continuing rise in the planet's total population) and urbanization (the tendency for people to live in larger and larger cities). Powerful arguments can be made that the success of future peacekeeping missions may be won or lost in cities.<sup>64</sup> Urban areas, especially in conflict-affected countries, are emerging as epicenters of multi-layered violence and extreme vulnerability. Thus, parts of Bangui (in the Central African Republic), Port-au-Prince (Haiti) and Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire) have long been under the control of gangs and militias and may hold the key to understanding future peacekeeping missions. In all such situations, UN peacekeepers have had to operate in densely populated urban settings characterized by the presence of non-conventional armed groups and to adapt to the strategic complexity and specificities of urban space.<sup>65</sup> The challenges thrown up by such missions have shown the UN Police (UNPOL), in particular, has had significant gaps in its capacity to respond. At the same time, demands for UNPOL's services are increasing and its role is expanding across multiple peacekeeping operations.<sup>66</sup> For Bangladesh, future contingents to UNPOL must be prepared and equipped in such a manner that concerns around varying standards and approaches, as well as capacity limitations and gaps in training for operating in such 'urban guerrilla warfare' setting are adequately addressed.

While Bangladesh has been a top troop-contributing country, it must be pointed out that recent trend in UN peacekeeping point towards a future where such a position may not be taken for granted. This has become clear following the publication by the United Nations of *A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for United Nations Peacekeeping* in 2009 where a call is made for 'an expanded base of troop- and police-contributing countries...to enhance collective burden-sharing and to meet future requirements'.<sup>67</sup> The document's main focus is UN will not be over dependent

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<sup>64</sup> David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London and New York: Verso, paperback edition, 2011); Richard J. Norton, "Feral Cities", *Naval War College Review*, Vol. LVI, No. 4, Autumn 2003, pp. 97-106.

<sup>65</sup> Louise Bosetti and *et.al.*, "Peacekeeping in Cities: Is the UN Prepared?", UNU-CPR, available at <http://www.merit.unu.edu/peacekeeping-in-cities-is-the-un-prepared/> (accessed 28 April 2017).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, online.

<sup>67</sup> In short, this report is known as *The New Horizon Report*. See: Department of Field Support (DPKO/DFS), *A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping*, (United Nations: New York, July 2009).

on one or two major suppliers of troops and will increase the availability from new sources—states or regional bodies. Already South Asian countries are facing pressure from other countries who wish to make large and meaningful contributions to peacekeeping missions.<sup>68</sup> Bangladesh should also make contingency plans for dealing with possible reduction or drying-up of UN peacekeeping missions as the administration of US President Donald Trump has announced plans to reduce US share of paying for UN peacekeeping missions from 28 percent to 25 percent or about US\$2.2 billion annually. The US Ambassador to UN Nikki Haley has also asked for reforms within the UN and a review of each of the UN's 16 peacekeeping missions.<sup>69</sup> Are such postures a harbinger of a ‘slash and burn’ approach to peacekeeping by Donald Trump? While the answer is yet to be found, Bangladesh needs to adjust to the changing scenario and plan its moves accordingly.

The analysis in this section highlights the changing nature of the peacekeeping operations in recent times. It also highlights the importance of capacity building of the peacekeepers in light of the transformation in peacekeeping endeavors. The major question, after discussing international cases of national peacekeeping policies in section I and challenges in section II, is—which factors does the GoB need to consider in formulating its national peacekeeping policy?

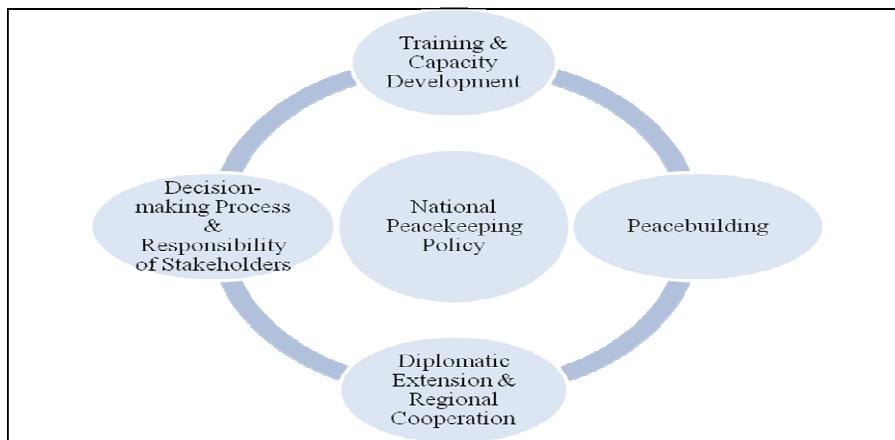
#### **IV. Factors of the National Peacekeeping Policy for Bangladesh**

The purpose of this section is to offer a policy guideline for Bangladesh's participation in the UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. The analysis is developed on the basis of the challenges discussed in the earlier section and opportunities that the GoB may want to exploit in compliance of its foreign policy. It is important to note that the GoB has committed to send large number of troops,

<sup>68</sup> Adam Smith, *Recent Developments in UN Peacekeeping and Their Implications for South Asian Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries*. Lecture presented at the Regional Conference on South Asian Contribution in UN Peacekeeping, organized by the Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, in collaboration with the American Center, US Embassy Dhaka, 22-23 August 2013; also, Shrijan Bahadur Malla, “Nepal and peacekeeping: Losing ground”, available at <http://www.myrepublica.com/news/18724/> (accessed 28 April 2017).

<sup>69</sup> Howard LaFranchi, “Trump Team submits UN peacekeeping to scrutiny. Is it worth a bargain?”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 05 April 2017, available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2017/0405/Trump-team-submits-UN-peacekeeping-to-scrutiny.-Is-it-a-bargain> (accessed 28 April 2017).

police and civilian experts in UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>70</sup> In addition to the political support, there are institutional, normative and financial rationales for such intensive participation under the purview of the UN.<sup>71</sup> Bangladesh does not face major internal or external problems in individual force generation. Therefore, it is crucial for all the stakeholders to explore future opportunities in the UN peacekeeping operations. This paper advocates for a collaborative approach in four fundamental areas of peacekeeping policy (see figure: 1). These are: (a) decision-making and responsibility of the stakeholders, (b) capacity building of the peacekeepers, (c) diplomatic extension and regional cooperation, and (d) peacebuilding activities. The following discussion on the national peacekeeping policy of Bangladesh will elaborate on these areas.



**Figure:** Proposed Model of National Peacekeeping Policy for Bangladesh<sup>72</sup>

#### a. *Decision-making and Responsibility of the Stakeholders*

Bangladesh intends to comply with a clear mandate under international law, which is essential for its participation in UN peacekeeping operations. The major provision is that Bangladesh's participation in peacekeeping operations will be based on clear mandates from the UN Security Council. This applies to both peace-enforcing

<sup>70</sup> "Dhaka stands ready to go further with peacekeeping: Hasina", *The Daily Observer*, 29 September 2015, available at <http://www.observerbd.com/2015/09/29/112744.php> (accessed 1 May 2017).

<sup>71</sup> See: Zaman and Biswas, 2016, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>72</sup> Authors prepared the figure. These four factors are significant and derived from the analysis of the international cases of national policies of peacekeeping (see: section I).

operations in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter, and in peace-keeping operations in accordance with Chapter VI of the UN Charter.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Bangladesh also complies with other relevant international legal instruments that facilitate such operations to be carried out with the consent of the recipient state and other relevant parties. Bangladeshi uniformed and civilian personnel in UN peacekeeping operations will comply with international human rights and humanitarian laws, such as the covenants on civil and political rights, the convention on the rights of the child and its optional protocol on children in armed conflicts.

To expedite the decision-making process the GoB can form a National Task Force. This will be a coordinating body that is responsible to implement the national policy and revise it in due course of time on the basis of the needs from internal stakeholders. The Task Force will have the mandate to revise and update the national policy on extended participation in UN peacekeeping operations; oversee the implementation of the policy; examine the trends of the contribution every year; recommend the Government to formulate new laws or policies in the concerned areas; and suggest the Government on training and procurement related issues. In addition to this, the GoB may consider forming an operational level working group which will be responsible to assist the National Task Force from time to time. This group may meet on a quarterly basis to coordinate operational issues related to different stakeholders to share information, optimum utilization of resources, and logistics issues. The prime stakeholders for UN peacekeeping operations are: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Ministry of Defence, Bangladesh Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Bangladesh Police. The MoFA may form a pool of civilian experts who will contribute in such operations.

The MoFA will be the leading agency to perform diplomatic endeavors in regard to communications with the United Nations. It should keep close contact with the Bangladesh's Permanent Mission in New York. The Ministry can convey any request of troops and police to the concerned authority in the shortest possible time. The MoFA can also coordinate the activities of other stakeholders in managing the requests sent by the UN. The AFD may want to facilitate the promulgation of policies and GoB's approval for the deployment of troops from Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force in the UN missions. The AFD can also coordinate all the

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<sup>73</sup> See the UN Website to read details about the charters, available at <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/> (accessed 27 April 2017).

operational and administrative activities regarding UN related tasks among the three Headquarters.

Bangladesh Police should be able to formulate its respective policy document for force generation, training and deployment. The policies of the AFD and Bangladesh Police will be done in coherence with the National Policy. Their respective policies should contain specific provisions on duties and responsibilities with regard to meeting demands from the UN.

*b. Capacity Development of Troops, Police and Civilians for Multidimensional Peacekeeping*

The proposed national policy must highlight the significance of capacity development of the peacekeepers according to the changing needs of the UN. The Lakhdar Brahimi Report emphasizes the significance of military readiness and expertise in maintaining peacekeeping mandates.<sup>74</sup> It states that peacekeepers must be trained to use arms and force to defend themselves and civilians in host countries. Similarly, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan welcomed the new approach, stating that peacekeeping operations go beyond the traditional military functions and adopt a more muscular form of peace operations with a ‘robust mandate’ in order to avoid the kind of fiascos that occurred in previous missions.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, the upcoming missions require more commitments for longer stay and steady contributions on the nation/state building processes. Such deployment to hostile environment with forward-leaning postures also make it imperative that authorized troop and police ceilings are balanced by the deployment of suitably trained and capable troops, police and civilian experts capable of implementing the complex mandates issued by the UN Security Council.<sup>76</sup> The use of technology is another

<sup>74</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305, S/2000/809. Available at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/55/305](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/55/305) (accessed 1 May 2017). To understand the importance of capacity development of peacekeepers and related reform, one may see the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO), *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace, Politics, Partnership and People*, June 2015, available at [http://peaceoperationsreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HIPPO\\_Report\\_1\\_June\\_2015.pdf](http://peaceoperationsreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HIPPO_Report_1_June_2015.pdf)

<sup>75</sup> Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations, 2003, available at [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/Peacekeeping-Handbook\\_UN\\_Doc2003.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/Peacekeeping-Handbook_UN_Doc2003.pdf) (accessed 1 May 2017).

<sup>76</sup> Alex J. Bellamy and Charles T. Hunt, “Twenty-first century peace operations: protection, force and the changing security environment”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 6, 2015, pp. 1297-98.

critical component that contributing countries must consider in terms of its preparedness for the mission.

The AFD and Bangladesh Police must be ready to deploy a sizable amount of peacekeepers in the quickest possible time to any mission upon permission received from the top coordinating authorities of the UN and Government. These troops and police will be part of Rapid Deployment Level (RDL) forces, as per MoU of UNSAS. Regular trainings will be provided to the peacekeepers at the training institutes so that there remains a steady flow of trained peacekeepers at the RDL. The RDL outfits will be equipped properly as per need to be deployed effectively in mission areas within the agreed timeframe. The National Task Force can study the requirements of the multidimensional peacekeeping and suggest the Government to take necessary steps in equipping national troops, police and civilians as per the demand of the UN.

The GoB should take initiatives to send potential peacekeepers to avail appropriate training and capacity development activities in home and aboard. The MoFA, AFD and BIPSOT will collect necessary information about relevant international training opportunities, venues, and costs of the training. The AFD and Bangladesh Police will actively assist the Foreign Ministry by continuously developing a database and offering international training opportunities for the potential peacekeepers. The Ministry will request for financial allocation from appropriate authorities, in both home and abroad, to run the international training endeavor.

The GoB may want to initiate the establishment of a training center for the future civilian experts to expedite the potentials of Bangladesh's participation in future peace-support operations under the purview of the UN. The MoFA, in consultation with the National Task Force, will prepare a national pool of civilian experts. In addition to this, MoFA may also train a civilian reserve corps to serve as a ready external talent pool to assist in the administration management and execution of UN peacekeeping operations. Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) may prepare a list of GoB officers citing their education qualifications and expertise which should be displayed online and can be used by international organizations as they seek positions to be filled up in peacebuilding missions.

Institutions of Armed Force and the Police may want to hire civilian academic experts and faculty members from public universities to lecture and supervise research in the broader peace and security issues. Civilians may be offered opportunities to acquire education from military and police institutions. Similarly,

troops and police experts will get the opportunity to learn from the relevant disciplines of public universities. Mention can be made here of the National Defence College (NDC), the premier military educational institution, where members of armed forces along with military officers from various countries study alongside Bangladeshi civil servants and are taught by faculty members drawn from a mixture of public universities, government and think-tanks. Moreover, the large number of officers now opting to enroll in degree programs offered by both public and private educational institutions inevitably interacts with students and faculty who are drawn from diverse backgrounds. University of Dhaka (DU), Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) and Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) are the leading academic institutions that may introduce further research and academic study programs in the relevant areas of peacekeeping, conflict transformation, security and development. Further, this practice will enable Bangladesh to understand the future challenges of participation in UN missions and to better prepare the country in an effective manner.

The GoB must enforce the capacity development of female troops and police officers. It must comply with all UN effort to address gender through specific UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. These are: UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), and 2122 (2013).<sup>77</sup> The GoB must aim for a gender-equality perspective to be integrated into all stages of UN peacekeeping operations. At national level this means, for example, strengthening training efforts for military police and civil personnel who may be considered for participation in UN peace operations. Bangladesh will lobby for better representation of women in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes.<sup>78</sup> Greater representation of women can change existing gender imbalances and potentially decrease sexual offences committed by the perpetrators. Achieving gender balance in peacekeeping operations will promote a wider gender-mainstreaming agenda.

### *c. Extensive Diplomatic Engagements*

The Permanent Mission of Bangladesh in New York plays an important role in UN peacekeeping issues. They have been active in Fourth and Fifth Committee meetings

<sup>77</sup> For details, see the website: United Nations, *Women, Peace and Security*, available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml> (29 April 2017).

<sup>78</sup> The challenges and opportunities for ensuring more women participation in peace operations are discussed in Georgina Holmes, “The Commonwealth, Gender and Peacekeeping”, *The Round Table*, 2017, pp. 1-18, online version available at DOI: 10.1080/00358533.2017.1352147 (accessed 11 August 2017).

to endorse the rights, safety, and security of the peacekeepers. Besides, the triennial review of equipment related issues are discussed through Contingent Owned Equipment (COE) Working Group meetings, where Bangladesh Armed and Police Forces play a lead role to take care of our interest. Bangladesh has served as Chair of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and has led the drafting of two significant documents: the 2010 Review of Peacebuilding Architecture, and the 2010 Review of International Civilian Capacity.<sup>79</sup> In finalizing the documents, Bangladesh successfully convinced other parties to incorporate issues like south-south cooperation and women's empowerment.

The GoB may want to consider the expansion of its diplomatic relations with countries at their post-conflict and stabilized state. Specially, the Government should seriously consider exploring diplomatic relations by opening up embassies or high commissions in those countries, where Bangladeshi troops and police have had an effective role in maintaining peace and stability. The GoB will support cooperative relations with the African regional endeavors that have been contributing significantly in UN peacekeeping and peace-support operations. Bangladesh will establish an intensified dialogue with the AU and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in order to continue a regular communication framework for more cooperation in peace missions. As one of the leading contributors for the last one decade or more, Bangladesh can also commit to provide technical assistance to these regional organizations, where appropriate. Bangladesh may consider closer military and police cooperation with the AU, including exercises and other forms of build-up of expertise, with the aim of being able to take part in AU-Bangladesh joint operations with units.

Relations with African regional organizations are critical in order to strengthen Bangladesh's effective contribution in the UN-mandated peacebuilding operations. Bangladesh should also strengthen its cooperation with these regional forums on business and development fields. Various chambers of commerce and other relevant business organizations should work in tandem with the GoB, to avail the business opportunities available in post-conflict African states.

d. *Involvement in Peacebuilding Endeavors*

Bangladesh aspires to play a crucial role in the sustaining peace through economic development. In doing so, the GoB can invite business communities: Chambers of Commerce and other similar forums to actively participate in business promotion

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<sup>79</sup> See: Zaman and Biswas, 2013, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

functions. The National Task Force can arrange regular dialogues with the business communities to set a separate policy on trade promotion, especially in African countries. Ministry of Commerce can provide all facilities to promote such activities, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The GoB should extend their cooperation to incorporate actors, such as NGOs, human rights organizations and experts, and academia to form national civil society expert groups for increasing peacebuilding efforts of Bangladesh. An expert group of such kind on peacebuilding can be more functional and effective to address the global needs in post-conflict zones anywhere in the world due to the experiences garnered from their long standing contribution in this sector.

The Government has already set up the Bangladesh Peacebuilding Center.<sup>80</sup> The MoFA possesses the mandate to regulate the Center. This Ministry can implement the plan in joint collaboration with an established university, BIPSOT or an academic institution that provides sufficient infrastructural and technical support. The Center can offer ‘state-of-the-art’ services in research, training and policy advocacy in the areas of peacebuilding and various other kinds of peace-support operations. The GoB may consider inviting international development partners to provide financial support to arrange the initial establishment costs. The Center in coordination with AFD and Police can bring international and national experts to produce quality output that will enhance Bangladesh’s future participation in UN peacebuilding operations. Some of the curricula can be coordinated between the Center and BIPSOT to ensure optimum utilization of resources and greater benefit. The major aim of the Center, therefore, is to catalyze civilian participation along with the engagement of troops and police in UN peacekeeping endeavors. This will be the center of excellence to sustain Bangladesh’s effort in maintaining global peace, security and development.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The paper argues that it is significant for Bangladesh to formulate a national peacekeeping policy to effectively utilize its resources, coordinate the role of different institutions, and fulfill its normative visions in the international platforms. The GoB has already declared that it is in a process to formulate a national peacekeeping policy.<sup>81</sup> This paper offers genuine policy guidance to the concerned officials in

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<sup>80</sup> See the website: <http://bpctdhaka.org/board-of-governors/> (accessed 3 May 2017).

<sup>81</sup> Bdnews24.com, “Bangladesh formulating national peacekeeping strategy, says Hasina”, 29 September 2015, available at <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/29/bangladesh-formulating-national-peacekeeping-strategy-says-hasina> (accessed 1 May 2017).

fulfilling its objective in this regard. The analysis of selected international cases in Section I show that the major factors of a functional peacekeeping policy could be a formulation of: (a) decision-making process among the stakeholders, (b) capacity development of the peacekeepers, (c) extensive diplomatic engagements, and (d) fixing the goals of long-term support, i.e. peacebuilding. It highlights the challenges for a major troop and police contributing country at the global level in section III. It is pertinent to understand such challenges also underscore the need for Bangladesh to take into cognizance the above-mentioned factors in formulating its national policy on peacekeeping. The paper also offers a discussion of factors that are suggested by the authors to be incorporated in the future national peacekeeping policy of Bangladesh. It argues that the potential policy needs to be inclusive of actors and issues relevant to the changing future patterns of global peacekeeping. The 21<sup>st</sup> century may not be strictly a peaceful century<sup>82</sup> and the most likely shape and structure of the international order yet to come is far from self-evident at present. This very uncertain context applies to international peacekeeping missions and makes a fundamental case for a prudent approach to planning for such missions. This paper makes a clarion call for Bangladesh to be ready to confront and deal threats in accordance with society's contemporary political support.

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<sup>82</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

## **THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN BANGLADESH: JUSTIFYING HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH**

Asma Binta Shafiq\* and Sharmin Afroz\*

### **Abstract**

Despite the progress of food production in recent years, Bangladesh has been suffering from chronic food insecurity. It not only hampers the quality of individual's life but also obstructs the overall development of the state. So it is of utmost importance for Bangladesh to take appropriate measures in order to remove the problem of food insecurity. The implementation of the right to food might be the best possible way to resolve this issue. But the enforcement of this right depends on what kind of approach the state has adopted to food. The two available approaches to food are: human rights based approach and basic need approach. The former imposes binding obligation upon a state to enforce the right, whereas the latter does not do so. Bangladesh as a follower of the need based approach does not hold any particular responsibility of enforcing the right to food. As a result the problems of malnutrition and hunger remain unaddressed and such problems are widespread in Bangladesh. It requires the government to shift its current approach to a right based approach. International human rights instruments, most of which have been signed by Bangladesh, provide very useful guidelines in this regard. Since existing framework in Bangladesh appears to be inadequate to meet the need of hungry people, the government should adopt new mechanism in pursuance of international human rights norms.

Key words: Food insecurity, right to food, Bangladesh, human right based approach.

### **1. Introduction**

Every human being is entitled to the right to adequate food, which is crucial for the enjoyment of all rights.<sup>1</sup> It helps creating a life free from hunger, malnutrition and poverty. It is fundamental for human dignity as well. Despite the recent growth in food production, food insecurity<sup>2</sup> remains a pressing problem in Bangladesh. Hunger,

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<sup>1</sup> ICESCR General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (Art. 11), *Adopted at the Twentieth Session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, on 12 May 1999* available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4538838c11.html> [accessed 27 April, 2017].

<sup>2</sup> Food insecurity exists when the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is found limited or uncertain. See Food insecurity, Hunger, Malnutrition and Undernourishment, available at <https://www.nap.edu/read/11578/chapter/5#43> [Accessed 16 May 2017].

malnutrition and poverty are widespread in the state and millions of people struggle to meet their basic food needs every day. The level of malnutrition in Bangladesh is amongst the highest in the world. Half of the population, 65 million people, is too poor to be able to afford enough food to maintain a healthy and productive life.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, food safety in term of food adulteration has been identified as one of the biggest human rights concerns in Bangladesh.<sup>4</sup> Such situation impairs not only the quality of life but also the development of country. Although the problem of food security is grave the government of Bangladesh has not yet taken any fruitful step to resolve it. Bangladesh is signatory to almost all major human rights instruments, that deal directly or indirectly with the right to food, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (ICESCR). The ICESCR is the most important human rights instrument which specifically enshrines the right to food and the right to be free from hunger in its article 11. Therefore, Bangladesh has a legally binding commitment under the Covenant to respect, protect and fulfill the right to food of the people.<sup>5</sup> The fulfillment of such commitment would ensure the right to food in the state, which eventually establishes food security.

However neither constitutional provisions nor existing legislations of Bangladesh directly recognize the right to food. Article 15 of the Constitution of Bangladesh indirectly requires the state to ensure the basic necessities of life including food.<sup>6</sup> A harmonious reading of Articles 16 (rural development and agricultural revolution), 18 (public health and morality) and 32 (protection of right to life and personal liberty) might provide a scope to enforce the right to food. In a number of cases the High Court Division (HCD) of the Supreme Court has adopted this interpretation. Although there is no specific law or the Constitutional provision recognizing the right to food, there are huge ranges of laws in Bangladesh, which indirectly protect various

<sup>3</sup> UN Commission on Human Rights, *Addendum to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food: Mission to Bangladesh*, 29 October 2003, E/CN.4/2004/10/Add.1, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4537ac90.html> [accessed 13 May 2017].

<sup>4</sup> Rajkiran Barhey, and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, ‘*The Right to Food: Legal Protection in Bangladesh*’ (Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) and Campaign for Right to Food & Social Security (RtF&SS), 2015) p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Quazi Shahabuddin, “The Right to Food: Bangladesh Perspectives”, *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol. XXXIII (March-June), 2010, No. 1&2, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Article 15 of the Constitution states that it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens the provision of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care.

facets of the right to food. These laws are supposed to create a strong national legal framework for protecting the right to food.<sup>7</sup> But the reality is not so. In spite of the availability of food, accessibility to it remains a major problem. Current legal framework does not properly deal with this issue. It also fails to address poverty, gender, disability, geographical location and cultural practices that are also important factors in shaping food security.<sup>8</sup> Against this backdrop this article attempts to search feasible ways to resolve the problem of food insecurity in Bangladesh. It argues that the adoption of human rights based approach to food would be the best possible way to achieve food security in the state.

There exist two approaches towards ensuring the right to food: need based approach and right based approach. Bangladesh follows the traditional need based approach rather than right based approach. A need based approach does not impose any binding obligation upon state to enforce the right to food. It lacks informed legislation, political will, and coordinated action, which is available under the right based approach. Thus a rights-based approach provides a structure for legal recourse creating favourable environment for people to realize the right to food.<sup>9</sup> It covers the problem of distribution of resources, and that of inequality, discrimination and such other issues obstructing the realization of the right to food. Indeed the development of food as human rights has resulted in a wider understanding of a legal obligation on the state to guarantee the right to food for individuals.<sup>10</sup> But realizing such an approach in Bangladesh, though is highly desirable, would involve a huge challenge. Hence the purpose of this study is to find out the need of searching human rights based approach to food in Bangladesh and the challenges involved therein. It also explores feasible ways to overcome such challenges. In so doing this paper attempts to define the right to food, to discuss the provisions of the right to food as embodied in international human rights instruments, and national legal framework. It will also highlight the nature of state's obligation in ensuring the right to food as well as the obstructions that hinder the fulfillment of such obligation. Finally this paper suggests some measures to be taken by states and other concerned actors involved with realizing the right to food, in order to achieve human rights based approach to food in Bangladesh. The right to food includes both food security and food safety. This study is mainly concerned with food security and not food safety like adulteration of food.

<sup>7</sup> Rajkiran Barhey, and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 39.

<sup>8</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, "From Basic Need to Basic Right: Right to Food in Context", *A study prepared for National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh*, (June) 2014, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Rajkiran Barhey and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.* p. 19.

## 2. Definition of the Right to Food

As regards food security the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), an organization under the United Nations (UN) leading international efforts to defeat hunger, holds that the physical and economic access by all people, at all times to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life refer to food security.<sup>11</sup> This is the operational concept of the right to food as used by this organization. It can be argued from this that a proper realization of the right to food might resolve the problem of food insecurity in a country like Bangladesh. Citing the right to food as an inclusive right the High Commissioner for Human Rights says that this right does not merely refers to minimum ration of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients. It is a right to all nutritional elements that a person needs to live a healthy and active life, and to the means to access them.<sup>12</sup> Thus, availability of adequate food and accessibility to it constitute fundamental components of the right to food. In other words absence of these elements gives rise to food insecurity and hunger. However in his famous book *Poverty and Famines* (1981) Amartya K. Sen opined that lack of accessibility to food rather than its availability is the root cause of hunger and malnutrition. According to him disempowerment, marginalization and poverty undermine people's economic access to adequate food causing hunger.<sup>13</sup> As observed above, despite the growth of food production Bangladesh has been suffering from hunger and malnutrition. This is so because of people's incapacity to access to food, which mostly resulted due to the reasons mentioned by Sen. But, the removal of food insecurity does not depend merely on accessibility to food. It requires that other elements of food security that is, availability, adequacy and sustainability should be attached to food.<sup>14</sup> So in order to ensure food security these contents should be understood properly. The human rights based approach to food consists of these fundamental components. Besides, it imposes binding legal obligation upon states to enforce the right to food. As such

<sup>11</sup> S. Mahendra Dev, "Right to Food in India" *Working Paper No. 50, Centre for Economic and Social Studies*, (Hyderabad, August-2003) p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Fact Sheet No. 34, The Right to Adequate Food*, April 2010, p. 2, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ca460b02.html> [accessed 13 May 2017].

<sup>13</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Pooja Ahluwalia., The implementation of the Right to Food at the National Level: A critical Examination of the Indian Campaign on the Right to Food as an Effective Operationalization of Article 11 of ICESCR, Centre for Human Rights and Global Justice Working Paper Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Series, November 8, 2004, available at: [www.chrgij.org/publications/does/wp/Ahluwalia%20](http://www.chrgij.org/publications/does/wp/Ahluwalia%20) [Accessed 16 May 2017].

adoption of right based approach to food would help achieving food security. It necessitates finding a complete definition of the right to food.

Although various national and international human rights instruments recognize the right to food, they do not provide a uniformly accepted definition of the right. In its General Comment (GC) No. 12 the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Committee) states that the right to adequate food is realized when “every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement in ways consistent with human dignity”.<sup>15</sup> Although used in most of the cases, it is not an exhaustive definition covering all aspects of the right to food; it simply provides a component of the right to food. In this regard, the definition given by former Special Rapporteur might be considered as comprehensive. It says that the right to have regular, permanent and free access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free from fear means the right to food.<sup>16</sup>

The two core contents of the right to food: availability and accessibility to adequate food have further been elaborated by the Committee. Thus the concept of availability refers that food should be free from adverse substance and culturally acceptable in quantity and quality, which will satisfy the nutritional and dietary needs of individuals.<sup>17</sup> Accessibility includes both physical and economic accessibility. The former means that adequate food must be accessible to everyone including physically and mentally disabled persons, victims of natural disasters or other disadvantaged groups. The latter requires that food should be affordable to all. In other words individuals should be able to afford food for an adequate diet without compromising on any other basic needs, such as school fees, medicines or rent.<sup>18</sup> Socially vulnerable groups such as landless persons and other impoverished segments of the population should be given attention through special programmes to facilitate economic accessibility. The process of acquiring such accessibility should not interfere with the

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<sup>15</sup> ICESCR General Comment No. 12, para 6, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> The Right to Food, Report of the Special Rapporteur, E/CN.4/53, 7 February 2001, para 16, p.7.

<sup>17</sup> ICESCR General Comment No. 12, para 6, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *op. cit.*, [accessed 13 May 2017].

enjoyment of other human rights and be sustainable.<sup>19</sup> However the enjoyment of such right by people of a particular country depends on what kind of approach the state has adopted towards realizing the right to food.

### **2.1. Need Based Approach vs Right Based Approach**

The traditional approach adopted by most of the country towards the right to food is need based approach. Bangladesh is not an exception to this. Bangladesh places this right in part II of the constitution under the head of ‘fundamental principles of state policy’. This part mainly deals with socio-economic rights, which are not judicially enforceable. Although the higher judiciary often attempts to implement the right through liberal interpretation by including the right to food into the right to life, it does not create specific direction on the principles of availability, accessibility and other important factors, which are essential to enforce the right to food. The adoption of need based approach enables the state to escape its obligation of guaranteeing these essential conditions. Indeed this approach does not impose any binding obligation upon the state. The right to food is considered as charity under this approach. On the contrary human rights based approach impose specific obligation upon state of implementing the right to food. A right based approach to food fundamentally depends on certain human rights principles. These are as follows:

**Equity:** state should design and implement program on the basis of detailed information indentifying most vulnerable who suffer food insecurity. The causes of their insecurity should also be recognized. Such groups would become the target groups and goods and services would be delivered to them.

**Non-discrimination:** While prioritizing the most vulnerable, state should pay special attention to the fact that no discrimination is made on the basis of religion, ethnic affiliation, age, gender, political opinion, social or cultural status, nationality, language, property, or some other criterion.

**Respect for human dignity:** No person is obliged to act in a way that undermines their self-esteem, sense of human dignity and/or the respect of others towards them.

**Participation:** People’s voices should be heard and respected during decision-making and in the process of planning, implementing and monitoring programme actions.

**Empowerment:** The state should create different alternatives among which people would choose the one that is most advantageous to them. It should also enable people to acquire the capacity to choose.

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<sup>19</sup> ICESCR General Comment No. 12, para 8, *op. cit.*

**Absence of adverse impacts:** There should be method available to make the government accountable for all decisions and actions taken. Proper attention should be given to judge whether such activities of government bring any negative effect on the protection and upholding of the human rights of any member of society.

**Adequate responses:** The government should have clear knowledge and understanding about needs of the target group and should priorities the areas of work before taking any program or action for implementing the right to food. It should also make the group aware about such program and actions.<sup>20</sup>

The right based approach to food requires state to observe these principles in framing and implementing law and policies, which ultimately ensure the right to food for all. Besides, this approach can make government accountable for violating its obligation of observing these principles. The need based approach neither recognize the above rules nor make government accountable in the case of its failure to enforce the right to food. It mainly depends on benevolence, which cannot be considered as a suitable approach to resolve the problem of food security. It is worthy to mention here that the right to food not only includes all the elements of food security- availability, accessibility and sustainability but also goes further than this, by making food security a human rights obligation, rather than a preference or policy choice, or just an aspirational goal.<sup>21</sup> hence it can rightly be said that food security can be achieved through the recognition of human rights based approach to food in Bangladesh. In order to achieve this goal it is essential to know the foundation upon which such kind of approach is established. International human rights instruments offer this base. Bangladesh should search for ways to design its national framework in accordance with these.

### 3. The Right to Food in International Human Rights Instruments

The right-based approach to food is now deeply embedded in international human rights instruments.<sup>22</sup> Several instruments recognize the human right to adequate food. The ICESCR deals more comprehensively than any other instrument with this right. Article 11 of the Covenant provides foundation of the right to food in a treaty within 164 parties, Bangladesh being one of them. It has established that the fundamental

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<sup>20</sup> Susana Gauster, "Human Rights in the Design and Implementation of Local Actions of the Special Programmes for Food Security in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua: A Comparative Analysis" *FAO Publication*, (Rome 2014), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Pooja Ahluwalia, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> Abdullah A Faruque , *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 11.

right of everyone to be free from hunger is a legal right.<sup>23</sup> State parties under article 11 (2) recognize that more immediate and urgent steps may be needed to ensure “the fundamental right to freedom from hunger and malnutrition”. The FAO also promotes this motto. The Preamble of its Constitution declared that one of its purposes is to ensure ‘humanity’s freedom from hunger’.<sup>24</sup> In 2004 the FAO Council adopted the “Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security”, commonly referred to as the Voluntary Guidelines. These guidelines provide guidance to governments to realize the right to adequate food. These Guidelines are a human rights-based practical tool addressed to all States, which require states to adopt a holistic and comprehensive approach to hunger and poverty reduction. They involve direct and immediate measures to ensure access to adequate food as part of social safety net; investment in productive activities and projects to improve the livelihoods of the poor and hungry in a sustainable manner; the development of appropriate institutions, functioning markets, a conducive legal and regulatory framework; and access to employment, productive resources and appropriate services.<sup>25</sup>

Hence the guidelines on food security help states to take appropriate steps for complying with the obligations under article 11(1) of the ICESCR. Pursuant to the article states recognize “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”<sup>26</sup>. As party to this Covenant, Bangladesh should comply with this obligation of ensuring adequate standard of living for its citizens, which necessary includes the realization of the right to food by everyone.<sup>27</sup> As mentioned above, the Committee’s elaboration of the normative content of article 11 expressed in General Comment No. 12 is of huge significance relating to the interpretation of the right to food. It affirms that the right to adequate food is indivisibly linked to the inherent dignity of the human person and is indispensable for the fulfillment of other human rights enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights. It is also inseparable from social justice, requiring the adoption of appropriate economic, environmental and social policies, at both the national and international levels leaning to the eradication of poverty and the fulfillment of all human rights for all.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Rajkiran Barhey, and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> S. Mahendra Dev, *op. cit.*, p.2.

<sup>25</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 11.

<sup>26</sup> ICESCR General Comment No. 12, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> ICESCR General Comment No. 12, *op. cit.*

It is worthwhile to mention here that the evolution of the right to food derives from the larger human right to an adequate standard of living provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948. Article 25 (1) of the UDHR asserts that ‘everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family including food, clothing, and housing..’. In several other international instruments, the right to food is recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, focusing especially on the need for freedom from hunger.<sup>29</sup> The Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), for example, states that the protection of the right to life requires states to adopt positive measures, such as measures to eliminate malnutrition. Further the Committee against Torture under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984), has pointed out that lack of adequate food in prisons might be treated as inhuman and degrading treatment. Other human rights instruments dealing with the protection of specific groups also recognize the right to food. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) may be cited as such examples.<sup>30</sup> Some regional instruments, such as the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, known as the Protocol of San Salvador (1988), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) recognize the right to food.

#### 4. Domestic Framework Relating to the Right to Food in Bangladesh

The government of Bangladesh considers food policy as a priority area. The experience of famine in 1974 has led governments to keep food policy at the top of government’s agendas. As the famine caused the loss of popular support to the then government, subsequent governments have been keen to rapidly change and adopt food policies essential to prevent acute mass hunger; so that they could prevent similar outcome.<sup>31</sup> However, despite being the top priority, food security remains a major problem in Bangladesh. It might be due to the loopholes of domestic legal framework or other socio-economic factors. There are three main ways in which the state takes actions on the right to food at the national level. First, through the creation of a constitutional right to food; second, through the adoption of a legal framework

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<sup>29</sup> S. Mahendra Dev, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>31</sup> Rajkiran Barhey, and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

on the right to food or food security and nutrition; and third, by ensuring that other existing legislation is conducive to the realization of the right to adequate food (FAO, 2009). Another legal element is how judicial mechanisms deal with violations of the right to food.<sup>32</sup>

#### **4.1. The Right to Food in the Constitution of Bangladesh**

Constitution is the supreme law of Bangladesh. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedom is deeply embedded in the history and society of Bangladesh. The preamble of the Constitution invokes the core values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and pledges that it shall be a fundamental aim of the State to realize “a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social will be secured for all citizens”.<sup>33</sup> The rights mentioned in Part II and Part III of the constitution reflect many human rights including the right to food prescribed in international human rights instruments.<sup>34</sup> The right to food is specifically found in Article 15 of the Constitution as fundamental principles of state policy. Generally constitutional recognition of the right to food occurs in three different ways: 1) direct recognition as a human right in itself or as part of another human right, 2) recognition as a directive principle of state policy, 3) implicit recognition through expansive interpretation of other human rights (e.g. right to life). The constitution of Bangladesh recognizes the right to food in the second way. However, there are suggestions that the right to food might be recognized in the third way. Thus the constitution does not directly recognize the right to food.<sup>35</sup>

#### **4.2. Statutory Provisions and policies on the Right to Food**

The inclusion of the right to food within statutory provisions or government policy makes the right operational as it enables the victims of violation of the right to seek remedy under the law and make concerned authority accountable for that. It also

<sup>32</sup> Margret Vidar, Yoon Jee Kim and Luisa Cruz, “Legal Developments in the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food” *Thematic Study 3, FAO*, (Rome 2014), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Candidature of Bangladesh to the Human Rights Council, 2015-2017, Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251, General Assembly, United Nations 2014, p. 1, available at <http://www.unelections.org/files/Bangladesh%20for%20HRC.pdf>. [Accessed 13 May, 2017].

<sup>34</sup> Articles 8 to 25 embodied in Part II of the Constitution contain economic social and cultural rights under the head ‘fundamental principles of state policy’. Part III includes a number of civil and political rights from articles 26 to 47A, known as ‘fundamental rights’.

<sup>35</sup> Rajkiran Barhey and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

gives precise definition of the scope and content of the right, set out specific obligation for state authorities and other related actors. So realization of the right to food largely depends upon the existence of food related law and policies.<sup>36</sup> There are a number of law and policies in Bangladesh dealing with the right to food. The Essentials Articles (Price Control and Anti-Hoarding) Act, 1953, The Control of Essential Commodities Act, 1956 and The Essential Commodities Act, 1957 define food as an essential commodity and contain provisions to control food price, production, treatment, keeping, storage, movement, transport, supply, distribution, disposal, acquisition, use or consumption and trade and commerce. The Consumer's Rights Protection Act, 2009 aims to establish institutional mechanisms and propose higher punishment for certain offences.<sup>37</sup> Recently Bangladesh has enacted the Safe Food Act, 2013 in order to ensure right to have safe food. The Act defines safe food and adulterated food. It establishes an institutional mechanism called 'Bangladesh Safe Food Authority'. The main purpose of this Act is to ensure right to safe food, but not right to food as such.

Apart from legislation Bangladesh has certain food policies. The Food Policy of 1988, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of 2005, the National Food Policy (NFP) in 2006 and the National Food Policy Plan of Action (2008-2015) contain provisions to increase food production, to decrease poverty and to ensure sustainable food security.<sup>38</sup> But these laws and policies have not been formulated in accordance with human rights principles. They lack a comprehensive definition of food. They are also silent on the issues of availability and affordability of food, the essential conditions of the right to food.

#### **4.3. The Role of Judiciary in Enforcing the Right to Food**

Being embodied in directive principles of state policy the right to food is not judicially enforceable.<sup>39</sup> In other words, the adoption of need based approach to food rather than right based approach does not impose any binding obligation upon Bangladesh Government to implement the right to food at local level. However, recently a trend has been developed to enforce this right by the higher judiciary through liberal interpretation of the right to life. Such practice is also observed in

<sup>36</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>37</sup> Taslima Islam, 'Food-Related Legislation in Bangladesh' available at <http://www.sawtee.org/presentations/30July2013P1.pdf> [Accessed 13 May 2017].

<sup>38</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Article 8(2) of the Constitution of Bangladesh states that fundamental principles of state policies are not judicially enforceable.

other countries of South Asia such as India and Nepal.<sup>40</sup> In most of the cases the process of the court is initiated by the Public Interest Litigation (PIL). In Bangladesh, a number of landmark PIL cases have been filed by public interest lawyers, environmental lawyers and consumer activists before the HCD on the right to food. In *Rabia Bhuiyan MP v. Ministry of LGRD & Others*<sup>41</sup> the Court relied on a harmonious reading of Articles 15, 18 and 32 dealing with the right to food, right to health and right to life respectively. It held that the failure to provide access to safe and drinkable water violated the right to life. In another case namely Radioactive Milk case,<sup>42</sup> the Court prohibited a shipment of radiated milk powder within Bangladesh on the ground that individuals had the right to safe food as part of the right to life.<sup>43</sup> Although these decisions are mainly related with food safety it paves the way to realize food security. In the latter case the HCD, for example, holds that the right to life under the Constitution “not only means protection of life and limbs necessary for full enjoyment of life but also includes, amongst others, protection of health, and normal longevity of an ordinary human being”.<sup>44</sup>

Although the right to food is not directly applicable its inclusion as a fundamental principle of state policy is of significant importance. It serves as a guide under article 8(2) of the constitution to interpret constitutional provisions relating to fundamental rights, such as the right to life.<sup>45</sup> In a number of decisions the HCD used the “fundamental principles” to interpret the meaning of the “fundamental rights”. In a landmark case on housing, *Ain O’ Salish Kendra (ASK) and others vs. Government of Bangladesh and others* the HCD stated that fundamental rights include the right to livelihood, and that the Constitution both in the fundamental principles of state policy

<sup>40</sup> The highly cited Indian Supreme Court case, *People’s Union for Civil Liberties vs Union of India & Ors*, (2001) affirms that the right to life under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution includes the right to food and other elements needed for a dignified life. The Supreme Court of Nepal also delivered a verdict in the case of *Prokash Moni Sharma* (2008) in favour of the right to food in view of chronic food insecurity in the country. Vidar Margret, Kim Yoon Jee and Cruz Luisa, *op. cit.*, p.11.

<sup>41</sup> [2007] 59 DLR (AD 176).

<sup>42</sup> Writ Petton No. 92 of 1996, 48 DLR (HCD) 438.

<sup>43</sup> Rajkiran Barhey, and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Writ Petton No. 92 of 1996, *op. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> Article 8(2) states that the principles shall be guide to the interpretation of the Constitution and of the other laws of Bangladesh. Article 32 of Bangladesh Constitution says “No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty, save in accordance with law”.

and in the preservation of the fundamental rights provide that the State shall direct its policy towards securing that the citizens have the right to life, and livelihood.<sup>46</sup> Such decisions necessarily direct the protection of right to food, which represent a significant advancement towards the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights in Bangladesh. It also means, by extension, that the right to food can now be considered to be justiciable, as a case can be brought for its enforcement within the purview of the right to life.<sup>47</sup>

### **5. The Nature of State's Obligation in Enforcing the Right to Food**

The nature of state's obligation in enforcing the right to food depends on what method state has adopted to it. As mentioned earlier needs-based approach does not require legislation to implement it or coordinated group action. On the other hand the right based approach imposes a legal obligation on the state to ensure the right to food. It holds food as fundamental human right which are due, rather than something which are given. It empowers the individuals, allowing them to hold public authorities accountable when they fail to perform their duties. It also enables them to go court directly where there is violation of the right to food.<sup>48</sup> Although Bangladesh adopts need based approach it cannot escape some obligations undertaken under the ICESCR. These obligations are common for all state parties, irrespective of the fact as to what approach they have adopted to food. Accordingly Bangladesh should 'respect, protect and fulfill' its obligation of ensuring the right to food under the Covenant; and individuals can justifiably demand that the state carry out the obligations.<sup>49</sup> The obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the responsibility of implementing the right to food are common in almost all human rights instruments; despite they hold different views as regards states' obligation to the right to food.

#### **5.1. The obligation to respect the right to food**

The state should respect people's access to food and means of obtaining food available under the current mechanism. In other words, any measure that prevents access to food, for example denying food assistance to political opponents, should be prohibited. Further the state must not take any step which is likely to deprive anyone from access to adequate food.

<sup>46</sup> Orders in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh High Court Division Writ Petition No. 3034 (1999).

<sup>47</sup> Orders in the Supreme Court of India Civil Original Jurisdiction Writ Petition No. 196 (2001). See UN Commission on Human Rights, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Rajkiran Barhey and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>49</sup> "The Right to Food in Practice: Implementation at the National Level", *FAO Publication, Rome*, 2006, p. 2.

### **5.2. The obligation to protect the right to food**

The state should protect everyone from being deprived of access to adequate food in any way. Thus the state must protect individuals' enjoyment of the right to food against violation by third parties (e.g., other individuals, groups, private enterprises and other entities). States should prevent third parties from destroying sources of food by, for instance, polluting land, water and air with hazardous industrial or agricultural products or destroying the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples to clear the way for mines, dams, highways or industrial agriculture.

### **5.3. The obligation to fulfill the right to food**

The obligation to fulfill includes both an obligation to facilitate and an obligation to provide. The obligation to facilitate means that the state must be proactive in strengthening people's access to and use of resources and means of ensuring their livelihoods, including food security. While doing so the state should apply the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It should apply the doctrine of substantive equality by giving special attention on breastfeeding mothers, older people, people with a disability or an illness and other people belonging to disadvantaged section of society. The obligation to provide on the other hand requires that in the case anyone is in fact without adequate food, the state should take effective steps in order to create an enabling environment, which will make people self-reliant for food. The state must provide food, where people are unable to become so.<sup>50</sup>

Thus in accordance with human rights based approach every individual is a right-holder, fully entitled to demand that the state perform these obligations mentioned above.<sup>51</sup> Individual's entitlements relating to livelihood security such as the right to work, land reform and social security are closely related to fulfillment of the above obligation by the state.<sup>52</sup> As such state should concentrate on these issues as well. The state should also identify vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as women, children, farmers and peasants, fisher people, indigenous people and take appropriate measures in order to remove the factors responsible for such vulnerability, which are fundamental to realize the right to food.<sup>53</sup> Whatever may be

<sup>50</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 18, 21.

<sup>51</sup> The Right to Food in Practice: Implementation at the National Level, *op. cit.*, p.2.

<sup>52</sup> S. Mahendra Dev, *op. cit.*, pp. 30, 31.

<sup>53</sup> What is the Right to Food, available at <http://www.righttofood.org/work-of-jean-ziegler-at-the-un/what-is-the-right-to-food/> [Accessed 29 April, 2017].

the ways and means to comply with the three obligations, all should aim to ensure that everyone is free from hunger and as soon as possible can enjoy the right to adequate food. This requires state to frame legislation and policy towards ensuring food and nutrition security for all, identifying the resources available to meet the objectives and most effective ways of using them. Such laws and policies can be found only where there exists human rights based mechanism to food. So the Government of Bangladesh should adopt this approach in order to achieve food security in Bangladesh.<sup>54</sup> But it would involve a huge challenge due to the obstructions associated with current mechanisms relating to the right to food, as well as the relevant socio-economic conditions of the poor country.

#### 6. Obstacles to Enforcing the Right to Food

Bangladesh has made considerable progress in overcoming the threat of famine and realization of the right to food over the years.<sup>55</sup> Despite the absence of its formal legal recognition, the right to food has been secured in effect by the Bangladesh government. Bangladesh has achieved between 1990 and 2014, for example, one of the biggest improvements in its Global Hunger Index score.<sup>56</sup> However the full realization of the right to food is yet to be done, which is hindered by a number of obstacles, such as natural disaster, poverty, lack of education and awareness, absence of appropriate law etc. Bangladesh is the most disaster-prone countries in the world. It suffers from not only frequent floods, but also cyclones and earthquakes. Under such situation a poor and densely populated country faces immense challenge to guarantee the right to food for its citizen.<sup>57</sup> The availability of food is temporarily or permanently disrupted during the natural disasters. It causes large segments of the population to remain vulnerable to food security.

Besides, lack of education and awareness, continuing population growth, gender discrimination, adulteration of food, reduction of land every year due to demand of housing and industries, submersion of land, salinity of water due to climate change, declining soil fertility due to overexploitation of soil and imbalanced use of fertilizers are main threats to achieving food security in Bangladesh.<sup>58</sup> Another important concern is absence of specific law ensuring the right to food. In such absence the state attempts to apply existing laws, which creates further problem. The multiplicity

<sup>54</sup> ICESCR General Comment No. 12, *op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> UN Commission on Human Rights, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>56</sup> Rajkiran Barhey, and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>57</sup> UN Commission on Human Rights, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8.

of such laws, particularly on food safety, results in a number of overlaps and lack of clarity regarding responsibilities and powers of concerned authorities. The offence of food adulteration, for example, is created by at least three different laws. Each law, however, frames the offence differently, with different punishments, which can lead to confusion, both for those seeking remedies, and those enforcing them. Further, enforcement and implementation of the law in Bangladesh is a perennial problem. More effective policy and institutions are required to improve this area.<sup>59</sup>

The role of higher judiciary through PIL is often considered as an effective means to ensure food security in Bangladesh and other South Asian countries. But judicial decisions in such cases do not always bring certainty; as for example, they do not always focus on availability and accessibility of food. Moreover PIL is mainly initiated by NGOs or voluntary organization, rather than the victims themselves. As it depends upon the will of such institutions, they might not always be interested to file such case. There is nothing to force them to file the case. Further the court may also not always give same decision in other similar cases. There might be a scope of different interpretation of the same right in future. Thus the appropriate means to ensure food security would be to have specific law and policy rather than leaving it to the mercy of government, court or any other organization. The absence of such law and policy is perhaps the greatest obstacle towards achieving food security in Bangladesh.

## **7. Recommendations to Ensure the Right to Food in Bangladesh**

It appears from the above that Bangladesh does not hold an appropriate strategy to food in order to achieve food security. As the realization of the right food is supposed to ensure food security, the government should emphasize on three fundamental things on priority basis. The first one is the process of formulation of policies; second is the progressive realization of right and concern for disadvantaged and third is monitoring and accountability. The process of formulation of policies should be participatory. Then only the policy makers would come to know the problems of the poor. In providing food and nutrition one should take care of the disadvantaged persons. Monitoring and public accountability, the two important instruments for realizing right to food should also be incorporated in the whole process of realizing food security. Although the primary responsibility of observing all these duties rests with the state, other actors such as NGOs, civil society and concerned international

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<sup>59</sup> Rajkiran Barhey and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

organizations should cooperate with the government in achieving a right based approach to food in Bangladesh.<sup>60</sup>

### **7.1. The Role of Government**

One of the fundamental aspects of the right to food is justiciability. The Constitutional or legislative recognition confers justiciability upon the right to food. The Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission (BNHRC) in this regard observes that direct constitutional recognition of the right to food would protect the right from the ambiguity of judicial interpretation and empower individuals to demand policies and laws which allow them to realize their right to food. More importantly, it would also provide individuals with remedies against the authorities when their right to food is violated.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the inclusion of the right to food in fundamental rights part of the constitution would enable the hungry people to move directly to the HCD under article 44 and 102 of the constitution. But it can hardly be expected that poor people will be able to avail this remedy from highly expensive and prolonged process of higher judiciary. This probable situation demands that the government should adopt law and policies which would provide practical solution to the problem of food insecurity, covering all dimensions of food. It should also ensure implementation of such law and policies and better functioning of the programmes undertaken by it to ensure food security. At the same time the government should concentrate on introducing mechanisms for better delivery systems with transparency and accountability. It should also introduce a system to ensure public accountability, as it is crucial for the success of right to food. Besides the adoption and implementation of law and policies, the government has many functions to perform, some of which require special attention as regards the realization of the right to food.

#### **7.1.1. Creation of Employment and Other Opportunities to Ensure Accessibility to Food**

As mentioned above, Amartya Sen and others argued that food availability is not a major problem but the main problem of food insecurity lies with accessibility to food. So government should take effective measures in order to make sure that food is accessible to all both physically and economically. The adoption of special programmes for vulnerable sections and such other policies might ensure physical accessibility. Economic accessibility requires that purchasing power should be

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<sup>60</sup> S. Mahendra Dev, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>61</sup> Rajkiran Barhey and Mohsina Hossain Tushi, *op. cit.*, p.34.

created through employment. Thus the right to employment is crucial for achieving right to food. The Government can facilitate labour intensive growth and provide direct programmes to generate productive employment which in turn can ensure right to food.<sup>62</sup>

### **7.1.2. Ensure the Access to Land**

Access to land is also crucial for the realization of the right to food. Land and other natural resources, as for instance, water and trees are essential for people's livelihoods. Indeed land is considered as primary source of wealth, social status and power. Gender discrimination remains a great obstacle to the accessibility to land. Because of religious and cultural traditions women get marginalized in land-related policies. They are excluded from benefits and do not exercise rights, such as property rights, on an equal basis with men. In the case of land reform or land administration projects the needs of women should be taken into consideration.<sup>63</sup>

### **7.1.3. Protection of vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged groups**

Not only women there are also other groups in society who need special attention. The government should adopt specific programmes to meet the need of some groups, who are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and whose economic, social, and cultural rights are at greatest risk. The prisoners or detained persons, indigenous peoples, children, refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and undocumented migrants can be brought under this category.<sup>64</sup>

## **7.2. The Role of NGO, Civil Society and International Community**

It appears from the above that the primary duty of implementing the right to food rests upon the government. But in the absence of proper role to be played by other concerned organizations, government would not be able to handle efficiently the obstacles preventing the enforcement of the right to food. NGOs and civil society have a significant role to play in fulfilling the right to food. They usually perform their functions in two ways: firstly, NGOs themselves organize innovative programmes for raising food security of the poor. Secondly they assist government in fulfilling its obligation of right to food. The most important and third function of NGOs is to play particular role in applying the principles of accountability, transparency and participation in implementing the right to food. They can play an

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<sup>62</sup> S. Mahendra Dev, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 68.

<sup>63</sup> 'Report of the South Asian Dialogue on the Right to Food 23–25 November 2015 Dhaka, Bangladesh', *FAO publication*, Rome, 2016, p. 23.

<sup>64</sup> Margret Vidar, Yoon Jee Kim and Luisa Cruz, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

even more crucial role in the cases, where food policy requires the beneficiaries to participate in decision making and benefit sharing with accountability and transparency. NGOs can monitor the programmes and deliver the services and often may replace the existing bureaucracy. In India, for example, two human rights NGOs People's Union for Civil Liberties and the Right to Food Campaign have played important role in focusing the government's obligation to fulfill the right to food.<sup>65</sup>

The realization of the right to food does not depend merely on fulfilling obligation by government or local NGOs. It requires international cooperation as envisaged in the charter of the United Nations. The charter states that international community and multinational organizations should cooperation with national states to enable them to discharge their functions of protecting and preserving human rights of individuals. Thus a proper coordination should be made both among government, donors and other stakeholders and across the productive infrastructure and social sectors relevant to food security as was done in some African countries like Sierra Leone, Brazil and Bolivia. The National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), in Brazil, for example, brings all key stakeholders together (two-thirds civil society, one-third government) in a forum for discussing food security issues.<sup>66</sup> So it can be said that though the primary responsibility of the state is to ensure the right to adequate food, it remains the responsibility of the civil society and the international community to support and complement State action.<sup>67</sup>

### 7.3. Monitoring

Monitoring is an essential part of the effort to realize the right to food. Various actions can be taken to monitor the realization of this right. Reviews of policy, budgets of public expenditure and public monitoring mechanisms might be important administrative mechanisms to this end. Assessments of various kinds, such as impact assessments would provide a way for policymakers to anticipate the probable impact of a projected policy on the enjoyment of the right to food, and later to review its actual impact. In addition to the Government's self-monitoring, monitoring by NHRIs and civil society organizations would also contribute to hold the Government accountable for the realization of the right to food, such as for individual violations.<sup>68</sup>

It is worthy to mention here that human rights approach should not only be applied through various functions mentioned above, but the right to food should also be

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<sup>65</sup> S. Mahendra Dev, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>66</sup> The Right to Food in Practice: Implementation at the National Level, *op. cit.* pp. 20, 21

<sup>67</sup> Quazi Shahabuddin, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>68</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *op. cit.*, p. 30.

visualized. The implication of the right in terms of appeal and justiciability mechanisms should also be envisaged. Consideration must be given to the time and resources devoted to the initial activities of publicizing and raising awareness of the right based approach to ensure that participants know their rights and the mechanisms that are available to uphold them.<sup>69</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

There is none to deny that food is the most important human rights issue, and access to adequate, culturally acceptable and affordable food is crucial for the enjoyment of all rights including the right to life. So it should be the prime concern for every state, particularly for a country like Bangladesh, which suffers the severe problem of food insecurity, to adopt effective measures in order to implement the right to food. Although in recent years it has attained food self-sufficiency, the problem of hunger and malnutrition is acute and widespread in the state.<sup>70</sup> Given persistent malnutrition and poverty in Bangladesh there is a need to increase focus on access to food, since availability of food is not a major issue at this stage.<sup>71</sup> Affirmatively the government has adopted specific laws and policies to address food insecurity and has put appropriate institutional mechanism in place to deal with food crisis in times of natural disasters. But these do not constitute a right-based approach; rather they are based on basic need approach. Besides, the processes of policy formulation, the contents of policies and the monitoring of policy implementation are not consistent with the requirements of the right-based approach. The goals and targets set by policies are also rarely found to be in conformity with those to which the state has committed itself in the process of signing various human rights instruments.<sup>72</sup>

The adoption of basic needs approach enables Bangladesh to abstain from fulfilling its obligation to enforce the right to food as such. Since this approach depends on benevolence rather than binding obligation, it can hardly be expected that the problem of food security can properly be addressed through this manner. Moreover enforcement mechanisms of existing law and policies are weak or non-existent. Accordingly it is not possible to bring a complaint before a court of law to implement the right to food. Although the situation has been changed to some extent through PIL, the decisions of court often give rise to uncertainty and ambiguity. So the recognition of food as a human right through a comprehensive legal framework will

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<sup>69</sup> Gauster Susana, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>70</sup> Barhey Rajkiran and Tushi Mohsina Hossain, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>71</sup> UN Commission on Human Rights, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Quazi Shahabuddin, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

be of vital importance, not only to remove existing hunger but also to achieve sustainable and long-term food security. However, the current legal and policy framework can provide guideline to Government in order to formulate the proposed law on right to food in Bangladesh, given its international and constitutional obligation.<sup>73</sup>

A right-based approach to food stresses on the obligation of state as well as on the role of relevant stakeholders to realize the right to food. It emphasizes on poor and vulnerable people who are often excluded from the processes that determine policies to promote food security. It not only requires that the final outcome of abolishing hunger should be addressed but also proposes ways and tools by which food security is achieved. Thus right based approach to food can help the government to reach the poorest. This method seeks to create enabling environments and conditions for people to feed themselves by insisting that nutritious food is not simply a basic need, but a fundamental human right. It provides a scope for public participation in the food and nutrition discourse from people most affected by food insecurity. It provides a mechanism through which general public can hold the government accountable for making progress in ending food insecurity.<sup>74</sup> But the success of this system depends on removal of obstructions that hinder the enforcement of the right to food. The adoption and implementation of comprehensive law and policies on the right to food, proper coordination among concerned authorities, identification of responsibilities of government and other actors might pave the way to realize human rights based approach leading to attain food security in Bangladesh.

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<sup>73</sup> Abdullah Al Faruque, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 30.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

## **UNPUBLISHED UMAYYAD AND ABBASID SILVER COINS IN THE BANGLADESH NATIONAL MUSEUM**

Shariful Islam\* and Muhammad Manirul Hoque\*\*

### **Abstract**

This article has disclosed twenty two Umayyad and Abbasid silver coins preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins were discovered from southeast Bengal. In this connection, mention may be made that a hoard of Abbasid gold coins were collected in the Bangladesh National Museum in 1996 and these were discovered while excavating the land from Warukbazar in Chandpur District. We know that Bengal was well-connected with Arabs maritime trade link during the early medieval period as reported by the contemporary Arab and Persian geographers, traders and travellers. These numismatic evidences firmly establish this fact as archaeological sources of the Arabs literary texts. Moreover, the Arabs literary texts hitherto suggest that this trade network flourished during the Abbasid period. But these silver coins clearly indicate that this trade link flourished from the early Umayyad period. Certainly these numismatic materials may be used as corroborative source to review the history of Arab-Bengal trade link.

A large number of Umayyad and Abbasid silver coins preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum, deserve scholars' notice. The exact spot of discovery of these coins are not known. N.K. Bhattacharjee wrote that M.F.C. Martin had gifted these coins to the museum but he did not mention who was this Martin and how these coins were collected. So far we know, M.F.C. Martin was a British civilian, writer and official collector of Dhaka District during the early nineteenth century. He visited many places of eastern Bengal and collected artifacts which were preserved in the Deputy Magistrate's Dhaka office and subsequently these historical objects were gifted to the Dhaka museum. It is probable that he collected these coins somewhere from Dhaka District. Mr. Martin gifted 28 silver coins to the museum including 10 Umayyad coins and 10 Abbasid coins. Among the rest of the coins one was a Sassanid silver coin and the others were the silver coins of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, Ilyas Shah and Shah Alam. Besides these, there are two more Umayyad silver coins preserved in the reserve collection of the museum which came from the Baldha collection.

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It is most likely that N.K. Bhattachari knew the exact place found of Martin's collection of coins and he realized that these are very important historical objects. He appointed an Arabic scholar or Maulana to decipher these coins but he failed. So, these coins are still unpublished. Most of the coins are in a good state of preservation and only three coins are affected by corrosion. All these coins bear ancient Arabic alphabets as legend and the style of writing is known as 'Kufic'. Dots (*nokta*), medial (*Hārākāt*) such as *Jera*, *Javara* and *Pesha* have not been used in this writing system like the modern Arabic writing style. However, all these coins are more or less decipherable. The weights and sizes of these coins, the reading of their obverse and reverse legends, issuing period and the rulers who issued them and historical implications of these coins etc. have also been discussed in this article.

First, we would like to mention the characteristics of these coins:

#### **Umayyad Silver Coins**

1.

Accession No	:	5389
Weight	:	2.63 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	90 A.H / 711 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 31 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Reverse	:	In the middle: (Lā ilāha illā) الله وحده (Allāhu whdahu) لَا شرِيكَ لَهْ (Lā sharīka Lahu) In the margin: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ضُرِبَ هَذَا الدِّرْهَمُ بِأَصْطَخْرٍ فِي سَنِّ تَسْعِينَ (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham beistakhar fī sana tisyēen)
Obverse	:	In the middle: الله أَحَدُ الله (Allāhu ahad allāhu) الصَّمْدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَ (Assamad̄ lam yealid wa) لَمْ يُوَلَّ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ (lam yulad wa lam yakun) لَهُ كُفُواً أَحَدٌ (Lahu kufuwān ahad) In the margin: مُحَمَّدُ رَسُولُ اللهِ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينُ الْحَقِّ لَيَظْهُرُ عَلَى الْدِينِ كُلَّهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (Muhammadur rasūlullh arsalahu bill hudā wa dīnul haq liyujhirahu alāddīnu kulluhu wa law karihal mushrikūn)



2.

Accession No	:	5395
Weight	:	2.90 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	78 A.H / 699 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 31 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	In the middle: لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu) الله وحده (Allāhu whdahu) لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu) In the margin: بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بدمسق سنة ثمان و سبعين (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bedamesk sana samān wa sabyēen)
Reverse	:	In the middle: الله احده (Allāhu ahad allāhu) الصلوة لم يلد و (I Assamað am yealid wa) لم يولد ولم يكن (lam yulad wa lam yakun) له كفوا احد (Lahu kufuwan ahad) In the margin : محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون (Muhammadu rasūlullāh arsalahu bill hudā wa dīnul haq liyujhirahu alāddīnū kulluhu wa law karihal mushrikūn)



3.

Accession No	:	5396
Weight	:	2.78 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	127 A.H / 748 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 29 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله وحده لا سریک له (Lā ilāha illāhu wahdahu Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بواسطه سنہ سیع و عشرين و ميه          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bewāsete sana saba wa ashareen wa mia)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          الله احد الله (Allāhu ahad allāhu)          الصمد لم يلد و (Assamað lam yualad wa)          لم يولد ولم يكن (lam yulad wa lam yakun)          له كفوا احد (Lahu kufuwn ahad)</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bill hudā wa dīnul haq liyujhirahu alāddīnu kulluhu wa lam karihal mushrikūn)</p>



4.

Accession N : 5397

Weight : 2.63 gram

Language : Arabic

Style of writing : Kufic

Date of issue : 111 A.H / 732 A.D.

Measurement : Diameter 33 mm

Place found : Dhaka District

Attribution : Umayyad dynasty

Obverse : In the middle:  
 لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)  
 الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)  
 لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)  
 In the margin:  
 بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بواسطه سنہ احدی عشرہ و میہ  
 (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bewāsete sana ahadā  
 ashara wa mia)

Reverse : In the middle:  
 الله احد الله (Allāhu ahad allāhu)  
 الصمد لم يلد و (Assamad lam yealid wa)  
 لم يولد ولم يكن (lam yulad wa lam yakun)  
 له كفوا احد (Lahu kufuwan ahad)  
 In the margin:  
 محمد رسول الله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون  
 (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk  
 liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau kariha □ mushrikūn )



5.

Accession No	:	5398
Weight	:	2.77 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	90 A.H. / 711 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 25 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله وحده ( Lā ilāha illā )          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم باصطخر في سنة تسعين          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham beistakhar fī sana tisyēēn)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          الله احده ( Allāhu Ahad Allāhu )          الصمد لم يلد و ( Assamad Lam yealid wa )          لم يولد ولم يكن ( Lam ulad̄ wa lam yakun )          له كفوا احده ( Lahu kufuan ahađ )</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )</p>



## 6.

Accession No	:	5399
Weight	:	3.75 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	Not so clear, tentative reading is 111 A.H /732 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 28 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله ( Lā ilāha illā )          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin: illegible, but probable          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم سنة احدى عشره و ميه          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham... sana ahadā ashara wa mia)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          الله احده (Allahu Ahad Allahu )          الصمد لم يلد و          لم يولد ولم يكن ( Lam ullađ wa lam yakun )          له كفوا احده ( Lahu kufuan ahađ )</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk          liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )</p>



7.

Accession No	:	5403
Weight	:	2.74 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	95 A.H /716 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 25 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:  <b>بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بواسطه في سنه خمس و تسعين</b>          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bewāsete fī sana khamsa wa tisyeēn)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          الله احد الله (Allāhu ahad allāhu)          الصمد لم يلد و (Assamad lam yealid wa)          لم يولد ولم يكن (lam yulad wa lam yakun)          له كفوا احد (Lahu kufuwān ahad)</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون          (Muhammad rasūllāh arsalahu bill hūdā wa dīnul haq liyujhirahu alāddīnu kulluhu wa law karihal mushrikūn)</p>



8.

Accession No	:	5404
Weight	:	3.04 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	122 A.H/ 743 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 25 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بواسطه سنة اثنين وعشرين و مية          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bewāsete sana isnaine wa          ashareen wa mia)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          الله احد الله (Allāhu ahad allāhu)          الصمد لم يلد و          لم يولد لم يكن (lam yulad wa lam yakun)          له كفوا احد (Lahu kufuwan ahad)</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlulāh arsalahu bill hudā wa dīnul haq          liyujhirahu alāddīnu kulluhu wa law karihal mushrikūn)</p>



9.

Accession No	:	5407
Weight	:	2.66 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	90 A.H / 711 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 24 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty

Obverse : In the middle:  
 لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)  
 الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)  
 لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)  
 In the margin:  
 بسم الله صرب هذا الدرهم في سنه تسعين  
 (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham fi sana tisyēen)

Reverse : In the middle:  
 الله احد الله (Allāhu ahad allāhu)  
 الصمد لم يلد و (Assamad lam yealid wa)  
 لم يولد ولم يكن (lam yulad wa lam yakun)  
 له كفوا احد (Lahu kufuwan ahad)  
 In the margin:  
 محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون  
 (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bill hudā wa dīnul haq liyujhirahu alāddīnu kulluhu wa law karihal mushrikūn)



10.

Accession No	:	18469
Weight	:	4.69 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	Illegible
Measurement	:	Diameter 32 mm
Place found	:	Unknown, Baldha collection.
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	In the middle (not so clear) لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ( Lā ilāha illā allāh) ..... ..... In the margin: (illegible) بِسْمِ اللَّهِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ( Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham ....)
Reverse	:	In the middle; illegible but may be الله احده الصمد (Allāhu ahad allāhu assamad) لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُوْلَدْ وَلَمْ (Lam yealid wa lam yulad wa lam) يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُواً أَحَدٌ ( Yakun lahu kufuwan ahad) مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ ( Muhammad bin ismā'īl) In the margin: مُحَمَّدُ رَسُولُ اللهِ أَرْسَلَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينُ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَهِّرَهُ عَلَى الْدِينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ( Muhammad rasūlullah arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )



## 11.

Accession No	:	18470
Weight	:	2.43 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	123 A.H / 741 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 28 mm
Place found	:	Unknown, Baldha Collection
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك لـه (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بـسـمـ اللهـ ضـرـبـ هـذـاـ الـدـرـهـمـ بـوـاسـطـ سـنـةـ ثـلـثـ وـعـشـرـينـ وـمـيـهـ          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bewāset sana suls wa ashareen wa mia)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          الله اـحـدـ اللهـ (Allāhu Ahad Allahu)          الصـمـدـ لـمـ يـلـدـ وـ ( Assamad Lam yealid wa)          لـمـ يـوـلـدـ وـلـمـ يـكـنـ ( Lam ulad wa lam yakun)          لـهـ كـفـواـ اـحـدـ ( Lahu kufuan ahađ)</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره          المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk          liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )</p>



12.

Accession No	:	5394
Weight	:	2.75 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	76 A.H / 697 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 27 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Umayyad dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بدمسق سنة ست و سبعين          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bedamesk sana sitta wa sabiyēen)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          الله احده (Allāhu ahad allāhu)          الصمد لم يلد و (Assamad lam yealid wa)          لم يولد ولم يكن (lam yulad wa lam yakun)          له كفوا احده (Lahu kufuhan ahan)</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bill hudā wa dīnul haq liyujhirahu alāddīnu kulluhu wa law karihal mushrikūn)</p>



**Abbasid Silver Coins**

13.

Accession No	:	5384
Weight	:	2.90 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	193 A.H / 814 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 21mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	In the middle: لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu) الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu) لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu) In the margin: بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بمد ينه السلام سنة ثلث و تسعين و ميه (Bismillahi juriba haja ddirham be madinatussalam sana suls wa tisyéen wa mia
Reverse	:	In the middle: محمد (Muhammad) رسول (rasūl) الله (Allāhu) In the margin: محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn)



14.

Accession No	:	5406
Weight	:	2.73 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	163 A.H/ 784 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 23 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بمدينه السلام سنة ثلث و مائة و سنتين و ميه          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bemadinatussalam sana          suls wa sittnēēn wa mia )</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          محمد رسول ( Muhammad rasūl)          الله صلى الله ( Allāhu challā llāhu )          عليه وسلم (Alaīhe wa sallam)          الخليفة المهدى (Al khalifa al mahdī)</p> <p>In the margin: not very clear          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره          المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bill hudā wa dīnul haq          liyujhirahu alāddīnu kulluhu wa law karihal mushrikūn)</p>



15.

Accession No	:	5385
Weight	:	2.83 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	131 A.H/ 752 AD
Measurement	:	Diameter 23 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Khalifa Al Mahdi, Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)          الله وحده (Allāhu whdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بالمحديه سنه احادي و ثلاثين و ميه          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham belmuhammadie sana          ahadā wa salasēen wa mia)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          محمد رسول (Muhammad rasūl)          الله صلى الله (Allāhu challā llāhu)          عليه وسلم (Alaīhe wa sallam)          الخليفة المهدى (Al khalifa al mahdī)</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره          المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlullah arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk          liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )</p>



16.

Accession No	:	5386
Weight	:	2.86 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	131 A.H/ 753 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 25 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka district
Attribution	:	Caliph Al Mahdi, Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله ( Lā ilāha illāhu )          الله وحده (Allāhu whdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بالمدینة ... سنہ احادی و تلثین و میہ          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bemadinah... sana ahadā          wa salaseen wa mia)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          على ( Alī )          محمد رسول ( Muhammad rasūl )          صلی الله علیہ وسلم ( Challā llāhu alaihe wa sallam)          الخليفة المهدی (Al khalifa al mahdī)</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسلاه بالهدی و دین الحق لیظهره علی الدین کله ولو کرہ          المشرکون          (Muhammad rasūlullah arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk          liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )</p>



17.

Accession No	:	5388
Weight	:	2.90 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	172 A.H / 793 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 23 mm
Found place	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Al Khalifa al Mahdi, Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بمد ينه السلام سنة اثنين و سبعين و ميه          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bemadinatossilām sana          isnaine wa sabēen wa mia)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          محمد رسول (Muhammad rasūl)          الله صلى الله (Allāhu shallā llāhu)          عليه وسلم (Alaihe wa sallam)          الخليفة المهدى (Al khalifa al mahdī )</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره          المشركون          ( Muhammad rasūlullah arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk          liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )</p>



18.

Accession No	:	5391
Weight	:	2.94 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	152 A.H / 773 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 26 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	<p>In the middle:          لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu)          الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu)          لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu)</p> <p>In the margin:          بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم          بمدينة السلام سنة اثنين وخمسين و مية          (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham bemadinatussalām sana          isnaine wa khamseēn wa mia)</p>
Reverse	:	<p>In the middle:          محمد رسول الله (Muhammad rasūlullah)          مما امر به الامير الامين ( Mimma umirabihi al amirul amēēn )          محمد بن امير المؤمنين (Muhammad bin amirul muhmineēn)          جعفر ( Zaafar )</p> <p>In the margin:          محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره          المشركون          (Muhammad rasūlullah arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk          liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )</p>



19.

Accession No	:	5393
Weight	:	4.25 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	Illegible and not deciphered
Measurement	:	Diameter 31mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	In the middle: الله لا إله إلا (Lā ilāha illā) الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu) لا شريك له (Lā sharīka Lahu) In the margin: (illegible)
Reverse	:	In the middle: (illegible) In the margin: (illegible)



20.

Accession No	:	5387
Weight	:	5.99 gram.
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	Illegible and not deciphered
Measurement	:	Diameter 33 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka district
Attribution	:	Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	In the middle: الله لا إله إلا ( Lā ilāha illā ) الله وحده ( Allāhu wahdahu ) لَا شريك لَه ( Lā sharīka Lahu ) In the margin : ( Two lines illegible ) .....
Reverse	:	In the middle: الله ( Allāhu ) محمد ( Muhammad ) رسول الله ( Rasūlullāh ) In the margin: ( illegible, but may be ) محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى وين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون ( Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )



21.

Accession No	:	5405
Weight	:	3.20 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Style of writing	:	Kufic
Date of issue	:	133 A.H / 754 A.D.
Measurement	:	Diameter 21 mm
Place found	:	Dhaka district
Attribution	:	Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	In the middle: الله لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له In the margin: Not very clear, may be بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بمدينه السلام سنة ثلاث وثلاثين و ميه (Bismillāhi juriba hajā ddirham be madinatussalam sana suls wa salasēén wa mia)
Reverse	:	In the middle: محمد ( Muhammad ) رسول ( Rasūl) الله ( Allāhu ) In the margin: محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون ( Muhammad rasūlullāh arsalahu bilhudā wa dīnul hakk liujhirahu alā dīnu kullahu wa lau karihal mushrikūn )



22.

Accession No	:	5390
Weight	:	4.80 gram
Language	:	Arabic
Date of issue	:	Illegible and not deciphered
Measurement	:	Diameter 31mm
Place found	:	Dhaka District
Attribution	:	Uncertain, Abbasid dynasty
Obverse	:	In the middle: لا إله إلا الله (Lā ilāha illāhu) الله وحده (Allāhu wahdahu) لا شريك لـه (Lā sharīka Lahu) In the margin: (illegible)
Reverse	:	In the middle: الله (Allāh) محمد (Muhammad) ..... In the margin: (illegible)



The 22 Umayyad and Abbasid silver coins mentioned above is a large Arab-coin hoard hitherto discovered from Bengal. These unpublished numismatic materials give us further impetus to reassess the Arab trade link with Bengal during the early medieval period. But before we go into discussion of the historical implication of these numismatic evidences, it needs to refer other Abbasid gold coins discovered and published from Bengal. A number of Abbasid gold and silver coins have already been discovered and reported by the scholars from Bengal. A gold coin of Abbasid Caliph

Al-Mustāsim Billāh (1242-58A.D.) had been discovered from the excavation at Kutilamura of Mainamati. This gold coin is published by Harunur Rashid<sup>1</sup> and now this is being preserved in the Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh. Another Abbasid silver coin has been discovered from the excavation of Salvan Bihara at Mainamati in Comilla District. But this coin is badly corroded and it is not decipherable, while the other silver coin was discovered from Paharpur archaeological site as reported by Nazimuddin Ahmed<sup>2</sup> attributed to Abbasid Caliph Harun-al-Rashid. Both these coins are now being preserved in the Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Bangladesh. These Arabs coins discovered from rich archaeological sites like Mainamati and Paharpur are historically very important.

A hoard of Abbasid gold coins collected in the Bangladesh National Museum in 1996 were discovered while excavating the land from Warukbazar in Chandpur District (former Comilla District). A local coin collector named Oli Mia purchased these coins from Fajar Ali, a cultivator of Warukbazar and these coins were sold to the National Museum. It is reported from the collector that a number of coins were broken into pieces while digging the land and later on they were melted by the collector. Besides these, a number of gold coins were sold to some private collectors and ultimately 12 Abbasid gold coins came to the collection of the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins have been reported first by Rezaul Karim<sup>3</sup> and subsequently the present author.<sup>4</sup> Their detail historical implications have not yet been discussed.

Two more Abbasid gold coins were collected from Brahmanbaria District (former Comilla District) in 2002. The place found of these coins is uncertain. But the collector reports that these coins were collected from a jewelry shop of Brahmanbaria town. These coins are still unpublished. However, these Abbasid gold, silver and Umayyad silver coins discovered from an adjacent place of a famous archaeological site can certainly form important sources for reconstructing the history of flourishing trade and commerce in the early medieval Bengal.

<sup>1</sup> M. Harunur Rashid, *Early History of South-East Bengal in the Light of Archaeological Materials*, published by Itihās Academy, Dhaka 2008, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Nazimuddin Ahmed, *Mahasthan, Mainamati, Pahadpur*, Dhaka 1979, Second edition, p. 9

<sup>3</sup> Rezaul Karim, Bangladesh Jatiya Jadughare Samgrihita Abbasiya Svarnamudra: Ekti Paryalochana (Bangla), *Muhammad Sirajul Islam Smaraka Grantha*, published by the Bangladesh Itihasa Parisad, Dhaka 2009, pp. 179-191.

<sup>4</sup> Shariful Islam, *New Light on the History of Ancient Southeast Bengal*, Published by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka 2014, p. 227

During the Umayyad period many new kingdoms were conquered by the Muslim rulers and the Muslim empire was extended into a vast area including Africa, Asia and Europe. Many rich cities and ports were also incorporated into the Muslim empire. Peoples of different localities with different castes and creeds were converted into Islam and they also came to close contact of each others. Roads and communications were developed. Many new cities and town flourished.<sup>5</sup> Muabia (661-680 A.D.), the first Umayyad Caliph, issued coins following the Sassanid and Byzantine coinage tradition. The Umayyad silver coin is known as 'Dirham'. On the other hand, Gold coin was known as 'Dinar' and the copper coin as 'Phals'. These were issued following the Byzantine coinage tradition.<sup>6</sup> During this period monetary economy flourished and the banking system was initiated and developed in the cities of the Muslim empire. This new political, social and economic order created favourable situation to inland and overseas trade in the Muslim world.<sup>7</sup> The Arabs merchants were involving themselves in the Indian Ocean trade from the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onward and their maritime network extended gradually from Africa and Europe in the west to China in the east. The maritime Arab trade network with the Indian Ocean including Bay of Bengal or eastern India highly flourished during the Abbasid period. Certainly Bengal was well-connected with Arabs maritime trade link as it is reported by the contemporary Arab and Persian geographers, traders and travelers.

It may be mentioned that the work of Ibn Khurdadhbih (912 A.D.) was titled *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik* (the Book on Roads and Kingdoms).<sup>8</sup> Ibn Khurdadhbih was the chief of post and information in northern Iraq and close to Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutamid. He has reported routes, distances, trade link and commercial activities of the Arabs during his time. He has also mentioned a port of Bengal named Samandar and the port had seaborne contact with ports like Urnshin (Orissa coast), Kanja (Conjeevaram in Coromandal coast) and Sarandip (Srilanka). It is also referred in this Arabic text that Samandar was located at a distance of fifteen to twenty days passage by means of a river from Kamrun (Kamrupa).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Rogers, *The Spread of Islam*, Oxford, Elsevier-Phaidon, 1976, Chapter 3, Town and Country.

<sup>6</sup> A. K. M. Yiakub Ali, *Muslim Mudra O Hastalikhan Shilpa* (Bangla), Book Choice, Banglabazar, fourth edition 2010, p. 31

<sup>7</sup> J. R. Hayes, *The Genius of Arab Civilization*, Oxford, Phaidon, 1976, Chapter on Trade and Commerce by Ragae and Dorothea.

<sup>8</sup> S. Maqbul Ahmad, *Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China: Book One Al-Masalik Wal-Mamalik and Book Two Akhbar Al-SinWal-Hind*, translated from the original Arabic with commentary , Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1989, pp. 22-25.

A Persian geography book composed by a unanimous author (982 A.D.) titled *Hudūd al-Ālam* and the text refers ‘*Bahr Harkand*’ along with N.myas, Urnshin, S.m.nd.r (Samandar) and Andras. It also refers that Qamrun (Kamarupa), a kingdom in the eastern part of Hindustan, where there were rhinoceroses and numerous gold mines. Superior quality aloe wood would come from this country.<sup>9</sup> Persian term ‘*Bahr*’ means sea and *Harkand* is identified with Harikela (present Chittagong and its adjacent area) where there was a port Samandar identified with in and around modern Chittagong.

In 1120 A.D. Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi , another Arab author, who refers Hd.kira (Harikela) in place of Samandar and according to him, Hd.kira (Harikela) adjoins the coast of the sea of Aghbab (i.e., the Bay of Bengal) and this is an unpleasant sea but on its coast lie many large town. He also mentioned Hd.kira (Harikela) in the kingdom of Dhaum (Dharmapala).<sup>10</sup> But he, however, wrongly attributed this port as being located in the kingdom of the Pala king Dharmapala. No Pāla copper plate has yet been found in South-East Bengal. Three later Pāla image inscriptions have been found in ancient Samata□a region and in our assumption these images were brought later from North-Bengal. There is no evidence that ancient Harikela sub-region was included within Pala kingdom.

Al-Idrisi, another Arab author, who composed his account in mid 12<sup>th</sup> century collected facts from many travelers and sailors and the title of his book is *Nazhatu-l Mushtak*. He reports about the port of Samandar and the country of Kamarupa and he also mentions Samandar is four days distant from the island of Sarandip (Ceylon).<sup>11</sup>

However, according to most of the accounts of Arab writer is that ‘Aloe wood is brought hither from the country of Kāmarut in 15 days distance by a river of which the water is sweet. The Aloe wood, which comes from this country, is of superior quality and of a delicious perfume’. Kāmarut is certainly identical with Kāmarūpa, which was well-known for aloe wood and the rivers with sweet water were in all probability the Brahmaputra and the Meghna. This reference clearly indicates that aloe wood was transported to Sāmāndār from Kāmarūpa through inland river- network and it was exported to the Arab world and other countries. This port was used

<sup>9</sup> V. Minorsky, edited and translated, *Hudud al-Ālam*, London 1937, p. 87

<sup>10</sup> Translated and commentary of Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi on China, the Turks and India, London 1942, pp. 147-148; cited by Ranabir Chakravarty in the Appendix of Niharranjan Ray et al. edited, *A Source Book of Indian Civilization*, Calcutta 2000, p. 639

<sup>11</sup> Al-Idrisi, *Nuzhatu-l Mushtak*, edited by H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, in *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, London 1867, Vol. 1, pp. 74-93

extensively by the Arab merchants in the 9th to 11th centuries. Most probably Sāmāndār rose to prominence as an international port after the decline of Tāmralipti. Sāmāndār was connected with South India, Ceylon and West Asia.<sup>12</sup> Kāmarūpa, Ārākān, and Vaṅga formed the hinterland of this port. The route which ran from Sāmāndār to the Kāmarūpa was probably under the political control of the rulers of Samataṭa. So the movement of merchandise through the Samataṭa territory must have added wealth to the treasury of the rulers of Samatata. Moreover Sāmāndār was definitely connected with the inland river ports of Samataṭa sub-region. The regular issue of gold coins from Samatata area clearly indicates that it was a flourishing trading zone during the ancient and early medieval period.

The trading activities of the Arab merchants were certainly related with the port of Samatata along with Harikela region as most of the Arabs coins have been discovered from the greater Comilla District, the center of Samatata kingdom. It is our assumption that M.F.C. Martin collected these coins from Comilla-Noakhali region as during the early nineteenth century A.D. this region was included within Dhaka District. These Umayyad and Abbasid silver and gold coins may be taken as a corroborative evidence of the Arab's literary texts. The Arabs trade link with southeast Bengal through maritime network is now an established fact in the history of trade and commerce of ancient and early medieval Bengal. On the basis of these numismatic evidences, it has been confirmed that this trade network was established during the Umayyad period and it was highly flourished during the Abbasid period.

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<sup>12</sup> Ranabir Chakravarty, *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, Manohar, New Delhi 2002, p. 166

## **WOMEN'S MOBILITY, MENTAL MAPPING AND MARGIN OF FREEDOM IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACE: CASE OF WOMEN WORKING IN NEW SERVICE SECTORS OF DHAKA CITY**

Wasifa Tasnim Shamma\*

### **Abstract**

The study addressed the appearance of a new urban space of Dhaka city with the development of new service sectors focusing on women's mobility, fear and freedom in the city. Harvey, Lefebvre and Tonkiss' theories on city, social meanings to space, spatial practices, gender and fear of harassment inspired the essence of the study. The data were collected from the females working in different fashion houses, shopping malls and beauty parlours of the city principally by survey method and supplemented by case studies. Particularly with the growth of these new service sectors women's increasing presence and mobility have been found in the public space of the city. But unfortunately their freedom and movement in the public space have been marginalized by their mental mapping of violence inflicted by male. To avoid danger and remain safe they are to employ different types of protective strategies while remaining in public space. The study also revealed that they have learned these protective strategies from their socialization as girls.

### **Introduction**

Urban living is now perceptible with freer life and newer employment opportunities reinforced by global economic redesign. The economic restructuring has a capitalist concern that has reproduced the urban space with the growth of new service sectors and rise of consumerism. New services and businesses like cafes, restaurants, art galleries, and fashion shops have been attracted by new public space brought about by urban renewal.<sup>1</sup> The emerging service sectors, particularly shopping malls, fashion houses and beauty parlours are increasingly becoming the livelihood options in Dhaka city for young, less educated or even the indigenous girls and women. By dint of the rise of these sectors they have been entering in service-based economic

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1 A. Ortiz *et. al.*, Women's use of public space and sense of place in the Raval (Barcelona), *GeoJournal*, Vol. 61, No. 3, 2004, pp. 219-227

activities. Their engagement in this service economy has eased their visible presence in the public space of the city that was impossible few decades ago. Thus the city has become a space of freedom for women and women's freer movement in the public space has been explained as women's mobility in this study. Women's depressed condition to incorporate them in the initiatives of economic development since the country's independence did not change before 1980s.<sup>2</sup> But as a global development force urbanization has changed women's condition and at the same time has also created risk or insecurity or exacerbated insecurity for urban dwellers. Harassment in public space hampers women's physical and psychological mobility in Bangladesh. It has been mentioned that even for the fear of facing further harassment most of the incidents go untold and off the hook.<sup>3</sup> Women's use of space is determined by geography of fear that incorporates their mental maps and heightened consciousness of perceived dangerous places at dangerous times.<sup>4</sup> Further, women's fear of sexual susceptibility at particular dangerous and threatening environment has been regarded as their perception of safety.<sup>5</sup> Harassment in public places makes women feel uncomfortable to relax and fear the most awful happening.<sup>6</sup> Hence, women's mental mapping of fear is their fear of male violence which marginalizes their use, experience and perception of urban public space. It is also reinforced by frightening experience and advices by their parents and others and media reporting. Furthermore, the younger women are more afraid of violent crime in public space, more constrained by fear of violence. Consequently, the concept of urban public spaces is recently rethought as socially constructed since production of public space reflects people's social characteristics, gender and social background.<sup>7</sup> In a modern city all of

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- 2 S. Hossain et. al., *Safe City and Urban Space for Women and Girls: An explorative study to deepening understanding of the concept and indicators of safe city*, 2012, Action Aid Bangladesh
  - 3 Z. Akhter, *Eve-teasing, Tears of the Girls: Bangladesh Open University towards Women Empowerment*, International Women Online Journal of Distance Education, Vol: 2 (October), Issue: 4, article 1, 2013, p.7
  - 4 G. Valentine, *The Geography of Women's Fear*, Area, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1989, pp. 385-390
  - 5 R. Macmillan et al., *Experiencing the streets: Harassment and Perceptions of Safety Among Women*, Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2000, pp. 306-322.
  - 6 M. Davidson et al., *The Mediating Role of Perceived Safety on Street Harassment and Anxiety' Psychology of Violence*, American Psychological Violence, 2016, p. 6
  - 7 R. Soenen, 'Everyday Urban Public Space. Turkish Immigrant Women's Perspective by Eda Ünlü-Yücesoy', *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2007, pp. 411-413

these factors are fretful about the right to the city and particularly the right to a gendered city.

### **Theoretical construction of women's presence in and mental mapping of urban space**

The city and the quality of urban life have been commodified. Urban living is now accompanied by shopping malls, multiplexes, cafes, departmental stores, fashion industry, cultural and knowledge-based industries.<sup>8</sup> Simultaneously, threatening of urban identity, citizenship and belonging as well as individual security in the face of criminal activity promoted by a neoliberal ethic. But Harvey particularly focused on the fortification of the city and creative dispossession apart from a right to a gendered city.<sup>9</sup> David Harvey presented 'Grid of spatial practices' recognized by Henry Lefebvre where he described the representation of space as perceived.<sup>10</sup> It includes all of the symbols and significations, code and understanding, psychological inventions (codes, symbols, spatial discourse, utopian plans, imaginary settings, figurative spaces, built environments etc.) Harvey further says that the body exists in space and submits to authority. Capitalist concern no longer does anything with the product to be sold but more with money, sex and power. He attached social meanings to spaces and time as different groups put different meanings to space and time by using them. Spatial practices are derived from capitalism and they take different meanings in accordance with different social relations of class, gender, community, ethnicity or race. Inspired by Lefebvre, Harvey proposed that spaces are occupied by objects (e.g. hearth, home, open places, street, squares, markets etc), activities (use of spaces), individuals, classes, gender and the organization and production of space are dominated by individuals or powerful groups which represents spaces as spaces of fear or spaces of repression.<sup>11</sup> Space reproduces spatial code that restricts activity in space, commands bodies, prescribes and proscribes gestures, routes and distances to be covered.<sup>12</sup> Lefebvre captures our attention to the critical phase of the city – 'the harbinger of the certain globalization of the urban'. This critical phase has been brought into light by exemplifying it with the pros and cons of streets. For Lefebvre

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8 D. Harvey, 'Social Justice & The City', Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009, pp. 315-323

9 *Ibid*

10 D. Harvey, 'The Condition of Postmodernity', Cambridge MA & Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1989, pp. 219-222

11 Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 222

12 H. Lefebvre, 'Production of Space', Malden MA: Blackwell, 1974, pp. 31-33

argues that the highly trafficked and busy street provides security against criminal violence such as theft, rape or assault. So vanishing of street intensifies criminality. Against the street he postulated that streets have become a form of oppression or subjugation. Movement in the street has become not only mandatory but also repressed.

Fran Tonkiss spotlighted how the perception and the use of urban spaces are affected by the issues of gender and sexuality.<sup>13</sup> Doing this it demonstrated how cities conduct us as bodies and how ourselves are produced by urban experiences. She elucidated how structures of gender and sexual difference are thus reproduced by urban spatial arrangements. Therefore, boundaries of individual bodies cannot shape gender and sexuality but these are shaped by space. Hence, she addressed the problem of gender and sexuality not as a function of a sort of individual body visible in the street but as a function of urban physical and social environments. It means that social and physical environment of the city inhabit and reproduce the problem of gender and sexuality. And, to locate gender and sexuality in the city means to locate bodies in space. She viewed street as sexed and gendered. She attempted to explore how the geography of violence and fear constrains women's spatial practices. Thus she pointed out the gendered use of urban space. In Tonkiss's theory it was mentioned:

the younger generation of women who are just now entering in such large numbers into the newer occupations and the freer life which the great cities offer them.<sup>14</sup>

She told that women's presence in urban space is linked with interaction between freedom and danger.<sup>15</sup> The cities are offering young group of women newer career and freer life in which the women are entering into huge numbers. It has troublesome effects on social and moral order. These women are thereby getting social and spatial liberties, political visibility and the pleasures of anonymity. Individual women have thus dislodged the dominant order of social space and also produced spaces of movements for themselves. Therefore, the city has become the space of freedom for women. Their presence in urban space is a signification of disorder, danger and desire. But the real scene of urban space goes unseen that is critical to both freedom and safety of women. Because the city has become a site of danger simultaneously as women's fear of male violence has become a fear of space. The gendered subjects that come into view in the street not only handle the physical and social space but

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13 Tonkiss, F. (2005), Space, the city and Social Theory, *Polity Press*, pp. 94-112

14 Tonkiss, *op. cit.*, p.101

15 *Ibid.*

also the symbolic spaces- gendered roles and practices, location and conduct of gendered bodies. The gendering of space lies evidently in this geography of danger. Geography of danger denotes city as a site of danger that restricts women's full access to and use of urban spaces and also perpetuates women's fear of male violence that is unraveled as a fear of space. Geography of gender is simply these margins of freedom and maps of danger constituted in the city. Therefore, it can be inferred that geography of gender is the geography of danger in urban space. More specifically, it means marginalisation of women when they become visible in public space in the city by jeopardizing women's use of and fear of space.

Women's perception of safety and danger is also structured by the physical environment of urban space. Degree of visibility or transparency, openness or easiness of access or way out, better street light, employ of closed circuit television (CCTV) make women feel safer in the urban space. Thus perception of safety and danger in the city that shapes gendered use of space. Thus, women's common fear of being mistreated by crime is predominantly underscored by the fear of rape and sexual assault. Again, women's perception of danger and safety is also spatialized that relies on the unstable geography. Geography is unstable in two senses- in the sense that various groups of people occupy urban space and in the sense that the ways through which space changes over time.<sup>16</sup> Spatialization of danger and safety denotes that particular spaces are dangerous and some spaces become dangerous at particular dangerous time. It is mostly because of the uneven distribution of male violence over time and space. Tonkiss highlighted Valentine's suggestion that space is perceived as dangerous by women because of the unregulated behaviour of men at particular times.<sup>17</sup> These unregulated behaviours of men can take place both in open spaces (parks, towpaths, and wasteland) and closed spaces (subways, alleys, laneways, multistory car parks, train carriages). She exemplified that a railway station or park is fully safe at mid day but becomes fully unsafe at mid night.

The charged nature of space for many women, and the fraught nature of the female body in space are evident in the advice commonly offered to women if they should find themselves on a deserted street after dark: the notion that you should walk in the middle of the road and not on the pavement literally puts women out of place in ordinary public spaces. It might be good advice, but it underlines the way that having a female body can be a spatial liability, and how certain spaces in the city are experienced as a kind of conflict zone.<sup>18</sup>

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16 Tonkiss, *op. cit.*

17 Tonkiss, *op. cit.*, p. 103

18 *Ibid.* p. 104

The nature of space is emotional/ electric for women and that of female body is burdened. Women adopt spatial strategies to avoid danger and remain safe. Women's defensive use of space means to avoid certain places at certain times, use private transport, avoid going out alone at night or seek protection from a man within the heterosexual couples. The strategies vary with respect to race, age, income, status and lifestyle of women. Akin to most kids and dogs, women are taught how to use street and where to tread, to observe who are staring at or gazing at, what to do if something unpleasant or irritating situation takes place. Women are advised to avoid pavements and to use middle of the road while walking in the street. Therefore, perception of fear and danger in urban space affects women's use of this space.

### **Methodology**

Mixed-method strategy was followed for the present study where quantitative findings have been supplemented by qualitative method. Five areas have been picked out from the city of Dhaka purposively for conducting the study. Dhanmondi, Shahbag and Nilkhet have been selected from DSAC and Mirpur-1, Mirpur-10 and Banani from DNCC.<sup>19</sup> These areas have been selected as I have found host of service sectors such as shopping malls, fashion houses and beauty parlours and also consumers from different class and cultural backgrounds of the city in these areas. Also, these areas are situated in my proximity. Specifically, these three sectors have been selected as they are offering huge part time, full time and seasonal jobs for the poor, less educated and indigenous females of the country. Survey questionnaire was administered on female service workers of these sectors. As there was no previous data or statistics on the number of service workers in different service sectors, the sample size of 130 respondents was purposively selected. To make an almost fair distribution of the number of respondents in the three service sectors, 41 respondents were taken from shopping malls, 43 from fashion houses and 46 from beauty parlours. As the study required informative, in-depth and in-detail data, 'face to face' mode was selected for administering the interview guidelines to the respondents. Further, 25 unique and informative cases of female service workers were collected to supplement the findings of the quantitative data. The survey questionnaire was semi-structured to bring out the quantitative findings thoroughly on socio-demographic characteristics of female service workers, the new urban space and new service

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19 Dhaka City Corporation has been divided as Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) as per The Local Government (City Corporation Amendment Act (2011).

sectors, their contribution to women's employment, freedom and movement in urban space, their psychology of fear and adoption of protective strategies while moving in urban public space. The data were analyzed using univariate analysis, cross tabulation and tabular presentation in bivariate analysis. After analyzing the data, they were interpreted in several sections following the questionnaire. Further, few cases were studied to discover diversified construction of social reality of the female respondents working in new service sectors. The exclusive and informative stories of the perception and lived experiences of the subjects were described in the form of narrative analysis. The findings from the case studies have been interpreted and summarized at the last stage of carrying out the cases. All of the ethical issues, validity and reliability were rigorously kept up to use a sound methodology for the study.

#### **Women in new service sectors and movement in urban public spaces**

Beauty parlours, fashion houses and shopping malls are the leading new service sectors in Dhaka city. These are the emerging service sectors that were not available in the city few years ago and they are growing so fast in the city that everyone can find them here and there of the city and can avail their services. Among the new service sectors, about 38 per cent of the respondents pointed out shopping malls, nearly 74 per cent beauty parlours, 45 per cent fashion houses as the flourishing service sectors in the city of Dhaka. Some women have also talked about the growth of some other service sectors in the city such as service centers of mobile phone, manufacturing, departmental stores, cafes etc. A brisk commodification of the city and city life of Dhaka escorted by shopping malls, fashion industry, beauty parlours, cafes, departmental stores and so on replicates Harvey's arguments in his 'Social Justice and the City'.<sup>20</sup> The development of new urban space in Dhaka also echoes Harvey's 'appropriation and production of space' in the 'the Condition of Post modernity'.<sup>21</sup> Appropriation and production of Dhaka's urban space by numerous fashion houses, beauty parlours, shopping malls, cafes, departmental stores etc and also by people's everyday transport practices perfectly harmonize with Harvey. The present study also tones with Friedmann and Wolff's (1982) 'clusters of employment' in the sense that the cluster of luxury shopping and entertainment has

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20 *op. cit.*, Note 8

21 *op. cit.*, Note 9

replaced the cluster of manufacturing that was the dominant one few decades ago.<sup>22</sup> A sales girl of a shop summarized the reports of her observation as follows:

Previously there were not so many shops and shopping malls. Now lots of shops and shopping malls are giving recruitment to thousands of women. Many women are also coming into this occupation seeing other women.

Surprisingly, with the growth of new service sectors i.e. beauty parlour, fashion house and shopping mall, more women have been visible in work place and public place that was impossible for women a few decades ago. Respondents in this study argued that it is the credit of different beauty parlours, fashion houses and shopping malls to bring out huge number of women out of their four walls. It is the credit of the great city that has made possible women's visible presence in urban space by giving them new jobs and free life.<sup>23</sup> Astonishingly, nowadays the proportion of unemployment has become higher for male segment than the female segment. Around 87% respondents commented that women are more recruited than men in these service sectors and 4 per cent replied the vice versa. But 13 per cent respondents argued that both men and women are being recruited by new service sectors in Dhaka city. Therefore, there is a relation between new service sectors and recruitment in terms of gender. Among the respondents surveyed, 31.5 per cent is from shopping mall, 33.9 per cent from fashion house and 34.6 per cent from beauty parlour. As per their statements, within recruitment types of respondents' service sectors, shopping malls are offering 30.8 per cent full time and 35 per cent part time recruitment, fashion house 37.4 per cent full time and 15 per cent part time and beauty parlour 31.8 full time and 50 per cent part time recruitment. Also, beauty parlour, shopping mall, fashion house are the service sectors where young girls and women are being engaged in a greater proportion than the middle aged or aged women. The study reveals that the female sales girls and beauticians are mostly young girls and women between 20 and 25 years of age. These are also the sectors which provide employment opportunities for the women with educational background from class six to HSC. Also the girls who have no schooling or have had their academic qualification up to class five are recruited in these service sectors. Further, all of the respondents from the tribal background work in different beauty

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22 J. Friedmann & G. Wolff, 'World City Formation: An Agenda for Research and action', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, 1982, pp. 309–344.

23 *op. cit.*, Note 14

parlour. Therefore, it is the outstanding finding of the study that beauty parlour is the only new service sector which offers the means of subsistence for the indigenous girls and women and thereby opens the carrier window for the disadvantaged population of the country. These sectors are thus empowering women who are young, tribal and low level of academic qualification by providing them job opportunities.

A indigenous girl working in a parlour of Mirpur-10 praised the growing engagement of young tribal girls in beauty parlour:

Previously, none of the tribal girl used to come to the city at a very young age. Now one is coming observing another woman working in beauty parlour.

Most of the female service workers (58.5%) have absolute and moderate freedom in their work place. Those (41.5%) who are absolutely or moderately unsafe in their work place are young women. They are harassed by their male colleagues who continuously disturb them by offering them marriage proposal or proposal for making love relationship, asking for their mobile number and following up them towards their home and even sometimes by blackmailing them.

Sumaiya, a young sales girl of a shopping mall combats with bad comments coming from the young boys in the corridor between her shop and rest room.

*'Look, look, she is looking very nice today. Is she all right?'*

Sometimes young boys disturb the beauticians in their work place by tagging papers with indecent language and hanging them on the wall or the door of the parlour or by giving call to T & T numbers frequently and asking for different girls. Even when the beauticians leave their parlours, they are teased by men on the streets. But very few of them enjoy freedom moderately in public space. Haque defines this harassment of women as eve teasing such as making vulgar comments, deliberate touching, pushing, shoving, vulgar staring, whistling, opportune clapping, sly whistling, singing evocative song, despicable gesture etc in the street and public transport and also in the workplace.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Women's Mental mapping of harassment in urban public space**

The present study also provides mental mapping of violence in urban public places of female service workers. Women's mental mapping of violence is the conventional imagery that is socially rooted in the mind of women. This mental mapping shows

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24 A. Haque, *Eve Teasing in Bangladesh: Causes and Impact on Society*, The International Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 15, No.1, 2013, pp. 2-3

them which places and times and also the crimes should be considered as fearful and which women are more susceptible to violence.<sup>25</sup> For example, girls are made anxious by family, friends, colleagues and media about the occurrences of women's harassment in public places and also socialized to restrict their movement in public places. Their family suggests them to move decently or modestly. Further, respondents mentioned that their family and relatives advised girls and women not to protest harassment if they face in public places. Also, their family gives them order to return home before night time and to avoid ultra modern dress. Thus women's movement in towns and cities is greatly interrupted by perceived vulnerability of being attacked- 'a virtual curfew on women at night in some urban areas.'<sup>26</sup> The data also uncovers that respondents' family and colleagues forbid female service workers to use subways, alleyway and certain dangerous places. The female service workers are also socialized to avoid strangers and talk to them and not to move alone. It was also revealed that some female service workers get suggestions to avoid male friends or boyfriends, to avoid to go unknown place alone and to make the teasers understand softly not to disturb them. Again young girls in new service sectors of the city are made anxious about experiencing of harassment in public space by media news and reports as well as by suggestion or awareness given by their family, friends and colleague. The study reveals that public transport is the major mode of movement for female respondents to commute everyday between their serving place and living place. It clearly demonstrates that user of public transport (around 47 per cent) is greater than that of walking mode (about 38 per cent). Another 10 per cent use rickshaw and nearly 5 per cent only use battery driven vehicles for the same purpose. These findings clearly replicate the explanation that women are greater user of public transport and walking than men in European countries and also in developing countries.<sup>27</sup> Besides, women prefer to travel by less expensive transport than men. Women's problems while making trips exacerbates in developing countries. For instance, in Bangladesh, women face difficulties to get access to buses as they are to be touched by other passengers while boarding the buses. Moreover, women are found engaged in part-time jobs in shops and supermarkets which have

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25 E. I. Madriz, *Images of Criminals and Victims: A Study on Women's Fear and Social Control*, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1997, pp. 342-356

26 R.H. Pain, *Social Geographies of Women's Fear of Crime*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1997, pp. 231-244

27 C. Duchene, *Gender and Transport*, Discussion Paper No. 2011-11, International Transport Forum, 2011, pp. 7-9

longer or unsociable working hours. All of these problems together hampers women's mobility and make them vulnerable to a sort of social exclusion. According to the study almost 27 per cent respondents feel unsafe in the street when they use it every day. Another, 45.96 per cent respondents who uses public transport for daily purposes perceives this mode of travel unsafe for them. Women's fear of victimization incorporates fear while using public transportation.<sup>28</sup> In practice, non sexual and sexual physical violence are experienced in a greater proportion by female service workers travelling by public transport rather than those using walking mode. In contrast to, verbal harassment is experienced more by women using walking mode than those using public transport. They also feel unsafe in markets, bus stops, neighborhood, lakeside or park. They are always drawing a mental map of being experiencing non-sexual physical, sexual physical and verbal harassment while moving in urban public space.

Female service workers are fearful of non-sexual physical violence by men while using public places of Dhaka every day. They are most scared of pushing, deliberate tapping, winking and making provocative expression among non-sexual physical violence. They sometimes get worried about the fear of throwing papers and spitting, throwing acid by men targeting them and again about the fear of kidnapping. Among sexual physical violence, touching is feared by large number of women. A good number of women are also fearful of rape, grabbing and caressing their private areas while remaining in the public space of the city daily. Majority of the women picked up bad or sexually explicit comments as the most fearful verbal harassment that a woman might experience anytime in the public places of the city. They are also severely scared of hissing and kissing sounds, leering and whistling. They are more fearful of sexual physical violence than non-sexual physical violence and verbal harassment in the public space of the city. Some other women are not fearful of harassment in public place as they have got habituated to it or they do not bother it. But in reality, they have had experience of more verbal harassment than sexual physical violence in the public places of Dhaka city.

A young receptionist of a shop expressed her fear when she remains in public places of Dhaka:

the matter of losing prestige in public space is the greatest issue for a woman. Nothing is to be done if anyone says something bad about a girl or woman.

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28 H. Scott, *Stranger Danger: Explaining Women's Fear of Crime*, Western Criminology Review, Vol. 4, No. 3. 2003, pp. 203-14

Therefore women's feeling of fear is produced by the fear of male violence and mostly by sexual violence. Madriz (1997) described female fear as fear of male violence.<sup>29</sup> In this sense women's fear is gendered as postulated by Tonkiss.<sup>30</sup>

Spatialization of women's danger and safety depends on unstable geography of space.<sup>31</sup> Following her theory, the present study replicates two dimensions of spatialization particular space (e.g. public transport, subways, alleyways etc) are unsafe; particular space becomes unsafe at particular time (e.g. night time); and secondly, space becomes unsafe for the appropriation of it by various groups of people. Such as unemployed and deviant young boys, middle aged men, rickshaw pullers, drunkards, gangs. High proportion of joblessness, the presence of gangs, and the drug trade together intensified the visibility of adult men and young boys in public spaces.<sup>32</sup> About half of the respondents (68%) perceive that at night time particular places become dangerous for women. Pawson and Banks (1993) found that night time is most fearful due to the domination of public space by young boys.<sup>33</sup> Almost 23 percent perceives morning time as unsafe for women when they use certain public spaces to reach their work place. Nearly 15 percent thinks that all most all the times public spaces are unsafe for women and 10 per cent claims afternoon and evening as fearful for women. But women who work as service workers are harassed mostly by middle aged men and secondly, by unemployed and deviant youth and the Rickshaw-puller and drunkards. They tend to show their domination as the powerful group of the society on these public places by harassing women in different forms and varied degree. It also supports Harvey's postulation on the appropriation of space by different persons, classes and social groupings and also on the domination of space by powerful groups. In this regard, Valentine argued that in spite of having career success, women's freedom in public space is hampered by their fear of male violence.<sup>34</sup> Closed space is more unsafe than open space as perceived by most of the women. Around 64 per cent women feel unsafe in closed space such as

29 Madriz, E.I.(1997), 'Images of Criminals and Victims: A Study on Women's Fear and Social Control,' *Gender and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 342-356,

30 *op. cit.*, Note, 15

31 *op. cit.*, Note, 16

32 J.E. Cobbina et. al., Gender, Neighborhood Danger And Risk-Avoidance Strategies Among Urban African-American Youth, *American Society of Criminology*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2008, p. 699

33 E. Pawson, and G. Banks, *Rape and Fear in a New Zealand City*, Area, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1993, pp. 55-63

34 *op. cit.*, Note, 4

subways, underground ways, alleyways, public bus, shops etc and 26 per cent in open space such as street, parks, and lakeside. Further, approximately 10 per cent women perceive both closed and open space unsafe for them. So, Goheen (1998) stated that in new spaces such as in the street variety of activities are represented and consequently suggested to fear public spaces even when they are crowded because of the dangerous behaviour occurring in these spaces.<sup>35</sup> Tonkiss defined women's fear of male violence as the fear of space for which the city has become a space of danger for women.<sup>36</sup>

### **Women age and fear of harassment**

There is a relationship between women's age and feeling fear of harassment in the urban public space. Younger women are more fretful about experiencing violence while remaining in public place of the city. Conspicuously, as per the findings of the study, fear of harassment in public spaces is felt mostly and in a greater proportion by the young female service workers between 20 to 30 years. It uncovered that 14.39 per cent respondents of up to 20 years is fearful of non-sexual physical violence, 28.95 per cent is of sexual physical violence and 25.52 per cent is of verbal harassment.

**Table: Age of the respondents and fear of harassment**

	Up to 20 yrs	21-25 yrs	26-30 yrs	31-35 yrs	36-40 yrs	40+ yrs	Not applicable	Total
Non-sexual physical violence	14.39	23.02	17.27	4.32	2.16	2.88	35.97	100
Sexual physical violence	28.95	26.32	19.74	3.29	1.32	3.29	17.12	100
Verbal harassment	25.52	20.69	17.93	2.76	2.07	2.07	28.97	100
Total	68.86	70.03	54.94	10.37	5.55	8.24	82.06	300

Further, 23.02 per cent respondents of age of 21-25 years are fearful of non-sexual physical violence, 26.32 per cent is of sexual physical violence and 20.69 per cent is of verbal harassment. Non -sexual physical violence, sexual physical violence and verbal harassment are respectively feared by 17.27 per cent, 19.74 per cent and 17.93 per cent of the respondents aged between 26 and 30 years. Very few numbers of women of 31 to 40+ years is afraid of harassment. So, fear of being harassed in

35 P.G. Goheen, *Public space and the geography of the modern city*, Progress in Human Geography, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1998, pp.479-496

36 *op. cit.*, Note, 13

public space declines with increasing ages. However, some of the respondents did not report or reveal their fear of being harassed in public space of Dhaka city.

### **Urban social & physical environment and women's insecurity**

Due to increasing crowd and decreasing day-time crowd, particular public places turn into dangerous space for women. Female service workers are harassed in the midst of crowd when it increases at office-hour in the morning or at night when working hour is over. These harassing incidents specifically occur when women attempt to get access to public transport and to have a limited space by competing with lots of men in a crowded bus. It becomes hardly possible for the female passengers to board the bus and ride by it without being touched, grabbed, tapped or caressed by male co-passengers or even by the helpers of the bus. Decreasing day time crowd again significantly makes women susceptible to harassment by men in streets, subways or alleyways at night when the women return back to their home. As exposed by the study, 28.43 per cent women commented that increasing crowd and 27.41 per cent that decreasing day time crowd account for unsafe public places. Lefebvre argued that criminal violence such as theft, rape or violent behaviour does not take place in busy and trafficked street.<sup>37</sup> Rather, criminality is strengthened by the vanishing of business from the street i.e. decreasing day time crowd. Thus for Lefebvre, streets have turned into a form of oppression. Again, 20.3 per cent respondents insisted that it is lack of surveillance that contributes to make the public places dangerous for women. Furthermore, 20.81 per cent shared that women become harassed in public places for poor lighting in urban public spaces. Some respondents viewed that shortage of public transport is another reason of rendering certain places of the city unsafe for women. Lack of surveillance and poor lighting also contribute to women's harassment in public space of the city.

Harassing situations take place against women by men even before the police or traffic police. Sometimes they enjoy or overlook the situations or sometimes they encourage women's harassment in public space of Dhaka city by allowing the culprits to go unreported and unpunished. Moreover, they tend to take part in women's harassment by interrogating them differently after the incidents of harassment and thereby waste their time and let them go alone at night after interrogation. Further, they are teased while walking in poor lighted subways, alleyways or even the main roads on their way towards home from their work place.

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37 *op. cit.*, Note, 12

In poor-lighted areas, men get the opportunity to harass women outside the vision of other people. Degree of visibility, openness or easiness of way in or out, poor lighting are some of the features of the physical environment of urban space that shapes women's perception of safety in the public space.<sup>38</sup> Blobam and Hunecke also revealed that poor visibility offering potentiality for the occurrences of crime is produced in poor-lit area.<sup>39</sup> Poor-lit area is a physical characteristic as reported by them. Both increasing crowd and decreasing day time crowd make it easy and possible for the culprit to way in harassing women and way out after the occurrence of the harassment. The female service workers of the city of Dhaka are also afraid of being harassed at night on their way towards home in poor-lighted street, subway or alleyways. Poor- lighting and decreasing day time crowd reduce the degree of visibility of the incidents of a woman's harassment in a dark subway and alleyway. Sometimes, due to shortage of public transport at night women are to wait at bus stops for longer period at night and are to be harassed by men. Thus problem of gender and sexuality in the street is not a factor of individual bodies but that of urban social and physical environment of the city as mentioned by Tonkiss' theory.

Warr talked about women's adoption of protective strategies to remain safe in Seattle.<sup>40</sup> To avoid danger and stay safe in the public space of Dhaka city, almost all of the female service workers adopt protective strategies. Among the protective strategies avoiding walking alone at night and avoiding unsafe and unknown places are adopted by most women. A significant number of women also avoid travelling alone. Some female service workers have avoided public transport to remain safe while using the public place of Dhaka city. Many of the women avoid crowd and waiting at bus stops after dark to keep themselves aloof from unavoidable harassment in the public space of the city. The adoption of protective strategies by female service workers for their perception of fear and danger reinforces 'Defensive use of space'.<sup>41</sup> Women's perception of danger socially built up affects women's use of urban space. Thus space has become a social construction as space is itself the product of social practices and social practices are reproduced in space.<sup>42</sup> More specifically, urban

38 *op. cit.*, Note, 13

39 A. Blobaum, and M. Hunecke, *Perceived Danger in Urban Public Space The Impacts of Physical Features and Personal Factors*, Environment and Behavior, Vol. 37, 2005, No. 4

40 M. Warr, *Fear of Rape among Urban Women*', *Social Problems*, University of California Press, Vol. 32, No. 3, 1985, pp. 238-250

41 Tonkiss, *op. cit.*

42 H. Koskela, *Gendered Exclusions: Women's Fear of Violence and Changing Relations to Space*, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 81, No. 2, 1999, pp. 111-124

space of Dhaka is produced by parental advices, discussion among friends and colleagues as revealed by the study. Social practices such as to avoid dark, unsafe place, moving alone, wearing modern dress etc are produced in the same space. Therefore, behavioural adaptation is affected by fear of crime.<sup>43</sup> Freedom and movement of most of the female service workers in public place of the city is hampered by their adoption of different protective behaviour in order to avoid harassment by male violence while remaining outside their own home. Implementation of protective strategies hinder women's free movement in the public places of city the most. It also interrupts to enjoy their jobs or engagement in new service economy. It also creates fear of male violence when they remain in the public space alone. Following different protective strategies by women in the service sectors also makes it compulsory for them to be accompanied by others for their own protection and thereby impedes their freer movement in the public places of Dhaka. Some women also cannot maintain modern life style for adopting protective tactics to remain safe in public place of the city. Women's defensive use of space interrupts their access to work and freedom.<sup>44</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The city and city life of Dhaka have now recently been portrayed with the emergence and expansion of new service economy such as dazzling shopping malls, numerous fashion houses and inestimable beauty parlours. The rise and roles of these new service sectors have brought about huge number of women out of the four walls of their home and have created a space of movement for them in the city. All of these features have together produced a new urban space in city. The study has confirmed the presence of these features in the public space of Dhaka. It has revealed that these new sectors are offering livelihood options for young women tremendously by creating a host of part-time, full time or over-time jobs and thereby are encouraging women's mobility in the public space of the city. Even though these sectors are also offering some job opportunities for the male segment of the population, the proportion of recruitment is not higher than that of the female segment. Notably, the women working in these new service sectors are to come out of their home and go for their work place daily. But unfortunately, some of the young sales girls have also

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43 B. J. Doran, and M.B. Burgess, 'Putting Fear of Crime on the Map: Investigating Perceptions of Crime Using Geographical Information System', Springer Series 9 on Evidence-Based Crime Policy, Springer Science and Business Media, 2012

44 S. Trench, *et al.*, *Safer Cities for Women: Perceived Risks and Planning Measures*, Liverpool University Press, Town Panning Review, Vol. 63, No. 3, 1992, pp. 279-296

experienced harassment in their work place by male strangers or male colleagues. These women are to leave their workplace at night daily and at late night occasionally. Most of these women use public transport and walking mode determined by the distance of their work place and residence. Public transport, streets, subways and alleyways are the most convenient places for men to harass women in the public space of Dhaka city. Therefore, these women always attempt to draw out a map of danger in urban public space putting it in specific place and time. Their mental mapping revealed that they are more fearful of sexual physical violence than verbal harassment in the public space of the city. But in practice, they have experienced verbal harassment more than sexual violence. Women plot public transport, subways and alleyways as the most unsafe space for them and night as the most unsafe time of the day in their psychological mapping. Their perception of fear of harassment in public space has been socially originated in the psychology of women. The study has revealed that women are advised by their family, friends, colleagues to come back to home before dark and to move decently. They are also advised to avoid strangers, male friends or boyfriends, subways, alleyways, unknown places to stay safe in the public place. Women themselves adopt different protective strategies to avoid danger in public places of Dhaka. Among the protective strategies, avoidance of unsafe places and stay alone at unsafe time in public space is followed by the female service workers the most. Their fear of danger is also determined by their age. The urban social and physical environments also intensify women's possibility of being harassed in public space of Dhaka city. Thus the social implication of psychological mapping of danger intensified by age and urban social environment impede women's free movement in public place and also sometimes to enjoy freedom of their jobs.

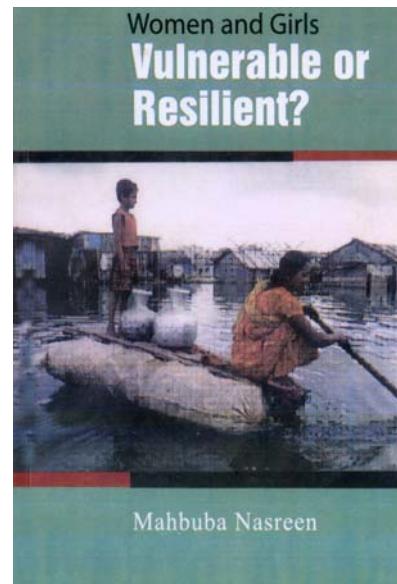
## Book Reviews

Mahbuba Nasreen, *Women and Girls: Vulnerable or Resilient?*  
Published by Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability  
Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2012. Pages XX + 121,  
Price: Tk. 300, ISBN: 978-984-33-5649-9

Bangladesh is often cited as a disaster prone country in South Asia. The northern districts of the country was seriously affected by a flash-water floods in 2017. This disaster compelled the local populations to be homeless and, thus, they were entirely reliant on humanitarian relief from development partners (development NGOs and foreign donors) and groups of philanthropists (e.g., students, voluntary organisations and clubs). Such consequences in the post-flood are, of course, not a new phenomenon. The 2017 flood has remarkably broken all of the previous records of floods that have occurred during 1988, 1991, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2016. The intensification of this flood, its economic and non-economic loss and damages are higher than any previous flood.

We had little knowledge about the coping mechanisms of various groups, such as aged women and adolescent girls in the inundated villages. However, an attempt has been taken to fill up this gap by Mahbuba Nasreen, a leading scholar in gender and disaster studies in a book entitled *Women and Girls: Vulnerable and resilient?*. The book has emerged from the author's doctoral thesis and a subsequent study conducted after the 2007 flood. It primarily addresses how women and girls cope with 'vulnerabilities', during and after floods, and then resume their normal lives after their severe displacement.

In the first two chapters, Nasreen uses a sociological approach to disaster studies. In



the subsequent chapters, she adopts a mixed-method approach for capturing empirical evidence, illustrating variations in coping with floods of illiterate rural women of two districts- Gaibandha and Faridpur. The inclusion of illiterate women as research subjects enables readers to know the complex connections between the poor women's contribution to family maintenance and staying unpaid both during and after floods. This, in turn, leads women to shoulder additional economic burden for family maintenance, according to the writer. She also argues that men are to pass time without any productive activity because there is absence of paid employment during and immediately after flood.

While she includes merely the aged women, adolescent girls' resilience, and coping strategies of floods, the book excludes other potential groups of research subjects: transgendered people, young men and women, people with disabilities, rural 'literate women' and 'illiterate men'. This methodical critique barely offers an opportunity for a lay-reader to understand the ways that 'illiterate men' act as an agent of patriarchy and attitudes towards women and other potential groups to respond to flood and survive by maintaining familial tasks (collecting relief, cooking food, caring children and fetching water) as coping strategies of floods.

The third chapter succinctly details flood and disaster management initiatives adopted by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief of Bangladesh, development partners and academic institutions. Such initiatives include developing disaster risk-management policies, plans and decision-making process, risk assessment, early warning system, disaster information management, disaster education and training activities. The author, explicitly, claims that those initiatives address 'gender' specific needs for reducing the extent of risks, loss and damage posed by flood. In reality, what are the visible benefits of including 'gender' specific activities in reducing loss and damage of the illiterate women and girls of rural villages? For instance, the flood in 2007 took a heavy toll on houses, infrastructure, crops and livestock. These losses collectively instigated the poor women and girls to be worst affected. The male-led relief materials distribution process, of course, does not materially benefit the illiterate poor women and girls. The local customs such of *Purdah* (veil) and religious outlook appear as hindrances for the aged women and girls to go to relief distributions centres very often.

While focusing on flood and disaster management initiatives in the third chapter, the writer could integrate guidelines of two widely recognized frameworks for disaster risk reduction: Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030). This chapter could have been improved by including resiliency aspects from the Hyogo Framework for Action's lessons already

learnt by the Government of Bangladesh and the development partners. The concluding discussion could give some hints to readers for the future development of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and how possibly this can be implemented both by the state and communities and development partners.

Chapter four elaborately analyses the everyday activities (raising the livestock, poultry, agricultural work, water fetching, care for domestic animals, livestock and collection of fuel for cooking) of women and girls, performed both in and outside the home during non-flood periods. The author articulates that due to the custom of *purdah* and orthodox Islam the women and girls are hardly welcome to the local market for selling livestock resources. Their husbands even do not assist women in the household work, which could have reduced their workload. Both cases clearly reflect upon the socially assigned gender role of women as domestic duty bearers and unwaged caretakers. In contrast, both before and after a flood, the women are engaged in social networking: maintaining of better relationship with kin and non-kin neighbours, exchanging goods and services for their necessities including participation at special occasion of marriage and festivities. The writer could utilise ‘Gender Transformative Approach’ for developing arguments how individual women and girls become engaged to challenge gender norms, address power inequities, related to physical labour and income, between persons of different genders during non-flood periods (Hillenbrand et al. 2015).

Chapter five addresses empirical evidence of vulnerabilities of women and girls before flood, during flood and after flood. For example, women had to work more extensively during flood than pre-flood because the male members stayed unemployed due to inundation. Activities of women during flood included cooking, cleaning, procuring drinking water and caring for small children and domestic animals. She also indicated women had to shoulder the additional workload to serve the family members. Men had scarcely helped women in household chores. Women also assisted men in raising and building platforms, making stoves and protecting livestock and poultry. Moreover, women suffered much more from insecurity, harassment by strangers and unavailability of women-friendly toilets etc. In pre-flood activities, women took various measures as part of their preparedness for ensuing flood. It included storing fuel for cooking; storage of food and fodder in raised platform; making separate movable stoves, building barriers around homestead; and reinforcement of roof and corner post of the house. There are many recent well-documented research studies (e.g., Garai 2017; Islam, Ingham, Hicks & Manock 2017; Smyth & Sweetman 2015; Canon 2002 & Blaikie et al. 1994) showing aspects of gender vulnerabilities occurring both during and after a disaster. The author could

add arguments bringing the socio-ecological aspects of vulnerabilities, particularly women and adolescent girls experience during flood.

The book provides solid evidence of resiliency building among rural women. To resume and meet the immediate need for survival both during and after flood, rural women sacrifice their assets: domestic milking cows, livestock, poultry and land. Due to increased price of foodstuff, women had to search for cheap food items to feed the family members. Due to the inadequacy of relief materials women look for alternative food items like the stem of water lily and creepers and herbs available in the common village resource grounds. Poor women were to depend on the natural herbs in order to cure diseases to avoid cost.

To conclude, Nasreen has presented many case studies demonstrating women's response and coping mechanism, and the impediments due to social forces: negative attitudes towards women, their intense physical labour, patriarchy, and *purdah*. The author could incorporate potentially diverse groups as research subjects to bring their experiences of flood coping mechanism, which might have contributed to the debate around mobility, education, gendered resilience building process.

**Sajal Roy\***

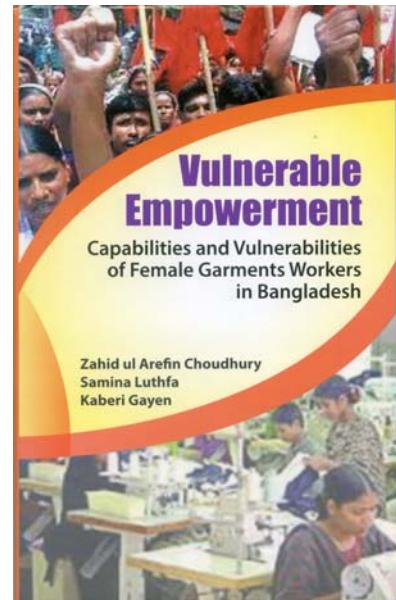
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*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Hum.), Vol. 62(2), 2017, pp. 255-260*

Zahid ul Arefin Choudhury, Samina Luthfa, Kaberi Gayen,  
*Vulnerable Empowerment: Capabilities and Vulnerabilities of Female Garment Workers in Bangladesh*, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Dhaka 2016, Pages 173, Price Tk. 550, ISBN 978-984-34-1066-5

Does employment in garments industry empower or jeopardize women? On the basis of primary and secondary research, this book seeks to provide an answer. It draws our attention to a possibly improving condition in the lives of RMG workers. ‘Though women are facing gross vulnerability emergence of some capabilities is evident,’ (p165) it says and supports this statement with detailed data drawn from meticulously structured research. By doing this, it challenges some pre-conceived notions and makes valuable addition to the growing body of existing literature and scholarly work on the condition of ready-made garment workers in Bangladesh. It also makes concrete recommendations for activism and welfare work in the RMG sector.



A large number of the RMG workers are young women. Employment in this industry, as it is claimed, made women in Bangladesh more autonomous and visible and it became a force of change in the gender roles in Bangladeshi society. While that may be true, the reality, for these women, consists of various types of harassment as well as exploitation such as low and irregular salary, bad working condition and the inability to mount collective action. Therefore it is a matter of debate exactly how much this employment in the RMG sector has improved the lives of women in Bangladesh.

The first chapter of the book gives an overview of the RMG sector in Bangladesh, literature review and methodology of the research. The book stands on data collected from a survey of 1014 female garments workers on their perception of general condition of life, including family and work life, as well as interview of key persons engaged with the sector. For collection of data, these factories were divided according to size and type, with 3 types 4 clusters.

Chapter two explores vulnerability in personal domain and at workplace. Personal domain includes living condition, diet, health and care seeking behaviour, pattern of income and expenditure. Living condition was measured on the basis of house type and access to water, kitchen, toilet and bathroom facilities. Nearly all of the respondents share kitchen, bathroom and even the room(s) where they live with several people of the family, and in some cases friends/neighbours. Moreover, close to one-fifth lacked supply of running water. This indicates a stressful situation - a threat to health and wellbeing. The research found that respondents could fulfill their hunger even though could not always maintain a balanced diet. Moreover, over half of the respondents faced health problems in the month prior to questioning which, for most, interrupted their daily work. A significant number reported suffering from stress-related health issues. Vulnerability at workplace was assessed in terms of two things: professional entitlements (wage and non-wage benefits) and physical infrastructure. Wage was the 'prime vulnerability' of the sampled women (p 73). A very high number - 41 percent - of the sampled women did not receive minimum pay. In addition, monthly expenditure outstripped government-mandated minimum wage for a large section of workers. As the research found, over half the women worked 10-20 hours in overtime every week, even though nearly half of them were forced into it and only a few were paid on the spot. In terms of non-wage benefits, a lot of the workers were vulnerable to dismissal without notice, could not take a personal day or even paid sick leave. Majority were found to be lacking any retirement plan with their employer. Workplace amenities included access to clean toilet and drinking water which the majority of those interviewed enjoyed. Respondents generally worked in buildings with wide enough stairs, fire extinguishers and emergency exits, sat under electric fans, indicating growing awareness following the disastrous accidents of the last decade. However, an alarming segment (8%) of the interviewees still worked in factories with locked exits.

The third chapter of the book discusses capability. Authors assessed capability in terms of well-being and job satisfaction. Satisfaction was measured in terms of workload, sense of achievement, perception of safety at workplace, and well-being was measured with training and development, communication environment at workplace, decision-making power in personal life and nature of work-life balance. As it was found, dissatisfaction with work experience arose from wage-related concerns and weak job contract and lack of opportunity for upward mobility. As for work environment, verbal abuse was found to be widespread, besides some degree of physical and sexual abuse. There was high level of dissatisfaction with work-life balance, with less than a third feeling they had time for family and kids, even fewer having any time for relaxation. How did work empower them in personal life? Less than half 'sometimes' had a say over the spending of the loans they took out and 28 percent had none; less than one third had involvement in investment decisions and 40% had none. This is significant because it gives us a clearer understanding when we speak of the 'empowerment' of female workers through employment in the garments sector and it appears less than ideal. However, 63 percent said they had become more involved in decision-making after their employment, which supports the conclusion of increasing capabilities.

The book challenges some popular perception. For example, it finds that work is somewhat satisfactory to female workers, especially in small factories and in knit and woven factories. It also validates some generally held views such as there have been little improvement when it comes to collective bargaining, although now there are some trade unions under restricted guidelines. The research also uncovered some interesting things. For example 11% faced harassment on the way to work when the owners saw no role for them to improve the situation. We learn that entering the workforce after some form of primary education has great significance in terms of vulnerability for a woman employed in garments sector. The authors draw our attention to the fact that '...female workers may swarm the rank and file positions in this industry they rarely reach a position of responsibility that supervises others' (p 81). Overall, the research finds that in terms of living condition, female workers of the RMG sector have achieved capability in some areas (life) but not in others (bodily health). The book concludes that this indicates upward movement of capability and downward direction of vulnerabilities. It also draws attention to what it calls 'emerging functional capability' as the women are now more involved in decision making and less unsure about future safety.

The fourth and last chapter of the book is dedicated to discussing disasters in garments sector. As the book points out, disasters are ‘a different level of structural vulnerability that lies hidden....(in) how the owners and the state conceive and treat these workers’ (p 122). A case study of the response to the disaster in Rana Plaza factory collapse is presented here. It shows how a structurally faulty building was allowed to be built, how work continued despite flaws becoming apparent, how insufficient rescue and rehabilitation was inevitable due to lack of preparation in terms of institutional capacity and funding, and how the culpable were freed from responsibility. It also discusses how the pressure to lower prices global competition in combination with local bad practices such as indirect sourcing (subcontracting to non-compliant firms) contribute to the continuation of work in unsafe spaces.

Real strength of the book lies in the analysis of disaggregated data. Workers employed in various sectors within the RMG industry (namely knit, woven and other type of factory) and workers employed in factories of different sizes are studied separately. In addition, individuals are disaggregated according to age, sex, marital status and work experience in the RMG sector. The data presented in the second and third chapters is so rich and varied that it gradually paints the portrait of a typical worker. Snippets can be conjured. For example, the younger people earned more, spent more and ate better. A typical female worker over a certain age, living without a man and entering workforce with low levels of education did not eat so well. Sweater factory workers earned most but ate the least well (especially if from ‘medium to large size factories’) and spent most on loan repayment. The impact of education on capability become apparent: those with some form of secondary education earn and spend more.

The book adds to existing knowledge by reporting the improved condition of workers (e.g. decrease in forced overtime, presence of weekends off work, better access to drinking water) and listing persistent concerns (e.g. delayed and low payment and violence at workplace). However, the most valued contribution is in the systematic investigation into vulnerabilities and capabilities, which produces nuances. We learn that although mostly satisfied, workers were aggrieved over wage, and although working condition was mostly good in terms of structural security and amenity, the experience was marred by verbal abuse at workplace and sexual harassment on the way to work. We learn about the dissatisfaction with lack of opportunity for upward mobility and training facilities. This work is significant

because it takes the generalized and almost stereotypical picture portrayed in national and international media with broad brush (mostly dismal) and investigates it with an academic approach. In similar fashion, we learn that in personal life, workers indeed could eat but not very well, and there was acute dissatisfaction with the time allotted for personal life (family, children, and personal relaxation). This greatly enhances our understanding and brings out the worker from a black box of general statements.

Disaggregation according to worker and factory specification has important implication for aid work and activism. Disaggregated data sheds light into specific areas within broad categories. The authors are able to identify what they call ‘vulnerability gaps’ i.e. areas where workers that are more likely to become exposed to risks and dangers (e.g. worker of specific age or work situation). Sweater factory workers were more vulnerable in terms of coercive overtime and overtime payment; knit factory employees were living in worst situation. Worker-specific gaps are also identified, e.g. ‘older women with more than one child were vulnerable to work more hours with less pay’ (p. 77). Figuring out vulnerability gaps enables authors to provide concrete and specific direction for anyone willing to work for the improvement of the condition of the women workers of Bangladeshi RMG sector. Besides that, authors make concrete suggestions to improve condition and support it with data, for example the need for training institutions for professional development and the need to make road from home to work safer.

Only limitation is in the elaboration of the theoretical framework. Sen (1980, 1993), and Naussbam (2000, 2011) are the foundations of the theoretical framework. Sen’s concept of capability (what people can do and be), his concept of vulnerability and Nussbaum’s list of capabilities required for dignity provide the basis of the framework. The framework is not presented sufficiently before embarking on the findings; it is rather spread across chapters one and three. This leaves reader unfamiliar with works of Sen and Nussbaum grappling through concepts and in dark about how the questionnaire and the indices drew from literature. It never becomes clear how authors reached from Sen and Nussbaum to the framework they used. Functionality and capability seemed to be used interchangeably and sometimes replaced by ‘functional capability’; because the concepts were not made explicit, their use created confusion. For example

workplace condition i.e. functionality was used again in assessing ‘functional capability’. A more detailed account of the framework would do the book justice.

All in all, the book is an important addition to the existing literature on the RMG sector in Bangladesh and women’s empowerment. The systematic collection and analysis of data set an example by allowing a nuanced portrayal of the situation. By shedding light upon the varied terrain, this book allows readers to draw an informed conclusion.

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