JOURNAL O F THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BANGLADESH

(HUMANITIES)

Vol. 66 No. 2 December 2021

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Website : www.asiaticsociety.org.bd

Published by The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

Price Tk. 200.00 (Two hundred taka)

ISSN 1015-6836

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STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: CONCEPTIONS AND CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES IN BANGLADESH

M A Kawser*

Abstract

The article investigates the conceptions and challenges related to Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) in public universities of Bangladesh. It provides a picture of the phenomenon in a specific context of the Department of History at the University of Dhaka (DHDU), Bangladesh. Reviewing scientific research on conceptions, misconceptions and challenges related to SET, this study seeks answers to the questions of how do the faculty members of DHDU perceive SET and how do their perceptions regarding SET, along with other contextual factors, play a role to challenge the implementation of SET. A case-based qualitative approach has been used in this study. Semi-structured interviews with six faculty members of the Department of History at the University of Dhaka (DHDU) have been conducted. In addition, drawing upon the theory of social constructivism, the researcher's own experiences with issues related to SET have been used. Data derived from both sources have been analysed thematically. The findings of the study revealed the existence of some misconceptions regarding SET, and referring contextual factors; they prevail over the arguments in favour of SET.

Key words: Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET), Dr. Fox's Effect, Strategic Planning, Lenient grading, Popular Hearsay, Academic Inertia, Public-Private Discourse

1. Introduction

The quality of education has, for a long time, been the central focus of policymakers and practitioners in academia. A diverse set of strategies are being employed to ensure the quality of education by improving the quality of teachers as it is widely believed that improving the quality of teaching is the key to educational success. ¹ Teacher evaluation systems that facilitate professional learning can contribute to the improvements in the quality of teaching and student achievement.²

^{*} Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Dhaka

¹ Gerald Letendre and Alexander Wiseman, "Introduction: The Challenges of Teacher Effectiveness and Quality Worldwide", *Education Policy Studies*, Vol. 27, 2015, pp. 1-38. DOI:10.1108/S1479-367920140000027001 Also see, G. Barzanò and E. Grimaldi, "Discourses of merit: The hot potato of teacher evaluation in Italy." *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 6, 2013, pp. 767–791. DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2013.774439

² Janet Looney, "Developing High-Quality Teachers: Teacher Evaluation for Improvement", European Journal of Education, Vol. 46, No. 4, 2011, pp. 440-455. https://doi.org/ 10.1111/j.1465-3435.2011.01492.x

Among the different approaches (Classroom observation, Department Chairman Evaluation, Analysis of Classroom Artifacts, Portfolios, Self-Report of Practice, Peer Evaluation, Student Evaluation), teacher evaluation by students is a widely used instrument in higher education. ³ Still, it is the only mechanism that is conducted on a regular basis and used to evaluate instructional effectiveness. Thus teacher evaluation has become synonymous with the evaluation of teaching by students. ⁴ But public universities in Bangladesh are yet to introduce a comprehensive mechanism to ensure the quality of education despite continuous demands from various stakeholders of higher education. Therefore, SET being a critical area of higher education, is largely under-examined or ignored. The aim of this paper is to investigate the existing conceptions, realities, and challenges of SET in public universities of Bangladesh. The paper seeks the answers to the questions -How do the teachers of public universities perceive the issues related to SET? Do these perceptions exist in reality? How do the contextual factors appear as challenges to any initiatives towards the introduction of SET?

1. Review of the literature

2.1 Concepts of SET

The concept of teacher evaluation, though new in this part of the world (Bangladesh and other South Asian countries), dates back to the 1700s, when the evaluation was highly informal. Barrette and colleagues claim the beginning of teacher evaluation as early as the fifteenth century when the students of the University of Bologna paid their teachers according to teaching abilities. The history of formal teacher evaluation is the phenomenon of the early twentieth century. Evaluation of teaching by students got popularity in the US universities starting from the 1920s. A variety of terminologies are used to indicate evaluation

James Pounder, "Is student evaluation of teaching worthwhile?: An analytical framework for answering the question. Quality Assurance in Education", Vol. 15, 2007, pp. 178-191. DOI:10.1108/09684880710748938 It has become a world phenomenon. It is hard to find an institution in the USA that does not follow teacher evaluation by students.

⁴ Lawrence M. Aleamoni, "Student Rating Myths Versus Research Facts from 1924 to 1998", *Journal of Personal Evaluation in Education*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1999, pp. 153-166

⁵ R. J. Marzano, A. Frontier, and D. Livingston, Effective supervision: Supporting the art and science of teaching, Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2011

⁶ C. Barrette, E. Morton and Anjel Tozcu. "An Overview of Teacher Evaluation." *Conference Proceedings*, 1995. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/Kawser/AppData/
Local/Temp/21487-40326-1-PB.pdf (accessed on 23 September 2021)

⁷ P. A. Spencer and M. L. Flyr, "The formal evaluation as an impetus to classroom change: Myth or reality"? *Research/Technical Report*, Riverside, CA., 1992

⁸ H. W. Marsh, "Students' evaluation of university teaching: Research findings, methodological issues, and directions for future research," *International Journal of Educational Research*, Vol.11, 1987, pp. 253-388

of teaching by students, such as Student Ratings of Instruction, ⁹ Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET), Student Evaluation of Educational Quality, Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness, Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance, Student Evaluation of Instruction, Student Course Satisfaction, Student Course Evaluation etc.¹⁰ In this paper, the relatively recent term Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) has been used synonymously with the terminologies listed above.

The definitions of teacher evaluation seem to be similar across the literature. It reviews teacher performance and effectiveness in the classroom through a formal process. Ideally, the evaluation reports are used to provide teachers with feedback and guide their professional development.¹¹

2.2 Arguments for and against SET

Thousands of studies have been conducted on various aspects of SET since the 1920s and earlier. The literature that suggests biases in teacher evaluation is not scanty. However, a good deal of literature tested such claims empirically and asserted the validity and reliability of teacher evaluation.

One of the most egregious claims concerning teacher evaluation is "Bad teachers get better evaluation" or "good teachers can get bad evaluation." A study at the United States Air Force Academy claims that "highly rated professors actually taught students less, on average, than less popular profs." In a similar vein, Jonathan Zimmerman, a history professor, suggests that "professors who receive

⁹ Stephen L. Benton and Kenneth R. Ryalls, "Challenging Misconceptions About Student Ratings of Instruction," *The IDEA Center*, IDEA Paper 58, 2016, pp. 1-22, Retrieved from:

https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA 58.pdf (accessed on 10 May 2021)

¹⁰ Gregory Ching, "A literature review on the student evaluation of teaching: An examination of the search, experience, and credence qualities of SET", *Higher Education Evaluation and Development*, Vol. 12, 2018, pp. 63-84. DOI:10.1108/HEED-04-2018-0009

¹¹ S. Sawchuk, "Teacher Evaluation: An issue overview," *Education Week*, 3 September 2015. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/teacher-evaluation-anissue-overview/2015/09 (accessed on 23 September 2021)

¹² H. W. Marsh and M. Bailey, "Multidimensional students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness," *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 64, No. 1, 1993, pp. 1-18

¹³ Stephen L. Benton and Kenneth R. Ryalls, "Challenging Misconceptions", 2016

¹⁴ Ross Douthat, "Now, the Case Against Student Evaluations", The New York Times, 25 June 2010, Retrieved from https://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/25/now-the-case-against-student-evaluations/ (accessed on 10 May 2021)

high evaluations are actually worse teachers than their peers." According to Stark and Freishtat, teacher evaluation is analogous to a popularity contest where good teachers receive bad ratings and vice versa. Benton and Ryalls, on the contrary, argue that an efficient teacher might occasionally receive negative ratings in a particular course due to personal and environmental factors influencing performance. The scenario will be different if the ratings of multiple courses are taken into account. Benton and colleagues suggest that the performance of at least six to eight courses should be considered before deciding on the teaching effectiveness of an individual teacher. Benton and Ryall mentioned several studies that found student ratings of instructions positively correlate with their actual course achievement measured by exam performance , instructor's self-ratings²⁰, and ratings by colleagues, administrators²¹ and trained observers²². These studies offer a strong apparatus against the claim that good teachers do not consistently receive the highest ratings.

¹⁵ J. Zimmerman, "The real scandal behind the Yale course Web site", *The Washington Post*, 24 January 2014. Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-real-scandal-behind-the-yale-course-web-site/2014/01/24/f719ef56-8449-11e3-9dd4-e7278db80d86 story.html (accessed on 10 May 2021)

¹⁶ P. B. Stark and R. Freishtat, "An evaluation of course evaluations. Published" *Science Open*, 2014 (version 1), pp. 1-26. Retrieved from: https://www.scienceopen.com/hosted-document?doi=10.14293/S2199-1006.1.SOR-EDU.AOFRQA.v1 (accessed on 10 May 2021)

¹⁷ Stephen L. Benton and Kenneth R. Ryalls, "Challenging Misconceptions", 2016

¹⁸ Stephen L. Benton, D. Li, R. Brown, M. Guo and P. Sullivan, "Revising the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction System." IDEA Technical Report No. 18, Manhattan, KS: The IDEA Center. 2015. Retrieved from: https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Technical-Reports/Revising-the-IDEA-Student-Ratings-of-Instruction-System-2002-2011-Data Technical report 18.pdf (accessed on 10 May 2021)

¹⁹ See T. Beleche, D. Fairrisand M. Marks, "Do course evaluations truly reflect student learning? Evidence from an objectively graded post-test". *Economics of Education Review*, Vol.31, No. 5,2012, pp. 709-719. Stephen L. Benton, D. Duchon and W. H. Pallett, "Validity of self-report student ratings of instruction." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol. 38, 2013, pp. 377-389

²⁰ See K. A. Feldman, "Instructional effectiveness of college teachers as judged by teachers themselves, current and former students, colleagues, administrators and external (neutral) observers." Research in Higher Education, Vol. 30, 1989, pp. 137-194. H. W. Marsh, and M. J. Dunkin, "Students' evaluations of university teaching: A multidimensional perspective." R. P. Perry and J. C. Smart (Eds.), Effective teaching in higher education: Research and practice, New York: Agathon Press, 1997, pp. 241-320

²¹ Feldman, "Instructional effectiveness", 1989

²² Feldman, "Instructional effectiveness," 1989; Marsh & Dunkin, "Students' evaluations of university teaching," 1997; H. G. Murray, "Low-inference classroom teaching behaviors and student ratings of college teaching effectiveness" *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 75, 1983, pp. 138-149

The saying that strict teachers receive low evaluations has been around since the beginning of student ratings of instruction. Still, it gets repeated similarly that easygoing teachers receive high ratings.²³ Numerous scholars argued in fovour of the leniency hypothesis where teachers can buy better ratings by adopting lenient grading standards. Nimmer and Stone, in their experimental studies, found that grading practices, i.e., strict or lenient and the time of rating, i.e., after the lecture, after examination, or after performance assessment on the examination, directly affect the student ratings.²⁴ Stroebe presents this hypothesis as a matter of mutual benefit where students need good grades and teachers need good ratings; thus, grade inflation occurs. Student ratings empower students with the weapon that is used to reward lenient-grading instructors who demand less work and punish strictgrading instructors. He shows that students rate lenient-grading and easy-going instructors positively and choose courses that promise good grades. ²⁵Scholars, on the other hand, argued against the leniency hypothesis, saying that they found minimal or no correlation between lenient grading and high ratings. In contemporary American colleges and universities, "As" represent 43% of all letter grades, whereas the percentage was 28% less in 1960 and 12% less in 1988.²⁶ Although historical data shows a gradual increase of lenient grading, Zimmerman, a critique of teacher evaluation, acknowledged that student evaluations are not the only reason for grade inflation.²⁷ J. A. Centra, studying 50,000 classes across eight disciplines, found that the expected grade of the students was only weakly related

²³ Benton and Ryalls, "Challenging Misconceptions", 2016

²⁴ J. G. Nimmer and E. F. Stone, "Effects of grading practices and time of rating on student ratings of faculty performance and student learning", Research in Higher Education, 32, 1991, pp. 195-215. Also see Bryan W. Griffin, "Grading leniency, grade discrepancy, and student ratings of instruction," Contemporary Educational Psychology, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2004, pp. 410-425.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2003.11.001

²⁵ Wolfgang Stroebe, "Student Evaluations of Teaching Encourages Poor Teaching and Contributes to Grade Inflation: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis," Basic and Applied Social Psychology, Vol. 42, No. 4, 2020, pp. 276-294.DOI: 10.1080/01973533.2020.1756817. Also see Lyell Asher, "When Students Rate Teachers, Standards Drop: Why do colleges tie academic careers to winning the approval of teenagers? Something is seriously amiss". The Wall Street Journal, 27 October 2013, Available

at:https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304176904579115971990673400

²⁶ Stuart Roistaczer and Christopher Healy, "Where A Is Ordinary: The Evolution of American College and University Grading, 1940–2009", *Teachers College Records: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 2012. Retrieved from: https://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=16473 (accessed on 11 May 2021)

²⁷ J. Zimmerman, "The real scandal behind the Yale course Web site", 2014

to the student ratings of instructions.²⁸ Instead of lenient grading, teachers can improve their ratings by introducing more productive methods, such as challenging students, stimulating their interests ²⁹ and bringing appropriate changes to their instructions and courses based on student's feedback.³⁰ Moreover, a more extensive study involving about half a million classes across 300 institutions revealed that teachers tend to receive high ratings when their students are challenged and have high achievement standards.³¹

The ability of students to judge their teachers is sometimes seen with suspicion. Students might be immature, revengeful, and disrespectful to their teachers, angered or annoyed with their teachers, turning this serious matter into a joke or game are the assumptions that act behind such suspicion. If students are given the privilege of judging their teachers, they might be personally bias. ³² As students are less educated than the teachers, it is often argued that they are not qualified to judge teaching effectiveness. The argument goes further with the question of "how can we trust undergraduate students to render valid judgments about our teaching effectiveness when most of them have never taught?" In answering this question, Benton and Ryalls referred to hospital administration, where the patient's voice matters in evaluating the physician's effectiveness. One significant factor in this regard is patient's ratings of experience with their physician, which include perception of recovery, physician's communicative skills and quality of care etc. ³⁴Ignoring the patient's input in improving medical services would be foolish though patients are not doctors. Similarly, ignoring students' input in improving

²⁸ J. A. Centra, "Will teachers receive higher student evaluations by giving higher grades and less course work?" Research in Higher Education, Vol. 44, 2003, pp. 495-518. Also, see H. W. Marsh, & L. A. Roche, "Effects of grading leniency and low workload on students' evaluations of teaching: Popular myth, bias, validity, and innocent bystanders." Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. 92, 2000, pp. 202-22.

²⁹ H. W. Marsh and L. A. Roche, "Effects of grading leniency", 2000

³⁰ J. A. Centra, "Will teachers receive higher student evaluations", 2003

³¹ Stephen L. Benton, M. Guo, D. Li and A Gross, "Student ratings, teacher standards, and critical thinking skills," April 2013. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco. Cited in Stephen L. Benton and Kenneth R. Ryalls, "Challenging Misconceptions", 2016

³² Sidney Pelton, "Should We Give Students The Ability To Grade Their Teachers?" Available at http://buhachtimes.weebly.com/should-we-give-students-the-ability-to-grade-their-teachers.html (accessed on 22 May 2021) Also see Trinity Townsend and Keiahna Tucker, "Should Students Be Allowed To Grade Their Teachers," *Dobie News*, 27 March 2018 Available at https://dobienews.scuc.txed.net/13734/ uncategorized/should-students-be-able-to-grade-their-teachers/(accessed on 22 May 2021)

³³ Stephen L. Benton and Kenneth R. Ryalls, "Challenging Misconceptions", 2016, pp. 2-3

³⁴ M. P. Manary, W. Boulding, R. Staelin, and S. W. Glickman, The patient experience and health outcomes. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 368, 2013, pp. 201-203

teaching would also be foolish though students are not professors.³⁵ Teachers always perform better on the day of peer or external observation because they are aware of this judgment. Logically, if they know they are being judged every day by their students, they will always perform at their best. So student ratings could significantly help teachers to improve their level of professionalism.³⁶

The effect of the instructor's gender on the SET is a frequently referred conception. A significant body of work claims that the student ratings are biased against female teachers. Mengel and colleagues found that female teachers get systematically lower student ratings than their male counterparts, although student's grades and self-study hours are not affected by the instructor's gender. They also contend that the ratings of male students contribute to this bias which is largely found in the mathematical courses and junior female teachers.³⁷ Boring claimed that gender stereotypes influence students to be biased in favour of their male professors. She reported that the different teaching dimensions students value among male and female teachers are often consistent with gender stereotypes. Both male and female students believe that men have more knowledge and stronger class leadership skills (related to male stereotypes), despite the fact that students seem to learn equally from men and women.³⁸ On the other hand, some studies contend that female teachers receive considerably higher ratings than their male counterparts.³⁹Smith and colleagues reported that both the male and female students rated their female instructors highly. 40 However, a significant amount of studies found no meaningful

³⁵ Stephen L. Benton and Kenneth R. Ryalls, "Challenging Misconceptions", 2016

³⁶ Sidney Pelton, "Should We Give Students" Date of this editorial was not found, but the link has been provided above.

³⁷ Friederike Mengel, Jan Sauermann and Ulf Zölitz, "Gender Bias in Teaching Evaluations," *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Volume 17, No. 2, April 2019, Pages 535–566, https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvx057. Also see R. J. Kreitzer and J. Sweet-Cushman, "Evaluating Student Evaluations of Teaching: a Review of Measurement and Equity Bias in SETs and Recommendations for Ethical Reform", *J Acad Ethics*, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-021-09400-w

³⁸ Anne Boring, Po-OFCE, Sciences & (France, LEDa), "Gender Biases in Student Evaluations of Teaching. *Journal of Public Economics*". Vol. 145, 2016. DOI:10.1016/j.jpubeco.2016.11.006. Also see S. Adams, S. Bekker, Y. Fan, *et al.* "Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching: 'Punish[ing] Those Who Fail To Do Their Gender Right." *High Educ* 2021.https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00704-9

³⁹ W. R. Caines and M. C. Shurden, "Gender issues in the student ratings of the school of business instructors at a regional university." Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2001, pp. 39-46. C. N. Tatro, "Gender effects on student evaluations of faculty," Journal of Research and Development in Education, Vol. 28, 1995, pp. 169-173

⁴⁰ S. W. Smith, J. H. Yoo, A. C. Farr, C. T. Salmon and V. D. Miller, "The influence of student sex and instructor sex on student ratings of instructors: Results from a college of

differences between the ratings of female and male instructors. ⁴¹ Zipser and colleagues analysed nearly 6 million observations regarding overall student ratings of the instructor over a period of 11 years in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and found no evidence of systematic gender differences. ⁴² Studying both STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and non-STEM fields Li and Benton claim that there is no practically meaningful effect of instructor gender on students rating. They argue that student bias found in previous studies "may be more an artifact of research design than students' favoritism of one gender over the other." Moreover, it is argued that research reported differences between male and female instructors, typically occurred in the laboratory. Studies, in reality, tend to be different and found only a fragile relationship between student ratings and the gender of the instructors. ⁴⁴

There is a concern that highly entertaining and expressive instructors yield a high rating. This view supports the "Dr. Fox Effect," where Naftulin and colleagues employed a professional actor to give a charismatic and enthusiastic lecture without

communication," *Women's Studies in Communication*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2007, pp. 64–77. http://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2007.10162505

- 41 J. A. Centra, Reflective faculty evaluation: Enhancing teaching and determining faculty effectivenes, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993). J. A. Centra, N. B. Gaubatz, "Is there gender bias in student evaluations of teaching"? The Journal of Higher Education, 2000, Vol. 71, No. 1, pp. 17–33. http://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2000.11780814K. A. Feldman, "College students' views of male and female college teachers: Part II: Evidence from students' evaluations of their classroom teachers. Research in Higher Education" Vol. 34, No. 2, 1993, pp. 151–211. S. W. Smith, J. H. Yoo, A. C. Farr, C. T. Salmon and V. D Miller, "The influence of student sex and instructor sex on student ratings of instructors: Results from a college of communication." Women's Studies in Communication, Vol. 30, No, 1, 2007, pp. 64–77. http://doi.org/10.1080/07491409. 2007.10162505
- 42 N. Zipser, L. Mincieli, D. Kurochkin, "Are There Gender Differences in Quantitative Student Evaluations of Instructors"? Res High Educ 2021.https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-021-09628-w Also see Emma A. Renström, Marie Gustafsson Sendén, and Anna Lindqvist, "Gender Stereotypes in Student Evaluations of Teaching," Frontiers in Education, Vol. 5,2021. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.571287
- 43 Dan Li and Stephen L. Benton, "The Effects of Instructor Gender and Discipline Group on Student Ratings of Instruction," IDEA Research Report 10, The IDEA Center, April 2017. Retrieved from https://ideacontent.blob.core.windows.net/content/sites/ 2/2020/01/ Research_Report_10.pdf (accessed on 11 May 2021) Also see DAM Peterson, LA Biederman, D. Andersen, TM. Ditonto, K. Roe, "Mitigating gender bias in student evaluations of teaching," PLOS ONE, Vol. 14, No. 5, 2019.https://doi.org/ 10.1371/journal.pone.0216241
- 44 J. A. Centra, Differences in responses to the Student Instructional Report: Is it bias? Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 2009. K. A. Feldman, "College students' views of male and female college teachers: Part II Evidence from students' evaluations of their classroom teachers." Research in Higher Education, Vol. 34, 1993, pp. 151-211

having sufficient knowledge about the topic and its content. This actor, referred to as Dr. Fox, delivered a lively and humorous lecture interacting warmly with the audience. He received overall high ratings even from an educated, experienced audience. Ware and colleagues suggest that the "Dr. Fox Effect" is not an illusion; both student ratings and achievement are affected by the seductive lecture. Abrami also reported bias in the student ratings as it is affected more by expressiveness than student learning. Many later studies reanalysed seductiveness and severely criticised Naftulin and colleagues' study. Marsh and Ware found that expressiveness was affecting student ratings more than content coverage when students were not offered incentives. They, however, found no "Dr. Fox Effect" when students were given incentives in a college-like situation. Peer and Babad suggested no "Dr. Fox Effect" in the actual educational context by quoting Abraham Lincoln (and Bob Marley) that "You can fool some of the people some of the times, but you cannot fool all the people all the time!"

Studies arguing against the more significant influence of non-instructional factors are not to deny the minimal existence of bias in student ratings. Benton and Ryalls acknowledged bias to some extent in student feedback as surveys are designed and filled out by humans. Highlighting this human bias to negate the usefulness of teaching makes no sense. If student feedback is to be ignored because of this bias, then one must also ignore peer review, administrator feedback, Promotion and Tenure Committee, reference letter, instructor self-reflections, and even grades given by the instructors as each of them has a human element to it.⁵⁰

Apart from the above-mentioned issues, the timing of evaluation (mid-term/end term, pre/post-exam), class meeting time (morning/afternoon), level of course (freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior and graduate), nature of course (major/non-major) class size, subject area, instructor rank (instructor, Assistant Professor,

⁴⁵ D. H. Naftulin, J. E. Ware and F. A. Donnelly, "The Doctor Fox Lecture: A paradigm of educational seduction," *Journal of Medical Education*, 48, 1973, pp. 630-635

⁴⁶ JE Ware and RG Williams, "The Dr. Fox effect: a study of lecture effectiveness and ratings of instruction", *J Med Educ.*, Feb., 1975, Vol. 50, No. 2, pp. 149-56. DOI: 10.1097/00001888-197502000-00006

⁴⁷ P. C. Abrami, "How should we use student ratings to evaluate teaching?", *Research in Higher Education*, Vol.30, 1989, pp. 221-227

⁴⁸ H. W. Marsh and J. E. Ware, "Effects of expressiveness, content coverage, and incentive on multidimensional student rating scales: New interpretations of the 'Dr. Fox' effect", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 74, 1982, pp. 126-134

⁴⁹ E. Peer, and E. Babad, "The Doctor Fox research re-revisited: "Educational seduction" ruled out." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 106, pp. 36–45. 2014, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033827

 $^{50\,}$ Stephen L. Benton and Kenneth R. Ryalls, "Challenging Misconceptions", $2016\,$

Associate Professor and professor), experience, personality, physical appearance, minority status and research productivity, student gender, prior subject interest, emotional state, and age etc. may also come to fore in the studies in for or against SET.⁵¹

2.3 Challenges

Introducing teacher evaluation can be challenging for several reasons. Most of these challenges derive from the context where teaching-learning happens, and decisions regarding Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) are taken. Relevant literature has been discussed below.

The purposes of evaluation appear to be a matter of contention as different stakeholders expresses divergent views and interests related to this issue. The controversy revolves around formative and summative systems of evaluation.⁵² The purpose of formative evaluation is to promote teacher's performance through an ongoing process. It helps teachers to be more effective and supports their professional growth.⁵³ The data derived from this evaluation helps teachers make decisions regarding teaching techniques, styles, and strategies.⁵⁴ Summative evaluation, on the other hand, values quality assurance and accountability. It is a judgmental decision on the quality and worth of a teacher that determines if a teacher meets minimum standards.⁵⁵ This type of evaluation is used to determine whether a teacher will be dismissed or continues, granted tenure, placed on probation, and promoted. Any initiatives to impose summative evaluation on teachers might cause tension.

The SET designed by the policymakers is often rejected by the teachers as they think it is not compatible with their concerns and daily practices.⁵⁶ Kennedy argued

⁵¹ Lawrence M. Aleamoni, Student Rating Myths Versus Research Facts from 1924 to 1998, *Journal of Personal Evaluation in Education*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1999, pp. 153-166

⁵² M. Isoré, "Teacher Evaluation: Current Practices in OECD Countries and a Literature Review," *OECD Education Working Paper* No.23, 2009, OECD, Paris. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46456688_Teacher_Evaluation_Current_Practices in OECD Countries and a Literature Review (accessed on 13 May 2021)

⁵³ P. Egelson, "Teacher evaluation plans that support professional growth," 1994. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 376 5. Available at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED376583.pdf

⁵⁴ David E. Gullatt and Leah M. Ballard, Choosing the Right Process for Teacher Evaluation, American Secondary Education, March 1998, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1998, pp. 13-17

⁵⁵ D. L., Dagley and J. K. Orso, "Integrating formative, summative modes of evaluation," National Association of Secondary School Principals, 53(6), 1991, pp. 72-82

⁵⁶ M. Isoré, "Teacher Evaluation", 2009

that teachers reject highly dedicated reforms not because of their unwillingness to change or improve but the failure of reforms to acknowledge the realities of the classroom. High expectations of the policymakers mismatch with the circumstances of the teachers.⁵⁷ As a consequence, the implementation of SET remains unfulfilled.

As the bottom-up decision-making process is practiced in the academic departments of universities, brings changes to the existing *modus operandi* are difficult to achieve. University teachers belong to a homogenous society and, therefore, offer diverse opinions on a particular issue. Junior teachers are more likely to welcome change than senior teachers. They support summative evaluation and are more likely to accept links between SET and the pay.⁵⁸

Some technical issues might appear as challenges to the SET. These are lack of professional expertise to conduct the evaluation, insufficient preparation of the entity, confusion regarding the purposes and uses of SET, extra workloads come with the SET and the question of legitimacy raised by teachers. Lack of resources for implementing SET could be another challenge.⁵⁹ The Head of the entity may find it tiresome and time-consuming.⁶⁰

In the United States, the controversy over the use of the SET went up in court as some school districts were using evaluation reports for taking layoff decisions. ⁶¹ The court directed that a school system must establish a formal dismissal procedure with safeguards. The school authorities must set the minimum acceptable teaching standards and inform the teachers in advance. In addition, they must produce documents before the court how a teacher's performance violated these standards. ⁶² Darling-Hammond et al. found these directions of the court posing challenges to the design and implementation of the SET because it is extremely difficult to

60 Arthur E. Wise, "Linda Darling-Hammond, Milbrey W. McLaughlin and Harriet T. Bernstein," *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 86, No. 1, Special Issue: The Master Teacher, September 1985, pp. 60-121

⁵⁷ M. Kennedy, *Inside Teaching*, Harvard University Press, London, England, 2005. Cited in Isoré, M., "Teacher Evaluation", 2009

⁵⁸ A. Milanowski, "Performance Pay System Preferences of Students Preparing to Be Teachers," American Education Finance Association, 2007. Cited in M. Isoré, "Teacher Evaluation", 2009

⁵⁹ OECD, 2009

⁶¹ Lewis, A. Evaluating educational personnel. Arlington, Va.: American Association of School Administrators, 1982

⁶² J. C. Beckham, Legal aspects of teacher evaluation. Topeka, Kans.: National Organization on Legal Problems of Education, 1981

integrate the requirements that serve both for the job status decision and the improvement of teaching. ⁶³

3 Methodology

A case-based qualitative approach has been used in this study. The Department of History at the University of Dhaka (DHDU), Bangladesh, has been selected as a case for this study to investigate conceptions, realities and contextual challenges related to Student Evaluation Teaching (SET). To investigate the existing perceptions and realities regarding the SET, this study used data derived from semistructured interviews with the six faculty members of DHDU. At least one faculty member having expertise on each of the historical periods - ancient, medieval and modern - has been interviewed. In addition, the combination of gender (2 females and 4 males), teaching, and research experience of the faculty members within these three periods has been maintained in order to ensure variation and representativeness of the data. To allow interviewees elaborate their perceptions towards SET, face-to-face open-ended interviews were conducted. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data derived from interviews also provided information regarding the reality. Moreover, data derived from the SET conducted by the researcher in two consecutive MA semesters at DHDU in 2014 and 2015 were also used as one of the primary data sources to investigate further whether the perceptions exist in reality. To explore the contextual challenges, discussions, and decisions of the Strategic Planning (SP) Committee at DHDU were used as a primary data source. As a member of this Committee, the author had the opportunity to observe and participate in the discussions over SET and other strategic issues. This paper has greatly benefited from this firsthand experience of the researcher. 64 Moreover, documents available at the DHDU office have also been used to supplement the data derived from the above-mentioned sources. Data derived from multiple sources have been analyzed thematically. The Alpha-Numeric Code number has been used for analyzing the qualitative data in this

⁶³ Linda Darling-Hammond, Arthur E. Wise and Sara R. Pease, "Teacher Evaluation in the Organizational Context: A Review of the Literature," Review of Educational Research, Autumn, 1983, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Autumn, 1983), pp. 285-328

⁶⁴ Social Constructivism Theory validates the data derived from the researcher's own experience with SET and participation in the policy debates at the Department of History, University of Dhaka. The proponent of this theory Lev Vygotsky, stated that individuals create their knowledge through active participation, and the creation of knowledge primarily takes place in a social and cultural setting rather than within individuals alone. See Michelle L. Davis, Sara M. Witcraft, Scarlett O. Baird, Jasper A.J. Smits, Learning Principles in CBT in Stefan G. Hofmann, Gordon J.G. Asmundson, (Eds) The Science of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Academic Press, 2017, pages 51-76,

paper. The Faculty Members of the Department of History at the University of Dhaka have been coded as FMDH1, FMDH2, and so on.

4 Findings of the Study

4.1 Conceptions regarding SET

Data derived from interviews revealed that a number of conceptions regarding Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) exist among the faculty members of DHDU.

- **4.1.1 Popular hearsay** Faculty members believe in some popular hearsays regarding SET. These hearsays have a ubiquitous character. They spread rapidly from a department to the whole university. One of the hearsays is that students might write something undesirable if they are given an opportunity to evaluate their teachers. As one of the interviewees said, "I knew from a colleague of another department that when they introduced SET, some students made indecent comments in the evaluation form which were absolutely undesirable (FMDH4)." Another hearsay is suspicious about the ethical integrity of the students. According to this hearsay, some students might not tell the truth when they are asked to evaluate their teachers. An interviewee attested the existence of this hearsay as she said, "Some students may have a grudge against a teacher, and they might tell lies about the teacher" (FMDH4).
- **4.1.2 Traditional Mindset** Conceptions regarding SET are also derived from the traditional mindset of the teachers. They think that the students are here to learn, not to evaluate the teachers. So students are not in a position to evaluate their teachers. According to them, students should not be allowed to evaluate teaching as they are not capable enough. As one of the interviewees said, "You will see that the maturity of the students has not reached the level that they can give an objective and un-bias report on their teacher" (FMDH5). He, however, acknowledged the existence of such a mindset that does not let students the opportunity to evaluate teaching. This interviewee said, "The mindset in our country, customs and conditions are not favourable for teacher evaluation" (FMDH5).
- **4.1.3 Personal bias** Faculty members are skeptical about the objectivity of the students. They think that the students may not be objective in evaluating their teachers for a number of reasons. They would bring the issues of regionalism and political consideration, which may influence the SET. Regionalism refers to an affinity among the teachers and students from the same region of the country. Some teachers think that such a relationship might influence the evaluation process as both teachers and students of the same region are compassionate to each other. According to an interviewee, "Here students very easily become sweat by personal

considerations. It may be seen that the students from a particular region of the country may rate teachers from the same region with excellent, excellent, and excellent" (FMDH5). Political affiliations of teachers and students might also hamper the objectivity of the evaluation. As one of the interviewees stated that "Students from different political organisations may be influenced politically in rating the teachers of the same ideology" (FMDH5).

4.1.4 Public-Private Discourse Faculty members believe that the context of the public university is not suitable for teaching evaluation. Here teachers have to deal with students on many occasions outside the class. This situation brings forward personal considerations during the evaluation of teaching. An interviewee who teaches in a private university as a part-time faculty explained why teaching evaluation in public universities is not suitable. He said,

Apart from classroom teaching, students of the private university do not have any other stakes with the teachers. That is why there is no reason for the students to go against the teacher at a personal level. However, here in Dhaka University, many types of things may interplay, and that is why this initiative will not be successful here (FMDH5).

4.2 Conceptions turn into misconceptions

Data derived from interviews as well as the personal experience of the researcher showed that the conceptions that exist in the minds of teachers regarding SET do not exist in reality and seem to be misconceptions.

4.2.1 Students are rather Constructive An interviewee, along with some of his young colleagues, proposed in the Academic Committee (AC) that the Department of History at the University of Dhaka (DHDU) should introduce SET.⁶⁵ However, most teachers, especially, the seniors rejected the proposal referring to the conceptions mentioned in the previous section. The AC, however, allowed faculty members to do it at individual levels, but it would not be mandatory to all. Following this decision, he, along with one of his colleagues, started evaluating their teaching individually. The statement of this interviewee suggested that he found students very constructive in making their comments. He further argued that SET provides teachers with the opportunity to improve their teaching. As he informed.

That was a wonderful experience. We used to do it at the end of every year and read it. Students evaluated my teaching very wonderfully. I came to know whether I was punctual, what was my strength, whether I was able to make them understand, whether I prepared myself well before taking the classes, what more should I do, whether I should

⁶⁵ He could not remember the exact year, but he informed that it was probably in 2002 or 2003.

use more equipment, what were my weak points, what were my positive sides etc. (FMDH 3).

This perception regarding SET is attested by the statement of FMDH1, who conducted teaching evaluation along with 15 faculty members from various departments of the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Social Sciences during 2001-2003. He rejected the existence of political and personal bias among students. According to this interviewee, "I did not find any comments derived from personal and political bias (FMDH1)." He further went on talking,

Sometimes I wanted feedback from the students. Some of them gave feedback in written form. Sometimes they appreciated and sometimes pointed out my areas of teaching techniques that need to improve. They even sometimes made comments about how I should have delivered the lecture for better understanding. These were very interesting (FMDH1).

4.2.2 Students Act Like Mentors

To explore the reality further, the researcher evaluated his teaching in two consecutive MA semesters in 2014 and 2015 at DHDU. He distributed evaluation forms among the students at the end of the semesters and asked them to return them to the next class. The analysis of the returned evaluation forms reveals that the students not only provided him with the comments related to the strengths and weaknesses of his lecture but also suggested how to overcome these weaknesses. They suggested making the class more participatory by introducing group discussion, presentation etc. They also suggested relating the course with local context in order to make the teaching more attractive, effective, and understandable. Moreover, referring to the job market, they expressed their interest in English as the medium of instructions and examinations.

4.3 Contextual challenges

This is very interesting to know why DHDU could not introduce SET officially despite having a positive impression of some teachers towards it. This research presents some contextual challenges that appeared as barriers to introducing SET in DHDU. Before presenting these challenges, it is necessary to discuss a report presented by the Strategic Planning (SP) committee as discussions over this report made the challenges visible and come into play. ⁶⁶ The researcher was actively involved in formulating this plan and presenting it before the Academic Committee. The following sections were written based on the researcher's personal experience as a member of the SP committee.

⁶⁶ Department of History, "Strategic Plan for Short and Long-term Development," Dhaka: Department of History, University of Dhaka, 2015

Background of the SP In 2015, the Chairman of DHDU received a letter from the Dean of Arts where he was requested to formulate5-year, 10-year, and 15-year Strategic Plan (SP) for the Department and to send it back to the Dean of Arts. ⁶⁷It was also mentioned that the SP would be considered for being part of the 25-year Master Plan of the University of Dhaka. In response to this letter, the Academic Committee (AC) of the Department of History formed a committee comprising of four members to formulate a strategic plan for the short and long-term development of the Department. The Strategic Planning Committee was asked to present its report at the Academic Committee, before submitting it to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. ⁶⁸Members of the SP committee met several times to identify major issues plaguing the Department, so that recommendations could be made for the consideration of the Academic Committee. They used the SWOT analysis method (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) to formulate the SP.

SET was at the top Considering the immediate needs of the Department, SP committee placed three recommendations at the very beginning where introducing SET was at the top. Section regarding SET in the SP was as bellow:

Evaluation of Teaching is not about how successful or unsuccessful a teacher is. It [SET] can be a powerful professional development tool. With the feedback provided by the students, teachers can identify their strengths as well as areas in which they need to improve. It helps them to develop more robust professionalism. At this moment, the Department of History lacks this system of developing professionalism in its teaching staff through teacher evaluation [SET]. Initiative taken by the Department to formulate a strategic plan gives the opportunity to introduce teacher evaluation [SET] as part of its efforts towards rendering quality education. 69

Making SET acceptable and sustainable: The Committee tried to find out why SET has not been introduced in the Department of History in the near past and identified two primary reasons. Firstly, the Department suspects that students are politically and personally biased. Secondly, the Department lacks the proper mechanism/logistics/administrative support to introduce this system. With regard to the former, faculty members who have conducted SET on their own (including a member of the Committee), found that the comments of the students are generally very constructive, and there is nothing to be worried about students' political and personal bias. As for the latter, the Committee came up with a mechanism that will make the process sustainable. One Committee member consulted with the Institute of Information Technology (IIT) of DU, and they agreed to provide a software

⁶⁷ Letter from Dean of Arts to the Chairman of DHDU, 15 March 2015

⁶⁸ AC (Academic Committee) resolution, 27 April 2015

⁶⁹ Department of History, "Strategic Plan", 2015, p. 1

program. Thus, the Committee recommends the following strategy for introducing teaching evaluation at the Department of History, University of Dhaka:

The Strategic Planning committee recommends introducing a computer-based teaching evaluation system from the First Year First Semester. All First-Year students are supposed to provide the IT Centre of the Department with an email address as part of their mandatory membership of the Centre. The computer software will automatically send an evaluation form to their email addresses. This form will contain such questions that will leave no room for politically or personally biased comments. They will only check the appropriate boxes and submit the form online. Then the software will automatically process the data to provide the respective teachers with the level of student's satisfaction, standard deviation etc. The respective teachers will get the evaluation report through an automatic email generated by the software so that nobody other than the respective teachers can see the report. To

The intention of the Strategic Planning Committee was to present SET as positively as it could.⁷¹ As a consequence, the AC of the Department decided to introduce SET immediately with no apparent objection by any of the teachers. But from the next day onwards, the contextual challenges appeared to be at work. The sections follow present these challenges as they were found to play a crucial role in barring the implementation of SET.

4.3.1Conflicting interests After the decision of the AC in favour of introducing SET, informal discussions among the faculty members of DHDU were going on. Some faculty members informally met almost all faculty members and tried to convince them in favour of their position against the introduction of SET. A meeting of the AC was called on 7 September 2015 to discuss the SP again. At the beginning, the Chairperson invited discussion on the decision taken in the last meeting regarding SET and asked whether it could be reconsidered. One of the faculty members took the floor and proposed to dissolve the decision regarding SET. Few other faculty members supported him. Those who were in favour of SET kept silent to avoid heated exchanges with their colleagues.

4.3.2 Misconceptions prevail over reality Faculty members, in this second AC meeting, protested SET by referring to the popular conceptions mentioned earlier. In addition, they mentioned two other conceptions that the introduction of SET would hamper student-teacher relationships and mutual respect among colleagues. Referring to these conceptions, they argued that introducing SET would hamper the

⁷⁰ Department of History, Strategic Plan for Short and Long-term Development, Dhaka: Department of History, University of Dhaka, 2015, pp. 1-2

⁷¹ This effort of the SP committee falls under formative evaluation that aims to help teachers improving the quality of their teaching. See Egelson, P., Teacher evaluation plans that support professional growth, 1994. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 376 5. Available at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED376583.pdf

overall teaching-learning environment at DHDU. For example, one of them argued that faculty members having poor ratings would not grade students objectively if they got them in the subsequent semesters. Regarding the deterioration of mutual respect among colleagues, they argued that after SET some teachers would enjoy superiority while others suffer from an inferiority complex which will hamper the existing mutual respect among colleagues. The result was the dissolution of the decision of the last AC meeting. It was decided that the DHDU would not introduce SET officially, but individual faculty members could evaluate their teaching independently.

4.3.3 Grey areas of 1973 Order Consulting the Dhaka University Order 1973, the SP committee mentioned no legal barriers in implementing SET at the department level. However, the teachers unwilling to introduce it referred to the Ordinance as there was no clear direction in favour of SET. They argued that any decision regarding this issue must be based on a clear black and white direction. The absence of such indication in the Order equipped them with the argument that we are not allowed to take any decision that is not clearly mentioned in the Order.

4.3.4 Academic Inertia According to higher education literature, academic inertia is a common phenomenon that exists in the academic departments of higher education institutions. ⁷⁴ Debates over the SP recommendations in the AC meeting reveal the presence of academic inertia in DHDU. Some faculty members were dead against any change in the Department and they considered maintaining the status quo as the best policy. According to them, Department is doing well with its existing policy. Any change to this policy will hamper the smooth running of the Department.

4.3.5 Academic leadership matters The same Department introduced SET officially about a decade ago due to an able academic leadership in the chair. He could manage all teachers to agree upon the decision regarding the introduction of SET. Such academic leadership was badly needed when the debates were going on over a unanimous decision taken by the AC. Only an excellent academic leader can drive the departments towards a positive direction by developing confidence among the colleagues, adjusting opposing arguments, and taking the leading role when

⁷² Isore casually mentioned this conception though not supported by much literature. See M. Isoré, "Teacher Evaluation", 2009

⁷³ AC (Academic Committee) resolution, Department of History, University of Dhaka, 7 September 2015

⁷⁴ Bjorn Stensaker, "Organizational Identity as a concept for understanding university dynamics," *High Educ*69, 2015, pp.103–115 .https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9763-8

necessary. Lack of such leadership was one of the reasons behind the failure in introducing SET despite most teachers were in favour of it.

4.3.6 Bottom-up decision-making approach One of the teachers argued that as there is no clear indication in the University Order regarding SET, Department cannot initiate the process. The SP committee argued that it is true that there is no indication in favour of SET in University Order, but it is also true that there is no indication against SET too. So decisions taken by the majority of the Department would not be illegal. Moreover, the SP committee referred to an Article of the Order where AC of the Department is given sole authority to decide any academic matters. However, teachers against SET remained rigid in their position and said that "we should not do it at the department level. We should forward this plan to the higher authority, and if the authority decides to introduce teacher evaluation, we will comply with that decision."

4.3.7 Lack of Logistic Support All interviews informed that they experienced an official teaching evaluation for once in their whole teaching career. A committee was formed to make the questionnaire and to conduct the evaluation. At the end of the year, one of the committee members went to the classrooms of all courses and distributed the evaluation forms to the students to fill up instantly and collected them. This initiative was discontinued not because of the conceptions mentioned in the previous section but for the lack of capacity of the Department. One interviewee mentioned it clearly, "One of my colleagues had entered into my class, and I left. They distributed the questionnaires to the students to fill up.... faculty members had to do it manually, which was time-consuming and tiresome. As a result, it was stopped" (FMDH4).

4.3.8 Lack of congenial atmosphere Individual efforts towards implementing SET was not sustainable because the atmosphere was not in favour of such initiatives. As mentioned in the previous section that FMDH3 recalled teaching evaluation as a wonderful experience. He stopped evaluating his teaching because one of the colleagues he started with did not continue it. He said, "I stopped it [SET] after my colleague had stopped. We used to help each other conduct the evaluation and plan our upcoming courses based on the student's feedback. I felt like I was alone and lost my interest" (FMDH3). Another interviewee who started

⁷⁵ Here official teaching evaluation meant the evaluation conducted under the decision of the Academic Committee.

⁷⁶ See Mohammad Abul Kawser, Curriculum Development in Higher education: The Role of Faculty Members, Dhaka: Itibritto Prokashan, 2021

it, along with 15 other faculty members, had to quit it for a different reason. He said it [SET] was stopped when some other faculty members and I went abroad for higher studies" (FMDH1).

5 Discussion

The findings of the study revealed the existence of some misconceptions in the Department of History at the University of Dhaka (DHDU). Some of these misconceptions are similar to those discussed in the literature. In addition, some new misconceptions emerged from the findings. Implications of these misconceptions are discussed below:

It is interesting to know that faculty member's conceptions regarding SET are not borne out by their own experience but from the popular hearsay. They could not even recall the names of their colleagues from whom they got to know that students might not be decent and truthful in making their comments. The existence of this conception attested to what Sidney Pelton found in their studies. The findings of this study suggest that some faculty members still possess a traditional mindset regarding student's capability of judging their teachers. Echoing what Benton and Ryalls mentioned in their study, faculty members consider students as mere learners having no role in improving the learning process being evaluators. The root of such a mindset seems to be embedded in the ancient India Guru-centric education system where students were considered as followers or mere disciples. The instructor-focused teaching method, practiced in higher education of Bangladesh, may have a link with the ancient education system of this land. Teachers are not used to considering themselves as senior scholars and students as junior scholars through practicing the student-focused pedagogical method.

The findings of this study suggest some unique misconceptions that are not found in world literature. For example, students might be biased in their ratings because of regionalism. According to this misconception, teachers from the districts or regions of the students might get high ratings. This misconception has got its ground in Bangladeshi academia as such regionalism is seen in different spheres of society. Another unique misconception suggested by the findings is political

⁷⁷ Sidney Pelton, Should We Give Students The Ability To Grade Their Teachers? Available at http://buhachtimes.weebly.com/should-we-give-students-the-ability-to-grade-their-teachers.html (Accessed on 22 May 2021) Also see Trinity Townsend and Keiahna Tucker, Should Students Be Allowed To Grade Their Teachers, Dobie News, 27 March 2018 Available at https://dobienews.scuc.txed.net/13734/uncategorized/should-students-be-able-to-grade-their-teachers/(Accessed on 22 May 2021)

ideologies of teachers and students affect SET. Sometimes it is heard that students are victimised for their political views. So it is easy to assume that teachers will also be victmised for their political ideologies if students are given the right to evaluate them. Moreover, as political ideologies are taken into account in different occasions crucial for their career, this misconception easily gets firm root in the mind of teachers. Another finding of the study suggests that public universities are not suitable for SET as teachers are involved in many extra-curricular activities where students get to know teachers from close contact, which brings personal considerations to SET. From the perspective of a part-time teacher, this conception seems to be true, but full-time teachers at private universities are also engaged in many extra-curricular activities in the form of different clubs, and this does not seem to affect SET, which they have been practicing for decades.

Discussion over the report of Strategic Planning (SP) Committee revealed the existence of the misconceptions that the SET will hamper the congenial environment of the Department as teachers who will receive higher ratings might cause inferiority complex among the teachers who will receive lower ratings. However, the whole process is conducted with the utmost confidentiality, and there is no scope to know each other's grades. This study, however, did not find any concept related to lenient grading, instructor's gender, and Dr. Fox Effect discussed in the literature. The question of grading did come during the discussion over the SP report but for a different reason. It was assumed that the teachers who will receive lower ratings might victimise the students with lower grades if they get the same students in subsequent semesters. The conceptions of gender discrimination and Dr. Fox Effect seem to be relevant to academia where SET is in practice, and there are efforts to make it bias-free. As public universities in Bangladesh have not taken any initiative to implement SET, this is obvious that such conceptions are yet to get any space in the popular hearsay.

Teachers who have experienced SET reported no bias derived from the conceptions discussed in the literature. They found SET could be very useful for their professional development as students were very constructive in making their comments. They identified the weaknesses and strengths of the teachers as well as suggested how teachers could enhance the quality of teaching. It indicates that the misconceptions regarding SET do not exist in reality. The SET initiated by the Department was stopped due to the end of the tenure of an enthusiastic Chairperson of the Department and the SET initiated by the individual teachers was discontinued because of lack of logistic supports and because other colleagues did not join or it might seem to be tiresome to manage individually.

Despite having these positive instances, the proposal of the SP committee for introducing SET could not be implemented for some contextual challenges. The discussions over the recommendations of SP showed that most faculty members at DHDU were in favour of introducing SET, however, they were not willing to introduce it at the cost of personal relationships among colleagues and a peaceful working environment as they found some of their colleagues were dreadfully against to this initiative. Any counter-arguments would lead the situation to worsen. Nobody, including the SP Committee, desired such consequences. Moreover, academic leadership matters for any initiative to be successful. The same Department introduced SET more than a decade ago because of a dynamic academic leader. It was even more difficult during his tenure because senior teachers were against this initiative. However, he successfully convinced them in favour of introducing SET, while senior faculty members were against it as they used to believe in popular myths, or they were probably not willing to provide students with the right to evaluate teachers, or they probably did not like to welcome any change. However, the current scenario is different; comparatively, junior faculty members are not willing to welcome any change. The shift of academic inertia from senior to junior faculty members might negatively affect the efforts to enhance quality in higher education in Bangladesh.

Findings derived from the debates over the report of the SP committee suggest that some of the faculty members who have never conducted SET in their courses tend to refer to popular hearsay when any initiative is taken in favour of introducing SET. They also refer to the grey areas of the University Order where nothing is mentioned about introducing SET by the Department. They, however, seemed to be agreeable to accept SET if the decision comes from the highest authority of the university. It indicates that the bottom-up decision-making process of the university is not suitable for implementing the SET. Finding in this regard suggests that the top-down decision-making process is suitable for introducing SET. It is practiced in most private universities because faculty members have nothing to do with the decision regarding SET. Faculty members of public universities, on the other hand, play an important role in the bottom-up decision-making process where any attempt to introducing SET requires consensus among the faculty members, which is difficult. It indicates that the mode of higher education governance matters for taking decisions regarding SET. It is noted that Departments of the university follow many top-down decisions without hampering their academic autonomy.

6. Recommendations

Drawing upon the findings of this study, some recommendations can be made regarding the ways of overcoming contextual barriers to introducing SET in the higher education institutions of Bangladesh.

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) may conduct some pilot projects in different departments of the public universities to show that misconceptions regarding SET do not exist in reality. It will help academic departments of various universities referring to these pilot projects to overcome internal protests against SET.
- 2. The UGC or the universities can also offer some sort of incentives for the departments willing to introduce SET on their own.
- Training on student-focused teaching methods may be arranged for the teachers to change their hierarchical mindset. It will help them consider students as junior scholars and value their feedback in the form of SET.
- 4. Directions for the implementation of SET should come from either university authorities or UGC to avoid the disadvantages of the bottom-up decision-making approach in this regard.
- Public universities should help Chairmen of the departments grow the quality of academic leadership through training/workshops so that they can successfully mobilize their departments towards change.
- 6. Teaching at universities is probably the only profession in Bangladesh where no professional training is offered within an institutional framework. Naturally, teachers are afraid of any initiative towards SET and put serious effort into resisting it. The UGC could establish a Training Academy where pedagogical training focusing on the issues of the SET for all newly recruited university teachers should be made mandatory for a certain period. They will go for teaching only after receiving this training.
- 7. The UGC can also offer 'on job' training for university teachers to make existing faculty favorable to changes according to the changes in the society. Alternatively, individual universities could also establish such Academies to train their teachers.
- 8. To address the issues, e.g., lack of resources and time; related to the SET, universities should provide departments with sufficient administrative and financial supports so that departments come forward to implement SET, causing no extra burden on their regular budget and loads.
- 9. Universities should take the initiative to keep politics away from academic affairs. To this end, the training programmes mentioned above can play an important role by developing professionalism among the faculty members.
- 10. To get the teachers easily agreeable to SET, initially, formative evaluation of teaching should be given priority rather than confronting teachers with summative evaluation having potential consequences on their career and salary.

7. Conclusion

Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) is considered one of the most effective tools in enhancing the quality of education. Countries around the world have been systematically practicing SET for more than a century. The higher education system in Bangladesh, though a prototype of the western model, still could not introduce it. Faculty misconceptions and their predominance in public universities appeared to be one of the major impediments towards the implementation of SET. A number of contextual factors, especially lack of logistic supports, contribute most to this end. Therefore, the successful implementation of SET in the public universities of Bangladesh needs to remove misconceptions and logistic constraints. The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh in collaboration with public universities can play an important role in this regard. Of course, the goodwill of the government is also necessary. Finally, more studies are needed in this area of higher education for a better understanding of factors rendering challenges towards SET.

CONNECTEDNESS AND PANDEMICS: NOTES ON CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSMISSION OF THE BUBONIC PLAGUE IN SOUTH ASIA

Gazi Mizanur Rahman*

Abstract

This article studies the connection between transregional connectivity and the pandemics of bubonic plague in medieval and modern South Asia. As a burgeoning area in historical studies, connected histories are rarely focused on South Asian history. Emphasizing global trading networks and Trans-Asia connectivity, particularly between the pestilence originating places and South Asia, this paper shows that the transmission of the plague to South Asia occurred earlier than in other parts of the world; and South Asia, along with China, contributed to disseminating the Yersinia pestis to Europe and beyond. By examining interdisciplinary scholarships, this study suggests that connectivity was significant for spreading contagious diseases in the past, and still, it is relevant for the present and future pandemics. The connectivity has become faster than previous eras for the upgradation of transportation systems, which facilitated the rapid transmission of disease, for instance, the COVID-19. The invasion of infection goes hand in hand with transregional flows of humans and commodities. This paper suggests that the Government and people need to take precautionary measures to suppress future pandemics and reduce mortality.

Key words: Bubonic plague, pandemics, Black Death, connectivity, transregional, Silk Road.

Introduction

Every region of the world was exclusively connected through maritime networks and land routes during the pre-modern and early modern periods. Such connectivity facilitated the transmission of several pandemics of diseases such as smallpox, cholera, influenza, tuberculosis, and HIV. The bubonic plague was a contagious disease that broke out several times in human civilisations and caused three great pandemics. The first pandemic of plague appeared in Egypt in the 6th century and was further transmitted to Europe. The second pandemic in recorded pre-modern history was the Black Death. The third one, called "modern" pandemic affected

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¹ C. A. Devaux, "Small oversights that led to the Great Plague of Marseille (1720–1723): Lessons from the past", *Infection, Genetics and Evolution*, Vol. 14, 2013, p. 171

² John Aberth, The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350, A Brief History with Documents, (Palgrave Macmillan 2005).

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mostly South Asia.³ The world experienced massive devastation during the second and third pandemics, because the plague bacterium had extensively spread worldwide via sea and land routes. Therefore, pandemic scholars often term the transmission of disease as "globalisation of disease".⁴ The recent example of disease's globalisation is the novel corona virus or COVID-19,⁵ which originated in Wuhan, China, in December of 2019, invading more than 200 countries and territories around the world within a few months. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

Connected history is a burgeoning area in historical studies, which describes the mobility of people, goods, ideas, diseases, and cultures across the globe. However, South Asian epidemic and plague historians disregarded transregional connectedness and the invasion of bubonic plague in the Indian subcontinent. Scholars from different universities have explored the origin of some epidemics and their proliferation in numerous forms. Achintya Kumar Dutta has investigated the notable epidemics of the kala-azar (visceral leishmaniasis) in colonial Bihar in the late 19th and the mid-20th centuries. He has examined the situation of public health and the government's policy for controlling it.⁶ Sujata Mukherjee has reexamined the environmental factors to cause the malaria epidemic in colonial Bengal. Her study is a new dimension of thinking on malaria in colonial India by situating the environmental paradigm within a social and economic context.⁷

Sanjoy Bhattacharya et al. have examined the epidemic of smallpox in British India. They have illustrated the development of public health policies and vaccination programmes from political, cultural, religious, economic and technical perspectives. Bhattacharya has shown the global smallpox eradication programme, the most significant public health success during the 20th century. It was new

³ F. M. Snowden, Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present, (Yale 2019), p. 333

⁴ I. J. Catanach, "The "Globalization" of Disease? India and the Plague", Journal of World History, Vol. 12, issue 1, 2001, pp. 131-53

⁵ It is an infectious disease named '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV', a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

⁶ Achintya Kumar Dutta, "Black Fever in Bihar: Experiences and Responses", *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, Issue 12-13, 2008, https://www.epw.in/journal/2008/12-13/epidemics-south-asian-history-special-issues-specials/black-fever-bihar, accessed on 28 September 2021.

⁷ Sujata Mukherjee, "Environmental Thoughts and Malaria in Colonial Bengal: A Study in Social Response", *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, Issue 12-13, 2008, https://www.epw.in/journal/2008/12-13/epidemics-south-asian-history-special-issues-specials/environmental-thoughts-and, accessed on 28 September 2021.

⁸ Sanjoy Bhattacharya, Mark Harrison, and Michael Worboys, *Fractured States: Smallpox, Public Health and Vaccination Policy in British India 1800-1947*, (Educa Books/Orient 2005).

ground in the historiography of smallpox eradication in the subcontinent.⁹ Bhattacharya has further examined social, political, economic and public health aspects in British India, mainly colonial Eastern India, during the Second World War.¹⁰

The rising of maternal mortality was one kind of severe health issue in colonial India. Mridula Ramanna has demonstrated the increasing number of woman physicians and their contributions in improving maternal health in Mumbai during the early 20th century. Fazlur Rahman has illustrated a general view of Prophetic medicine, medical care, medical ethics, and curing different diseases. The author explores mainly wellness and illness through the Islamic religious faith and tradition. A support of the several properties of the several properties and tradition.

Bhagya Senaratne has explained the non-military security challenges faced by South Asian nation-states and the foreign diplomacy of the power rivalry during the pandemic, particularly during the Covid-19.¹³ Babu *et al.* have examined the preparedness for pandemic and response to the Covid-19 in South Asian countries.¹⁴

Yaqoob Khan Bangash has discussed the origin and catastrophe of the modern Bubonic plague focusing on South Asia, particularly Punjab. He has reviewed the policies and initiatives of the then colonial government in India. ¹⁵ Srilata Chatterjee has examined Government's response to the third pandemic in Bengal. ¹⁶

⁹ Sanjoy Bhattacharya, Expunging Variola: The Control and Eradication of Smallpox in India, 1947–1977, (Orient Black Swan 2006).

¹⁰ Sanjoy Bhattacharya, *Propaganda and Information in Eastern India 1939-45: A Necessary Weapon of War*, (Routledge 2013).

¹¹ Mridula Ramanna, "Women Physicians as Vital Intermediaries in Colonial Bombay", *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, Issue 12-13, 2008, https://www.epw.in/journal/2008/12-13/epidemics-south-asian-history-special-issues-specials/women-physicians-vital, accessed on 28 September 2021.

¹² Fazlur Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition: Change and Identity*, (The Crossroad Publishing Company 1987).

¹³ Bhagya Senaratne, "The Covid-19 Pandemic and the Power Rivalry in South Asia", *The National Bureau of Asian Research*,19 December 2020. https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/new-normal-senaratne-121920.pdf, accessed on 28 September 2021.

¹⁴ Giridhara R. Babu, Sonalini Khetrapal, Daisy A. John, R. Deepa, K.M. Venkat Narayan, "Pandemic preparedness and response to COVID-19 in South Asian countries", *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, vol. 104, 2021, pp. 169-174

¹⁵ Yaqoob Khan Bangash, "Epidemics in South Asia - the plague", News On Sunday, 31 May 2020, https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/665185-epidemics-in-south-asia-the-plague, accessed on 28 September 2021.

¹⁶ Srilata Chatterjee, "Plague and Politics in Bengal 1896 to 1898", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 66, 2006, pp. 1194-1201

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Pandemic historians mainly discussed remedies, socio-economic and religious aspects, and political impacts of the pestilence¹⁷; and hence, connectedness remains unnoticed in their scholarships. This study shows that the transregional connectivity between the plague originating place and South Asia existed well before the outbreak of great pandemics. These Trans-Asia connections facilitated the transmission of the plague to South Asia earlier than in other parts of the world. Moreover, South Asia, along with China, contributed to disseminating the bacteria to Europe and beyond.

This study focuses on two interrelated issues: firstly, it offers a brief note on the origin of the plague during the second and the third pandemics; and secondly, it deals with the maritime and overland trading networks, which facilitated the transmission of plague. It concludes by suggesting that connectedness was a significant factor in spreading infectious diseases, including the plague in the past, and still, it is relevant for future pandemics. It is also suggested that the government and people need to change their attitudes and behavioural patterns in the early stages of future pandemics to suppress contagious disease and reduce mortality.

Origin of bubonic plague

DNA studies identified the root cause of the plague was bacillus, a rod-shaped bacterium.¹⁸ In 1894, a French biologist, Alexandre Yersin, called the bacteria as *Yersinia pestis*.¹⁹ The *Yersinia pestis* or *Y. pestis* was transmitted through infected rat fleas, which jumped from the nonhuman hosts to the human body, and it was the aetiological agent of the plague's pandemics.²⁰

The originating place of pestilence in the 14th century is disputable. Pandemic historian George D. Sussman is of the view that there was no evidence of a severe

¹⁷ W. H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, (Anchor Press 1976); R. Horrox, (trans. and ed.) *The Black Death*, (Manchester University Press 1994); J. P. Byrne, *Daily Life during the Black Death*. (Greenwood Press 2006).

¹⁸ G. A. Eroshenko et al., "Yersinia pestis strains of ancient phylogenetic branch 0.ANT are widely spread in the high-mountain plague foci of Kyrgyzstan", PLOS One, Vol. 12, 2017, No. 10: e0187230. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0187230, accessed on 28 May 2020; Peter de B. Damgaard, et al., "137 ancient human genomes from across the Eurasian steppes," Nature, Vol. 557, 2018, pp. 369–374

¹⁹ Byrne, Daily Life during the Black Death, pp. 7-8; C. Laes, Disability in Antiquity, (Routledge 2017), p. 408

²⁰ L. C. Slavicek, Great Historic Disasters: The Black Death, (Infobase Publishing 2008), pp. 27-28; B. Bramanti et al., "The Third Plague Pandemic in Europe", Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, Vol. 286, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1098/rspb.2018.2429, accessed on 15 May 2020.

epidemic in India and China in the 1340s.²¹ Some scholars, however, disagrees with Sussman and suggests that a pandemic appeared in North China in the early 1320s or 1330s.²² The disease spread throughout the country and killed hundreds of thousands of people in China.²³ Some other studies have shown that the Black Death originated at Lake Issyk-Kul (Kyrgyzstan) or Lake Balkhash (Kazakhstan) in the Central Asian steppes, in 1339.²⁴ Ibn al-Ward (b. 1292-1349), a contemporary Arab historian who died from the plague, corroborated the fact that the Black Death originated around Central Asian steppes in the late 1330s, and spread eastward to China through the Silk Road, and depopulated the region.²⁵ Therefore, it is well assumed that the second pandemic originated in Central Asian steppes or near North China's border and gradually invaded its neighbouring areas, including South Asia, before arriving in Europe. As McNeill suggests, the second pandemic disease originated in the "Land of Darkness" in Asia before invading the European world, and it transmitted to northern Asia starting with China and proceeded then to India and the realm of Islam.²⁶

The third and modern pandemic of bubonic plague appeared in Yunnan's mountain valleys, China's southwestern province, in 1855. Soon it transmitted from Yunnan to neighbouring regions of China.²⁷ It invaded Hong Kong in 1894, and gradually transshipped to different cities in Asia, including Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata).²⁸ In 1896, the plague appeared at a grain warehouse in Mumbai²⁹, and in

²¹G. D. Sussman, "Was the Black Death in India and China?", Bulletin of the History of Medicine, Vol. 85, Issue 3, 2011, p. 319

²² C. I. Beckwith, Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present, (Princeton University Press 2009), p. 195; Horrox, (trans. and ed.) The Black Death, p.9

²³ M. Snell, "The Arrival and Spread of the Black Plague in Europe", *Thought Co*, 11 February 2020, https://www.thoughtco.com/spread-of-the-black-death-through-europe-4123214, accessed on 20 April 2020.

²⁴ Lakshmikanthan Anandavalli, "The Black Death in Medieval India: A Historical Mystery", Tangents: The Journal of the Master of Liberal Arts program at Stanford University, vol. 6, 2007, pp. 20-1; D. Nardo, The Black Death, (Cengage Learning 2011), pp. 15-16; Horrox, (trans. and ed.) The Black Death, p.18

²⁵ Aberth, The Black Death, p.11; Byrne, Daily Life during the Black Death, pp. 4-5; Slavicek, Great Historic Disasters, pp. 30-40

²⁶ McNeill, Plagues and Peoples, p. 145

²⁷ M.B. Dey, "Lessons from the Bubonic Plague of 1896", Live History India, 24 March 2020, https://www.livehistoryindia.com/history-daily/2020/03/24/lessons-from-the-bubonic-plague-of-1897, accessed on 28 May 2020.

²⁸ Snowden, Epidemics and Society, p. 337

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the same year, some suspected cases of plague were found in Kolkata.³⁰ From British India and Hong Kong, the third pandemic transmitted across the world.

Topographically, the Indian plate covers South Asia³¹ which was connected with the Eastern and Western world through trading networks since the 2nd century BCE. The transregional connectedness depended, until the beginning of the air transportation system, exclusively on either maritime or overland, or both means. Such connectedness facilitated the transmission of *Y. pestis* through infected persons or plague-ridden rats and fleas.³² Both pandemics originated near or in China, and it further proceeded to South Asia and Europe through trading routes. Yue et al. notes that the plague spread across the world through trade routes.³³

The latter sections of the paper discuss how the overland and maritime connectivity between China and South Asia facilitated the spread of two transnational epidemics.

Connected seas and lands during the Black Death

The Bay of Bengal was a significant corridor to disseminate ideas, and it also facilitated trans-cultural networks in the vicinity of the Indian Ocean. Two major religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, emerged in South Asia and these religions spread to Southeast and East Asia through the Bay. Scholars showed the flows of knowledge and ideas between India and China during the pre-modern period.³⁴ As

²⁹ M. Echenberg, Plague Ports: The Global Urban Impact of Bubonic Plague, 1894-1901, (New York University Press 2007), p. 50; R. Nathan, The Plague in India (1896, 1897) Vol. II, (Calcutta Government Print Office 1899), p. 182

³⁰ Plague Commission, History and Proceedings of the Plague Commission, Bengal, 1896 to 1898, (Calcutta 1899), p.2

³¹ It is defined by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Himalayas and Karakoram mountains on the north, the Arabian Sea on the west, and the Bay of Bengal and Bangladesh borders on the east.

³² A. J. Vogler *et al.*, "A Decade of Plague in Mahajanga, Madagascar: Insights into the Global Maritime Spread of Pandemic Plague", Volume 4, Issue 1: e00623-12, 2013, pp. 1-10. doi:10.1128/mBio.00623-12, accessed on 28 March 2020.

³³ R. P. H. Yue *et al.*, "Trade routes and plague transmission in pre-industrial Europe", *Scientific Reports*, vol. 7, article no. 12973, n.pag, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-13481-2, accessed 10 May 2020, accessed on 10 May 2017.

³⁴ T. Sen, "The Yuan Khanate and India: Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries", Asia Major, Third Series, China at the Crossroads: A Festschrift in Honor of Victor H. Mair, Vol. 19, Issue 1/2, 2006, p. 305;J. Neelis, Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern borderlands of South Asia, (Brill 2011), pp. 250, 252; S. Chew, 'The Southeast Asian Connection in the First Eurasian World Economy, 200 BCE-CE 500.'Michael Pearson (ed.), Trade, Circulation, and Flow in the Indian Ocean World, (Palgrave Macmillan 2015), p.34

Bernstein demonstrates how Indian Muslim traders facilitated the spread of Islam to Southeast Asia.³⁵

Like the trans-cultural corridor, the Bay of Bengal played a significant role in making maritime trading routes. During the 13th century, the Chinese merchants visited Madurai, a commercial centre, and the Pandyan Kingdom in India.³⁶ They further proceeded towards the Middle East and the Mediterranean world. Along with these sea-routes, Ibn Battuta, a contemporary Moroccan traveler, widely visited South and Southeast Asia, and China during the 14th century when he saw 13 Chinese junks and merchants at Calicut (Kozhikode).³⁷ The Chinese merchants continued extensive maritime trade of various commodities, including silk and Chinese ceramics, with India and Bengal during the 14th and 15th centuries.³⁸ Like the Chinese, South Asian traders exported a range of manufacturing and agricultural products, including textiles, rice, and wheat to the Chinese coast and the Malay Archipelago. In return, they imported spices, camphor, porcelain, sandalwood, and cowries.³⁹ No wonder, along with these merchant ships or sacks of commodities, the infected rat fleas were transported.

The westward sea routes of South Asia also linked it with the Arabian Peninsula. During the years of the Black Death, the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526), particularly the regime of Muhammad bin Tughlaq (r. 1325-1351) and Firoz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-1388), had communication with the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Cambay (Khambhat), a seaport in Gujarat, was under the jurisdiction of Muhammad bin Tughlaq during the highest rate of mortality and infection of the Black Death. This port was one of the top trading links across the Arabian Sea. Another port, Kozhikode, was a commercial hub that attracted traders from the Indian Ocean's rim. In South Asian seaports, the Muslim merchants brought luxurious commodities, including rose water, incense and carpets, and seeds and grains from the Middle East. Figure 1 shows the transportation systems and connectivity

³⁵ W. J. Bernstein, A Splendid Exchange: How Trade Shaped the World, (Atlantic Monthly Press 2008), p.95

³⁶ Anandavalli, "The Black Death in Medieval India", p.23

³⁷ L. Levathes, When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragoμ Throne 1405-1433, (Simon and Schuster 1994), p.88; Bernstein, A Splendid Exchange, p.2

³⁸ Levathes, When China Ruled the Seas, pp.138-39

³⁹ Leonard Andaya, 'Massoi and Kain Timur in the Birdshead Peninsula of New Guinea, the Easternmost Corner of the Indian Ocean World.' Michael Pearson (ed.), Trade, Circulation, and Flow in the Indian Ocean World, p. 98

⁴⁰ Sussman, "Was the Black Death in India and China?" pp. 333-34

⁴¹ K.R. Hall, A History of Early Southeast Asia: Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 100–1500, (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers 2011), pp. 310, 330

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between South Asia and other parts of the world. These routes were used for trade and assisted the transmission of plague from the Middle East and Central Asia.

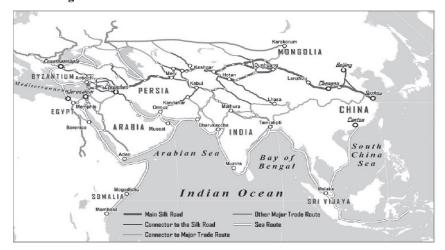


Figure 1: Sea routes in the Indian Ocean from 8th to 14th centuries.

Source: Rodrigue et al., The Geography of Transport Systems, (Routledge2013), p. 43

Like the maritime networks, South Asia was connected over lands with the Eastern and Western world. The Silk Road had linked China with other parts of Asia since the 2ndcentury BCE. The Silk Road's Northern route joined at Kashgar heading towards Samarkand, Bactria (a flat region located in Central Asia), Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.⁴² A Chinese Buddhist monk named Hsuan Tsang (c. 602-664) travelled from China to India via Central Asia. The Southern Silk route connected China with the Indian subcontinent via Sichuan-Yunnan-Myanmar-Bengal routes. With the appearance of bubonic plague in China, caravansaries carried the bacillus to Central Asia and the Middle East within a few years.⁴³ Snell suggests that the plague reached South Asia from China via common trading routes along the seldom-travelled mountains of Tibet.⁴⁴ The Indian merchants mainly imported

⁴² Beckwith, Empires of the Silk Road, p. 21; Neelis, Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks, pp. 246-252; N S Gill, "Places on the Silk Road", Thought Co. 2 July 2019, https://www.thoughtco.com/places-on-the-silk-road-116660, accessed 20 March 2020.

⁴³ K. Szczepanski, "How the Black Death Started in Asia," *ThoughtCo*, 11 February 2020, https:// www.thoughtco.com/black-death-in-asia-bubonic-plague-195144, accessed 20 April 2020.

⁴⁴ M. Snell, "The Arrival and Spread of the Black Plague in Europe".

horses and Turkish slaves from Central Asia, particularly from Samarqand, Bukhara, and Tirmidhi (Uzbekistan).⁴⁵ These slaves were deployed as soldiers or servants of the emirs and sultans in India. Sacks of grains and flours were given as foodstuff to the slaves during their transportation. This travel would easily have transported the live and dead rat fleas. However, both the Northern and Southern routes were responsible for spreading the bubonic plague.⁴⁶

As plague was a contagious disease, it is difficult to believe that the second pandemic did not cross the Bay of Bengal with the Chinese ships or did not have passage along the caravansaries routes; because the Delhi Sultanate had a strong trading network with the plague-infested East and Central Asia. The above discussions show the possible ways of the Black Death invading South Asia, such as eastward and westward seaports, or over the Silk Road. Ibn Battuta noted that the bubonic plague broke out at Telingana (Telangana) during the regime of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq. The Sultan was encamped with his army; and Emir Abdullah of Herat died of the plague.⁴⁷ Scholars corroborate the fact that there were two outbreaks of plague in India between the 1330s and 1340s.⁴⁸ The pestilence started in September 1347 in eastern India, and millions of people died between 1346 and 1348.⁴⁹

Passage to Europe

The outbreak of the plague took place in India and Europe in the 1330s and 1347, respectively. These years indicate that pestilence appeared in South Asia well before Europe. The pandemic might have transmitted from South Asia to Europe, and the scholars have shown the possible routes of r transportation of rodents. South Asia's westward maritime networks started from Mumbai, Gujarat, and Karachi ports to the Mediterranean basin, passing through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Ibn Battuta saw some Syrian ships at Calicut, crossing the Arabian Sea to the Persian Gulf.⁵⁰ Merchants and pilgrims travelled by sea regularly from India to the Arabian Peninsula.⁵¹

⁴⁵ S. Chew, 'The Southeast Asian Connection in the First Eurasian World Economy', p. 34

⁴⁶ McNeill, Plagues and Peoples, p.168

⁴⁷ Ibn Batuta, *The Rehla*, (translated and commented by Mahdi Husain), (Oriental Institute1976), pp.101-112

⁴⁸ P. Spear, *The Oxford History of India*, (Clarendon 1958), p. 304; E. Khan, "Visitations of Plague in Mughal India", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 74, 2013, p. 306. Anandavalli, "The Black Death in Medieval India", pp.20-23

⁴⁹ Horrox, (trans. and ed.) *The Black Death*, pp. 18, 41-49, 70-76; Szczepanski, "How the Black Death Started in Asia".

⁵⁰ Levathes, When China Ruled the Seas, p. 88

⁵¹ Snell, "The Arrival and Spread of the Black Plague in Europe".

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Merchants also sailed from the opposite direction to South Asia. For instance, the traders from the Mediterranean and Arabian worlds voyaged for the South Asian ports, since the early Christian era.⁵² The westward maritime routes started a long coastwise journey down from Alexandria (Egypt), passing through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf linking the South Asian seaports. The Muslim merchants exported typical cloths and most elegant fabrics from Bengal, the Coromandel Coast, and Gujarat to the Muslim Empires in the Middle East and West Asia via the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf ports.⁵³ These trading networks from and to South Asia were responsible for disseminating the plague towards the Mediterranean world or Europe. The trajectory of an unexpected and universal pestilence from India to Syria and Palestine and reaching Greece in 1349 is also evident.⁵⁴

Some other scholars have shown the transmission of plague from Central Asian steppes or North Chinato Eastern Europe. The lake Issyk-Kul or Balkhash was located near China, and thence the disease was transported to Astrakhan on the northern Caspian coast. The plague further proceeded at Kaffa (Feodosia, Crimea) on the Black Sea in Crimea in 1346.⁵⁵ In 1347, some 12 merchant ships from the Black Sea docked at the Sicilian port of Messina (Italy), which disseminated rat fleas. People noticed that most sailors of those ships were dead, and some were covered with black boils that trickled blood and pus.⁵⁶ Followed by Italy, the trading ships carried the plague into port cities of European countries like France, Spain, Britain, and Ireland, by 1349. It visited Germany, Scandinavia, the Baltic States, and Russia in the 1350s.⁵⁷

The above discussions show the historical geography of the Black Death, which started near China, and invaded other parts of Asia, including India. Along with China, the westward maritime network of South Asia, and the westward aquatic passages of East Asia, contributed to the transfer of the infected rats or persons to Europe. As the second pandemic's trajectory towards India and Europe is settled, the next section discusses the modern pandemic that depopulated Asia.

⁵² J. P. Rodrigue, Claude Comtois, and Brian Slack, *The Geography of Transport Systems*, (Routledge 2013), p. 44

⁵³ Bernstein, A Splendid Exchange, pp. 252-53

⁵⁴ Horrox, (trans. and ed.) The Black Death, p. 80

⁵⁵ Bernstein, A Splendid Exchange, p.140

⁵⁶ history.com editors, "Black Death", 30 March 2020, https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/black-death, accessed on 4 June 2020.

⁵⁷ P. Slavin, "Death by the Lake: Mortality Crisis in Early Fourteenth-Century Central Asia", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 50, issue 1, 2019, p. 59; M. Cartwright, "Black Death," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, 28 March2020, https://www.ancient.eu/Black_Death/, accessed on 15 June 2020.

Modern pandemic: crossing boundaries

It has been mentioned earlier that the third pandemic of plague originated in Yunnan in the 1850s. From the coast of China and Hong Kong, the plague was transported towards South Asia between 1891 and 1896. ⁵⁸ British dominance over the Bay of Bengal was established during the late 18th century. Merchant ships of the East India Company, and also passenger ships, sailed from South Asia to the Malay Peninsula, China, and Hong Kong. ⁵⁹ The logbook of arrival and departure indicates that the British ships voyaged from and to Bengal, Mumbai, Chennai, Malay Peninsula, Borneo, and China. ⁶⁰ Infected rats frequently travelled longer distances by these ships; because *Y. pestis* could survive up to fifty days, depending on favourable temperatures. ⁶¹

The nearest towns or cities of seaports were vulnerable because the pathogen entered new lands by "plague ships". ⁶² British opium-laden ships and sacks of grain such as rice and wheat from Hong Kong carried infected rodents at Mumbai port in 1896. ⁶³ The first case was detected at Mandvi near the dock of Mumbai seaport. Within a short period, people noticed that rodents died in Mandvi's warehouses, and the residents near granaries became sick of a mysterious disease. The disease was later diagnosed as bubonic plague. ⁶⁴ The Advisory Committee for the plague in India investigated four villages (Sion, Wadala, Parel, and Worli) near the Mumbai seaport; and corroborated the fact that people got sick from infected rat fleas in warehouses of those villages. ⁶⁵

The British civilian or non-civilian ships, particularly from the China coast and the Malay Peninsula, used to visit the Kolkata port.⁶⁶ This connectivity was responsible

⁵⁸ W. Simpson, A Treatise on Plague: Dealing with the Historical, Epidemiological, Clinical, Therapeutic and Preventive Aspects of the Disease, (Cambridge 1905), p. 138

⁵⁹ Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, 4 September 1856, p. 2; H. P. Ray, 'Crossing the Seas: Connecting Maritime Spaces in Colonial India'. Himanshu Phorrasbha Ray and Edward A. Alpers (eds.), Cross Currents and Community Networks: The History of the Indian Ocean Worlds, (Oxford 2007), pp.53-54

⁶⁰ Singapore Chronicle and Commercial Register, 20 January 1831, p.3

⁶¹ W. G. Liston, "Plague, Rats, and Fleas", *The Indian Medical Gazette*, vol. 40, issue 2, 1905, pp.43-49

⁶² A. J. Vogler et al., "A Decade of Plague in Mahajanga, Madagascar", p.1

⁶³ G. Morelli et al. "Phylogenetic diversity and historical patterns of pandemic spread of *Yersinia pestis*", *Nat Genet*. Vol. 42, Issue 12, 2010, pp.1140–1143.

⁶⁴ Snowden, Epidemics and Society, p. 342; Dey, "Lessons from the Bubonic Plague of 1896."

^{65 &}quot;Reports on Plague Investigations in India", *The British Medical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2456, 1908, pp. 211-14

⁶⁶ C. Skinner, (trans. and ed.), Ahmad Rijaluddin's Hikayat Perintah Negeri Benggala, (Martinus Nijhoff 1982), pp. 21-29

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for the outbreak of plague in Bengal. In 1896, a *dom* (a lower caste) assisted a plague victim's autopsy in Kolkata, and the incident facilitated the spread among the residents.⁶⁷ In 1898, a ship from the British India Steam Navigation Company disembarked the soldiers of King's Light Infantry of the British Army at the Kolkata Port. The ship carried infected rodents.⁶⁸

The *Y. pestis* was extensively transported from seaports to rural areas through railway wagons and traditional transports such as coastal craft and bullock carts. The seaports of South Asia, including Kolkata, were linked with inland roads and rails for trade, labour migration, and pilgrimage. The Eastern Bengal and Assam railway contributed to inland connectivity and facilitated the spread of plague within the British Indian Empire. The railways were the means of conveying migratory rat fleas through sick persons, clothes, and food-grains from one town to another as "stowaways". The disease was carried to many destinations, including Bihar, Hooghly, 24-Parganas, Midnapore, Burdwan, Saran, and Patna. ⁶⁹ It moved from Mumbai to Poona (now Pune), Karachi, and other towns of the north and east of the subcontinent through inland transportation. These places were hot spots of plague, and the mortality rate was high over there.

The third outbreak of bubonic plague initially appeared in Yunnan, which transcended boundaries with north-eastern India via the Himalayan reservoir. Yunnan also connected with South Asia's eastern frontier via Myanmar, because Bengal's location left a narrow land bridge with mainland Southeast Asia and China. These connections became more visible and extensive through some mighty transboundary rivers which made it possible to connect South Asia and China. During the colonial period, rivers got more attention than other previous eras for inland transportation and trade. The Tibetan-Himalayan glaciers are the origin of such few trans-border rivers, including the Brahmaputra, the Ganges, the Indus, the Irrawaddy, the Mekong, the Salween, the Tarim, the Yangtze and the

^{67 &}quot;Plague In Calcutta In 1898", The British Medical Journal, Vol. 1, Issue 2041, 1900, p. 340

⁶⁸ History and Proceedings of the Plague Commission, Bengal, 1896 to 1898, (Bengal Secretariat Press 1899), appendix ii.

⁶⁹ G. Liston, "India: Abstract of a Paper on Plague, Rats, and Fleas", *Public Health Reports* (1896-1970), Vol. 20, No. 2, 1905, p. 56; W. W. Clemesha, "An Account of Plague in Bengal", *The Indian Medical Gazette*, vol. 41, issue 9, 1906, p.355

⁷⁰ McNeill, Plagues and Peoples, p.168

⁷¹ A.M. Chowdury, Illustrated an overland transregional connectivity among Bengal, mainland Southeast Asia, and South China during the ancient period. See, A.M. Chowdury, "Bengal and Southeast Asia: Trade and Cultural Contacts in Ancient Period", The Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue, Bangkok, Thailand, 21-22 January 1991.

Yellow. These rivers played a significant role in developing a cross-border road system across south-western China, Myanmar, Bengal, and north-eastern India. The changing nature of transport and communications patterns in the lower river valleys of the Irrawaddy, Chao Phraya, and the Mekong since 1850 was note worthy. 72 The British colonial surveyors experimented with making a connection between the Brahmaputra and the Irrawaddy rivers to the province of Yunnan. 73 This aquatic and cross border connectivity intensified the passage of commodities, culture, and diseases.

The British Government also initiated developing rail communication from Kolkata to Yunnan and mainland Southeast Asia via Dhaka and Cumilla. In the 1870s, the Chittagong-Mandalay railway route was considered the "shortest and direct" one for a possible connection between Bengal, China, and other areas of the Malay Peninsula. In 1899, the Associated Chambers of Commerce recommended that Chittagong should be connected with Kolkata and Mandalay-Rangoon Railway. Consequently, the British Indian Government reached an agreement to make several lines from Myanmar to China on behalf of the Consul General in Yunnan by 1904.⁷⁴ This rail communication might have facilitated the crossroads transportation of goods and diseases.

The British government introduced the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 for suppressing the pandemic in India. This Act allowed the government to take some special measures for passengers who travelled by road or rail. The measures were like surveillance of arrivals from infested places, inspection of railway passengers, removal of plague and suspicious cases from trains, disinfection of railway luggage and carriages. The authorities segregated and compulsorily hospitalised the passengers who were suspected of the plague. The plague of the erection of field hospitals and observation camps. One observation camp of the East Indian Railway Bengal was erected at Khana Junction. However, during the modern pandemic, about 20 million people died from *Y. pestis* in India. Before

⁷² H. Dickand Peter J. Rimmer, Cities, Transport and Communications: The Integration of Southeast Asia since 1850, (Palgrave Macmillan 2003), p.155

⁷³ I. Iqbal, "The Space between Nation and Empire: The Making and Unmaking of Eastern Bengal and Assam Province, 1905–1911", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 74, issue 1, 2015, pp.71-73

⁷⁴ I. Iqbal, "The Space between Nation and Empire", p.74

⁷⁵ W. E. Jennings, A Manual of Plague, (Rebman Limited 1903), p. 200

⁷⁶ Simpson, A Treatise on Plague, p.70

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the pandemic finally subsided, the death toll was about 95 percent of the total global mortality.⁷⁷

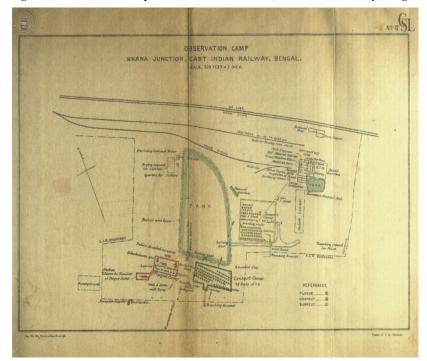


Figure 2: Observation Camp Khana Junction in Bihar, East Indian Railway, Bengal.

Source: R. Nathan, *The Plague in India (1896, 1897)*, Vol. IV, Maps and Charts, (Government Printing India, 1898).

The bacterium was transmitted throughout Europe and the Americas from the British colonies in India.⁷⁸ Therefore, some foreign Governments, including that of Egypt, imposed an embargo on merchant ships that embarked on the Indian seaports.⁷⁹ Consequently, the Indian Government took some precautionary measures to interrupt the spread of plague over maritime traffic.⁸⁰ The Government

⁷⁷ Snowden, Epidemics and Society, p. 334

⁷⁸ G. Morelli et al., "Phylogenetic diversity and historical patterns of pandemic spread of *Yersinia pestis*", pp. 1142–43; Snowden, *Epidemics and Society*, pp. 39-333

⁷⁹ R. F. Patterson, "India: Plague in Calcutta and measures to prevent its spread", Public Health Reports (1896-1970), Vol. 14, No. 14, 1899, p. 489

⁸⁰ S. C. Seal, "Epidemiological Studies of Plague in India: The Present Position", *Bull. Org. mond. Sante/Bull. Wld Hlth Org*, vol. 23, 1969, pp. 289

inspected and disinfected the passengers and crews of ships before embarkation for a sea voyage from the Indian seaports. Ships and passengers were fined for non-compliance of government instructions. The government also inspected ships, passengers, and their belongings arriving from outside; and also introduced a quarantine system at the Kolkata port. Novelist Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay illustrated how the Kolkata port authority inspected ships' crews and passengers before departure. Si

Nothing could illustrate the relationship between the trade and conveyance of contagious diseases better than the second pandemic of plague. The modern transportation system rapidly transmitted the third pandemic from the China coast to South Asian ports through merchant and military ships.

Conclusion

This study has shown that *Y. Pestis* was solely responsible for bubonic plague, which originated near or in China in the 1330s and the 1850s; later, it turned into global epidemics. Some main components of connectedness – such as maritime and inland highways – facilitated trade, human mobility, and bubonic plague transmission. This paper has shown that South Asia was interconnected with the Eastward and Westward seaports in the Indian Ocean's rim during pandemics, and these contacts are continuing till now. The region was also connected with China through land routes. This transboundary connection between the originating place of pestilence and South Asia had a historical lineage. The second and third pandemics hit South Asia from China within a few years after its outbreak.

This paper has shown that connectedness was a significant factor in spreading infectious diseases during the medieval and modern periods in South Asia – a fact that pandemic historians had overlooked. Transportation systems, a component of connectedness, have witnessed upgradation since the mid-19th century. Therefore, diseases or pandemics could easily and rapidly travel from one to another region. As of 28 September 2021, the COVID-19 infected more than 233 million people in 221 countries and territories; and about 39 million positive cases were found in South Asia alone. Among the South Asian states, India recorded the highest number of infected persons with about 34 million cases.⁸⁴ It is said that one airline

⁸¹ Patterson, "India: Plague in Calcutta and measures to prevent its spread", p. 489

⁸² R. Nathan, The Plague in India (1896, 1897) Vol. II, pp. 137-38, 190-221; Jennings, A Manual of Plague, p. 200

⁸³ S. C. Chattopadhyay, Srikanta, (United Publishers 1999), pp. 93-94. (In Bengali).

⁸⁴ For the current data of COVID-19, https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/, accessed on 28 September 2021.

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was the key fctor to spread the corona virus pandemic. 85 Due to the development of the conveyance system, the COVID-19 arrived in South Asia three months after its outbreak. Therefore, connectedness is still a relevant factor in spreading the subsequent pandemics.

It is likely that South Asian historians will address the connected histories and other related pandemics issues. In 2013, China initiated the revival of the ancient Silk Routes and launched a mega project naming *one belt, one road.*⁸⁶ About 60 countries, half of the world's population, will come under this project. The transregional connectedness across the world, particularly between China and South Asia, will become multifaceted under the project. If the project is fully implemented, the great mobility of people, goods, and diseases will be unavoidable in those countries. This connectivity is also significant for future pandemics and public health.

The COVID-19 has caused many unexpected things, including high mortality, interrupted mobility, slow economic growth, changed human behavioural patterns, and increased socio-economic problems. Scientists predict more pandemics⁸⁷ posing a threat to the state's security, public health, and social orders. Due to the rapid transportation system, the mobility of people and disease has become faster than in the previous eras. Therefore, this study emphasises some precautionary measures to reduce the transmission risk and death rate. For suppressing contagious disease, the concerned governments and people need to change their attitudes and behavioural patterns in the early stages of pandemics. More research maylead to a deeper understanding of pandemics and connectedness globally, particularly in South Asia.

^{85 &}quot;Iran's Mahan Air is seen as key vector in worldwide corona virus pandemic", *Salaam Times*, 10 April 2020, https://afghanistan.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_st/features/2020/04/10/feature-01, accessed on 10 July 2020.

⁸⁶ M. Witte, "Xi Jinping Calls For Regional Cooperation Via New Silk Road", *The Astana Times*, 11 September 2013, https://astanatimes.com/2013/09/xi-jinping-calls-for-regional-cooperation-via-new-silk-road/; accessed on 28 March 2020; W. Jiao and Zhang Yunbi, "Xi proposes a 'new Silk Road' with Central Asia", *China Daily*, 8 September 2013, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013xivisitcenterasia/2013-09/08/content_16952228.htm, accessed on 29 March 2020.

⁸⁷ V. Gill, "Coronavirus: This is not the last pandemic", *BBC News*, 6 June 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-52775386, accessed on June 2020; "Coronavirus: Fear over rise in animal-to-human diseases", *BBC News*, 6 July 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/health-53314432, accessed on 12 July 2020.

REVISITING DURKHEIM: A STUDY ON SUICIDE IN JHENAIDAH DISTRICT OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

Suicide, an influential work by Emile Durkheim, has long been one of the central contributions to the sociological study of suicide. While the Durkheimian theoretical framework may saturate the need for understanding suicide incidents from the dimension of societal influence, this paper found a lack of using the framework in suicide-related studies in Bangladesh. We considered it our area of study. Following the Durkheimian approach, this paper explores the nature of suicides in Jhenaidah and examines how relevant the Durkheimian framework is to understand suicidal behaviour. To do so, a mixed-method approach was used in both data collection and data analysis. Findings show that all indicators used by Durkheim are not consistent in explaining suicide incidents in Jhenaidah. Among the four-fold typology of suicide, there is a high prevalence of egoistic and anomic suicide in Jhenaidah, even though the magnitude of prevalence is partial. We find social-demographic, normative, and cultural differences in explaining the disunities with the Durkheimian approach. Through the analysis, this paper contributes to the further expansion of the sociological underpinnings of suicide. We conclude with the suggestion that there is a need for reassessing the Durkheimian thesis for exploring suicides by using more comprehensive and extended data.

Key words: Suicide, Durkheim, Jhenaidah, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Suicide is not only an individual problem but also a social problem, because it affects victims, family members, and society in a wider context. This problem is projected to become a greater contributor to the global burden of disease over the coming decades. Every year approximately 800,000 people die worldwide due to

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C. J. L. Murray and A. D. Lopez. The global burden of disease: a comprehensive assessment of mortality and disability from diseases, injuries, and risk factors in 1990 and projected to 2020. Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1996; J. M. Bertolote and A. Fleischmann, 'Suicide and psychiatric diagnosis: a worldwide perspective', World Psychiatry, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2002, pp. 181-85

suicide; and on another count, one person dies every 40 seconds.² According to the prediction of the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020), about 155, 0000 people will commit suicide every year from the year 2020 and it is the third leading cause of death among 15-29-year-old demographics globally.³ An aim for reducing suicide rate does exist in the proposed indicators of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 3, Target 3.4, and Indicator 3.4.2)⁴ Suicide is responsible for the largest share of the intentional injury burden in developed countries.⁵ According to the WHO Mortality Database (2020), 85% of suicides in the world occur in low and middle-income countries. Furthermore, suicide prevention received huge attention in developed countries, whereas it remains under coverage in developing countries like Bangladesh.⁶ Of note, Bangladesh scored the tenth position in the list of high suicide-prone countries, as it witnesses nearly eight incidents of suicide among every 100,000 people. In Bangladesh, suicide is higher in the South-west districts.8 Particularly, the Jhenaidah district experiences high rates of suicide and suicide attempts that exceed international and national averages.9 The BBC report (2020) shows that on average every month, approximately twenty-one people commit suicide per 100,000 in Jhenaidah District, whereas this number is eleven in overall Bangladesh. Besides, on average, approximately one person dies every day in this district. In 2020, from January to July, 120 people have committed suicide in Jhenaidah which indicates that suicide is a severe social problem in Jhenaidah. 10

² WHO. 'Latest suicide estimates in the World Health Statistics: Monitoring health for the SDGs', Mental health and substance use, September 2, 2020, Available at https://www.who.int/mental health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/, (Accessed on Sept. 27, 2020).

³ Ibid.

⁴ https://www.who.int/mental_health/suicide-prevention/SDGs/en/ (Accessed on Nov.10, 2020)

⁵ C.D. Mathers and D. Loncar, 'Projections of global mortality and burden of disease from 2002 to 2030', PLoS Med, Vol. 3, 2006, p. e442

⁶ M. K. Murad, 'Suicide Prevention and Developing Countries', Journal of the Rayal Society of Medicine, Vol. 98, No. 10, 2005, pp. 459-463

⁷ World Health Organization (WHO), Preventing suicide: a global imperative. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2014.

⁸ S. M. Y. Arafat, 'Suicide in Bangladesh: a mini review', *Journal of Behavioral Health*, Vol. 6, No.1, 2016, pp. 66-69

⁹ A. R. Khan et al., 'Suicide and Attempted Suicide in Jhenaidah District, Bangladesh, 2010–2018', Crisis, 2020, Vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 304-312; BBC. Bangladeshe Attohottar Har Jhenaidahe J Karone Beshi (Reasons behind Jhenaidah Having Higher Suicide Rate in Bangladesh), September 10, 2020, Available at https://www.bbc.com/bengali/news54098021? fbclid=IwAR290mWpwcIoEFY2mDiPmZlufXz2eAD80qHtmhAjBfetV9DxwBAgWuDgOk0

¹⁰ Ibid.

The first scientific endeavour to explain suicide was initiated by Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist. The Durkheimian theoretical and analytical framework of suicide is regarded as a pioneer in suicide research. Different studies have found Durkheim's framework relevant for explaining suicides, 11 although the Durkheimian framework is criticized in many ways. Not all indicators used by Durkheim fit for individual-level data. Hence they are somehow ambiguous for empirical research. 12For example, Wasserman (1983) found no significant relationship between suicide and election, whereas Durkheim argued for the relationship between war, political crisis, and suicide rates. In contrast to Durkheim, the suicide rate is not in a linear growth with the development of individualization and modernization because of the continuous adaptation process of people with the changes in society.¹³ Moreover, Durkheim's Suicide is found difficult to be claimed as valid for every society including Bangladesh. 14 Instead of these critiques, it is difficult not to claim that the contextual nature of social structure stimulates suicide rates. 15 Based on the above understanding, the point of departure of this paper is using the Durkheimian framework in explaining suicide incident in Jhenaidah. This paper examines to what extent the Durkheimian framework is relevant in understanding suicidal behaviors in Jhenaidah, a Bangladeshi district. The paper is organized in the following manner. The following section describes the theoretical underpinnings of the research. The next section explains the methodological schema, followed by findings. The last section concludes the entire discussion by assessing the relevance of Durkheim in studying suicide.

B. A. Pescolido and S. Georgianna, 'Durkheim, Suicide and Religion: Toward a Network Theory of Suicide', American Sociological Review, Vol. 54, No.1, 1989, pp.33-48; F. V. Tubergen et al., 'Denomination, Religious Context, and Suicide: Neo-Durkheimian Multilevel Explanations Tested with Individual and Contextual Data', American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 111, No. 3, 2005, pp. 797-823

M. Wray et al., 'The Sociology of Suicide', Annu. Rev. Sociol, Vol. 37, 2011, pp. 505–28; D.P. Phillips and T.E. Ruth, 'Adequacy of Official Statistics for scientific research and public Policy', Suicide and Life Threatening Behavio, Vol. 23, 1993, pp. 307-319; R. Condorelli, 'Social complexity, modernity and suicide: an assessment of Durkheim's suicide from the perspective of a non-linear analysis of complex social systems', SpringerPlus, Vol. 5, No. 374, 2016, Available at https://doi.org/10.1186/s40064-016-1799-z; Wasserman, 'Political Business Cycles, Presidential Elections and Suicide and Mortality Patterns', American Sociological Review, Vol. 48, No.5, 1983, pp. 711-20

¹³ R. Condorelli, op.cit.

M. R. Islam, and W. R. Rahman, 'Sociological Parameters of Suicide and Attempted Suicide in Rural Bangladesh: Some Case Studies from Three Villages of Jhenaidah District', J. Socio. Res. Dev, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2006, pp. 42-49; M. J. Ara, M. F. Uddin and M. H. Kabir, 'The causes of Suicide and Impact of Society in Banglades', International Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2016, pp. 25-35

¹⁵ M. Wray et al., op. cit., pp. 505-28

Theoretical framework

The theoretical and research tradition on suicide can be differentiated into three different phases: Pre-Durkheimian, Durkheimian, and Post-Durkheimian. Pre-Durkheimian thinkers of the late 19th century found a positive correlation between increasing suicide rates and the rise of modernity. These thinkers pointed to suicidal causation from the perspective of the free-willed individual acting, an unintended consequence of the increasing level of education, solution of individual problems, caused by imitative behavior. Among these thinkers, moral statisticians were the most influential who pointed to systematic patterns of suicide and shared the assumption that suicide was morally problematic. 16 Durkheim took a more analytic view than the Pre-Durkheimian thinkers in showing how social changes made some groups more vulnerable to self-destruction than others. Throughout the Post-Durkheimian era, thinkers offered some major sociological statements such as aggression-frustration model and status integration theory. 17 Along with them, other critics reviewed the works of Durkheim and complained against Durkheim for not considering the social and cultural meaning of suicide. 18 As of now, it is clear that theories of suicide can be placed differently by the ways of explaining suicidal behavior, such as Pre-Durkheimian, Durkheimian, and post-Durkheimian approaches. In explaining suicide, this paper relies on the Durkheimian framework based on the understanding that Durkheim's theory has sufficient theoretical power and empirical support. 19

By applying a sociological lens, Durkheim shows suicide as a social phenomenon that depends on social circumstances. According to Durkheim, suicide is applied to any death that is a direct or indirect result of a positive or relative act accomplished by the victim himself, and the victim knows that it will produce this result.²⁰ Durkheim argues the suicide rate as a social fact, which is something external to the individual. It is the structure of society that influences suicide rates. Moreover, the suicide rate in society shows remarkable stability every year. Durkheim claims that

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ A. F. Henry and J. F. Short, Suicide and Homicide: Some Economic, Sociological and Psychological Aspects of Aggression. Free Press, NewYork, 1954; J. P. Gibbs, and W. T. Martin, Status Integration and Suicide: A Sociological Study. Univ. Or. Press, Eugene, 1964; J. D. Douglas, The Social Meanings of Suicide. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, NJ, 1967.

¹⁸ J. D. Douglas, *The Social Meanings of Suicide*. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, NJ, 1967.

¹⁹ M. Wrayet et al., op. cit., p. 17; R. Sennett, Introduction. in On Suicide by 'E Durkheim. Penguin, London, 2006; F. W. Kaslow, 'Suicide: Causation, Indicators and Intervention' Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1975, pp. 60-81

²⁰ E. Durkheim, Suicide, The free Press, New York, 1951.

by examining various types of suicide, it is possible to identify major elements of society. This is how Durkheim explains suicide rates as a social fact.

Integration as well as regulation is central to his analysis of suicide. Durkheim categorizes suicides based on the extent of social integration and regulation. By integration, Durkheim referred to the sense of social belonging and inclusion, love, affection, and care coming from social tics. Individuals in a well-integrated society are less vulnerable to suicide as they get support during a personal crisis.²¹ Durkheim concluded, "Suicide rates vary inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups to which the individual belongs".²² He explained the level of social integration regarding integration in family, religious, and political domains.²³ Form his fourfold typology of suicide (see, Table 1); egoistic suicide happens when integration is low, whereas altruistic suicide arises when integration is high. By regulation, Durkheim referred to the sense of monitoring, mistake, and guidance that come from social ties. Anomic suicide occurs when regulation is low and fatalistic suicide occurs when regulation is high.

Table 1: Four-fold typology of suicide

Types of Suicide	Level of integration/regulation	Major indicators
Egoistic	Low integration	Low integration into the family Low integration with religion Low integration with political society
Altruistic	High integration	Over integration of the individual with society Sacrificing character for the betterment of immediate society
Anomic	Low regulation	 Low regulation of social norms, values, and social order Breakdown of social equilibrium
Fatalistic	High Regulation	Passions choked by excessive discipline in society
		Future is blocked by excessive regulation of society

Source: Durkheim, 1951

²¹ M. Wray et al., op. cit.

²² E. Durkheim, op.cit., p. 224

²³ W. Pope, Durkheim's Suicide: A Classic Analyzed. Univ. Chicago Press, Chicago, 1976.

This paper considers this typology as a frame work to explain suicide incidents in the context of Bangladesh. Due to data unavailability to explain all the indicators in Table 1, we focus on some social variables (family, religious and political integration; age, gender, marital status, educational attainment; cultural norms and behavioral practice for women) in order to explain and explore suicidal behavior in Jhenaidah through the theoretical lens of Durkheim. Though it is difficult to replicate the context and statistical data used by Durkheim, this paper postulates that the variables and indicators to be explained in the finding section have been illustrated with reliable data procedures.

Methods

To shed light on the dynamics of suicide in Bangladesh society through studying a particular area, this paper examines to what extent Durkheim's framework is relevant to understand suicidal behaviors in a Bangladeshi district. The study area of this research was the Jhenaidah district, a suicide-prone area in Bangladesh. Jhenaidah Sadar was chosen for fieldwork and all the *Upazilas* were included for secondary data collection.



Figure 1: Research area (Map of Jhenaidah District)

To reflect on the arguments of Durkheim, this study applies specific indicators of egoistic suicides in exploring the suicides of Jhenaidah. Considering these issues, design and methodology were chosen for this study. There has been a growing need to use multi-methods to conduct sociological research on suicide. ²⁴ Considering this methodological concern and our research questions, a mixed-method strategy was followed for the study. Mixed methods were appropriate because mixed or multi-method approaches help switch from one method to another, confirm outcomes from various data sources, and push understanding further. ²⁵ This paper explores the nature of suicides in Jhenaidah and examines how relevant the Durkheimian framework is to understand suicidal behavior. To fit with the objective, mixed-method is suitable since it helps in expanding knowledge of suicides by integrating theory-based variables and subjectivity as part of the inquiry. ²⁶ However, among different types of mixed-method designs, the research followed the explanatory sequential mixed method design. ²⁷

Both primary and secondary data were collected for this study. Primary data were collected from 160 individuals who attempted suicide, with the help of the Society for Voluntary Activities (SOVA). The SOVA is a nonprofit organization that works for suicide prevention in Jhenaidah and collects detailed information on the victims of attempted suicide. Among those selected cases of attempted suicides, 15 respondents were interviewed purposively for qualitative data. In addition, information was collected about religious integration from members of civil society by conducting a few informal interviews. For secondary data sources, this paper used official statistics about suicides in Jhenaidah. Secondary data were collected from Civil Surgeon Office, Jhenaidah, and the SOVA. From 2010 to 2016, monthly and yearly numbers of suicides of all the Upazilas in the Jhenaidah district were collected from secondary sources. Descriptive analysis was performed for the study. Qualitative data were integrated with quantitative data for an in-depth understanding of the research issue. In addition, annual district statistics (2011) and annual district statistics (2016) were used to calculate suicide rates in Jhenaidah. Of note, this paper offers some data on attempted suicide due to the unavailability of

²⁴ M. Wray, et al., op. cit.

²⁵ J. W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. SAGE Publications. Los Angeles. 2018; W. L. Neuman, Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1997

Michael J. Kral, Paul S. Links and Yvonne Bergmans, 'Suicide Studies and the Need for Mixed Methods Research', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2011, pp. 236-239

²⁷ J. W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, op. cit.

all necessary information about completed suicides, although Durkheim ignored attempted suicides in his analysis. However, in order to ensure reliability, in-depth interviews were followed. From an ethical point of view, the research confirmed confidentiality and protected the anonymity of the respondents during data collection and analysis.

Suicide and Attempted Suicide in Jhenaidah district

From 2010 to 2016, the number of suicide attempts in Kotchandpur has increased significantly compared to the other *Upazilas* in the district (Table 2). However, in the case of completed suicides, the rate is higher in Jhenidah Sadar. It is commonly perceived that Jhenaidah's Shailkokupa is a suicide-prone area, but data reveal that the number of suicide attempts in the area is less than most of the *Upazilas*. In addition, this paper finds that the suicide rate in Jhenaidah District is constant every year (Figure 2).

Table 2: Average number of attempted and completed suicide per 100000 population in Jhenaidah district $(2010-2016)^{28}$

Upazilas	The average number of attempted suicide per 100000	The average number of completed suicide per 100000
Jhenaidah Sadar	206	24
Shailkupa	87	17
Harinakundu	100	21
Kaliganj	176	16
Kotchandpur	215	18
Maheshpur	83	14

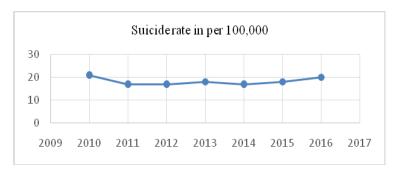


Fig. 2: Rate of completed suicide in Jhenaidah district (2010-2016) (Source: SOVA, 2020)

²⁸ Data were calculated by using number of total population of each *Upazila* (Source: District statistics, 2011)

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Suicide incidents by age, education status, family structure, and economic status

In Jhenaidah, the young generation has a higher suicide rate than older people (Figure 3). The study reveals that among the age group of 11-30, the tendency to commit suicide is high among teenagers and newly married individuals. Besides, female suicide was more prevalent in each age group.

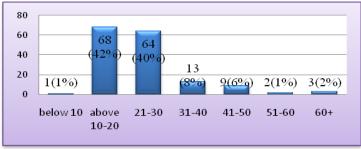


Figure 3: Suicide attempts by age (Source: field data)

The prevalence of suicidal behavior among females is higher than among males. By using field data, this paper traced that 59% females and 41% males attempted suicide. ²⁹ Official statistics of the population were used for further clarification about female suicide. The total population in Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila is 508,638. ³⁰ Among the population, the number of females is 254015, and the number of males is 254456. Hence, it is revealing that female suicide is more prevalent in this area. Considering gender and marital status, 63% of female victims and 37% of male victims were married. The difference between male and female victims indicates that married females are more prone to attempting/committing suicide than married males.

Table 3: Number of attempted and completed suicide among males and females (2010-16)

Year	Attempted Suicide		Com	pleted Suicide
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2010	388	585	30	72
2011	372	618	24	70
2012	380	615	44	54
2013	329	615	36	63
2014	361	507	27	103
2015	363	583	40	78
2016	325	523	63	72

(Source: SOVA, 2017)

²⁹ Field work, 2017.

³⁰ BBS, District statistics of Jhenaidah, 2016.

The highest rate (29%) of suicidal attempts is among the nine to ten graders. This study finds that suicide decreases with higher educational status (Figure 4). Education opens scopes – such as gaining social support in a crisis, coping with stress, and living in a healthy social environment – that prevent individuals from committing suicide. Attaining higher education can prevent individuals from committing suicide. Considering the types of family, suicide is high among the members coming from nuclear families (figure 5).

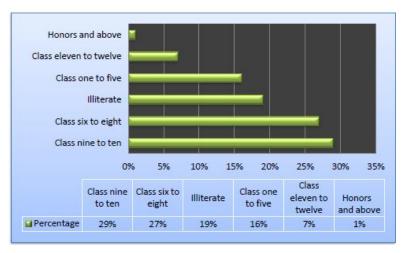


Figure 4: Suicide attempts by education status (source: Field data)

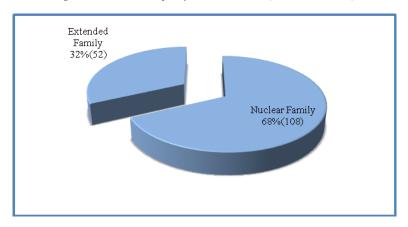


Figure 5: Attempted suicide by family structure (Source: Field data)

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In terms of marital status, the suicide rate among unmarried individuals in Jhenaidah is higher than that of the married. Compared to the data of the married and unmarried population in Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila, the suicide attempt is 4% more among the unmarried than the married. Moreover, suicide is higher among those who have children. As one respondent (Birajpur, 3 July 2017) utters her experience:

I married for the second time after divorcing my first husband and left there a four-year baby because of excessive torture without any reason. Now I have another son in my second husband's house. My husband talks with another woman on mobile phone and they are in a love relationship. When I resisted it, he didn't listen to me. He continued his relationship with that woman. During that time, I felt insecurity gradually. I thought my husband would take care of his son when I wanted to commit suicide. I have no importance in the family. Why should I think about the family?

Those who responded that children didn't matter in saving their life, they were of the view that children were no more important for living than their problem. Besides, traditionally defined practices and expectations about taking care of parents when they get older may cause suicides. A victim of attempted suicide (Hiradanga, 6 July 2017) uttered about her son,

My son doesn't want to bear my expenses. He misbehaves. During discord on these issues with my son, I tried to commit suicide. Till now, my son does not talk to me. I gave birth to him, took care of him, raised him, but now he doesn't tolerate me anymore. For which expectation should I live?

From the perceived experiences of victims, this paper found having children as non-protective against suicide. In terms of economic status, suicide attempts are high among those who have monthly family income between Tk. 5000- Tk.7000 (43%). This paper found low suicidal attempts among those who have monthly family income between 11000/- and above (11%).

Religious practice and suicide incidents

To explore the relationship between suicidal incidence and level of religiosity and religious practices, this paper focused on the subjective interpretation of the respondents. For being a Muslim-majority country, the victims of attempted suicides were interviewed who were from Muslim families. These individuals failed to connect religious beliefs/practices in managing their day-to-day life, particularly individual crises. Furthermore, they related their religious practices to confirmation for heaven in the afterlife. This may have been an expression of instrumental thinking rather than religious involvement. This study found a possible relationship among age, level of religious integration, and suicide

incidents. Older people are more involved in daily religious practices than middle-aged and young people. Religious integration may cause lower suicide cases among older people (figure 3). The study found a further explanation from members of civil society about religious integration in Jhenaidah. The growing number of mosques fails to confirm religious integration; rather these religious institutions are transforming people into different segments while offering a narrow opportunity for integration and reducing social cohesion. This study further reveals the relevance of religious obligation about suicides. Though suicide is a great crime in Islam,³¹ suicides have been a leading problem in Jhenaidah. A woman (Chutlia, 11 July 2017) uttered her experience in response to the question about why she attempted suicide since she knew that it was a sin:

Nothing was in mind during the suicidal attempt. The problems of life were more important to me. What happened in my brain, I don't know. That is why I couldn't remember that suicide was a sin.

This is how this paper delineates the relation between neglecting religious obligation and suicide. Finally, this paper claims that the instrumental practice of a religion may have an impact on suicide.

Political integration and suicide

According to Durkheim, suicide rates tend to vary depending on the degree of integration within political society³² During great social disturbances – such as turmoil, wartime, parliamentary crisis, and election period - suicide rates decrease compared to the corresponding months of previous years. For analysis of this argument, the study focuses on the Bangladesh national elections of 2014 and disturbance in the society created by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh. In the last month (December) of 2013, the number of suicides was 12% lower (142) than the same month in 2012. In January of 2014, suicides were 18% lower (140) than the suicides (170) of the corresponding month of 2013 (Table 4). It was the time when political tensions grew due to the elections of January 5, 2014. The main opposition party, the BNP, boycotted the elections. Following this, the country witnessed various kinds of protests and blockades. Hartal and blockades by the BNP-Jamaat alliance started in the January of 2015. The following tensions of the election period continued for a long. During this month, suicidal incidents were less than the corresponding month of 2013 and 2014 respectively.

³¹ N. Retterstol, Suicide: A European Perspective, Cambridge University Press, London, 1993.

³² E. Durkheim, op. cit., 1968, p. 208

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 Table 4: Monthly incidents of suicide attempts in Jhenaidah District (2012-2016)

Months	Number of cases of a suicide attempt				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	160	170	140	129	152
February	190	183	187	170	200
March	272	231	194	245	189
April	217	227	218	230	238
May	227	253	255	270	157
June	249	245	178	192	180
July	202	264	207	185	210
August	262	275	241	262	237
September	244	244	242	274	235
October	194	222	228	225	218
November	191	167	173	199	162
December	162	142	149	140	169

(Source: Civil Surgeon Office of Jhenaidah, 2017)

Subjective causes of suicide according to Durkheim's categorization

Inherent in the data sources, we conceptualize individual causes of suicide depending on the level of integration and regulation in the society. Indicators, explored from the data, suggest that egoistic and anomic suicides are intense in Jhenaidah. In terms of egoistic suicide, this research explores that suicides instigated by family discords and violence ultimately results from a lack of integration while lack of integration may come from family, religion, and political environment.

Table 5: Causes and types of suicides as of Durkheim

Types of Suicide	Individual Indication of Suicidal cause
Egoistic Suicide: lack of familial, religious, and political integration	Spousal discord because of perceived dissimilarity and not fulfilling expectation Discord with other family members in inlaw's house and own family members Sibling violence
Altruistic: resulting from the thinking of the common interest of society	Severe disease Feeling of dishonor because of not fulfilling socially ascribed duty
Anomie Suicide: resulting from the normlessness, i.e. conflict between traditional and modern moral values	 Love affair Extramarital relation Marital discord for husband's low earning Indifference to work and reading Not obeying elders' command and order Son's lack of responsibility towards parents

Fatalistic Suicide: excessive domination, guide, care, and strict values and rules	Excessive physical assault The suicide of a young husband or wife	
Others: uncategorized	PovertyDowryEmancipation from and stress for debt/ loan	
	• Discord for physical/ sexual inability of the husband	

Altruistic suicide incidents, as the study finds, are caused by victims' feeling of guilty for as creating sufferings for family and a sense of burden to society, as he/she was not able to perform the prescribed role of society. Thus, altruistic suicides were triggered by the failure of the individual to perform the duties that society expected of him or her. This concept is referred to as thinking common interest of society. In terms of anomic suicide, individual indications were categorized according to the conflicts between predominant traditional values and modern values. In this case, freedom of choice was found significant in understanding the conflicting situation. Fatalistic suicide was categorized by considering strict guides and values of new status roles. For example, to cope with the spousal and familial role of a newly married couple can reflect the context of a regulative force of society. In addition, excessive physical assault, particularly against women, is a major form of domination that results in fatalistic suicidal incidents. However, few individual cases of suicide were categorized as 'Other' because it was difficult to include those cases in the four-fold typology of suicide.

Discussion

This paper started off aiming to explain the nature of suicides in Jhenaidah and examines how relevant the Durkheim framework is to understand suicidal behaviors in a Bangladeshi district. Following a mixed-method in data collection and analysis, this research has managed to explain the framework. The results show that there is a higher prevalence of attempted suicides in Jhenaidah than in the completed suicides. Among the *Upazilas* of Jhenaidah, Kotchandpur has a higher rate of attempted suicides. The incidence of completed suicides is higher in Jhenaidah Sadar.

To claim the efficacy of the Durkheimian framework, the results of this paper show that there are both consistency and inconsistency between the study and arguments of Durkheim (Table 6 and Table 7).

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Table 6: Consistency between Durkheimian framework and research findings

Durkheim's argument	Consistent claims of the study	
The suicide rate in society shows remarkable stability every year	The suicide rate in society shows remarkable stability every year	
Suicide is higher among the unmarried than that among the married person	Suicide is higher among the unmarried than that of the married person	
Married males commit suicide less than the married female	Married males commit suicide less than the married female	
The suicide rate is high among nuclear families than the extended family	The suicide rate is high among nuclear families than the extended family	
Suicide increases with a lack of family, religious and political integration	Suicide increases with a lack of family, religious and political integration	

Table 7: Inconsistency between Durkheimian framework and research findings

Durkheim's argument	Claims about the study area	
Freedom of inquiry causes a lack of religious integration.	Ways of religious practice may create a lack of religious integration.	
Women commit suicide less than men	Women commit suicide more than men	
Suicide is higher among those who have no children	Suicide is higher among those who have children	
Rich people commit suicide more than poor people	Poor people attempt/commit suicide more than rich people.	
Suicide rate increases with age	Suicidal incidence is low among aging people.	
Suicide rate increases with knowledge	Educational attainment is inversely related to suicide.	

This paper has offered an interpreting of these inconsistent results with Durkheimian framework. Considering Durkheim's arguments regarding religion, this paper claims that instrumental ways of religious practice cause loss of cohesion in this area and this may have an impact on the suicide incidents. This paper adds that individualism deriving from a lack of integration in society restricts collective credo among people.³³ This may have a correlation with increasing suicidal incidents.

In terms of gender, this paper contradicts those who claim a higher rate of male suicides over female suicides³⁴ Following Durkheimian typology, the pattern of

³³ W. A. Pridemore, 'Heavy Drinking and Suicide in Russia', Social Forces, Vol. 85, No. 1, 2006, pp. 413-430

S. S. Canetto, 'Gender and Suicide in the Elderly', Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, Vol. 22, 1992, pp. 80-90; C. Girard, 'Age, Gender and Suicide: A Cross-National Analysis', American Sociological Review, Vol. 58, 1993, pp. 553-74; B. Pescosolido, and E. R. Wright, 'Suicide and the role of the family over the life course', Family Perspective, Vol. 24, 1990,

female suicides in Jhenaidah may be traced by fatalistic suicides. Due to structural inequality and violent oppression, women may feel over-regulated and become more susceptible to suicidality.³⁵ In addition, though women have more flexible coping skills than men because of numerous role changes during the life course³⁶in Jhenaidah, suicidal behavior is socialized as an act done more likely by women resulting in low coping capacity. Moreover, studies relate education with an increased female suicide rate.³⁷ In Jhenaidah, suicide is still high among women who are not highly educated. In terms of having children, Durkheim argues that the suicide rate is low among the persons who have children; because integration with family increases for the child.³⁸ This statement contradicts the claim of this paper. Further investigation may explore the causes of why having children is not protective for parents against suicides. Considering economic status, this paper has found correlation of low income with increased suicidal incidents. Durkheim associated poverty with a low suicide rate.³⁹ This inverse result of this paper is supported by other studies, 40 which have examined Durkheim's claim about poverty.

The higher suicide rate among the young generation in Jhenaidah is contradictory to many studies including Durkheim.⁴¹ This age pattern of suicide is supported by C. Girard that Durkheim's analysis about the high rate of suicide in old age is different for Third World countries.⁴² However, low suicidality among the older people in Jhenaidah may possibly result from social values of family security, caring, and increasing religious integration with age. By educational status, in

pp. 41-58; S. Stack, 'The Effect of Religious Commitment on Suicide: A Cross-national Analysis', *Journal of health and Social Behavior*, Vol 24, 1983, pp. 362-374

³⁵ E. Summers-Effler, Defensive strategies: the formation and social implications of patterned self-destructive behavior, Adv. Group Process. Vol. 21, 2004, pp.309–325. Available at DOI: 10.1016/S0882-6145(04)21012-8; V. N. Chang, I Just Lost Myself: Psychological Abuse of Women in Marriage. CT: Praeger, Westport, 1996.

³⁶ S. S. Canetto, op. cit.; S. Stack, op. cit.

³⁷ R.Austin et. al., 'Sex role change, anomie, and female suicide: A test of alternative explanation', Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, Vol. 22, 1992, pp. 197-225

³⁸ E. Durkheim, op. cit.

³⁹ Ibid

S. Stack, 'Suicide: A 15 Year Review of the Sociological Literature: Part II: Modernization and Social Integration Perspectives', Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, Vol. 30, 2000, pp. 163-76; D. H. Rehkopf and Stephen L. Buka, 'The Association between Suicide and the Socio-Economic Characteristics of Geographical Areas: A Systematic Review', Psychological Medicine, Vol. 36, 2006, pp. 145-57. Available at DOI: 10.1017/S0033291 70500588X.

⁴¹ F. W. Kaslow, op. cit.; N. Retterstol, op.cit.

⁴² C. Girard, 'Age, Gender, and Suicide: A Cross-National Analysis', American Sociological Review, Vol. 58, No. 4, 1993, pp. 553-74

Jhenaidah, the relationship between educational attainment and suicide is negative. Wen L. Li also reveals this inconsistency with Durkheim.⁴³

This paper further reflects on Jhenaidah as a suicide-prone area from the perspective of the adaptation process. Condorelli showed a relationship between the adaptation process with modernization and a gradually low suicide rate. ⁴⁴By exploring the individual causes of suicides, this paper claims that normative elements of modern society are not widely accepted in Jhenaidah, particularly in rural areas. The traditional social constraint contradicts with new cultural changes that weaken strong traditional norms and values, resulting in suicide incidents. Also, freedom of individual choice — such as love relationship, extramarital relationship — is constrained by this society. Individuals of this area lack adaptation capacity during the crisis circumstances resulting from the conflict between traditional and modern culture. This may shape the high rate of suicides in this area.

Finally, egoistic and anomic suicides are high in Jhenaidah. Few cases were found to be involved in altruistic and fatalistic suicides. Regarding female suicides, fatalistic suicides are remarkably prevalent in this area. However, contradictory findings of this study may be due to geographic, demographic, and cultural differences with other studies. Though there are inconsistent results, continuing this study within the Durkheimian tradition is an effort for deriving theoretical underpinning about suicide.

Conclusion

This paper started off with the aim of understanding to what extent the Durkheim framework is relevant to understand suicidal behaviors in a district of Bangladesh. This paper reveals that the Durkheimian framework is relevant to understand suicidal behaviors in Jhenaidah but it shows inconsistency in many contexts. The status of social-demographic variables is different in the context of Jhenaidah. Particular cultures and normative practices of Bangladesh society are not enough to claim comprehensively the four-fold Durkheimian typology of suicides. Nevertheless, this paper significantly contributes to the empirical and theoretical levels. On the theoretical level, this paper contributes to the existing knowledge-building level, specifically to the further expansion and generalization about Durkheimian analysis of suicide. This paper has empirical implications too. There is a general perception that Shailkupa is the suicide-prone area whereas we have found Kotchandpur as the attempted-suicide-prone area and Jhenaidah Sadar as the committed -suicide-prone area. We have acknowledged some limitations of our

⁴³ Wen N. Li, 'Suicide and Educational Attainment in a Transitional Society', *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1972, pp. 253-258

⁴⁴ R. Condorelli, op. cit.

study. Due to the methodological limitations of the study design, the findings of the paper may not be generalized for other areas of Bangladesh. In the interpretation of the results presented above, we are also cautious about the failure of the exact replication of the Durkheimian thesis. Despite these limitations, this paper has important implications for further studies about suicide. Based on the above understanding, this study proposes to apply some new theoretical frameworks to explain suicide phenomena in overcoming the limitations posed by the Durkheimian framework. Accordingly, to examine the inconsistencies of the results presented above, this paper encourages future researchers to use more comprehensive and extended data.

NATH PANTHA SHRINES AND PERPETUAL TRADITION IN BANGLADESH

Partha Sarathi Nath*

Abstract

Nath tradition is a very ancient tradition in Bangladesh. The first human guru of Nath Yogi Sampradaya Yogi Matsyendranath was born in Chandradwip or Sandwip which is presently in Bangladesh. During the 9th-10th century CE in Bangladesh Nath monasteries and temples were built under the influence of the Yoga and supernatural yoga power of the Yogi Matsyendranath, Yogi Gorakshanath and others enlightened Nath Siddhas. There are numerous monasteries and temples in Bangladesh today. The monasteries and temples retain the Culture and tradition of the Nath Pantha.

Key word: Nath Shrines in Bangladesh.

The Nath Yogi tradition of Bangladesh carries on the legacy of ancient tradition. The people of Nath Pantha in Bangladesh are known as Nath community, Yogi community and Nath Yogi community. The titles Nath, Debnath, Majumdar, Dalal, Bhowmik, Devasharma, Goswami, Yogi etc. are used at the end of their names. Although Nath and Yogi are with the ancient tradition, the rest have been added to the end of the name at different times later due to social and economic reasons. The source of Nath Yogi's self-identity cannot be scientific without diagnosis anthropology, sociology, architectural patterns. In search of that self-identity, attempts have been made to search for Nath temples and Nath traditions in Bangladesh.

There is no way to get acquainted with the Shaiva Yogi Nath community without the help of *Brahma Vaivarta Purana*, *Matsyendra Samhita*, *Abadhut Gita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Goraksha Samhita* etc. There was no human race, social classification came due to social ties. Caste has been created in each class. In Vedic society, there were two classes of people - Munidhara and Rishidhara. Muni's two branches are Grihasthashrami and Muni. The Yoga panthi Munis took the ideal of Sadashiv. Other gods didnot have any children, but Shiva had two sons, he is a grihayogi. That so why Nath Yogis are of two types— Sanyasi Nath yogi and

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householder Nath yogi. Disciple Nath yogis are called 'Nadaja'yogi and hereditary Nath yogis are called 'Binduja' yogi:

Nathaddwiprakarasrishtirjata-nadarupa bindurupa cha.
"নাথাদদ্বিপ্রকারা সৃষ্টির্জাতা- নাদরূপা বিন্দুরূপা চ।
Nadarupa shishyakramena bindurupa cha putrakramena.
নাদরূপা শিষ্যক্রমেণ বিন্দুরূপা চ পুত্রক্রমেণ।
Nadannabanatha jatah,bindutahSadashiva Bhairaba jatah"...
নাদান্নবনাথা জাতাঃ, বিন্দুতঃ সদাশিবোভৈরবো জাতঃ।

The threefold theory of Vedic Nath yoga philosophy is "Alakh Niranjan (Alakhnath)—Anadinath—Adinath":

অলখ নিরঞ্জন (অলখনাথ)-- অনাদিনাথ—আদিনাথ (translation by the author). The status of the three Naths is of one Shiva.²

Those who follow this philosophy of Nath theory are Nath yogis. The similarity of this Tripada theory with the mantra of Atharva veda 2/1-2 can be noticed:

Trini padani nihita guhasya. ত্রীনি পাদানি নিহিতা গুহাস্য

Yogi Gorakshanath, the proponent of Nath philosophy, is devoid of high and low thoughts. On the other hand, Yogi Matsyendranath is associated with the Tantra Yogini Kaul sect in the Nath-Yogi tradition. Originally described in the *Atharva Veda* as a combination of *yoga* culture such as *Bratya shaiva* worship, *Upanishadic Brahmavidya* and *yoga sadhana*, Nath Yoga tradition emerged over time. Yoga and worship were adopted in the age of Upanishads. Upanishads like *Chandogya*, *Kath*, *Kaushitaki* are proof of it. In this context, Dol Gobinda Shastri said: "The Yoga system was the main system of worship of pre-vedic Aryans i.e. vratyas and Dravidians. In course of time this was also accepted by the vedic Aryans".

In the age of Epics and *Puranas*, Yoga or Nath Yoga takes a more advanced form. Shiva as the main deity is worshiped along with Brahma and Vishnu. In this context K.C. Mishra said: "In the puranic age *Vratya saiva* cult or *Yoga Marga* attained its perfection as Natha Dharma or Nathism. Siva was termed as Natha by the followers of Saivism". But in the Buddhist era, the importance of *Vedas* and *Upanishadas* diminished. Finally, in the 7th-8th century, Buddhism, Hindu tantric

¹ Goraksha Siddhanta Sangraha, Edit Ramlal Srivastava, Gorakshanath Temple, Gorakhpur, UP, 2007, p. 59

² Rajmohan Nath, *Anadya Charit*, Assam Banga Yogi Sammilani, Kolkata, 1964, p. 5

³ Jiban Nath, "Origin and Development of Nath Yoga Cult", Yogisakha Magazine, October 2009, Kolkata, p. 107

⁴ K.C. Mishra, The Cult of Jagannatha, Firma Comp. Ltd., Kolkata, 1984, p. 89

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practice and *kaya yoga* began to dominate. On the other hand, Shankaracharya was preaching against Buddhism. At that time, Yogi Matsyendranath and Yogi Gorakshanath were trying to co-ordinate. In this connection, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi said: "In the eighth and ninth centuries, Buddhism progressed rapidly towards Tantric practice and Kayayoga. Later Nath Pantha, a sect of shaivites became dominant while many practices of Tantric Buddhism became part of it".⁵

As a result, Nath religion became very popular in the last part of the first millennium. At the time when Buddhism was into a lean phase, the Jains, the *Ajibiks* and followers of such mass religious sects turned to Nath Pantha and survived. Naturally some features of all these religions found assimilated in *Nath Pantha*. In this regard, Atul Sur said: "Ajibik and Jain religions were established in Bengal in considerable opposition. But most of these religions later became Buddhist or *Nath Panthi*". 6

Naturally, the majority of the Buddhist, Jain and *Ajibik* communities took refuge in Nath Pantha and defended themselves. Discussing the architectural aspects of the Buddhist *stupas* at Wari Bateshwar, Mainamati, Mahasthangarh, Paharpur, Bikrampur *bihar*; it is thought that Buddhism was the dominant religion in Bengal from the 7th to 8th century and later Nath Pantha took center stage. It can be seen that the archaeological finds of Yogi Matsyendranath, Yogi Gorakshanath, Yogi Gopichandranath, Yogini Mainamati have been found along with Buddhist statues. It is to be noted that no so called Hindu temple or mosque was found during this time. According to Haraprasad Shastri, Brahmanical religion, Nath religion and six different religions of Buddhism are eight types of religions that existed in Bengal till the twelfth century. Apart from the Brahmanical religion, the seventy per cent of the Bengal population at that time was either Buddhist or Nath Panthi.⁷

During the seventh-eighth centuries, Brahmanical religion was strongly opposed to Buddhism. Then there was a compromise between Buddhism and progressive religion Nath Pantha. Shiva was established in the place of Buddha. Shiva and Buddha spoke in the words of common people. For this reason, Sufi Mostafizur Rahman and Mohammad Habibullah Pathan have introduced Shaivism along with Buddhism in architectural monuments like Wari Bateshwar and Mainamati in Bangladesh.⁸

⁵ Aalok Porbo, Sahitya Academy, translation: Sandhya Chowdhury, pp. 82-97

⁶ Atul Sur, Banglar Samajik Itihas Jigyasa, Kolkata, 1976, pp. 50-52

⁷ Baridbaran Ghosh, Bouddhadharma (Ed.), Kolkata, 2002, pp. 210-217

⁸ R. M. Debnath, Bangadeshe Dharmiya Samaj, Itihas O Bibarton, Nabayug, Dhaka, 2016, p.15

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Even the people of Paharpur, Mahasthangarh and Mainamati area was inclined towards either Buddhism or Nath religion. Nihar Ranjan Roy said: "In pre-Gupta period (sixth – seventh centuries) there was no Aryan, Vedic or Brahmanical religion in this region which is now known as Hinduism. Rather we can find the presence of yoga and Shaivism at that time". In *Charyapada*, we also find a society where there was no discrimination of caste and creed among the people though as per religious beliefs they were either Buddhist or *Nath Panthi*. Here Sukumar Sen observed:

In the literary work of the spiritual saints, the prominent style is out of the reach of the Common people and is prevalent in some spiritual saintly communities. Nath Panthi Yogis are the inheritors of this tradition. Many of the subjects taken up by the siddhacharyas in the *Charyagitis* were influenced by the Nath tradition unknowingly. ¹⁰

The idea of building a *deul* or temple centered on various Shaivite deities originated in Bengal in the mythological period. Shiva, Shiva's wife Parvati (Gouri), their two sons Ganesha and Kartika and two daughters Lakshmi and Saraswati could not be accommodated in a small throne or *dehara*. Since then the construction of *Deul* or temple started. *Kirtanams* and *manchas* began to be established by virtue the of the Vaishnavite movement introduced by Sri Chaitanyadeva. But monasteries and *akhras* began to be established in Bengal with the development of Nath literature. As a result of this, Nath temples were found in different parts of the Bangladesh at that time and even today. Though it has lost its lustre, but the glory still remains.

Pilgrimages of Hinduism became the pilgrimages of Nath community also, especially the Hindu temples of Shiva, Bhairab and Shakti. Apart from this, the Nath community has their own temples and monasteries all over Bangladesh. According to Kalyani Mullick these pilgrimages existed even before the Goraksha era. 12 In different parts of Northern Bangladesh, Nath Yogi songs and *Tinnath* worship (a pattern of worship built around the ideas and practices associated with Matsendranath, Gorakshanath and Jalandharnath) and *Tinnath* fairs are found even today. The Tinnaths are identified as Minanath or Matsyendranath, Gorakshanath and Jalandharnath alias Haripa. Their power is considered to be supernatural, but a result of the power of yoga. With the power of yoga, they are said to attain astasiddhi or eight types of powers or virtues. In some puranic interpretations as

⁹ Nihar Ranjan Roy, Bangalir Itihas, Vol. 1 (3rd edition), translation mine, Dey's, Kolkata, 2003, pp. 496

¹⁰ Sukumer Sen, Bangla Sahityer Itihas, Vol. 1, translation mine, Kolkata, 1978, p. 74

¹¹ Mosarraf Hossain and Mahbub-Ul-Alam, Hindu Mandir Sthapotyik Porichoy, Akshar, Dhaka, 2018; pp.35-36

¹² Kalyani Mallick, Nath Sampradayer Itihas Darshan O Sadhan Pranali, Calcutta University, Kolkata, 1946, pp. 101

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well as in Tinnath's Panchali, the *Tinnaths* are considered to be incarnations of *trideva*: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Matsyendranath, Gorakshanath and Jalandharnath are also equated with Buddhist *Trisharana*: *Buddha*, *Dharma* and *Sangha*. A reference to a Tinnath's song is found in Yogendra Nath Gupta's 'History of Bikrampur'.¹³

Adinath Temple, Cox's Bazar

The Adinath temple has been established on the Mainak hills on an island near the mouth of the Maheshkhali river and the Bay of Bengal in the Coxbazar district of Bangladesh. The Adinath temple can be reached by crossing 69 steps from the plain to the top of Mainak. It is an ancient temple of the Nath community. Adjusth Shiva and Ashtabhuja Durga idols are established here. Ratan Lal Chakraborty mentions that it is known locally that Prabhabati Thakurani who was the zamindar of Maheshkhali established the Adinath temple. 14 The temple is located at Maheshkhali Upazila Sadar, 10 km northwest of Coxbazar city. 15 However, the temple is believed to have been built between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Yogi Matsyendranath was born in the 7th century in the nearby Chandradwip or Sandwip.¹⁶ Year's ago, there were 216 acres of land under the Adinath temple. The Maheshkhali Channel to the east of the temple has swallowed up most of the land. It is said that this eight-armed idol of Devi Durga was brought from the royal temple of Kathmandu, Nepal in 1818 AD and placed in this temple. At present the amount of land in the Adinath temple including the pond is 5.06 acres. Several houses have been built in the vicinity of the temple at different times. As a result of repeated renovations to the temple, the old sculptural and architectural style is no longer available.

The Adinath temple is 10.6 m long, 7.62 m wide and 5.93 m high. It is said that the main temple was divided into 3 parts. In the northern part, there are two prayer rooms of 3.35 m square in the first part. There is a Banalinga Shiva idol in the east room. Banalinga Shiva idols can be seen in most of the Nath temples. In the west room there is an octagonal Durga idol. Adinath temple is a temple dedicated to Yogi Matsyendranath and yogi Gorakshanath. Researchers believe that Yogi Matsyendranath appeared in the 7th-8th century, and Gorakshanath in the 9th-10th century. However, "Goraksha Vijaya" Kabya, a book on their life and perfect yoga practice, was written in the sixteenth century. Adinath temple is the oldest traditional temple of the Nath community in the southernmost part of the

¹³ Ratanlal Chakraborty, Bangladesher Mandir, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1995, p. 45

¹⁴ Bangla Academy, Cox's Bazarer Itihas, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 2016, p. 64

¹⁵ Shahidullah Mohammad, Bangla Sahityer Katha, Vol. 1, Dhaka, 2014, p. 14

¹⁶ Facebook Group, Swadesh Bangla, 17 November 2015.

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Bangladesh. A market located next to the temple is called "Gorakh Ghata" market. From this name it can be inferred that Gorakshanath and his disciples used to visit this temple regularly. There is a mosque and a Rakhine Buddhist monastery next to the Adinath temple of the Nath community. This image reveals the secular liberal human religious consciousness of the Nath community. The temple worships Banalinga Shiva, Ashtabhuja Durga and Bhairabanath as well as Radhagobinda. Most of the people of the Nath community in Bangladesh have converted to Vaishnavism under the influence of Sri Chaitanyadeva. As a result, Vaishnava deities were worshiped along with Shaiva deities. A week-long fair is held at the Adinath temple every year on the Shiva chaturdashi tithi in the Bengali month of Falgun.

Adinath temple can also be the place where Yogi Matsyendranath attained yogasiddhi. I am saying this because Adinath temple is very close from Matsyendranath's birth place Sandwip. According to Bhavishyapurana and Skanda Purana, Matsyendranath was born in Sandwip. His parents and family considered him evil and floated him in the Bay of Bengal. A big fish ate him. But he went from living in the belly of a fish for 12 years in pursuit of yoga. In the end he became Yogisiddha Matsyendranath.



Figure 1: Adinath Temple, Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar

Nath Pantha Shrines 193

Chandranath Gonsai's Akhra, Kishoreganj

Nath temples and monasteries continue to play an important role in the spread of Nath tradition and culture. It can be said that in most cases the Nath Sanyasis and the monasteries have kept the Nath culture alive, even in many places householder Naths are abandoned or forgotten the tradition in Bangladesh. One such Nath Math in Bangladesh is the tomb of Yoga Siddha Chandranath Gonsai at Gobindapur in Nikli upazila of Kishoreganj district of Mymensingh division and the akhra of the Nath Yogi community. The monastery was built in the seventeenth century.

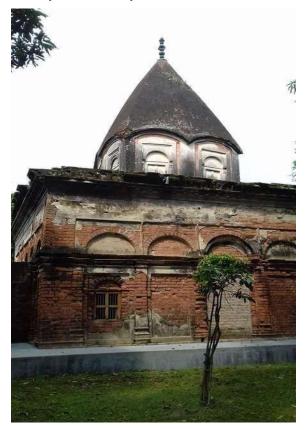


Figure 2: Gonsai Akhra, Kishoreganj.

From this monastery one finds a handwritten book of "Harmala" the book on the sadhana theory of the Nath Yogi community. At one time the Nath community was

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the dominant religious community in North Bengal, Bangladesh, Yogi Chandranath Gonsai was a seventeenth century Nath Yogi Siddha. Adjacent to the monastery are the sadhanpith and samadhi temple of his disciple Yogi Aduri Nath. There are many stories in the area about the miraculous powers of Yogi Adurinath and his yoga practice. He composed many sadhana songs on the method of Nath sadhana. Among his disciples are people from different communities. Notable among them is Mahmud Chan. He gained fame by practicing yoga. He composed several yogi's songs. The songs can still be heard in the voices of Bauls. Baul, Pir, Fakir's sadhan music was performed at this sadhanpith. There is a tomb of Mahmud Chan two miles away. Shah Jahan Saju mentioned that the book on the rare yoga practice of Nath Yogis was preserved in the Calcutta University after it was discovered from Chandranath Gonsai's akhra.¹⁷ The monastery has two entrances. The perimeter of the temple is high wall. There is a paved ghat next to the monastery. There are dighis next to all the Nath temples in Bengal. Chandranath Gonsai's akhra now bears silent testimony to its dilapidated old architectural style. At one time this Nath Akhra was one of the centers of the Nath Yogi community in East Bengal. It is to be noted that Azhar Farhad has mentioned that the Nath tradition in Bangladesh is not so institutionalized but flowing. He said that the Nath tradition is inter-twined with the Sufi and Fakiri sects. Lenta devotees practice yoga, they are yogis. In the fight against the Brahmanical sect, the devotees of the Fakiri sect also joined with the Nath Yogis.¹⁸

Kapileshwari Temple, Kapilmuni, Khulna

Yogi Bagnath's ashram was at Kapilmuni village in Paikgachha upazila of Khulna district in Bangladesh. In addition to Yogi Bagnath, there was a tomb of his guru Yogi Shishu Nath. Abul Kalam Mohammad Zakaria mentioned that there was a large and small mound in a village called Agra, one mile north-east of Kapil Muni Bazar. ¹⁹ Mr. Westland excavated a mound and found the ruins of ancient architecture. There are two stupas in Kashimnagar village north of Agra village. One of them is still located in the middle of Nath Yogi Para. ²⁰ Excavations at a mound have uncovered the remains of an ancient architecture, according to the district's first gazetteer. The natural disaster seems to have destroyed ancient architectural monuments, including temples and mausoleums. There is said to have been an ancient Kali temple in the village of Kapilmuni. ²¹ A wide brick mound

¹⁷ Shahajahan Saju, Amar Sangbad Patrika, Kishoreganj, 3 February 2020

¹⁸ Halayudh Mishra, Sheikh Shuvodaya, Asiatic Society, Kolkata, India, 2012, P.37

¹⁹ AKM Zakaria, Bangladesher Pratnasampad, Dibyaprakash, Dhaka, 2011, pp. 420

²⁰ Satish Chandra Mitra, Jashahore Khulnar Itihas, Vol. 1, Dey's, Kolkata, 2013, pp. 209

²¹ Ibid, p. 162

encircling the root of a pipal tree on the banks of the river points to the Kapilmuni's hermitage. Satish Chandra Mitra mentions that the name of this place is associated with the Kapil Muni. Like the Nath Temple, temples of the Nath Yogi community were built in this area. In ancient times, the center of Buddhism and culture was established in this region, but later, like other Nath temples in Bangladesh, temples of the Nath Yogi community were built next to Buddhist architecture. Kapilmuni used to hold a fair on the day of Baruni bath in the month of Chaitra. People used to come from different places. Since then, Kapileshwari Pujo has been introduced in the homes of the common people. People believe that on this day the water of Kapotaksha river is as holy as the water of Ganges and it is possible to attain virtue by bathing. It has been repeatedly damaged by natural calamities. At one time, an educated and a wealthy young man Binod Bihari Sadhukhan built a pucca temple and set up a stone idol of mother Kali. There are separate temples of mother Kali and Shiva in the temple area. Kapileshwari Kali temple in 2009 CE and Shiva temple in 2011 CE have been renovated and given a new look. A statue of Kapil Muni has also been installed in the Kapilmuni area. Local youth Shuvro Dev Nath told about the present condition and history of the temple. From the point of view of the land plan of the temple, the temples here have square rectangular triangular roofs.According to the Puranas, Kapil Muni is the son of Devahuti and Kardam Muni. When his mother prayed to him for spiritual advice, he said that the yoga method is the path connecting the soul and the paramatma which is to be followed by all living beings. The knowledge of Samkhya philosophy that Maharshi Kapil gave to his mother has been compiled in the "Kapil Gita". Ganga Nathi Pantha is one of the twelve Panths of the Nath community. This Pantha is named after Ganga Nath, a disciple of Maharshi Kapil. This is the path introduced by Bhagiratha who brought the Ganges to the mortuary. Kapil, the proponent of Samkhya Yoga, is said to have been a disciple of Yogi Gorakshanath. However, I think this Kapil who is the proponent of Samkhya Yoga and not that mythicalKapil muni. He is the Adi bidwan Kapil of Bengal. There are idols of Maharshi Kapil, Sagara and Bhagiratha in Sagardwip.²² While Gorakshanath was practicing yoga at the Goraksha Bansuli temple in Dumdum, he advised Kapil to go and stay in the Gangasagar.²³ Goraksha Bansuli in Dumdum, Kapilmuni in Khulna and Kapilmuni Ashram in Gangasagar were three temples of the Kapilani sect of the Nath community located near the Sundarbans area. At present, the Goraksha bansuli temple in Dumdum is under the control of the only Nath community. There are idols of Kapil Muni in all the three temples. Kapilmuni was worshiped along with other Nath Siddhas at the Goraksha

²² Satish Chandra Mitra, Op. cit., p. 318

²³ Kalyani Mallick, *Nath Sampradayer Itihas, Darshan O Sadhanpranali*, Calcutta University, Kolkata, 1946, p.101

Bansuli temple in Dumdum. Returning to the Sagar Mela, the Nath monks still gather at the Goraksha Bansuli temple. It is said that Kapil Muni used to practice yoga here. But many could not accept that Kapil Muni, the incarnation of Vishnu, had to become Shaiva Nath Guru. So many times some people in Bengal promote Kapil as another Kapil.

Mithapukur Bagduar Temple, Rangpur

Raja Gobinda Chandra or Gopi Chandra Nath left the country for life after receiving yoga initiation from Jalandhar Nath or Haripa. Then his son Bhaba Chandra Nath became king.²⁴ During the reign of Raja Bhaba Chandra Nath, the Bagduar temple was established at a distance of 1 km southwest of Udaipur in Mithapukur upazila of Rangpur district. The place is also known as Bagduar mound. It is an ancient temple of the Nath community. The actual appearance of the temple can be inferred from some of the ruins at present. The temple is now an ancient archaeological site under the control of the Archaeological Department of Bangladesh. At present the temple is standing naked. The temple is also known as 'Raja Bhaba Chandra Pat'. An eighteenth-century report from Glazier states that there were numerous ancient monument ruins and numerous reservoirs in a forested area of about 4 sq. km. This area was also called 'Udaipur Dhap'. 25 After clearing the forest, many ancient mounds can be seen there. There were many paved roads. But most of the mounds have disappeared. Ponds or reservoirs have been shot. There are currently three mounds. The Department of Archaeology has preserved them.²⁶ To the south of the Udaipur step is an ancient temple known as the "Baag Devi" temple and in a very dilapidated condition.²⁷ The temple was built at least in the tenth to eleventh centuries. Later it was reformed many times. The temple has been renovated till the British period. Later, due to lack of reforms, it has become dilapidated and old traditions are being destroyed.

The Udaipur Dhap and Bagduar temples are associated with the name of Raja Bhaba Chandra Nath. His other name was Uday Chandra. Raja Bhaba Chandra

²⁴ Satish Chandra Mitra, Op. cit., p. 341

^{25 &}quot;...the ruins which are situated in well high impenetrable jungle. Nothing of special interest was lighted on, ruins of the place and other buildings and tanks being the main feature. "Bengal District Records, Rangpur, Vol. 1, 1770-1779, edited by Walter K. Firminger, 1914.

²⁶ This is mentioned in the first Gazetteer of Rangpur district ----"Dr Buchanan saw large ruins and lines including streets of lanes between gardens. At the present day two long rows of tanks on either side of a road may be seen."

²⁷ Bangladesher Pratnasampad, Op. cit., p.150

²⁸ Glazier said, "Gopi's son Bhaba Chandra succeeded him. He is also called Uday Chandra, whence the name of his city Udaypur." *Bengal District Records*, Rangpur, Vol. 1, 1770-1779, Edited by Walter K. Firminger, 1914.

Nath was a devotee of Bagdevi. He used to go and worship in the temple himself. The people of the Nath community themselves are still worshiping. It is said that the goddess forbade the king to come to the temple for three days when she was menstruating. When the king mistakenly went to the temple in two days, he lost his wives due to the curse of the goddess and became a Yogi monk. Mr. Glazier reports that in the late eighteenth century, Buchanan received news of the discovery of some ancient coins from an old man in the Piedmont area. The gentleman told Mr. Buchanan that one of the coins had the names of Raja Bhaba Chandra Nath on one side and Bagdevi on the other.²⁹

In pre-historic times, Rangpur belonged to the kingdom of Pragjyotishpur or Kamrup. At that time, besides Sahajia Dharmasadhana, Dharma Sadhana were also common. Dinesh Chandra Sen also said that Nath Dharma was widely propagated in Bangladesh (then it was East Bengal) in the tenth and eleventh centuries. George Abraham Grierson from Rangpur collected literary specimens called "Manik Chandra Raja's Song" from a local Nath Yogi. He, however, did not mention the name of the Nath Yogi. Besides, 'Siddha Hari's song or a song based on the greatness of Jalandhar Nath was prevalent in Rangpur district. Dinesh Chandra Sen said, "In Rangpur-Dinajpur area, the story of Kanupa, Haripa, Gopichand is being sung under the name 'Siddha Hari's song'till today. Places like "Mainamati's Kotha", "King Harishchandra's paat" etc. near the place called 'Dharmapala' still bear the memory of Gopichandra and Mainamati. 30 Grierson published the Bengali language poem in Devanagari script.³¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sri Bishweshwar Bhattacharya wrote all the songs of Gopichandra from three Nath Yogis from Nilphamari district of Rangpur. The readings of two Nath Yogis were extensive and the lessons of one were short and partial.³² Bisweshwar Bhattacharya did not mention the names of three Nath Yogis. However, it is noteworthy that he published Gopichandra's songs in the language of Rangpur from Calcutta University. "Although this story of the nose lyricist belongs to the Nath community, it has transcended the boundaries of communalism and taken the form of an all-India lyric poem. Although the original origin of Dharmashrita Gatha

²⁹ Glazier said, "Gopi's son Bhaba Chandra succeeded him. He is also called Uday Chandra, whence the name of his city Udaypur", *Bengal District Records*, Rangpur, Vol. 1, 1770-1779. Edited by Walter K. Firminger, 1914.

³⁰ Dinesh Chandra Sen, Bangabhasha O Sahitya, 9th edition, PB Rajya Pustak Parshad, Kolkata 1986, pp.71-72

³¹ Ibid, p. 57

³² Sukumar Sen, *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. 1, 3rd edition, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, p. 261

Kabya is related to religion, it does not express communal sentiments, so both the Hindu and Muslim listeners of Rangpur district enjoyed it equally."³³



Figure 3: Bagduar Temple, Rangpur.

Yogir Bhavan, Bogra

The ancient monastery 'Yogir Bhavan' of the Nath community of Bangladesh is located 12 km north-west of Bogra city and 6 km south-west of Mahasthangarh. Most of the architecture here is broken. There are several idols and temples in the Yogir Bhavan. Ratan Lal Chakraborty says, "The Gorakshanath temple and the architecture adjacent to the temple probably belonged to the Nath sect, who later created Sahajia literature. The Yogi's Bhavan contains pre-muslim, muslim and modern, and architectural monuments of each era." A single-domed temple built with a single room on a rectangular land plan. Gorakshanath temple in Yogir Bhavan, Alora Village, Paikar Union, Kahalu Upazila, Bogra. One of the temples here is called Dharmadungi. It was inscribed in an inscription 'Sarba Siddhi San 1148 Sri Sufola'. Another inscription of the temple was inscribed by Sri Joy Nath in

³³ Motahar Hossain Sufi, *Bangla Sahitye Rangapurer Abadan*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 2001, p. 12

³⁴ Ratanlal Chakraborty, Op. cit., p.60

³⁵ Mosarraf Hossain and Mahbub-Ul-Alam, *Hindu Mandir Sthapotyik Parichay*, Akshar, Dhaka, 2018, p. 50

1163. It is believed that there was a Buddhist institution at this place earlier and a residential area of the Nath community was built on its ruins.³⁶ There was a very old building on the north side of Dharma Dungi. It is called Gadi Ghar. Corrugated sheet has been given as its roof has been damaged. The Dhuni here was on fire for 24 hours. The monastery was surrounded by a wall. The Yogir Bhavan on the east side used to go to the market through its south door. There are four temples in Yogir Bhavan. To the north of the monastery are the Sarbamangala and Durga temples. There was a well next to the Durga temple. Whose name was Jiyat Kund. To the east is the Gorakshanath temple. Kalbhairab temple on the south side. The Sarbamangala temple had three Haragauri idols, one buffalo Mardini idol, broken part of Ashtamatrika idol, one Saraswati idol with three faces. There is a stone Chamunda idol in Durga temple and a Shivalinga in Kalbhairab temple. Gorakshanath temple has three tombs of Nath Mohanta or Yogis. There were innumerable reservoirs in the Yogir Bhavan monastery. Among them Fuldighi and Dadhiya Dighi were of huge size. It is said that there was a house of Shalbahan kings next to Dighi.37



Figure 4: Yogir Bhavan, Bogra.

³⁶ Nazimuddinn Ahmed, Mahasthan, Mainamati, Paharpur, Archaeological Department, GoB, 2nd edition, 1979, in: Bhabanath Sarkar, Nath Dharma, Samaj O Sanskriti, Kolkata, 1988, p. 37

³⁷ Abul Kalam Mohammad Zakaria, Bangladesher Pratnasampad, Dibyaprakash, Dhaka, 2010, pp. 209-213

The condition of the present Yogir Bhavan is not the same as the previous condition. Yogir Bhavan, the main shrine or pilgrimage site of the Nath community in North Bengal, Bangladesh, located just six km from Mahasthangarh. Out of the 26 acres, 2-3 acres are left for the monastery and the rest is occupied by outsiders. The monastery area stands like a mound slightly higher than the flat land. The temple has been destroyed and its ruins are left now. Most of the Nath community in Bangladesh have converted to Vaishnavism. As a result, the importance and tradition of Nath Mandir has been lost to their present generation. Due to partition and other reasons, the people of the Nath community of East Bengal migrated to West Bengal, creating a crisis in the Nath community's monasteries and temples. Mithun Debnath, a local youth, said that in the Bogra region, it is said that if one is born in a Nath Yogi's house, one has to visit the Yogir Bhavan. He further said that if one had to walk two km through the well of this temple, one could go to another Gorakshanath temple which is located in the village of Pirapat. A Gorakshanath temple is also located here. At present, the tunnel path of the Gorakshakup of the Yogir Bhavan along with the Pirapat Gorakshanath temple has been destroyed. Presently, in the Gorakshanath temple of the Yogir Bhavan, people of the Hindu community on Thursdays and Sundays worship Gorakshanath with kheer when it is a calf. There is no maintenance of the temple now. A few days ago, local Pushpa Chandra Debnath was a priest in Durga and Shiva temples. Now another local man is the priest at the temple. Gorakshanath in Bogra region has become the god of "Gorakshak". Gorakshanath was offered milk, laddu, khai, murki and milk payes. Shaivite Yogi Gorakshanath was worshiped as lord Krishna under the influence of Vaishnavism. Naturally, the first and last lines of Gorakshanath's Panchali have Vaishnaba connotations ---

"Gorakshanath priti premanande hari hari balo."

গোরক্ষনাথ প্রীতি প্রেমানন্দে হরি হরি বল।

Nirob Kumar Debnath of Bogra said that there are people of Nath community in all parts of Bangladesh 98% of them follow the Vaishnavism. Moreover, due to the influence of Brahmanism, the temples and culture of the Nath community in Bangladesh have gradually lost their importance. The people of the Nath community are trying to defend themselves under the banner of Brahmanism. But in North Bangladesh, North Bengal of West Bengal, Rajbangshi and Palia communities of Assam, worship and songs of Gorakshanath are also active in present day. In the region of Cooch-Behar, Rangpur, the influence of Adinath Shiva and Gorakshanath of the Nath community in the songs of the Rajbangshi and Palia communities is still alive:

Shiva Dharma Niranjana শিব ধর্ম নিরঞ্জন Gorakshanatha rupe puja lan গোরক্ষনাথ রূপে পূজা লন Daki tomak Shiva guru baliya ডাকি তোমাক শিব গুরু বলিয়া Puspa rathe aaso namiya. পুষ্প রথে আস নামিয়া।³⁸

The description given by Shri Prabhas Chandra Sen in his book "History of Bogra", as quoted in Zakaria, about the building of Yogir Bhaban in 1912 is mentioned:

The monastery in the village is built on about 80 bighas of land and is surrounded by a wall. On the south side there is a huge arch made of bricks. From the outside, this place looks like the ruins of a Buddhist monastery. Inside Panchil, on the southwest side, there is Dharmadungi or Dharma Rajar Gadi. And to its north is the ruined temple called Gadi Ghar of Dharma. Outside of the boundaries to the east are the Kalbhairab temple, Durga temple and Sarvamangala temple respectively. The doors of the first two temples are on the south side and the other is on the east side. There is also a temple of Gorakshanath...The temple called Gadighar was made of bricks. It was given a corrugated shed when it collapsed in the earthquake. There is a Dhuni in this temple. It always burns. No one can say how old the temple is; it is hard to guess...There is a Shivalinga in the Kalbhairab temple. A stone can be seen on the surface of this linga. This temple has this type of brick inscription in Bengali script... Shri Jayanath Naranarayana during the year 1173 of Sriram Siddha...Padma cave in the northern hills of the Dadhi Sagar. The proverb is that this cave tunnel has reached as far as Mahasthangarh. Probably Yogi Matsyendranath succeeded in this cave...The temples are not very old, they were built later on old material. The Yogirghopa and Gorkui Maths of Dinajpur district are part of this Yogir Bhavan monastery. Mohanta Sri Balkai Nath Yogi is currently the mohanta of the monastery. Its predecessors were Shambhunath, Golapnath and Ramnath... Debottar has 460 bighas of land for the monastery. Of these, 80 bighas are monasteries, 30 bighas are paddy fields and the remaining 350 bighas are leased for 150 rupees. The fair that is held here during Shivaratri, Janmashtami attracts a large number of pilgrims.39

Yogi Matsyendranath, Yogi Gorakshanath, Jalandhar Nath/Haripa, Yogini Mainamati, Yogi Kanupa Nath, Yogi Gopichandra Nath's yoga adopt the supernatural power and siddha style. Even during the Muslim period, the influence of Nath religion did not diminish. The period from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries is generally called the glorious age of Nath Dharma. The Nath community was also influential among the Muslims of Bangladesh. Evidence of this can be found in the poetic stories of 'Goraksha Vijaya' and 'Gopichandra's Sannyasa' written by Muslim poets. 40

³⁸ Narayan Chandra Basunia, Gorakshanather Gan, Lokpuraner Anginay Rajbangshi Jiban katha, Kolkata 2014, p. 19

³⁹ Bangladesher Pratnasampad, Op. cit., p. 111

⁴⁰ Syed Ali Ahasan, "Mukhabandha", *Gupichandraer Sannyas*, Ed. Abul Kalam Mohammad Zakaria, Ryamon Publishers, Dhaka, 2017, p.3



Figure 5: Yogir Bhavan, Bogra.

Gorakshanath Temple, Gorkui, Thakurgaon

There are five temples of the Nath community at an ancient place called Gorkui, five miles west of Nekmarad in Rani Shankail upazila of the greater Dinajpur, Thakurgaon district. There are domes on the temples and tridents on the domes. The name Gorkui is said to have been due to the name of Gorakshanath. Ratan Lal Chakraborty mentions that one of the five temples is a Shiva temple, the other is a Kali temple, and the rest are the Samadhi temples of the Siddha-Mohantas of the Nath community. ⁴¹ The temple and the monastery are surrounded by a wall. The art

⁴¹ Ratanlal Chakraborty, Bangladesher Mandir, Op. cit., p. 53

of mythological paintings on the walls is important. Abul Kalam Mohammad Zakaria thinks that the age of the temples may be one and a half to two hundred years. 42 Gorakshanath is a historical person. He was present at least in the tenth to eleventh centuries. 43 Khandaker Mahmudul Hasan inscribed the rock on the temple and reviewed other features and thinks that these monuments were built during the Pala period.⁴⁴ There are temples in various parts of North Bengal of Bangladesh in memory of Gorakshanath. If the old temples are destroyed, the temples may have been rebuilt on the destroyed ones. The Shiva temple is a Charchala temple. The well of the temple is quite ancient. Wells made of sandstone are nowhere else in Bangladesh. Abul Kalam Mohammad Zakaria recovered an inscription from Gorkui in 1967, which is now in the Dinajpur Museum. Professor Abu Talib of Rajshahi University has claimed that it is an inscription of 920 Shakabda i.e. 998 AD. But the Bengali year was not introduced in 920 AD. The Bengali year is believed to have started during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Mr. Zakaria has taken the year 920 as the Bengali year and wanted to call it 1513 AD. 45 But this is not possible to be the Bengali year. The Bengali year was not introduced then. Moreover, if the temple was built at the time of Gorakshanatha's arrival, the time fixed by Abu Talib in 998 AD seems to be appropriate. The Nath Yogi community of North Bengal ofBangladesh the people of the Palia-Rajbangshi community consider the water of Gorkui or Goraksha well to be sacred. The temple had a lot of property including a pond in the Gorkui area monastery.

Although the temple area was designated as the property of debottar for the maintenance of the temple, the one Mohanta of the temple moved to India by exchanging all the property. Among the Samadhi temples one was a great Yogi Dheerchai Nath. The Gorkui well is about one meter in diameter, 7.5 feet deep. The well has been made by cutting sandstone. There are five pieces of 8-9 inch thick sandstone in each layer. This type of sandstone well is no more in Bangladesh. Zakaria Saheb mentions elsewhere that when the old temple and the inscription were destroyed during the Sultanate period, a new temple was built and the old era was kept in it. Gorkui is an important center and monastery of the Nath

⁴² Bangladesher Pratnasampad, Op. cit., p. 60

⁴³ Mohan Singh, Gorakhnath and Mediaeval Hindu Mysticism, Lahore, 1936, p. 21

⁴⁴ Khandaker Mahmudul Hasan, *Bangladesher Purakirtir Konje*, Adya Bhavan, Kolkata, 2020, p. 58

⁴⁵ Kabi Sukur Mahamuder, Gupichandraer Sannyas, Ryamon Publishers, Dhaka, 2017, p. 96

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 97

⁴⁷ Bangladesher Pratnasampad, Op. cit., p. 64

community. Among them, the Yogir Bhavan in Bogra and the Yogighopa Math in Rajshahi were not renovated. The only Gorkui Math in Thakurgaon has been renovated.



Figure 6: Gorkui, Thakurgaon.



Figure 7: Gorakshanath temple, Gorkui, Thakurgaon,

Yogi-Ghopa, Patnitala, Rajshahi

Yogighopa is located on the east side the marsh of Ghokshi under Dhamairhat Police Station, 13 km northwest of Paharpur Buddhist Monastery. It is an ancient

temple and monastery of the Nath community. Abul Kalam Mohammad Zakaria mentioned that about 300 bighas of land had been allotted for Yogirghopa long ago. ⁴⁸ There is no definite information as to when Yogighopa was founded. However, it can be said that in the ninth and tenth centuries, when Buddhism became a dream come true in the Burman-Sena era, Bangladesh was built on or near the Buddhist architecture. The Nath religion and community gained the most favour from the Pala kings. Even in the Muslim society, the Nath sect has a special influence. Khandaker Mahmudul Hasan said, "Cunningham is not, Buchanan also refers to it as the home of Deva Pal. The river that used to flow past the mounded settlements here has now lost its momentum due to earthquakes and other natural causes and turned into a small water-body the name of which is Ghokshi at present. ⁴⁹

Yogighopa is a very important archaeological site in Bangladesh. At present it is located in a remote area of Patnitala upazila of Naogaon district. Prior to 1947, it belonged to Dinajpur district. After the partition of the country, the area came under Bogra district. The archaeological site and Nath Math were attached to Naogaon subdivision of Rajshahi district from 1949 AD. In 1879, the English archaeologist Alexander Cunningham visited Yogighopa and wrote about it:

The Gupha is a small oblong room only 6 feet wide, containing a siva lingam, to the right and left of the entrance there are two platforms, one bearing the holly tulsi or basil, and the other the trident of siva. In front is the jogi's residence, and to the right there are two small shrines, one with a common plain lingam, the other with a fourfaced lingam, called 'Brahma lingam'. But there should be a fifth face on the top to represent Siva. Outside the Gupha temple there is a four armed figure of Vishnu. 3 feet 7 inches in height, and a broken figure of a female lying on a bed with a child by her side. ⁵⁰

The architecture here, including Yogighopa, is located on a mound. A mound of a few bighas is the ruins of ancient architecture. The place around the mound is also quite high. The lowlands on the other three sides of Yogighopa, except to the east, are known as Ghokshir-marsh. Atrai or another river might have flowed in this lowland. Yogighopa Math has 6 temples, 1 mohanta or yogi abode and a few Samadhi temples- Gorakshanath temple, Kalbhairab temple, Bimala mata temple, Brahma temple, Rakshakali and Samsan Kali temple. To the people of the Nath community, Yogi Ghopa is known as Bimala Ghopa. According to Yogini Kaul, Bimala mata was initiated by Yogi Matsyendranath. Yogini Bimala mata was the disciple of Yogi Gorakshanath. Yogighopa temple was established by Yogini Bimala mata herself. In this cave or ghopa she practiced yoga sadhana for many

⁴⁸ Bangladesher Pratnasampad, Op. cit., p. 282

⁴⁹ Bangladesher Purakirtir Khonje, Op. cit., pp.80-81

⁵⁰ Sir Alexander Cunningham, Archaeological Survey of India Report, Vol. XV, p.121

⁵¹ Bangladesher Pratnasampad, Ibid, p. 283

years. Nath Sampradaya is one of the important pantha is Aai pantha which was also established by Yogini Bimala mata. Once the Nath Yogi of Bengal followed both Aai pantha and Kapilani pantha.

Bimala Gopha is a Nath siddha Shakti peeth. Bimala Devi, a beautiful woman of the royal family, used to live in this place. One day Yogi Gorakshanath appeared there. Bimala Devi was childless. He prayed to Gorakshanath for a child. Goraskhanath gave some paddy seed to Bimala Devi as a blessing. After 12 years, Goraskhanath came there and saw that the paddy seed Bimala Devi was still breaking, not ending. Normally he did not get a son. Then when Bimala Devi told Gorakshanath about all the incidents, he added one child from rice and another child from rice husk or bran. Bimala Devi became a disciple of Goraskhanath with her two children. The names of the two children are Kankainath and Bhuskai Nath. Gorakshanath blessed Bimala Devi and said that Aai Pantha would be introduced in the Nath tradition in her name. Bimala mata attained asceticism and started practicing yoga at that place and became a perfect Yogini. Later the name of that place was Yogighopa. This place is presently located in Patnitala upazila of Nagaon district in Bangladesh. After the completion of yoga, the name of Bimala Mata in Nathpanthis Yogini Cholipa Nath. Entering the Yogighopa Math, the Kalbhairab temple is on the right. All Nath temples have Kalbhairab temples. The word Bhairab means terrible. Fear (bhai) + Sound (rab) = Bhairab. That is, Bhairab is the one who protects from fear. To the east of the Yogighopa is the first temple Gorakshanath temple, the second Bimala Mata temple. Even today, Bimala Mata is worshiped in the temple of Puri before the worship of the Lord Jagannath.



Figure 8: Yogir Ghopa, Patnitala, Naogaon



Figure 9: Yogir Ghopa, Patnitala, Naogaon.

The ancient architectural style of the temple is spell bounding. The Gorakshanath temple has two chambers. The tunnel path from the back cell leads to reservoir of Ghokshi. It seems that the reservoir had direct contact with the temple before. Even today, according to the old tradition, worship is done in Gorakshanath temple with milk banana. The third of the quadrangular temples is the Brahma temple. According to the architectural style of the Nath temple, each temple is a domed temple. The Samsan Kali mandir is located on the side of Ghokshi reservoir. The first temple on the west side is the Kali temple. The old glory of the monastery has been lost in the evolution of time. Six temples and a two-stored brick building housing of the Nath Yogi sanyasi are in a dilapidated condition. There is no Nath Sannyasi in the temple now. A devotee always worships. There are crematoriums and a few mausoleums on the north side behind the residence of Yogi monks. The Gorakshanath temple has been turned into a ruined temple. However, worship is done today and on the altar of Shivalinga Puja. Seeing the existence of Shivalinga and Shiva's trident, it seems that Yogighopa was the main center of Nath religion in North Bengal, Bangladesh. Mother idols, including Vishnu and the new born, appear to have been added later. Cunningham noted that there was communication with Yogighopa through the tunnel of the Yogir Bhavan in Bogra. In the book "History of Bengal" of Dhaka University, Yogi Ghopa is mentioned as a stupa:

A closer look shows that it was a Stupa and was probably an ultimate transformation of a Paharpur Buddhist monastery is located near the Yogighopa. Numerous stupa ruins can also be seen in Paharpur Buddhist Viharastructure due to an excessive tendency towards elevation and elongation.⁵²

Paharpur Buddhist monastery is located near the Yogighopa. Numerous stupa ruins can also be seen in Paharpur Buddhist Vihara.

Srihattanath Temple, Sylhet

From the 6th - 7th century AD, the Kachar, Srihattaregion was ruled by the Nath dynasty to the 12th-13th centuries. The Nath religion and community spread in this vast area for the welfare of Nath dynasty kings and Yogi Siddhas like Yogi Matsvendranath, Yogi Gorakshanath, The Nath community still lives in this region. That is proved by the Vatera copperplate.⁵³ Kamala Kanta Gupta is of the opinion that the Kalapur copperplate mine of Srihatta was excavated in the seventh century. 54 It is known from this copperplate inscription that the feudal king Marunda Nath donated land to the local Brahmins in the southern part of the Kushiyara river. On the other hand, it is mentioned that the kingdom of Gaur-Govinda or Raja Drum Nath extended to some parts of the kingdom of Kachar and Tripura besides Srihatta or Sylhet.55 The ancient name of Sylhet is Srihatta. It is actually named after the adored deity of the Nath community, God Srihatta Nath and the goddess Srihastha.⁵⁶ In the 7th century, the Nath dynasty kings of Tripura established idols of their deity Srihatta Nath and goddess Srihastha and established Srihatta Janapada in their area. When new settlements were created in an area, Hindu kings used to set up deities there. Similarly, mosques and monasteries were built by Muslim and Buddhist kings.

The ruins of Srihattanath Temple are still preserved in the area of the Central Muslim Sahitya Sansad at Dargah Gate. Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury said that there was an akhra for Nath Yogi sanyasi and devotees on the hill next to the temple. It seems that the residence of Minister Mona Roy was next to it. The residence area of Mona Roy is still called 'Monarayer Tila'. Ardhendu Shekhar Das states that the abode of Yogi Matsyendranath or Minanath and other Nath Yogi Siddhas was near the city of Sylhet called "Minanather Tila" which was later called

⁵² R. C. Majumdar, History of Bengal, Vol. 1, Dhaka University, 1943, pp. 484

⁵³ N. C. Nath, 'Tamralipi Prabhritite Bidhrita Alakshita Nath-tattwa', Shillong Sahitya Parishad Patrika, May 1981, p. 119

⁵⁴ Kamala Kanta Gupta, Copper Plates of Sylhet, Sylhet, 1967, pp. 69-74

⁵⁵ Copper Plates of Sylhet, Ibid, p.194

⁵⁶ Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury, 'Gourbange Muslim Bijay O Sufisadhakder Katha', *Sylheter Dak.Com BD*, 31 July 2019.

"Monarayer Tila". The Nath Yogi community in Sylhet had its original influence.⁵⁷ It is currently the official residence of the District Judge and the Civil Engineer. During the construction of these residences, the architectural facts used in the akhra can be identified. With the help of Rajkabi Rishikesh Vidyabinod and Raghunath Shiromani's book "Hattnath's Panchali", the ancient history, culture and public life of Srihatta are identified:

Punir bill chhariya Raja chhiltete gelo, পুনির বিল ছাড়িয়ে রাজা ছিলটেতে গেল Attanather puja diye thakurali pailo." অট্টনাথের পূজা দিয়া ঠাকুরালি পাইল। (Collected from Attanath Panchali)

There is a clear indication that King Gaur-Govinda or Drum Nath was the king of this region. Srihatta is also called "Hattnath's country". The historical account of his reign and the reliable epoch are recorded in "Hattanath's Panchali". It is recorded in 'Hattanath's Panchali' that Srihatta Nath is called 'Madhukaitabhari'. Se Srihattanath is actually an idol of Shiva. There is a mention of a Shiva temple called "Sri Hattanath" in the copperplate inscription of Raja Ishan Deva. With the advent of Srihatta Hajarat Shah Jalal in 1303 AD, the reign of Srihatta Gaur Govinda or Raja Drumnath came to an end.

Pirapat Gorakshanath Temple, Bogra

The village of Pirapat is located to the east of the Yogir Bhavan in Bogra. The Pirapat Gorakshanath Temple is located 14-15 km north of the Kahalu Upazila Sadar near the Yogir Bhavan. Remains of ancient architecture and the Gorakshanath temple are located at the foot of a high mound or tilla across a 9 shatak area site in a bamboo grove at Ghoper Aara in Pirapat Village. The temple was once associated with the Yogir Bhavan. The local People think it is a 900-1000 year old temple. These temples were built under the inspiration of Matsyendranath, Gorakshanath during the period of development of Nath religion. Now it bears witness to the times as the ruins of ancient architecture.

There are local rumors that Zamindar Dhyan Singh regularly worshiped at this temple with milk, bananas. Yogi Gorakshanath of North Bengal in Bangladesh has become a cow-guarding deity. Panchali of Tin- Nath is recited in North Bengal.

^{57 &#}x27;Sampadak Samipeshu', Ananda Bazar Patrika, Kolkata, 27 April 2017.

⁵⁸ Sri Mohini Mohan Dasgupta, Srihatter Itihas, Dhaka, 1903, p.143

⁵⁹ Prafulla Kumar Debnath, *Desh Bideshe Nath Tirtha, Math O Mandir*, Shaibya Prakashani, Dibrugarh, Assam, 2012, p. 142.

When a calf is slaughtered in North Bengal, pujo is offered in the cowshed with milk, *naru* (a kind of home-made sweet) and *payes* (a kind of pudding) made from the milk of that cow and *Panchali* of Gorakshanath or Panchali of Tin-Nath is recited:

Gorakshanather baul bajna baje. গোরক্ষনাথের বাউল বাজনা বাজে। Tak dekhiye magur mach hase.. তাক দেখিয়ে মাগুর মাছ হাসে।। Thak thak magur tor lagal pam. থাক থাক মাগুর তোর লাগাল পাম। Ek magur katiya sat. এক মাগুর কাটিয়া সাত।। Brahmonke khaoyalo. (৭) ব্রাহ্মণকে খাওয়ামো। Ek brahmoner lamba gala. এক ব্রাহ্মণের লম্বা গলা।। Tai khaye gelo kular kala. তাই খেয়ে গেল কুলার কলা। Premanande Gorakshanathe hari hari balo." প্রেমানন্দে গোরক্ষনাথে হরি হরি বল।। (Source: Popular folksongs or Tinnath Panchali)

Gorakshanath was worshiped as lord Krishna under the influence of Vaishnavism. Thus Gorakshanath is called the incarnation of Shiva. Cows are the vehicles of both Shiva and Krishna. In May 2005, anti-social activists dug up the mound in the dark of night in the village of Pira-Pat and fled with the temple's valuable assets. ⁶⁰ At present Pira Pat Gorakshanath temple is an area under the control of Bangladesh Archaeological Department.

Chandranath Temple, Sitakunda, Chittagong

Sitakunda is generally the place where Sita bathes. This shrine on the Chandranath hill in Chittagong has been mentioned by many as a place of worship. The presiding deity of the seat is Bhabani and her Bhairab is Chandranath or Chandrasekhar. According to the book 'Rajmala', the Tripureshwari idol was here, later the king of Tripura Dharma Manikya took them. ⁶¹ The area is believed to have been under the control of Buddhism during the Pala period.

⁶⁰ Daily Ittefaq Patrika, Dhaka, 29 May 2015. 61 Kaliprasanna Sen (ed.), Rajmala, Tripura, 1929, pp. 289-290



Figure 10: Chandranath Temple, Sitakunda, Chittagong.

Later, during the reign of the Chandra dynasty, Gobinda Chandra or Gopichandra was the king of the area. This Gobindachandra or Gopichandra is Gopichandra Nath, the son of Yogini Mainamati. It is said in the Tirumalaya inscription that Rajendra Chola, the king of the Deccan, invaded the kingdom of King Gobinda Chandra or Gopichandra Nath. Moreover, a copperplate inscription of the feudal king Loknath of Comilla has been discovered. The time mentioned in Loknath's copperplate is 344 Guptabdas i.e. 644 AD.⁶² The influence of the Nath religion can be seen everywhere from the 7th century onwards. Dinesh Chandra Sarkar wrote in the book "Pala-Sen era dynasty hereditary "that Gobinda Chandra was Shaiva. Chandranath is basically a Shiva temple, where there are Unakoti (near about crore) Shiva in positions. ⁶³ Sitakunda Chandranath hill has several temples including Shambhunath, Kalbhairab, Birupaksha, Shiva, Byas Kunda, Barabkunda etc. Prafulla Kumar Debnath says:

Chandreshwar Nath was the king of Sitakunda and its adjoining areas. According to the name of Chandreshwar Nath, a hill is called Chandranath hill. Shiva, the family deity of King Chandreshwar Nath, is established on that hill. The temple is named Chandranath Shiva after the hill. Kaiballya,the beautiful daughter of the king, lived next to this Shiva temple. She entered the fire pit and sacrificed herself to protect her chastity from the greedy eyes of Pathan subedar Mirza Kalu. Later a kunda was created at that place. Kaiballya was so beautiful that the people called her Sita. The name of the Kunda is

⁶² Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XV, pp. 301-315

⁶³ Bangladesher Mandir, Op. cit., p.45

Sitakunda from this name. The whole hilly region became Sitakunda." 64 Engineer Harendra Kumar Nath, a resident of Chittagong, said Brahmin priests have been worshiping at the Chandranath temple for a long time in the absence of the Nath community. In 1986, on the day of Shiva Chaturdashi, a special function was organized on the initiative of 'Bangladesh Nath Kalyan Samiti.' At that time a Nath Pujari was also with the Brahmin priest to offer tarpan to the devotees in Byas Kunda. Roads and stairs were repaired and constructed in the temple and adjoining areas with a government grant of Rs. 10 lakh. Dr. Kalyani Mallick also mentioned that there are hills and temples in Comilla named after Chandranath, Adinath, Mainamati etc. They have 'Nath' priests. Therefore, it gives an indication of the lineage of Gopichandra or Gobinda Chandra with the Nath community. 65 Moreover, Aduna, the daughter of Harishchandra, king of Savar in Dhaka, was the chief wife of Gopichandra Nath. Grierson's 'Manik Chandra's song' Aduna's lament has been published on the occasion of Gopichandra's asceticism. Dr. Binoy Sen shows that Harichandra (Gopichandra's father-in-law) of Gopichandra's song Harichandra Raja of Shunyapurana and Harichandra, the Buddhist king of the Chandra dynasty of East Bengal mentioned by Taranath are one and the same person. If the inscription in Tirumalaya is 1025 AD and Gobinda Chandra is defeated by Rajendra Chola, then Gopichandra will be about 30 years old and Mainamati will be old.66

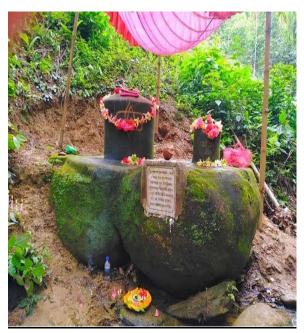


Figure 11: Shiva Temple.

⁶⁴ Desh Bideshe Nathtirtha, Math O Mandir, Op. cit., pp.141-142

⁶⁵ Nath Sampradayer Itihas, Darshan O Sadhan Pranali, Op. cit., p.56

^{66 &#}x27;Ramai Pandit', Cal Review, Kolkata, August, 1924.

Mainamati-Lalmai, Comilla

The Lalmai Mainamati hill in Comilla is named after Yogini Mainamati, a disciple of Yogi Gorakshanath, and his daughter Lalmai. The kings of the Chandra dynasty ruled here. Although they were Buddhists, they were later converted to Nath Pantha and renamed as Raja Manik Chandra, Raja Gobinda Chandra or Gopichandra Nath by Yogini Mainamati. Evidence of ancient civilization of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) the ruins of ancient monasteries and universities are found in the Lalmai-Mainamati hills. The Shalban Bihar here is contemporary to the Sompur Bihara in Paharpur. No one knew the antiquities of Lalmai Mainamati before 1875. Archaeological finds were discovered while building the road. Nalinikanta Bhattasali examineed the architecture here and mentions that it dates back to the 13th century. 67 For a long time no arrangement was made to maintain the architectural monuments. In 1955-56, it was decided to preserve 54 sites. Among them were Buddhist monasteries, monasteries with the queen's abode, various architectural monuments including temples. Mohammad Mosharraf Hossain mentions that the temple discovered inside the Mainamati cantonment area was built around 11th and 13th century AD. 68 The name Mainamati is related to the Nath religion. Though Buddhist civilization is said to have developed in the Mainamati region, the king of this region was Mainamati's husband Manik Chandra and son Gobinda Chandra or Gopichandra. Nazim Uddin Ahmed says, "The name Mainamati reminds us of the name of the mother of the famous Chandra dynasty king Gobinda Chandra of folklore and folk songs." 69 Abul Kalam Mohammad Zakaria says, "Manik Chandra, Mainamati, Gopichandra, Aduna, Paduna, Khetua, Minanath, Gorakshanath, Haripa characters are in every story."⁷⁰

Raja Manikchandra, Mainamati, Gopichandra were the disciples of Siddha Yogi Jalandhar Nath. After initiating Raja Manik Chandra and Mainamati Gobinda Chandra in the Nath way, his name was Sringeri Pa or Gopichandra Nath. Gopichandra joined the 'Pao' sect of Nath pantha. Mainamati and Gopichandra yoga centers still exist in Bangladesh and Tripura. Therefore, not only the Buddhist civilization was formed around Mainamati, but also the Nathpanthis were involved.

⁶⁷ Bangladesher Purakirtir Khonje, Op. cit., pp.174-175

⁶⁸ MD Mosarraf Hossain and MD Mahbub-Ul-Alam, *Hindu Mandir Sthapatyik Parichay*, Akshar, Dhaka, 2018, p.72

⁶⁹ Mahasthan, Mainamati, Paharpur, Archaeological Department, GoB, 1979, p.49

⁷⁰ Abul Kalam Mohammad Zakaria (Ed.), Gupichandraer Sannyas, Ryamon Publishers, Dhaka 2017, p.23

Charyapada also contains poems composed by Buddhist Siddhacharyas as well as Nath Siddhas. On the basis of all this, it can be said that besides the majority of the Buddhist architectural monuments of East Bengal including Comilla, the majority of the people of the Nath community's monasteries and temples. R.M. Debnath said, "It is seen that when we dig the soil and discover something ancient, we get Buddhist fame. The achievements of Gorakshanath, Minanath, Chowranghee Nath. We notice with amazement that at this time no so-called Hindu religious temple can be found, nor can a Muslim mosque be found."

It is difficult to determine how many temples of the Nath community were there in East Bengal in the past. In different parts of Bangladesh, many ancient mounds under the trees of big old trees or the muddy water-bodies and tombstones can be identified as temples of the Nath community. Therefore, more information about the Nath temple in Bangladesh can be researched extensively.

R. M. Debnath, Bangadeshe Dharmiya Samaj Itihas O Bibartan, Nabayug, Dhaka, 2016,
 p. 30

NATURE AND STYLE OF INDO-MUSLIM ARCHITECTURE: PERSPECTIVE OF RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE

A. T. M. Rafiqul Islam*

Abstract

During the Muslim rule in India (1192-1707), numerous buildings of both religious and secular nature were erected in various cities and administrative units at the royal and private initiatives. Over the years, a large majority of these edifices have been destroyed or are in a state of disrepair due to the cruelty of nature and the known or unknown thoughtless piracy of men. The surviving examples of these erections represent two different architectural styles, namely, the Sultanate architecture (1192-1526) and the Mughal building art (1526-1707), which we collectively call Indo-Muslim or Indo-Islamic architecture. It was the combination of two constructional methods — the arcuate system (arch-anddome) of the Muslims and the trabeate order (post-and-beam) of the land. Some remarkable building techniques of local architecture - like corbel arches and domes, lantern ceilings, jharokha (balcony), chhatris (kiosks), chhajja (eves), brackets, amlaka and kalasa finials, engraved idols of deities - are incorporated into the Muslim architecture of India. In the same way, Muslims introduced several foreign features into Indian architecture, such as voussoir arches, vaults and domes, pendentive and squinch, iwan, pointed arches, dome impost on drum, turrets at the quoins, arabesque and calligraphic design, geometric patterns, mugarnas motif and so on, which had already been developed in Muslim architecture outside India. The Indo-Muslim architecture was, thus, formed with the blending of the indigenous pre-Muslim Indian and the outside Indian Muslim building styles. It has occupied a distinctive place in the Islamic architectural history in particular and the world art in general because of its uniqueness, individuality and novel forms. This study aims at providing a brief review of the nature and style of Indo-Muslim architecture, with special emphasis on the ground plans and structural features of religious buildings.

Introduction

Architecture is a monumental building erected by the synthesis of the ground plan, structural design and aesthetic quality. The work of art, particularly building art, is one of the prime sources of past events that have played an important role in rebuilding history. Through the formation of the architecture of a nation, it is possible to evaluate the value and excellence of that nation's civilization. Building art mirrors the socio-economic and cultural lives of people. The combination of two

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significant but opposite cultures and civilizations, which is rarely observed in human history, has occurred in the journey of Indo-Muslim architecture in the blending of indigenous and extraneous characteristics. The pre-Islamic architectural traditions of India were set out by the erection of Buddhist and Jain caves, stupas, pagodas, temples, monasteries, hermitages (ashrams) and so on in the 3rd century BC. Unfortunately, among those buildings, only temples exist in pre-Muslim India and that no extant edifices of the secular buildings built in India at that time can be found. A retrospective review revealed the identity of the three art forms — the *Nagara* or Northern style, the *Dravida* or Southern style and the *Vesara* or mixed (hybrid) style. It should be noted that the temples of North and South India were distinguished based on some specific features, like sikharas and gateways (gopuram). The sikhara remained the most prominent feature of Northern Indian temples, whereas the massive gateway was the famous trait of South Indian temples. But the Vesara style temples shikhara and mandapa are joined by the antarala (a small lobby between garbhagriha and mandapa). Thus, it can be said that the Vesara temples were built through the unification of Dravida of South Indian and Nagara of North Indian architectural features. The arrival of the Muslims in this subcontinent was accompanied by the introduction of such types of construction and decoration. They are unique and in many ways different from the pre-Islamic Indian architectural traditions that had already developed outside India during the Muslim rule. It can be said that disregarding the ambiguities of the two diverse creations and ignoring the direct influence of the regional weather and climate, the Muslims gladly embraced the pre-Islamic constructional skills of the region as well as their architectural heritage. The Muslim architectural art in India, particularly in the construction of mosques, mausoleums, minarets, idgahs, madrasas, forts, palaces, hammams, hauz, baoli, hunting lodges and bridges, can be said to have been the result of a synthesis of two major architectural styles — the pre-Islamic style of the land and the already developed Muslim traditions outside India. The two styles are generally regarded as Indo-Muslim or Indo-Islamic architecture; individually, the former one is known as the Sultanate building art and the latter is known as the Mughal building art. Needless to mention, Indo-Muslim architecture holds a unique status for its distinctive features, though it belongs to Islamic nature. Therefore, more different types of buildings were made in India than elsewhere in the world for about five hundred years during the Muslim rule (1192-1707). The following is an attempt to briefly review the nature and style of Indo-Muslim architecture, with particular reference to the ground plan and structural design of religious buildings. The review is expected to play an important role in providing a clear idea of the glorious cultural heritage of religious architecture in medieval India. It is worth mentioning that Indo-Muslim architecture is classified into two major chapters — one of which is the imperial style of Delhi and the other is the regional or provincial style. The provincial style of Indo-Muslim architecture is not included here, because a large number of those monuments seemed adequate for a single study. However, the buildings of regional styles are discussed wherever relevant. Because it is important for art historians to perceive how the architectural legacy of a certain period continues to affect the development of the art of architecture in later periods of human history. The prime goal of this study is to collect all the documentation available in an effort to fill at least some of the gaps in our knowledge of this area.

Indo-Muslim Architecture

In the end years of the 12th century the permanent Muslim footing was made in the northern part of Indian soil. In course of time, the Muslims were able to bring under their control the entire Indian sub-continent comprising the modern states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and ruled over here till the coming of the British. During this long period of time, the Sultanate and the Mughal rulers – with their Upper Indian capital cities of Delhi, Agra, Fathpur Sikri and Lahore – governed the whole sub-continent by dividing it into a number of provinces like Bengal, Deccan, Gujarat, Malwa, Punjab, Multan, Kashmir and others. These Upper Indian rulers of the royal families as well as the provincial governors, who came from mainly the central Asian and Middle-Eastern Muslim countries, were all more or less connoisseur of art and architecture. It is at their patronage as well as the privative initiatives, numerous buildings - both secular and religious in character - were erected throughout the sub-continent. This is exemplified by the archaeological discoveries and literary sources. A large number of these erections have disappeared due to the fateful hammerings of nature and the thoughtless piracy of men. Nevertheless, many are still extant either in good repair or in dilapidated condition to tell the glorious Muslim heritage of Medieval India. The existing buildings reflect the blending of the two constructional styles. One was the already developed arcuate system based on arch-and-dome that had been imported from the Arab, the Persian and the Turkish origins; and the other was the pre-Muslim Hindu-Buddhist-Jaina trabeate order based on post-and-beam of indigenous sources. Some distinguishing features introduced by the Muslims in Indian architecture are voussoir arches, vaults and domes, pendentive and squinch, iwan, pointed arches, dome impost on drum, turrets at the quoins, arabesque and calligraphic design, geometric patterns, muqarnas motif and so on. Similarly, indigenous elements of Muslim architecture in India are thought to have included corbel arches and domes, lantern ceilings, jharokha (balcony), chhatris (kiosks), chhajja (eaves), brackets, amlaka and kalasa finials, and engraved idols of deities. With the synthesis of the two aforementioned art traditions, there emerged a new style of architecture in India under the Muslim rule. The new style is widely or popularly regarded as the Muslim architecture in India or more precisely the Indo-Muslim architecture.

Religious architecture

Buildings associated with human religious activities in various ways are termed as religious architecture. Having been Driven by spiritual inspirations, different communities have built numerous religious edifices under different names in the hope of showing loyalty towards and gratifying the creator. The edifices include mosques, tombs, idgahs, madrasas, khankas of the Muslims; churches and cemeteries of the Christians; Buddhist pagodas; chahartaq of the fire-worshippers; Hindu temples and mandapas and the likes. The existing monuments of Indo-Muslim architecture reveal that most of the buildings built during the Sultanate and the Mughal periods were religious in nature. A large number of them, mostly mosques, show a greater variety of forms by exploiting the parent style. Other surviving religious monuments consist of a few tomb-buildings, which were very popular in the Sultanate period as well as in the Mughal era. The extant tomb edifices in Indo-Muslim architecture are the second largest in number and expose the greatest diversity of styles based on the ground plan and architectural features. On the basis of structural design and artistic value, the immortal Taj (1632–53) is one of the most important examples of Indo-Muslim architecture of its kind. Nevertheless, there are also some examples of madrasa buildings belonging to the religious order in medieval India. The L-shaped edifice (1316) to the southwest adjacent to the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque and the L-shaped structure (1352) in the Hauz-i-khas area of Delhi are identified as the two oldest Islamic seminaries or madrasa buildings in India.² The construction plan and purpose of some buildings – like the Baghdad (1057) and the Nishapur (1058) madrasas in Iran and Central Asia; and the Tokat (1151-57) and the Niksar (1157-58) madrasas in Anatolia – can be considered as the predecessors of the madrasa architecture in India.³ There are some examples of such buildings in the architecture of medieval Bengal, built by the continuity of the former tradition. In this regard, the Belbari (1520) and the Darasbari madrasas (1522) of Gaur in the capital city of medieval Bengal, known from recent archaeological explorations and excavations, can be said to be the best

¹ A. T. M. Rafiqul Islam, "Modhjugiyo Banglar Sthapatya: Prokriti o Dhara", Bangladesh Asiatic Society Patrika, vol. 36, 2019, p. 3.

² P. Brown, Indian Architecture (Islamic Period), (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Ltd., 1975), p. 18; Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, Sultani Amolay Muslim Sthapatyar Bikash (Rajahahi: Rajshahi University Text Book Board, 1996), pp. 143-44.

³ Andre Godard, *The Art of Iran* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), p. 286; O. Aslanapa, *Turkish Art and Architecture* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1971), p. 124, fig. 21

examples. Though considering the structural design of the second madrasa, the only excavated architectural monument in Muslim Bengal is an imitation of the earlier Buddhist *viharas* exposed in Mainamati, Paharpur and elsewhere that were built during the pre-Islamic age.⁴ Some other monuments constructed during the Muslim era, such as *idgah* and Minar, are also noteworthy. There are some examples of *idgah* in Indo-Muslim architecture, but the references to such buildings are very few in this area. Though the examples of minaret architecture are actually rare, the Sohdra Minar and the Qutb Minar in Delhi are the two most eminent names in the history of world art. The five-storied first minaret building had a brick lattice on the surface to allow light into the interior. The structural design of Sohdra Minar bears a strong resemblance to the minarets being built in Iran and Ghazni in the first half of the 12th century.⁵ The Qutb Minar, built as a victory tower, is considered as a unique structure in Indo-Muslim architecture as well as in global art history. Here, Qutb means a pole and axis in Islamic theology and thus the pivot of Justice, Sovereignty and Faith,⁶

Mosque architecture

The main way to the development of architecture is its continuation. Throughout the history of world architecture, a particular region or a country bears more or less the imprint of that of the preceding period. For example, one cannot imagine Gothic architecture without the earlier Romanesque, Renaissance except Roman architecture, Rococo architecture minus Baroque or early Muslim architecture excluding Greco-Roman, Syrian and Sasano-Byzantine art. Similarly, the pre-Islamic Indian architectural heritage and the already developed Muslim construction styles have also been played an important role in forming and evolving the following building art of Indo-Muslim architecture. In the context of cultural history, this process of transfer is as important as its originality. Indo-Muslim architecture, better termed as the Sultanate and Mughal building art, was no deviation from this norm. The establishment of Muslim rule in India in the last decade of the 12th century (1192) led to the development of a new style of architecture, combining the arcuate system of the Muslims and the trabeate order of the indigenous method. As a result, following both traditions, various religious and secular buildings have been erected in the subcontinent. Among those religious buildings, mosques have been constructed

⁴ ABM Husain (ed.), Architecture, A Cultural Survey of Bangladesh Series-2 (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2007), p. 156; A. B. M. Husain (ed.), Gawr-Lakhnawti (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1997), p. 100.

Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 7.

⁶ Satish Grover, The Architecture of India: Islamic (727-1707), (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1981), p. 12.

in more significant numbers. As the key monument of Islamic architecture, the mosque should, from all considerations, be regarded as the greatest achievement of Muslim artistic activities. All through the Islamic world in all ages, the Khalifas, Sultans, Emperors, Governors, Amirs and individuals alike have been encouraged to build mosques by their self-initiatives. Hence, not just in terms of numbers, but with its majesty and grandeur features, the mosque architecture is one of the most important traditions of Islamic architecture glorified worldwide. The religious piety and the strong desire for the personal glorification of the builders were perhaps responsible for the erection of such a relatively large amount of mosques in the overall Islamic world. The Muslim architecture of India is no exception – a case in which the absolute majority of the existing buildings are mosques. The above facts can be easily understood by looking at the remaining edifices of Indo-Muslim architecture, which are still in a good state of preservation with subsequent restorations, repairs and additions.

In the history of Indo-Muslim building art, mosque architecture has developed into two main streams — one is the conventional type of single quadruple design and the other is the four-quartered plan. Few examples may be mentioned: the Quwwatul-Islam Mosque (1195) and the Adhai-Din-ka-Jhompra mosque (1199) built during the Mamluk period; the Begumpuri (1370) and the Kalan mosque (1387) at Turkman Gate built during the Tughlaq age; the Fathpur-Sikri Jami (1568-72), the Delhi Jami (1644-58), and even the Badshahi mosque (1673-74) in Lahore built during the Mughal era. All of these are the examples of the mosque with a single courtyard type of conventional plan, having a central ground with a cloister on three sides. However, the above-stated mosques were built upon a standard design that was introduced in Muslim architecture by erecting the Arab standard plan mosque and developed through constructing the standard Iranian form, particularly the Mughal standard type mosque of India. It should be mentioned here that the Jami mosque of Damascus (705-15) is a superb example of the Arab standard type and the Isfahan Jami is another splendid instance of an Iranian standard mosque (8th-17th centuries). It should be noted that in the same sequence, except for the layout and structural variations, there are a lot of examples of single-courtyard type mosques that were later erected in the succeeding Muslim dynasties outside India: the Abbasid examples like Baghdad Jami (762), Raqqa Jami (772), Samarra mosque (847) and so on. On the other hand, the two mosques — the first one Kalan mosque (1370-71) at Nizamuddin and the other Khirki mosque (1370) at Jahanpanah, built in a four-courted cruciform plan — have brought exceptional

⁷ G. Michell (ed.), Architecture of the Islamic World (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), pp. 232 & 253.

diversity to the history of mosque architecture in India as well as Muslim architecture as a whole. Nonetheless, the cruciform layout of the above mosques is not diversified in India; rather, its origin is rooted in Muslim architecture outside India. It is thought that the Ghajnavi Palace at Lashkari Bazar in Afghanistan (built around 1020) and the Nizam-ul-Mulk Madrasa (built before 1092) at Khargard of Rai have been built in a cruciform plan. Furthermore, the inner courtyard of Ribat Sharaf (1114) and the Jawara mosque (1135) may have followed the same design.⁸ There is no doubt that the aforementioned structures may have also played a significant role in formatting such mosques in Indo-Muslim architecture. But it is noteworthy that the plan to build a house with four courtyards was also prevalent in pre-Islamic India. In ancient times, there were references to four-quartered houses well-known to Indian builders; and relics such as Sarvatabhadra, Nandiyabhadra, Badradhaman, Swastika and Rukaka. In fact, the hostile weather of this region such as the hot wind (loo), the scorching sun and torrential rain — was the driving force behind the creation of this new design. It should be pointed out that the cruciform building plan may have taken a suitable place in Indo-Muslim architecture which is known as an outstanding contribution to the endless genius of Khan-i-Jahan Telingani, the Prime Minister of Firoz Shah Tughlaq. It is also mentioned here that the sanctuary of both mosques is divided into square bays, like the Begumpuri mosque in the Persian manner, each one roofed individually by a cupola founded on the Iranian chahartaq system.¹⁰

A review of the history of mosque architecture in India shows that the three-domed Bara *Gumbad* mosque (1494) marked the beginning of a new type of mosque-building in Indo-Muslim architecture. Before the erection of this mosque, the earlier mosques, such as Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, Adhai-din-ka-Jhompra mosque, Jamatkhana mosque, Begumpuri mosque, Kalan mosque, Kalan mosque at Nizamuddin, Khirki Mosque, even Bharuch and Cambay mosques, had more than three domes. Therefore, for the first time, the construction of the Bara *Gumbad* mosque set the example of a three-domed type in the Sultanate tenure, which henceforth, with some elaborations and alternations, continued to be erected by the Grand Mughals and their great Jami mosques in Delhi, Agra, Fathpur-Sikri, Lahore had a three-domed prayer chamber. Hence, the importance of the Bara *Gumbad* mosque lies in the construction of a new type of mosque with a three-domed variety in the Indian subcontinent. This style of Indo-Muslim architecture appears to have been an elaboration of the Persian *iwan-i-karkha* type of mosque, consisting of a

⁸ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 108.

⁹ R. Nath, History of Sultanate Architecture (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1978), p. 71.

¹⁰ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 107; Ibid, p. 70.

barrel-vaulted structure with a dome in the center. 11 The style was further developed and continued to be practiced throughout Mughal Bengal, of which there are numerous examples, such as Kherua mosque (1582), Maldah Jami mosque (1595), Islam Khan mosque (1608-13), Lalbagh Fort mosque (17th century), Shah Niamatullah Wali mosque (1639-96), Andar Qila mosque (1667) and so on. Moreover, the five-arched facade, oriel window, and conical bastion of Bara Gumbad mosque have contributed significantly to the development of mosque architecture in India through the extensive and integrated use of the Suri and Mughal periods. Likewise, the combination of cut plaster design and colorful tile ornamentation to create beauty has once made this mosque a unique example in the heart of India. One more technique of tile ornamentation, which the Mughals used to decorate their buildings on a large scale, originated from the Persian encaustic tiles. Similarly, the Indian fashion for tile ornamentation was later used in a very limited way in the Mughal buildings of Bengal. The tomb of Bibi Pari and the hammam within the Lalbagh Fort are two well-known monuments that exhibit this feature. The Moth-ki-masjid (1505) in Delhi and the Rohtasgarh mosque (1543) in Bihar are two significant architectural monuments built in the same style. But the two-storied extra-octagonal towers with arched windows in the corners of the Moth-ki-Mosque, instead of the corner towers attached to both ends of the qibla walls of the Bara Gumbad mosque, have given rise to some exceptional features in Indo-Muslim architecture. The central archway of the later mosque was constructed under the influence of the pylon entrance of Tughlaq architecture by the insinuation of the Jami mosque of Jaunpur (1438-78). The Oila-i-Kuhna Mosque (1541), built by Sher Shah Suri, is considered an excellent example of the integrated Lodi and Mughal style. The roofing system of this mosque — the squinch arch in the phase of transition of the central bay, the application of corbel mugarnas to the vaultedroof on both adjacent bays and the cross-vault ribs on the edge bays and the artistic beauty of the proportionate decoration — deserves to be regarded as a connecting bridge between the Lodi and the early Mughal architecture.

The Palace-mosque is an important chapter not only in Indo-Muslim building art but also in the history of Muslim architecture in general. The Nagina mosque in Fathpur-Sikri and the Mina mosque at Agra Palace Fort are notable examples of this style. The first is believed to have been made of white marble for the royal family's women and the second for the emperor's use. Although Indian mosques are

¹¹ Andre Godard, op. cit., p. 285; M. A. Bari, Mughal Mosque Types in Bangladesh: Origin and Development (Ph. D. Thesis, Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University, 1989), p. 89; A. B. M. Husain, "Mosque plan - an outline History", Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, vol. VI, Rajshahi University, 1982-83, p. 11.

built next to compact residential buildings, there are no differences in their construction plan and usable purposes. As a result, the palace-mosque tradition in India was influenced by the same examples from the early days of Islamic architecture. The superb specimens of this class are Qasr al-Mania (705-15), Jabal Size (705-15), Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (728-29), Khirbat al-Mafjar (8th century), Masatta (743-44) etc.¹² It is worth noting that early Islamic palaces were always adorned with mosques, which could be built either inside or outside of the palace walls. This style was followed later in the architecture of Mughal Bengal and the rectangular chamber with three semi-octagonal *mihrab* apertures inside the west wall within the *Tahkhana* Palace (1655) at Gaur is the only known example of the Palace mosque of Bengal.¹³

Following the establishment of Muslim rule in India, the building styles of Indo-Muslim architecture differed greatly and in some cases were distinct from those of ancient Indian architecture. The building materials of pre-Islamic Indian architecture were mainly stone and lantern ceilings, corbel ogee arches, finials, eaves, brackets, kiosks, oriel windows etc., all of which were the notable structural features of the land. After arriving in this country, the Muslims became acquainted with pre-Islamic Indian architectural traditions. Along with this, they introduced a new art style to coordinate the architectural heritage according to their religious needs, which is known as Indo-Muslim architecture and it has taken a special position in the history of global art. The use of corbel arches and domes of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, Adhai-din-ka-Jhompra mosque and the tomb of Sultan Ghari (1231) is perceived as a perfect imitation of the pre-Muslim Indian style. The roofing system of the first two mosques, the lantern ceiling of the local style as well as the vaulted roof of Muslim traditions outside India, is visible. It is believed that the construction of such roofs was done by imitating the lantern ceilings of the Hindu method of construction and the Ladkhan Temple (5th century) in Karnataka can be mentioned here as a perfect example.¹⁴ The top of the arches of the arched-screen of Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque also has an ogee shape at the meeting point of the twin curves. The shape of an ogee arch of Indo-Muslim architecture is derived from the arches of the chaitya-window and the gavaksa-motif, both of which are well-known to indigenous artisans. 15 The pre-Islamic Indian corbel arches were later noticed in pre-Muslim Bengal architecture, such as Paharpur and Shalbon Bihar, built in the

¹² A. T. M. Rafiqul Islam, "Modhjugiyo Banglar Sthapatya: Prokriti o Dhara", op. cit., p. 19.

¹³ A. B. M. Husain (ed.), Gawr-Lakhnawti, op. cit., pp. 113-14.

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lad_Khan_Temple (accessed on 01-07-2021)

¹⁵ R. Nath, op. cit., p. 10.

eighth century.¹⁶ This method was later reflected in the Muslim architecture of Bengal, like the *mihrab* of the Bari Mosque (1300) in Pandua, the arches of the kiosk pulpit of the Adina mosque (1375), the *mihrab* arches of the royal gallery at Darasbari mosque (1479) and Chhotasona mosque (1493-1519) in the suburbs of Gaur. In the mosque architecture of medieval Bengal, efforts have also continued to build a dome by using the corbelled pendentive, originating from pre-Islamic Indian architecture; and the best examples were the mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi (1298) at Tribeni and the Bari mosque at Hughli.¹⁷

After the Kirkhi mosque, no large congregational mosque appears to have been erected in Delhi for more than a century. A few mosques constructed during the Afghan era (1490-1540) were more private, called *punch-mukhi* mosques. They are built only prayer-hall divided into five bays except for cloisters, towering entrances and spacious courtyards. The name punch-mukhi comes from the fact that it has a sanctuary with five bays and a five-arched facade. The best examples of this class are Bara Gumbad masjid at Lodi garden, Moth-ki-masjid, Jamal-i-Kamal-imasjid at Qutb Delhi, Qila-i-kuhna masjid (16th century) and Humayun's mosque (1530) in Agra. Their importance lies not so much in its position in the evaluation of panch-mukha mosques as in the fact that Humayun's mosque is one of the earliest monuments of the Grand Mughals. It marks the primitive stage when Mughal art had not even made a modest beginning and the prevalent norms and standards of art provided the sole criterion. According to R. Nath, the statues of Humayun's mosque in its evolution are insignificant — as a matter of fact, even behind the Bara Gumbad mosque.¹⁸ The Jamal-i-Kamali masjid was regarded as the perfect and most beautiful mosque in this order. Still, all these majestic mosques represent the apex of the Sultanate architectural style in Delhi.

Of the mosques erected during the Mamluk period, the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque and Adhai-din-ka-Jhompra mosque are the oldest surviving examples of Indo-Muslim architecture built in a standard form. The silent feature of the second mosque is the addition of four tapering towers at its four corners and oriel windows on both sides of the central entrance. The conical bastions later became a hallmark characteristic of Indo-Muslim architecture, especially Tughlaq architecture in India and the Muslim architecture in Bengal. It is unnecessary to say that the conical

¹⁶ Abul Kalam Muhammad Zakariah, Bangladesher Pratnsampad (Dhaka: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, 1984), p. 248; Nazimuddin Ahmed, Mahasthan Mainamati Paharpur (Dhaka: Department of Archaeology, 1997), p. 73.

¹⁷ S. M. Hasan, Mosque Architecture of Pre-Mughal Bengal (Dacca: University Press Ltd., 1979), p. 129; A. H. Dani, Muslim Architecture in Bengal (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1961), pp. 43 & 48.

¹⁸ R. Nath, op. cit., p. 113.

bastions of Tughluq architecture bear a very close resemblance to the Abbasid building art, but the corner towers of medieval Bengal were usually made of polygonal bamboo knots, which were a replica of the corner poles of the country's prevalent thatched huts. The ending feature (oriel window), emanating from Rajputana and Gujarat's Hindu architecture, 19 appears successively in Mughal architecture, especially as an important part of the Akbari style of architecture Some other characteristics of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque and the Adhai-din-ka-Jhompra mosque are important as well. Both mosques introduced a system of arched facades in the history of Muslim architecture in India. This Indian version of the feature was most likely influenced by the arcade fronts of Persian brick-built mosques, which were inspired by the Arab architecture of the early centuries of Islamic architecture.²⁰ In their turn, the Arabs perhaps borrowed the arched motifs from the vaulted palace of Taki-i-Kisra at Ctesiphon (3rd century) of the Sassanians, which again had possibly been acquired from the Parthian buildings, as evidenced by the palace-facade at Hatra (2nd century).²¹ The Badaun Jami mosque, erected by the provincial governor Ruknuddin Firoz Shah in 1223 is a more significant building in the history of Indo-Muslim architecture for its exceptionality. That is the square *mihrab* aperture, an important element of mosque architecture that was introduced in India through this building.

One of the unique features of Muslim architecture in India is the *sahn* without *riwaq* of Shams mosque (1211-36) at Nagaur in Jodhpur, which has later been noticed in the Bharuch Jami mosque (c. 1300) and the Khanapur mosque (1325) in Maharashtra, both built during the Tughlaq period. Besides, the *sahn* without *riwaq* of these mosques is reminiscent of the Cordova Jami mosque (785-87) built by Abdur Rahman I and the Qairouan mosque rebuilt by Ziyadat Allah (836).²² The Jamatkhana mosque, built during the Khilji period (1290-1320), is notable for its ground plan and roofing system in Indo-Muslim architecture. The prayer hall of this rectangular mosque is divided into three parts: the square central bay roofed by a hemispherical dome, and two small domes covering the two rectangular bays on both sides. The mosque of Sher Shah (1541) in Bihar appears to have been built in the same pattern in Indo-Muslim architecture. The influence of this style was later observed in the Muslim architecture of Bengal and the Walipur Alamgir mosque (1692) in Comilla is an important example..²³ One more remarkable peculiarity of

¹⁹ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁰ P. Brown, op. cit., p. 11.

²¹ M. A. Bari, Khalifatabad: A Study of Its History and Monuments, (M. Phil. Thesis, Rajshahi University, 1980), p. 80.

²² Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 112.

²³ M. A. Bari, op. cit., p. 125-26.

the Khalji mosque is the intervening story or *triforium* imposed between the top of the sanctuary wall and the base of the dome. This striking feature could later be seen in the tomb of Mohammed Adil Shah, known as Gol Gumbaz (1626-56) of Bijapur, the capital city of the Adili Shahi dynasty (16th-17th centuries).²⁴ Alai Darwaza, the monumental gateway of Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, was built with masonry laid into two courses: a narrow course of headers alternating with a much wider course of stretchers. A similar construction system is observable in the Parthian palace of Hatra (2nd century) in Iraq and some of the Syrian buildings.²⁵ The erection technique of Alai Darwaza evolved from that of the succeeding period and at a later date is still a noticeable feature of the Mughal buildings.

The surviving examples of Tughlagian mosques are distinguished by some new features that were hitherto unknown in the earlier period. Some examples may include the pylon entrance (Begumpuri mosque), conical tapering bastions, battering walls, cross-vault construction and vaulted terrace (Kalan and Khirki mosque), the impression of military architecture, and plaster coating for adornment. The great pylon entrance of the Begumpuri mosque was a quite notable feature of Indo-Muslim architecture in medieval India as well as overall Muslim architecture. Although the Pylon entrance, a novel peculiarity of Indo-Muslim architecture, is said to be an imitation of the ancient Egyptian architectural traditions, the attempt to establish an opinion that can be observed demands a fair analysis. Its origins can be traced back to the land of India. The gopuram, a massive gateway of a Hindu temple in South India, has had a significant influence on the design of such an entrance.²⁶ As a whole, the pylon entrance of Begumpuri mosque was a great achievement of its age and the Sharqi mosques derived large-scale inspiration from this prototype to build their similar buildings, the best examples of which are the Jaunpur Jami and the Atla Jami mosque (1480). Another distinctive feature of Tughlaq building art, as well as Indo-Muslim architecture, is the construction of battering walls. It is understandable that this style may have been derived from pre-Islamic Indian traditions. Once upon a time in the ancient period, a battering wall was found in a building in the Indus Valley Civilizations (c 3000-2000 BC).²⁷ This type of construction is especially applicable to clay or brick walls to reduce the intense pressure on the thick walls in the basement.

²⁴ P. Brown, op. cit., p. 81.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 17.

²⁶ John Flaming & et al., *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 96.

²⁷ P. Brown, *Indian Architecture* (Buddhist and Hindu period), (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Private Ltd., 1959), p. 1.

As mentioned earlier, the Khirki mosque and the Kalan mosque is designed on a cruciform plan, produced by the two main aisles crossing at right angles. The roofing system of the former mosque has created a great diversity in Indo-Muslim architecture as well as in Muslim architecture as a whole. Its roof is divided into twenty-five square bays, four of which are open-to-sky for light and ventilation, twelve spaces are covered by flat roofs and the remaining nine are roofed by a cluster of nine domes. Nine such dome clusters are placed symmetrically in three rows and each dome cluster is periodically set up with nine flat roofs. The plan of nine-domed square buildings has gained wide popularity in various Muslim countries in Asia, Europe and Africa since the beginning of the ninth century. The earliest examples representing the style are those of the Masjid-i-Tarikh (ninth century) at Balkh in Afghanistan and an archaeological excavation by Darb Zubaida has uncovered the foundation of a nine-bayed mosque similar to those at Kurt in Saudi Arabia.²⁸ Some other examples of a similar building tradition include the Bu Fatata mosque at Susa (c. 840), the Sharif Tabataba mosque (c. 950) in Cairo²⁹, the Bib Murdum mosque (999) in Toledo and the Iski Cami (1403) at Eldrin.³⁰ Such a nine-domed cluster erection plan eventually had an important influence on the subsequent Muslim architecture of Bengal. The construction of a square mosque plan with nine domes in the Sultanate architecture of Bengal, such as the Nine-domed mosque and Masjidkur mosque at Bagherhat, Kasba mosque at Barisal, Satair mosque at Faridpur, all of which were built in the fifteenth and sixteenth century and the Laldighi mosque in Rangpur (17th century) etc.

The vaulted terrace of both Khirki and Kalan mosques is another specialty of Indo-Muslim architecture. A looming question is about its oigin. Some scholars have tried to find out its source in Muslim architecture outside India. The influence of such Indian mosques came, no doubt, from those of the early Islamic building art. The *tahkhana* platform or substructure of the arches of the as-Salih al-Talai mosque (1160) in Egypt provides an example.³¹ The Fatimid great eastern and western

²⁸ M. A. Bari, *op. cit.*, pp. 351 & 352; A. Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980), pp. 263-64, fig-903; Parween Hasan, *Sultans and Mosques* (London: I.B. TAURIS, 2007), p. 43, fn-21.

²⁹ D. Hill, Islamic Architecture in North Africa (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1976), p. 100; Markas Hattstein (ed.), Islam: Art and Architecture (German: h.f.ullaman publishing GmbH, 2013), pp. 114-15; K. A. C. Creswell, The Muslim Architecture in Egypt, vol. 1 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 11-15.

³⁰ A. Papadopoulo, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-64 & 504, fig-1114; B. Unsal, *Turkish Islamic Architecture* (London: Alec Tiranti, 1959), pp. 20-21, fig-4(b); A. Kuran, *The Mosque in Early Ottoman Architecture* (Chicago: University Press, 1968), p. 154, fig-167; Markas Hattstein (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 544.

³¹ K. A. C. Creswell, Muslim Architecture, vol. I, p. 276.

palaces were also provided with underground vaults, the idea of which again must have been borrowed from the Abbasid architecture of Baghdad and Samarra, where a large number of buildings are known to have been erected with underground vaulting.³² This Firozian tradition of constructing mosques on high vaulted plinths was later continued in Lodi and Mughal architecture. The tradition is epitomized by the Bara Gumbad mosque and the Humayun's Tomb. The mosques, built in the same vaulted platforms, are also known to have existed during the Mughal Bengal. The extant examples of the type are the Khan Muhammad Mirdha mosque (1704-05) and two other mosques — one at Begumbazar (1700-04) in Dhaka and the other at the Katra premise (1723) in Murshidabad. A plinth of this type could have been built as a residence for teacher-and-students to conduct Masjid-based magtabs or as a shop for commercial drives. In modern times, the vaulted terraces of many mosques or edifices are used as storehouses for business purposes or garages. In medieval Bengal, the mosques containing the vaulted rooms beneath the platforms appear to have been originally devised to be used as dormitories for the students and teachers of the madrasas. All the Mughal mosques in Bengal may be, in this context, regarded as 'Residential Madrasa-Mosque'. 33 In their outward effect, those above mosques (khirki and kalan mosque) bear some resemblance to the enclosure of the tomb of Sultan Ghari for their projected entrances with flights of steps, particularly with their round bastions thrown out from each corner.³⁴ A ladies' gallery at either end of the prayer hall of the Cambay Jami mosque (1325) in Gujarat has produced some varied examples of Indo-Muslim architecture.³⁵ The use of such mulakkhana or royal galleries has been particularly followed in the successive architecture of Sultanate Bengal, such as Darsbari mosque and Chhotasona mosque in Gaur and Kusumba mosque (1558) in Naogaon district. By the same token, the receding plane is one of the interesting peculiarities of the Jami mosque (1412) at Irish, which began large-scale inspiration from its predecessor, the Alai Darwaza in Delhi, built by Alauddin Khalji.³⁶ The outline of its arches and the system of repeating them prefigured the model that subsequently prevailed under the Sayyids and Lodis. That means it represents the stage of transition between the style of the Tughlaq and that of the succeeding dynasty.

³² Architecture, Series-2, p. 241.

³³ M. A. Bari, op. cit., p. 229.

³⁴ P. Brown, op. cit., p. 24.

³⁵ M. R. Tarafdar, "Some Aspects of the Mamluk Buildings and their Influence on the Architecture of the Succeeding Periods", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, vol. XI, No. 1, Dacca, 1966, p. 62.

³⁶ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 75.

With the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi in the first decisive battle of Panipat in 1526, the establishment of Mughal rule in India added a new dimension to the cultural sphere, especially in the art and architecture of the land. The change was noticed not only in ground plan and structural design but also in decoration, grandeur and majesty in comparison to that of the Sultanate period. It is understood that the Mughals did not completely accept the construction and decoration of architectural monuments composed of indigenous-oriented building styles during the Sultanate era. Thus, they gradually created a new form of architecture; its inspiration mainly came from the already developed by Muslims outside India, specifically the building style of Persia. It is worth noting that some outstanding features are seen to have been used in a modified and refined manner in Mughal architecture. Numerous innovative features are characterized by some unknown earlier traits, such as the octagonal tomb plan, the four axial iwans, the bulbous dome, the four-centered engrailed archways, opus-sectile and pietra-dura inlay works, muqarnas design etc. They were added to the Indo-Muslim architecture, which spread over during the Mughal period and a new trend was introduced in the history of Muslim architecture in India. In this context, it can be said that the older cultural trends of the land, such as the Sultanate, did not die out completely, rather helped the process to attain the perfection of the Mughal architecture. The surviving examples representing this unique style are the Fathpur-Sikri and Delhi Jami which were built in imitation of the Persian standard plan mosque with four axial iwans and bulbous domes. It is, therefore, no wonder that all the domes exteriorly spring from octagonal drums and gain some height. This is probably an imitation of the shouldered dome of the Lodi period in Delhi. But more important is the fact that these domes are slightly bulbous in the Persian style. A double-shell dome with a bulbous outline foremost appeared in the mosque of Bibi Khanam (1399-1404) and Gur-i-Mir (1404), the tomb of Timur in Persia.³⁷ The first Indian building to copy this sort of dome construction appears to have been the mausoleum of Humayan in Delhi. From this time onward, these Persian features were repeatedly performed in Mughal buildings, the climax of which is seen in the Taj Mahal in Agra. The construction and decorative aspects of the Mughal tradition — such as the fourcentered archway, hemispherical single-shell dome, plastered ornamentation and mugarnas squinch of the Sambhal mosque (1526) and the Baburi mosque (1528-29) in Kabulibagh — can be considered exact copies of the Lodi architecture. However, in the construction of small domes on the lateral bays of Baburi mosque and Kanchpur mosque (1530-31) in Agra, the design of intersecting arch-netting was observed at the transition phase. The arch-netting at that stage of the cited

³⁷ M. A. Bari, Khalifatabad, op. cit., p. 108.

mosques is a reproduction of those of the Timurid style of architecture. The best example of this trait is the Namazgah mosque (16th century) in Samarkand of Central Asia.³⁸ In consideation of all the features — like the domed chamber, a high *pishtaq* in a rectangular frame with an arched niche, flanked by lower lateral wings of four domed bays, arch-netting in the phase of transition etc. — the Kanchpura mosque is very much akin to that of the just aforesaid mosque.³⁹

The three-domed standard type mosque of Indo-Muslim architecture, which began with the erection of the Bara Gumbad and Moth-ki-mosque set up during the sultanate period, appears to have attained perfection through Akbar's Jami mosque in the imperial capital of Fathpur-Sikri. The three-domed rectangular prayer hall was divided into seven sections, the eleven four-centered archways, the threedomed variety with finials and other features of the quoted Jami mosque have strong similarities to those of the Delhi Jami and the Badshahi Jami in Lahore. In some cases, such as the absence of four axial iwans and the additional four tall minarets of the Badshahi mosque, they have made some asymmetry to that of the mosques as mentioned above. It is also noteworthy that the lofty minarets attached to each corner of the Mughal mosques are a new fashion in Indo-Muslim architecture that was later followed in the Mughal mosques of Bengal in a modified and refined manner. The three-domed prayer hall of Mughal mosques, the central dome of which is larger than the flanking ones, was initiated in Indo-Muslim architecture through the construction of the Kotla Mubarakpur mosque (1433-34) built during the Sayyid period that appeared as a Mughal standard type mosque at once. 40 The Mughal three-domed sanctuary was at the time regarded as a perfect mosque plan by itself and was kept as such without the addition of riwags in some of the lovely mosques, such as the Moti Masjid (1662) in the Delhi Fort and the Sunehri Masjid also in Delhi. 41 The type was brought to Bengal by the Mughals during their rule and all the Mughal mosques were built on the same plan, influenced by the North Indian architectural tradition. There is no congregational mosque built in a standard form during the Sultanate period except for the Adina mosque (1375) at Hazrat Pandua, but a large majority of the Mughal mosques in Bengal, like those of the preceding Sultanate buildings, are of the covered types. The climatic conditions of the riverine Bengal inspired them to build such a type of mosque

³⁸ Md. Mokhlesur Rahman, *Mughal Sthapatya* (Rajshahi: Sayeda Sufia Khatun, 2011), pp. 19 &

³⁹ Ebba Koch, Mughal Architecture (Germany: Prestel-Verlag, 1991), p. 36.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 172.

⁴¹ Architecture, Series-2, p. 272.

because the heavy rainfall would have caused sewerage issues within the courtyard of the mosques.

One of the familiar features of the Mughal standard type mosque is the four axial iwans which are unknown to the Sultanate architecture of the region, with the best examples of the style being the Fathpur-Sikri and Delhi Jami. This Mughal fashion is thought to have been adopted from Iranian architecture such as Bibi Khanam mosque, Sheikh Lutfullah Jami (1602-03) and Masjid-i-Shah (1630-31) in Isfahan.⁴² Although the iwan-i-gateway to Muslim architecture is derived from pre-Islamic Persian architecture, the Muslims are the main promoters of the four-axis iwans and the style in question was first introduced in the Seljuk Madrasa. The Zahiriya (1265) and Nasirya madrasas (1303-04) in Egypt, built during the Seljuk period, are the oldest examples of the four-axis iwans madrasas.⁴³ It should be pointed out that the four iwans of the Persian standard mosque are the courtyard facing, but the other three, except the sanctuary iwan of the Indian version, are extroverted to the courtyard. Notwithstanding, the Mughal iwan was not a replica of the Iranian iwan, which was relatively much larger and deeper and was not topped by horizontal rows of kiosks, a common feature of Mughal architecture in India. The Upper Indian Mughal tradition was later followed in Bengal architecture, with the best example being the Persian-influenced iwan type portal of the Katra buildings in Bengal, which was imported into Bengal during their regime. Some well-known features of Fathpur-Sikri Jami mosque - such as two-story chamber arrangements on both sides of the sanctuary, iwan-i-gateway, four-centered arch, horizontal parapet, semi-octagonal mihrab, plastered decoration etc – have all played an important role in the construction of Rajmahal mosque (16th century) in Bengal.44 The curved cornice of the Moti Masjid in Delhi is reminiscent of the bent cornice of the traditional huts of ancient Bengal. 45 The Bengali chala-curved motif as the curvature of the roofline was introduced in the Sultanate architecture of Bengal with the erection of the Eklakhi Tomb (15th century) and was consequently used in almost all subsequent buildings, with the patent and marked characteristics of Sultanate architecture as well as some early Mughal examples. As corroborative to

⁴² A. B. M. Husain, Fathpur-Sikri and Its Architecture (Dacca: Bureau of National Reconstruction, 1970), p. 103, fig-27; R. Nath, History of Mughal Architecture, vol. II (Delhi: Abhinava Publications House Ltd., 1985), p. 192, fig-64; P. Brown, op. cit., pp. 113-14; Barbara Brend, Islamic Art (London: British Museum Press, 1991), pp. 128 & 152-53; Markas Hattstein (ed.), op. cit., pp. 466 & 470.

⁴³ Andre Godard, op. cit., p. 287.

⁴⁴ Architecture, Series-2, p. 238.

⁴⁵ G. Michell (ed.), op. cit., p. 270.

this, mention may be made of the Chatmohar mosque (1581) in Pabna, the Kherua mosque (1582) in Bogura and the Atiya mosque (1609) in Tangail.

Tomb architecture

A Mausoleum generally refers to a building made of stone or brick on the grave of a ruling class or family members or members of the court or even a special important person. In other words, a tomb building is an immense vaulted hall with an underground chamber for burying dead bodies. Besides the erection of mosques, tomb architecture has also become very popular in the religious and social life of Muslims. In the history of tomb architecture, two ground plans – octagonal and square - were adopted as the model structure. In Muslim architecture, Oubbat al-Sulaibiya (862) is known as the embryonic tomb which is the first of its kind to be built on an octagonal plan and the tomb of Ismail Samanid (10th century) of Bukhara, on the other hand, is a unique example of the second tradition in Muslim architecture of being built on a square plan covered by a dome roof.⁴⁶ It is no exaggeration to say that the main source of Muslim tomb architecture, like mosques, is rooted in Roman-Byzantine and Persian lands. Mention may also be made of the tomb of the Virgin (fifth century) in Jerusalem and the chahartaq of Persia.⁴⁷ The ground plan of *Qubbat as-Sakhrah* (691), built by Khalifa Abdul Malik,made an important contribution to the development of octagonal tomb buildings in the Muslim world. However, the development of tomb architecture led to the emergence of the Seliuk-era tomb towers, such as Gumbad-i-Oabus (1008). Gumbad-i-Surkh (1147) and the tomb of Alauddin (1298) at Varamin⁴⁸. The latter is a unique style of the mausoleum; and the tombs of this brand are covered with canopies at the top of polygonal chambers. The construction of Sultan Ghari's tomb in India also marked the beginning of a new chapter in tomb erection, the pinnacle of which can be seen in the world-famous Taj Mahal. It should also be noted that the tomb architecture of India demonstrates a greater variety of forms according to the ground plan and structural design. They include the square plan (tomb of Iltutmish), the square + octagonal plan (tomb of Sultan Ghari), the fully octagonal plan (tomb of Khan-i-Jahan Telingani), the pavilion tomb (House-i-khas), the complex octagonal plan (tomb of Humayun), the stratified tomb (tomb of Akbar) etc. Needless to say, some of these Indian tombs are made in imitation of local design while others are modelel on Muslim architectural heritage outside India.

⁴⁶ Barbara Brend, op. cit., p. 73.

⁴⁷ Ayesha Begum, *Bangladesher Muslim Samadhi Sthapatya* (Dhaka: University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, 2015), p. 27.

⁴⁸ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 46.

The tomb of Iltutmish (1235) is the earliest surviving square tomb-building in Indo-Muslim architecture. Through the erection of this tomb, this style assumed so much popularity in the Indian subcontinent that the builders of almost all the succeeding dynasties and even the other provincial rulers accepted it. As examples of square tomb-buildings, the Ghiyasuddin Balban's tomb (1280) of the Mamluqs, the Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's tomb (1325) of the Tughlaq age, the Shish-Gumbad (1498-1517), the Bara-Gumbad (1494), the Chote-Khan-ka-Gumbad (1490), the Bagh-i-Alam-ka-Gumbad (1501) and the Bara-Khan-ka-Gumbad (1510) of the Lodi era, the Ibrahim Khan's tomb (1540), and the Zaman Madari's tomb (1543) of the Suri period can be mentioned here. The tomb of Samanid is believed to have inspired the construction of a single-domed square tomb in India and this brand is supposed to have been built in the history of art through the construction of the chahartag of the Sasanian fire temple. The best example of a Sassanian chahartag is the fire temple (2nd century) at Neisar. 49 The building may be taken as the starting point of the square single-domed monuments which were followed not only in the architecture of the subsequent dynasties in Persia, such as the Ghaznavids, the Karakhanids, the Seljuks but also almost everywhere in the Muslim world. This style was later introduced into the medieval architecture of Bengal through the making of the Eklakhi tomb (15th century), built on a square plan and topped by a dome. Gradually, this tradition was followed by the architecture of a single-domed square mosque in Bengal and there are numerous examples of that known as 'kiosk type'. This type of mosque is scattered over in different parts of Bengal, with the best example being the Allakuri mosque (1680) in Dhaka, which seems to be a copy of those of the Sultanate examples. A large number of such mosques are known in Sultanate Bengal, i. e., the Binat Bibi mosque (1456) in Dhaka, the Khanjahan mosque (1459) in Bagerhat, the Goaldi mosque (1519) at Sonargaon and so on. It should be noted that mosques of this style have been widely built and used in Persia, such as the Karakhanids, the Seljuks and the Ottoman period as the Iranian chahartaq. It is worth noting that the corbelled form of squinch vaulting used in the dome of Iltutmish's tomb demonstrates traditional Hindu construction methods. The corbelled squinch of this tomb has been built with the help of overlapping courses — with the corbelling out of every upper course following the outline of the arch, being thus the traditional trabeate method of the native builder.50

The arrangement of the three *mihrab*s in the same room of the Iltutmish tomb is quite varied and more impressive. Of course, long before the construction of this

⁴⁹ M. A. Bari, Khalifatabad, op. cit., p. 89, fn. 2.

⁵⁰ R. Nath, op. cit., p. 39.

tomb, the tri-mihrab in a tomb chamber was noticed in the Fatimid architecture of Egypt, such as that of Khadra Sharifa Mashhad (1108) and the tomb of Ikhwat Yusuf (c. 1125), which are the best examples of that variety.⁵¹ This feature of the Fatimid architecture is probably derived from Persian architecture by the Armenians. However, it can be said that tombs with mihrabs are commonly referred to as Mashhad. The Fatimid Mashhads is undoubtedly the earliest edifices of Mashhad architecture and later flourished in Persian and Indian Muslim architecture. An important feature of Indo-Muslim architecture is the construction of radiating voussoir arches which was first observed in Ghiyasuddin Balbon's tomb (1280) in the continuity of the Muslim architectural tradition outside India.⁵² Likewise, the square kiosk with a sloping roof installed at the top of the dome of Sheikh Kabiruddin Auliya's tomb (1397) undoubtedly bears a likeness to the chauchala vault of Bengal architecture. The Bara Gumbad tomb is considered the best example of the square tombs scattered in different parts of Indo-Muslim architecture. Although built in a square plan, it imitates numerous examples, such as the four-axis projected entrance with ornamental turrets at the quoins that distinguish this tomb from other square tombs in this country. This style later influenced the subsequent architecture of Bengal and the best specimen of the type is the Allakuri mosque in Dhaka which seems to be a replica of numerous Sultanate examples of Bengal. But it differs in other details, the most notable of which is the four axial projected frontons with turrets. For these reasons, therefore, this mosque deserves to be considered as the rightful successor to the tomb of Bara Gumbad, which is one of the preeminent examples of the kiosk-type tomb in India. Apart from the *mihrab*, the square ground plan, four axial projections, dome impost on drum, conical bastions, finials, structural design and other details have all created a superb semblance between the two buildings.

The tomb of Sultan Ghari in Delhi is a unique specimen of a combination of square + octagonal plan tomb structures built during the Mamluk age in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent. The underground chamber, the combination of covered and uncovered parts, the use of shallow-fluted pillars in the mosque area and the pyramid-shaped dome are thought to have been derived from the Seljuk architecture of Persia. The impression of an underground tomb chamber is evocative of the Seljuk tomb at Maragha in Azerbaijan, the examples of which are *Gumbad-i-Surkh* and *Gumbad-i-Oabus*.⁵³ Needless to say, the convention of

⁵¹ A. B. M. Husain, Arab Sthapattya (Dhaka: Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy, 1979), pp. 357 & 365.

⁵² P. Brown, op. cit., p. 15; Satish Grover, op. cit., p. 20.

⁵³ Andre Godard, op. cit., pp. 301 & 303.

burying the dead body in an underground chamber, such as the tomb of Sultan Ghari, has been practiced since ancient times, one of which is the Christian monument in West Asia and the other is the fire temple in East Persia.⁵⁴ The erection of such tombs containing an underground coffin may have arrived in India through the Seljuks, who took refuge in this area after being persecuted or affected by the Mongols. Moreover, such a mausoleum consisting of covered and uncovered parts is thought to be an exact imitation of the tomb of Sultan Sanjar (1157) of Seljuk Persia.⁵⁵ Although the shallow-fluted pillars in the mosque portion are considered the bearers of Roman architecture, the feature was probably imported from Syria by the Seljuks.⁵⁶ Similarly, the pyramid-like angular-shaped dome bears a strong resemblance to the Seljuk domes found at Kayseria in Anatolia in the twelfth century.

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In Indo-Muslim architecture, some mausoleums were built in the Multan region by affluent regional architectural traditions in the thirteenth century. Notable examples of such tombs are the tomb of Bahauddin Zakariya (1266-87), the tomb of Shahid Shahid (d. 1270) and the tomb of Shams Sabzwari (1329), built during the Tughlaq period. Their distinguishing features are bricks built in three-tiered structures — the first is square, the second is octagonal and the third is covered by a dome, conical bastions at each corner, glazed tile decoration and the use of wooden lath for elasticity etc. This type of tomb may have been developed in Multan by the unification of local features of the land and external elements of Muslim architecture, especially the Central Asian traditions.⁵⁷ The style in question gained such popularity in Indo-Muslim architecture that its architectural appeal remained intact for the next six centuries.

A review of the history of octagonal tomb architecture in India shows that the tomb of Khan-i-Jahan Telingani (1370) of Delhi is considered the first complete octagonal tomb in the Indian subcontinent. This particular structure was the starting point for a new tradition in tomb architecture and there is a complete sequence of tombs with a similar pattern, built at intervals for almost exactly two hundred years. However, there are many octagonal tombs, from the Tughlaq tomb to the Mughal mausoleum of Azam Khan (1566), made of a single octagonal hall with an arcade verandah. The initial source of this fashion may be the *Qubbat as-sakhrah*, the first octagonal shrine of Islamic architecture and the earliest monumental tomb of

⁵⁴ Ayesha Begum, op. cit., p. 30.

⁵⁵ J. D. Hoag, Islamic Architecture (New York: Harry & Abrams Inc, 1977), p. 290.

⁵⁶ M. R. Tarafdar, "Some Aspects of the Mamluk Buildings and their Influences on the Architecture of the Succeeding Periods" op. cit., p. 53.

⁵⁷ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 52.

Muslim building art is the *Qubbat al-Sulaibiya* and the tomb of Halagu at Maragha is another example of the octagonal type.⁵⁸ Indeed, numerous octagonal mausoleums have been constructed throughout the Middle East and India, most of which were made possible through the erection of the *Qubbat al-Sulaibiya*. However, this is the first known extant example of an octagonal tomb in overall Muslim architecture. This modest beginning shows that the royal tombs of the Sayyids, the Lodis and the Suris were inspired to build an octagonal design. From the construction of the tomb of Khan-i-Jahan Telingani to the erection of the tomb of Sher Shah, the tombs of Mobarak Shah Sayyid and Muhammad Shah Sayyid in the Sayyid era (1414-1451) and the tomb of Sikandar Lodi in the Lodi period (1451-1526), were built in an octagonal plan with an enclosed verandah. Although the tombs of Mubarak Shah Sayyid and Muhammad Shah Sayyid were built in imitation of Sultan Ulzaitu's tomb with the addition of an octagonal plan with corner turrets, an extra eight small towers, which were attached to each corner of Muhammad Shah Sayyid's tomb, have brought some differences to its overall structural design.

The tomb of Sikander Lodi is the first garden-tomb in Indo-Muslim architecture, serving as a connecting bridge between the fortified walls surrounding the earlier type of tomb and the extensive terraced gardens enclosing the subsequent mausoleums of the Grand Mughals. Other notable examples of octagonal tombs built during the Suri period are the tomb of Hasan Khan Sur (1540-45), the tomb of Ikhtiyar Khan (1540), the tomb of Isa Khan (1547) and the tomb of Chimni Khan (1550). All of these tombs preceded the tomb of Sher Shah. The first three tombs are said to have been renovated into the octagonal mausoleums of the Sayyid and Lodi eras. But the tomb of Chimni Khan, with its square interior chamber, has introduced special features in the history of tomb architecture in India. It can be said in passing that although the tomb-plan of Chimni Khan is octagonal, the inner chamber of its square is akin to the tomb chamber of Timur in Samarkand, mostly known as Gur-i-Mir.⁵⁹ Despite the attachment of the kiosk at each angle and the installation of an additional eight kiosks on the second level of the tomb of Sher Shah marks the beginning of something new in the artistic history of India. Furthermore, while the domes of the preceding tombs are erected on octagonal drums, the dome of Sher Shah's tomb is imposed on a sixteen-sided drum and the addition of latticed windows at the base of the drum has made the tomb glorious in its unique features. In the same way, the raised platform with an octagonal pavilion of the same monument has never been seen in any other earlier tombs, which proved to be the forerunner of the minarets later adopted as attached or detached by

⁵⁸ R. Nath, op. cit., p. 85.

⁵⁹ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 214.

the Mughals as complementary to their tomb structures. It is to be noted that the octagonal tomb construction was later followed in the architecture of medieval Bengal and the Begumpur tomb of Rajmahal (17th century), the building of Rahanpur in Nawabganj (so-called tomb) and the octagonal monument of Madhuil (so-called Karbalar *darga*) are the perfect examples of the undisputed style. However, the last-mentioned building, an octagonal central chamber that is surrounded by a rotating arcade verandah, can be said to be an exact imitation of the tombs of Sayyid and Lodi in Delhi.

Another special type of tomb was erected in Indo-Muslim architecture, known as the pavilion tomb (1351-88), located in the Hauz-i-khas area of Delhi. There is a considerable debate among the scholars, regarding the source of such tomb construction. There appears to be no doubt that it was loaned out from an extraneous Muslim architecture outside India. Because the pavilion tomb-buildings have a long history in Muslim architecture, the four tombs are known as Saba Banat (c. 1010) or Saptakanya, erected during Fatimid times in the south of Fustat in Egypt, are considered the earliest pavilion-type tomb structures in Islamic architecture. 60 These were the tombs of the great Fatimid Dais, who were the confidential messengers of the Sultans. 61 But according to R. Nath, it is essentially the plan of the Jaina mandapa, the only structural difference being that the dome has been built on an arcuate system in this case, while the Jaina mandapa had a corbelled ceiling.⁶² However, these canopy-shaped tombs are thought to be similar in design to the pavilion tombs in Hellenistic Syria.⁶³ The ground plan of some Sasanian fire temples recently discovered in Persia is also constructed as a canopy type. For example, the fire temple of Neisar can be mentioned here, the lower part of which is square, but the upper portion is covered with a dome.⁶⁴ Efforts to integrate the ancient monuments may be the Hellenistic or Sassanian fire temples on the one hand and the oldest Muslim relics such as the Oubbat as-Sakhrah or Oubbat al-Sulaibiva on the other contributed to design the pavilion tombs of Indo-Muslim architecture like Saba Banat.

The complex octagonal plan of Humayun's tomb (1562-71), built in a fusion of Indian and Persian styles, is a new addition to Indo-Muslim architecture as well as the architectural history of the whole Muslim world, culminating in the erection of

⁶⁰ A. B. M. Husain, Arab sthapattya, op. cit., p. 324.

⁶¹ Ayesha Begum, op. cit., p. 27; A. B. M. Husain, Itihas o Shilpakala: Madhpracha o Dakhin Asiaer Shonjogh (Dhaka: Novel Publishing House, 2016), p. 196.

⁶² R. Nath, op. cit., p. 62.

⁶³ K. A. C. Creswell, op. cit., pp. 112-13.

⁶⁴ A. U. Pope, Persian Architecture (New York: George Braziller, 1963), p. 71.

the Taj Mahal, the world-famous edifice of Emperor Shahjahan. This tomb, comprising an octagonal central hall and a diagonal passage leading to the corner octagonal chambers, consists of five octagonal rooms. The central chamber is surmounted by a Persian bulbous dome, imposed on the elongated drum with four axial iwans and the corner chambers are roofed by kiosks. It is mentioned here that this complex octagonal plan of Indian tombs has never been seen in Persia, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Arabia and Egypt. Considering the concept of exterior niches, the outer design and surrounding verandahs, it is undeniable that the ground plan of Humayun's tomb probably seems to be a modified and expanded version of the house plan of the Hemakut temple in the present Bellary district of Karnataka state. 65 Similarly, another remarkable building of Indo-Muslim architecture is the tomb of Akbar (1605-12) which has five stories, but its floors gradually became smaller in shape and size at the rising phase. The mausoleum with such ground-plan and structural design was previously unknown in Muslim architecture outside India and it differs even from the square and octagonal tombs of the Sayyid, the Lodi and the Suri periods in Delhi. It is, therefore, thought that the inspiration for the construction of such a tomb may have been drawn from the local architectural tradition. Its architectural origins are presumed to have been rooted in India and the structural design of this tomb can be compared with the infrastructure of the Vaikunta Perumal Temple at Kanchipuram (710-20). 66 The temple just quoted is also made up of five levels, though each of which has not shrunk as much as the tomb of Akbar. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Emperor Akbar may have been inspired by the models of the mentioned temple to build such a five-storied mausoleum.

The ongoing introductory study on Indo-Muslim architecture will perhaps remain incomplete if the tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah (1628), built on a nine-fold plan, cannot be covered here. This white marble tomb is a unique gem of Indo-Muslim architecture, built in a synthesis of Iranian and local building traditions and regarded as a transitional edifice from the sandstone building art of Akbar to the marble architecture of Shahjahan. Its structural design is a square compartment consisting of four corner rooms and passages corresponding to an enclosed verandah. It should be pointed out that the construction of this building marks a great change in the architectural style as well as the method of decoration of Mughal architecture. The monumental Taj, built in of white marble, pietra dura

⁶⁵ R. Nath, *History of Mughal Architecture*, vol. I (Delhi: Abhinav Publications House Ltd., 1982), pp. 263-65; Md. Mokhlesur Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁶⁶ Md. Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 153; R. Nath, Mughal Architecture, vol. III, p. 393, fig-72.

inlay work and carving methods, is the effective and successful result of Itimad-ud-Daulah's tomb. It may be mentioned at this point that Sultan Ghazan Khan built his tomb in a new style by erecting a suburb called Gazania which was later adopted as a perfect design for Persian and Indian architecture through the tomb of the Mongol Uljaitu.⁶⁷ The fact that it was built in the middle of a garden in a natural setting as well as the ornamental turrets at the end of the tomb can be considered the forerunners of the Akbar tomb and the world-renowned Taj Mahal. Needless to say, Mughal architecture, based on the foundation laid by Emperor Jahangir with white marble, later flourished under the patronage of Emperor Shahjahan and wellestablished its place in the history of world art. The plan of Itimad-ud-Daula tomb has had a special impact on the subsequent tomb buildings in Mughal Bengal, i. e. the tomb of Shah Niamatullah Wali at Gaur (17th century), the tomb of Bibi Pari at Lalbagh Fort (1684) and the tomb of Bibi Maryam (17th century) at Narayanganj. Moreover, the pyramidal roof of Akbar's tomb of Sikandra and Itimad-ud-Daula's tomb in Agra indicate the local architecture of Bengal and the very name Bungalow itself suggests that it is of Bengali origin and takes its derivation from the chauchala huts of the land. Nevertheless, the aforesaid Bangulow type is represented by the Churihatta mosque (1690) and the Armanitola mosque (1716) in Dhaka, each being covered entirely by a single chauchala vault. Although the chauchala vaulted roof of these mosques is suggested to have been the development or evolved style from the Upper Indian pyramidal roof of the abovementioned tombs. Notwithstanding, the pyramidal shape of the chauchala vault is probably the product of the outstanding contributions of Bengali craftsmen.

Though the Sultanate and the Mughal funerary buildings in India offer interesting examples of the structural and compositional variety, there are only two major kinds. The first type consists of a single-domed square tomb chamber and the second is of an octagonal type that is surrounded by an arcade verandah. Under Mughal patronage, another tomb-building style, known as the complex octagonal design, flourished in India. It is built on a nine-fold plan, in which four cubic outer octagonal chambers are linked geometrically to a central octagonal hall, but are independent. It is worth mentioning that a continuous verandah with a passage and a garden layout has become a defining feature of this class. Notably, the first two styles are the earliest and the commonest forms of Islamic tomb architecture. The traditions, also mentioned earlier, remained popular during the Sultanate and the Mughal eras and came to be associated with the orthodox plan. But the later style is very uncommon in Indo-Muslim building art as well as Islamic architecture. It is not an

⁶⁷ Abul Bashar Mosharaf Hussion, *Islami Chitrakala* (Dhaka: Khan Brothers and Company, 2004), p.83.

exaggeration to say that its origin and development are rooted in the land of India. So, the aforesaid mausoleums were built under the influence of Muslim architectural traditions as well as a distinct indigenous style that can be traced back to Indian funerary structures.

Minar architecture

The Arabic synonym for the word ÔMinar' is manar or manara. The word is derived from the Arabic word nar, which means fire-burns. The word manar refers to a specific location where the fire can be kept burning. It refers to the *Pharos* at Alexandria, on top of which a fire lit at night as a warning for mariners.⁶⁸ In Muslim architecture, a tall tower adjacent to a mosque is generally known to us as a minar. However, in Arabic terms, the place where the muezzin calls for prayer is recognized as the *mazinah*. During the reconstruction of the Fustat mosque (673) of Amr by Maslama, the tenth governor of Egypt, four minarets were added at the four corners of the mosque. It is said to be the first example of a minaret in Muslim architecture, according to the account of Magrezi, though he used the word Sawami instead of Minar in his text. Sawami is usually used to refer to a quadrangular minaret at each of the four corners of the temenos or the sacred enclosure of the Syrian temple inhabited by the fakir-dervishes'. 69 It is also used in Arabic poetry for signposts or the oil lamp in the cell of a Christian monk. 70 Gradually, the meaning of the word was extended to building art as well as the mosque towers, where the call for prayer was given. The four corner towers of temenos were later used as the minarets of the Damascus mosque. The towers were used as dwellings or observatories in the pre-Islamic age. It is to be noted that the minaret adjacent to the mosque was not only built for azan but also was developed as a symbolic sign intertwined with various purposes. Mention is made of Manara al-Malwiya (848) of Samarra architecture, Jam minar of Afghanistan (1163-64), Giralda minar of Seville (1184-99), Qutb minar of Delhi (1199-1230) and even the Firoz minar of Gaur (1488-90). The minarets, as a religious structure, represent the excellence and victory of Islam, whereas as a secular building, they serve as witnesses to the builder's achievement and glory.

In the twelfth century, with the establishment of good relations between the Indian Muslims and the pre-Seljuk sultans, architectural tradition pre-Seljuk architectural tradition permeated into Indo-Muslim architecture; the Qutb Minar in Delhi is an

⁶⁸ Architecture, Series-2, p. 264, fn-3.

⁶⁹ R. Nath, op. cit., p. 29; A. B. M. Husain, Itihas o Shilpakala, op. cit., p. 251.

⁷⁰ A. B. M. Husain, *The Manara in Indo-Muslim Architecture* (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1970), p. 2.

excellent example of the same character as the preceding. The minaret in question is thought to have originated in pre-Seljuk architecture. Several minarets were found in Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey before the construction of the Qutb Minar: the Gumbad-i-Qabus in Gurgan, Nadali (9th century) and Jarandas Minar (11th century), the Zarkurgan Minar (1108-09) in Rai and the Minarets in Ghazni (early twelfth century) all of which are the best examples of its kind.⁷¹ However, the Jam Minar (1149), built by Ghiyasuddin Muhammad, can be considered as the Qutb Minar's predecessor. This is due to the ground plan, tapering shape, lantern top and other similarities that have resulted in a wonderful bonding between the two minarets. Meanwhile, a brick-built minaret was also observed at Khwaja Siah Posh (1150) in Afghanistan in a periodic pattern with angular and rounded edges.⁷² The stated minaret has played an important role in the alternative arrangement of the angular and spherical fluted design of the exterior of the Qutb Minar. The minaret was initially associated with mosque architecture for the call to prayer in early Islamic architecture, but it was later instrumental in enhancing the beauty of the building. In the tomb architecture, for example, eight minarets around the dome of Sultan Uljatu's tomb, four minarets at the corner of the gateway of Akbar's tomb at Sikandar and even four minarets at the four corners of the Taj have been used as ornamental motives, which are very evocative of the structural design. 73 The minarets have become an integral part of the building, a reflection of the extraordinary achievements of the artists. Similarly, in the seventeenth century, the minaret was combined with Indian Mughal, Deccan, Bijapur and Golconda architecture in the form of a guldasta, transforming it into a decorative motif rather than a full-fledged minaret, which added a new dimension to the exterior decoration of mosques or tombs.

Madrasa architecture

The word *madrasa* comes from the Semitic root *D-R-S*, which means "to learn, to study" and also literally means "a place for learning and studying". The Arabic word "madrasa" refers to a general educational center that focuses on the practice of Islamic learning. Outside the Arab world, the term generally refers to a specific type of religious school or college for learning the religion of Islam, though this may not be the only subject studied. In an architectural and historical context, the word typically refers to a type of institution in the historic Muslim world that

⁷¹ Andre Godard, op. cit., fig. 215 & 216, pl. 123 & 138; A. U. Pope, A Survey of Persian Art, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 1027; A. B. M. Husain, Manara, op. cit., p. 43

⁷² R. Nath, op. cit., p. 26; Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 37.

⁷³ A. B. M. Husain, Itihas o Shilpakala, op. cit., p. 200.

primarily taught Islamic law and jurisprudence (fiqah) and other disciplines occasionally studied. In the late eleventh century, during the Abbasid rule, the Seljuk vizier Nizām al-Mulk built one of the first major official academic institutions, known in history as the Nizāmīyah Madrasa, based on the informal majālis. Over the next few centuries, madrasa buildings were extended throughout most of the Muslim world, frequently using alike architectural forms. Madrasas were often built around an internal courtyard, with four iwans (vaulted apartments open on one side) positioned symmetrically around the courtyard in the conventional madrasa pattern. This style originated in Buddhist monasteries in the Transoxiana region of Central Asia.

In the early Islamic age, academic education began in the mosque and its content was largely confined to etiquette (*adab*) and jurisprudence (*fiqah*). But when the madrasa was recognized as a separate institution, it included other interpretations of knowledge in the search for truth, in addition to the Qur'an and Hadith in the direction of the Sunni madhhabs. The curriculum then included philosophical studies, mathematics, chemistry, medicine and so on. The honorific title of Mudarris, which means the teachers of madrasa in Bengal, was Malik al-Umara wa al-Uzara or Ulama.⁷⁴ It is assumed that teaching was recognized as a respectable profession in early Islamic society. The two madrasas of Indo-Muslim architecture discovered from excavated examples differ from those known during the Seljuq period in Nisapur or Baghdad. The character is said to have been influenced by local architecture, with iwan and riwaq serving as important constituent elements that are uncommon in Indian examples. Moreover, the madrasas of this region were probably composed of more than one building. That is, the Indian madrasa is a two-storied structure with halls and rooms designed in the English L-shape.⁷⁵

Idgha architecture

Idgah is an open space surrounded by a wall on special high ground where prayers for the congregation are performed. Although its origins are unknown, the concept may have been inspired by the Prophet Muhammad's open-air prayer at *Quba* and the *Musallahs* of Iran were most likely built in the same pattern. ⁷⁶ Although the erection of *idgahs* was rare in early Islamic architecture, there are some examples of such buildings being built in India during the Mamluk, the Khalji and even the Tughlaq eras. The certain samples of such edifices in Indo-Muslim architecture include the Shasmi idgah (13th century), the Hansi idgah (13th century), the Rapri

⁷⁴ Architecture, Series-2, p. 154.

⁷⁵ Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, op. cit., p. 144, fig-33.

⁷⁶ Architecture, Series-2, p. 305.

idgah (1312), the Bharuch idgah (1326) and the idgah of hauz-i-khas (1404-05). Except for the enclosing wall, entrance and pulpit of the Hauz-i-Khas *idgah*, the Shamsi *Idgah* of Badaun and the Khalji *idgah* of Rapri, the architectural features of Bharuch *idgah* are more interesting and attractive. But glazed brick ornaments and glazed colorful tile decorations have respectively made Shamsi and Rapri *idgah*s more gorgeous.

The idgah of Bharuch is situated near Kali Talavdi on the outskirts of the town; and it is one of the finest and oldest monuments in Gujarat. It was constructed during the time of Muhammad bin Tughluq by a nobleman named Malik-ush-Sharq Fakhrud-Dawlah-Wad-Din Dawlat Shah Muhammad Buthari under the direction of Tajud-Din Muhammad Baha-ul-Mulk.77 The western wall is strengthened by five bastions, of which four are half-circular and solid, while the north-western bastion is hollow inside and surmounted by a small dome. This bastion appears to have no function, except possibly for being used as a watchtower. Three concave mihrabs are installed on the western wall. The notable feature of this idgah is the magnificent entrance gate constructed in the middle of the eastern enclosure. It is entered through three arches that rest on four pillars; the central arch is the largest and is shaped like a semi-circular cusp arch with nine cusps, while the side arches are pointed trefoil arches. The spandrels of the arches are decorated with imaginary leaves and each of the pillars of the front row is surmounted by small tapered turrets that serve only for a decorative purpose. The gateway is provided with a lofty dome which is supported by seven pillars. Each of the back row's corner pillars is reinforced by an octagonal bastion that aids in the weight support of the dome. The squinch system is employed for the makeover of the square chamber into a circle. The architectural features of the gate, such as tapering turrets, trefoils and four-centered pointed arches with cusped design suggest that it was possibly renovated during the reign of the Baburi dynasty.

Conclusion

If architecture is considered as the greatest achievement of all artistic activities, Muslim building art can be regarded as its most worthy and successful generation in all respects. On this account, Indo-Muslim architecture is a glorious chapter of overall Muslim architecture as well as the global art of architecture. So far pre-Islamic Indian features had been effective in the society and culture of this country, but the arrival of Muslims in India had now caused a change in all spheres of life, appropriating local and Muslim elements, particularly Middle Eastern Muslim

⁷⁷ Ghulam Yazdani (ed.), Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica (Published as a Supplementary Part of the Epigraphia Indica), 1933-34, p. 27.

cultures. This flow of change had been illuminated in the ground plan, structural design and decorative features of religious and secular buildings of medieval India. Similarly, the Mughal architecture of Delhi – e.g., mosques, tombs, minarets, idgahs, palaces, hammams and bridges – was the result of a combination of two different architectural styles: the Sultanate architecture of the land, and the foreign Muslim styles outside India. Between the two trends mentioned above, the influence of the later style on the Mughal architecture of Delhi, Fathpur Sikri, Agra, Lahore and other administrative units was much greater for some valid reasons. It is pertinent to mention here that the Mughal rulers of Delhi, being the direct descendants of the Mongol-Timurid race of Central Asia and Persia, were homogeneous in the realm of ethnically different entities. A close look at the nature and style of religious architecture in medieval India, such as mosques, tombs, minarets, madrasas and idgahs, has revealed the indigenous architectural style as well as the extraneous Muslim constructional heritage in terms of building layout, formation and aestheticism. That is to say, the religious architecture of medieval India has, on the one hand, assimilated the native architectural traditions; it has embraced the Muslim building styles outside India, on the other. As a result, a unique bridge has been well-established between the domestic and foreign cultural spheres. The Muslim building art of medieval India, especially religious architecture, has made an outstanding contribution to the composition of such bonding.

SITA RAM'S HYBRID PAINTINGS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY INDIA

Abu Kalam Shamsuddin and Benjamin Thorpe*

Abstract

Sita Ram's surviving watercolour paintings, dating from 1813 to 1823, consist of seemingly quiet landscapes, botanical studies, and architectural views, yet they poignantly encapsulate the complex forces that had begun to shape modern art. Hired by the governor-general of the British East India Company (EIC), Sita Ram developed a hybrid approach to painting that combined the late Mughal courtly style of Murshidabad with the British Romantic genre known as the Picturesque. He was assigned to travel alongside the EIC military, recording sites, scenes, and landscapes from West Bengal through North India. However, his paintings depart from straightforward documentation to include personal narratives, allusions to site-specific histories and mythologies, and a wide range of formal experimentation. Little has been written about Sita Ram outside of the western institutions where his paintings now reside, and the language that frames his work in these settings tends to privilege the influence of western tradition while glossing over the realities of colonialism. This essay seeks to bring more nuance to the discourse around Sita Ram's work and, by extension, that of his contemporaries who also worked for the EIC at this time. It explores the complexities that might have arisen for Sita Ram in the colonial context, and poses observations about his representational choices from the authors' vantage point as visual artists.

The Question of Style

Sita Ram and his contemporaries in the late Mughal tradition navigated a rapidly changing professional and political landscape. Mughal courtly patronage had begun to wane after the EIC seized power in the 1750s and 60s, and Bengal's economic independence was diminished under extractive EIC rule. Sita Ram would likely have witnessed as a youth the catastrophic famine of 1770, which had been propelled by the EIC's manipulation of currency and enforcement of industrial agricultural practices. In the increasingly fragmented Bengal of Sita Ram's early adulthood,

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British-run cities like Kolkata and Chennai (then called Calcutta and Madras) now provided the most stable places for artists to find work. By the turn of the nineteenth century, EIC officials had replaced the role of Mughal patrons in Bengal's economy of art production. For Sita Ram and many of his peers, the incorporation of western conventions into their work was no longer a matter of experimentation but one of professional survival.

Sita Ram likely received his earliest artistic training in the late Mughal courtly style known as the Murshidabad *Qalam* ("Pen"). According to art historian J.P. Losty, Sita Ram appears to have worked as an architectural draftsman in Calcutta before studying the Picturesque style, perhaps by attending public workshops known to have been held by the British Picturesque painter, George Chinnery.² In 1813, Sita Ram was hired by the highest-ranking official in the EIC, Governor-General Francis Rawdon, for whom he would work for the next ten years.

Rawdon's extensive journals provide little direct information about Sita Ram, but a passing mention of the artist suggests that Rawdon viewed Sita Ram's role as being primarily documentary: "[A] Bengal draftsman who accompanied us was directed to make a colored sketch of the scenery." Typically involving travel by boat, the tours that they undertook stretched from Calcutta through the northern states of Uttarakhand and Punjab, and could include an entourage of up to several thousand sepoys, officials, cooks, and merchants. Sita Ram's training in the Murshidabad Qalam enabled him to form a panoramic record of these tours, imagining bird's-eye views of sites and landscapes passed along the way. The elevated perspective and flattened sense of space derived from the Murshidabad Qalam imbues Sita Ram's work with more visual information than would be possible in a typical Picturesque painting (with its ground-level perspective), or in the imminent technology of the photograph. His paintings include high-altitude views of the Rajmahal Hills, the Himalayas, urban thoroughfares, and a dizzyingly detailed procession of EIC soldiers entering Lucknow.⁴ The arrival of photography to India in the 1840s would render obsolete the kind of role Sita Ram fulfilled as a documentary artist. However, it is worth pausing to consider the ways in which painting - especially the hybridized

Partha Mitter, Oxford History of Art: Indian Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001),
 p. 172

² J.P. Losty, Sita Ram's Painted Views of India: Lord Hastings's Journey from Calcutta to the Punjab, 1814-15 (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), p. 21

³ Sophia Frederica Crichton-Stuart (ed.), The Private Journal of the Marquess of Hastings (Allahabad: Panini Office, 1907), p. 133

⁴ Most of Sita Ram's paintings can be found in the online collection of the British Library, at https://www.bl.uk/.

form of painting practiced by Sita Ram and his peers - interpreted and reconstructed the surrounding world. Not only did Sita Ram bring his own narrative sensibility to his paintings, but the Mughal and British traditions in which he had trained were deeply embedded with constructs of culture, history, and power. Sita Ram regularly crafted images that went beyond documentation and dealt - both consciously and unconsciously - with the social constructs latent in the traditions he had inherited.

Mughal painting was a pluralistic tradition influenced by Persian miniatures, the Indian Rajput school, Chinese landscapes, classical Buddhist art of Bengal, and western academic painting. Sita Ram's home state of West Bengal had become the center of Mughal courtly painting in the 1730s when the North Indian capital of Delhi came under siege from the army of Persian leader, Nader Shah. The Murshidabad Qalam had emerged in West Bengal under the patronage of Nawab Ali Verdi Khan through the convergence of artists fleeing North India. As with earlier Mughal styles, its exacting sense of detail lent well to the representation of intricate textiles and ornate architecture for which Bengal was renowned. The style underscored the cultivation, plurality, and relative harmony of the state in the mid-eighteenth century (see fig. 1).

Picturesque painting, meanwhile, had begun as a provincial genre of landscape painting in late eighteenth-century England. In a rapidly industrializing country, the Romantic-era practitioners of the Picturesque selectively sought out rustic village scenes, open countryside, and Gothic ruins. This genre would become one of the primary modes through which images of the expanding British Empire were transmitted back to British audiences. Art historians have, in recent decades, pointed out ways in which Picturesque painters who worked in colonial settings relied on western stereotypes and classicizations of the cultures they portrayed. The selective gaze of the Picturesque acted, in the words of art historian Linda Nochlin, "as [a sign] of a certain kind of conceptual deprivation." In her essay, *The Imaginary Orient*, Nochlin discusses the genre's "absence of history" - that is, its erasure of details reflective of a complex and changing polity. Signs of industrialization and contemporary history were omitted from Picturesque paintings, and in colonial settings, the genre effectively reduced cultures far more diverse and cosmopolitan

⁵ G.H.R. Tillotson, "The Indian Picturesque: Images of India in British Landscape Painting, 1780-1880." The Raj: India and the British 1600-1947, Ed. C.A. Bayly (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1994), p. 150

⁶ Linda Nochlin, The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 35-36

than that of early nineteenth-century England into timeless, imaginary arcadias. The image of the "ruin" stands out as one of the Picturesque's most enduring cliches. Practitioners often embellished architectural decay - and even imaginatively destroyed architectural sites - for aesthetic pleasure. As the genre's founder, William Gilpin, wrote, "[s]hould we wish to give [a building] picturesque beauty, we must use the mallet, instead of the chissel: we must beat down one half of it, deface the other, and throw the mutilated members around in heaps."

The contradictions that the Picturesque genre might have posed for Sita Ram are striking. Having built a reputation for crisp, detailed architectural renderings, and having witnessed in his own lifetime the ruin of much of Bengal's infrastructure at the hands of British colonizers, what did he make of the Picturesque's fetishization of ruins? How did Sita Ram reconcile the homogenizing and "history-erasing" impulse of the Picturesque with his training in a late Mughal courtly style that prized fine detail and visual narrative?

A New Visual Language

Sita Ram was clearly informed by the Murshidabad Qalam and the Picturesque style, but his images land beyond that which would have been considered familiar in either tradition. His painting titled *View of John Havell's House*, for example, is based on a compositional structure found in Murshidabad paintings - a receding plane upon which the sense of diminution and perspective are balanced with a concern for important details and strong shapes (see fig. 1). *View of John Havell's House* also assumes the aerial perspective and symmetricality of the Murshidabad Qalam, but incorporates the illusory depth of western landscape painting through the use of chiaroscuro techniques and perceived color. The interplay of pictorial and naturalistic elements produces an idiosyncratic sense of perspective, as the ground appears to extend into a horizonless, empty space.

Often identified as the defining feature of modern art, this sense of being both rooted in and breaking out of tradition echoes throughout Sita Ram's work, raising questions about how he perceived the places and events he portrayed. One painting, titled *Illumination at Constantia on the receiving news of Peace in Europe (2nd November 1814)*, depicts a lantern display held at a site called Constantia in Lucknow to celebrate news of Napoleon's defeat by the British army (see fig. 3).

⁷ William Gilpin, Three essays: On picturesque beauty; On picturesque travel; and On sketching landscape: to which is added a poem, On landscape painting. / By William Gilpin (London, Printed for R. Blamire, 1792), p. 7



Figure 1. Unknown Artist, *Nawab Aliverdi Khan*, Murshidabad Qalam, ca. 1750-1755, Victoria and Albert Collection.



Figure 2. View of John Havell's House, ca. 1814-15, British Library, Add.Or.4709.

The shimmering spectacle surrounds a pond with an unfinished tower at its center. Framed along the bottom by a crowd of onlookers, the lantern display has been flattened in order to give it prominence in the picture. As an astute observer of architecture, perhaps Sita Ram intended for the semi-circular shape of the display to mirror the arching stairwells at the top of the Constantia building. The effect is startling, as the lantern display takes on the appearance of a fiery moon rising into the night sky. Sita Ram tends to represent such spectacles from a distance, with hundreds of figures included in the image. The vibrating sense of light emanating from his surfaces of stippled, complementary colors have led commentators to describe passages in his work as "impressionistic" - a term that harkens to the innovations of the French Impressionists sixty years later - though one might also note that these optical experiments can be traced to traditional Mughal paintings that depict the festivals of Shab-é-Barat and Diwali.

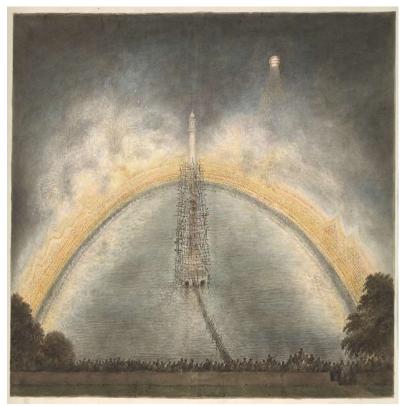


Figure 3. Illumination at Constantia on the receiving news of Peace in Europe (2nd November 1814), 1814-15, Watercolour on paper, 37 x 48 cm, British Library, Add.Or. 4752.

Another painting, titled *The Inside of the Opium Godown at Patna*, depicts the interior of an opium warehouse operated by the EIC (fig. 4). An array of stairs and passageways spiral upward within the square frame of the picture. Each passageway seems to contain its own vanishing point. The composition, demonstrating masterful control of guiding lines and subtle values, evokes a kind of *goluk-dhada* (labyrinth). Gazing into this maze of secret channels, one might be reminded of the EIC's trafficking of opium from India to China in its quest for unilateral power over global trade. Opium itself is notably absent from the scene. Instead, Sita Ram portrays the architecture of its production and distribution. The upward-spiraling staircase leads to a sliver of sky visible in the open ceiling, setting up a dialogue with another painting made at the same site.

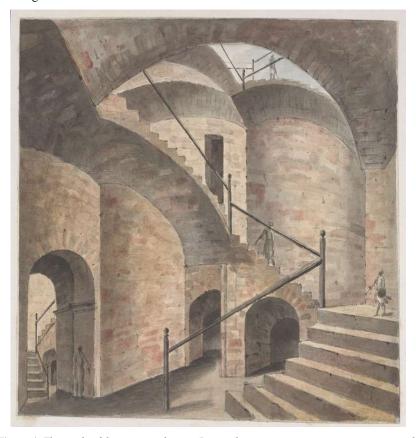


Figure 4. The inside of the opium godown at Patna, showing a staircase rising on increasingly high arches, 1814, British Library Add.Or.4702.

Bird's Eye View from Above the Opium Godown at Patna depicts the surrounding landscape from the point of view of having ascended into the sky through the open ceiling of the godown (fig. 5). Sita Ram uses the convex horizon line of Mughal landscapes to enhance the sense of altitude. From this soaring perspective, one can see boats sailing like paper toys along the River Ganga towards a setting sun. The expansive vision finds its counterpoint in what seems to be a small self-portrait - an artist seated with a sketchpad on the terrace at the bottom of the painting.⁸

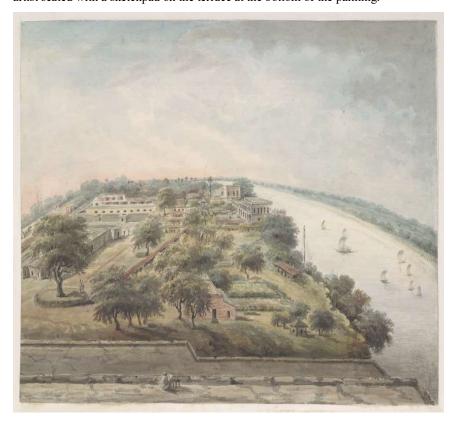


Figure 5. Bird's eye view from above the Opium Godown at Patna, 1814, British Library Add.Or.4703.

Representing Colonial History at Motijheel

Sita Ram traveled often, but his paintings tease out narratives and histories specific to the sites he portrayed. As a close witness to the activities of the EIC, he had the

⁸ Losty, Sita Ram's Painted Views of India, p. 64

complicated task of representing places that had come to signify the unfolding history of colonial occupation. One painting titled *View of a Mosque and Gateway at Motijhil* (fig. 6) portrays part of a former Mughal palace complex located outside the city of Murshidabad in West Bengal. Several of the key events in the shift from Mughal to British power had occurred at this very site in the 1750s and 60s. It was from this palace complex that Siraj-ud Daula's ill-fated army had marched south to the Battle of Plassey in 1757, unaware that his own general, Mir Jafar, had taken a bribe from the commander of the EIC military, Robert Clive, and was set to betray the Mughal army at the last minute. The *Diwani* ceremony of 1765, which granted the EIC the rights to collect land revenues in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, also took place at Motijheel. It was a site evocative of the relatively recent memory of colonial upheaval.



Figure 6. View of a Mosque and Gateway at Motijhil (ca.1817), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2002.461.

By the time Sita Ram made this painting in 1817, Motijheel ("Pearl Lake") had been occupied for several decades by the EIC, and many of its landmark structures had fallen into a state of disrepair. Sita Ram's painting documents a point in the site's steady deterioration under British occupation. Fragments of the crumbling gateway lie strewn about the grounds. Bare trees stand in a bristling line across a low, hazy horizon. A couple dozen minute figures populate the scene, some driving elephants and a *goru-gari* (supply cart), while others dressed in the white *dhotis* of government officials stroll around the crumbling gateway, gesturing towards the fallen cupolas that once sat atop the massive structure.

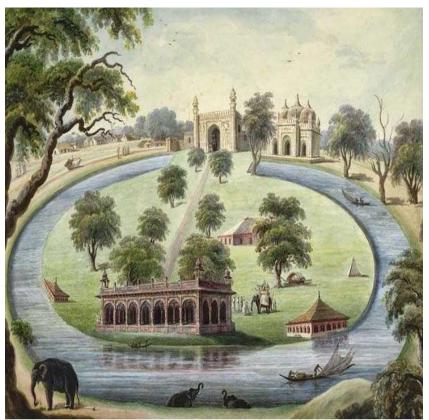


Figure 7. Unknown Artist, *Moti Jhil, "The Pearl Lake" Near Murshidabad*, ca.1790-1800, British Library, Add.Or.3209.

In an earlier painting of Motijheel dating to the late eighteenth century by an unknown artist of the Murshidabad Qalam, the beautifully carved arches of the

Sangidalan ("Stone Palace") can be seen mirrored in the crystal waters of the iconic lake (fig. 7). The bright colors and idealized symmetry of the composition lend to the site a sense of harmony and stability. (One of Sita Ram's paintings, *J. William Grant's Bungalow at Cawnpore*, employs the same blueprint as the earlier depiction of Motijheel (fig. 8.)).



Figure 8. J. William Grant's Bungalow at Cawnpore, ca.1814-15, British Library, Add.Or.4744.

Sita Ram's painting of Motijheel hovers between the aerial views commonly found in Mughal landscapes and the ground-level perspective of western academic painting. An illusory depth is achieved through the use of chiaroscuro techniques and a picturesque division of space into a fore-, middle-, and background, while the horizon line is slightly convex in the fashion of Mughal landscapes. Intricate architectural facades and vignetted scenes evidence an attention to fine detail derived from Mughal miniatures. Even the elephants appear delicate. In the foreground, a shopkeeper greets an approaching government official. The barely-visible EIC flag flutters in the clouds above, and an isolated figure standing alone in front of the mosque appears to look straight back at the viewer.

In his body of work at large, Sita Ram rarely engages with the Picturesque notion of the romanticized "ruin," focusing instead on architectural details particular to the site. By the time he painted Motifheel, the site was fast becoming a ruin, but his painting does not necessarily depict a ruin in the Picturesque sense of a site ravaged by eons of decay and evoking nostalgia for a long-lost past. Several elements in the painting pull one's attention away from immersion in the past and instead toward the present conditions of the site. The mosque, for instance, diminutive in scale but untouched by the decay that marks the gateway, stands in profile with its three domes shining in soft sunlight. The domes atop the mosque wouldn't have all been visible from this profile view, yet Sita Ram depicts all of them in precise detail, with their luminous stonework still intact. Mosques tended to remain in the care of local communities throughout the colonial era, and their condition was an important reflection of community cohesion. Although he himself was a Hindu, Sita Ram seems intent on recording the healthy condition of the mosque. To include the mosque at all would have required a degree of artistic license, for the edifices of the Motijheel palace complex, which span several miles, are spaced too far away from one another to realistically capture multiple structures in one image. Sita Ram seems to have shifted the exact locations of the mosque, lake, and gateway, condensing them in order to be able to include each in his painting.

Sita Ram also depicts a dry landscape rather than the lush, resource-rich landscape characteristic of the Picturesque style. This may reflect historic, climate-related changes in the Indian subcontinent at this time. A series of volcanic eruptions to the southeast - most notably Mount Tambora's eruption in the Indonesian archipelago in 1815 - had produced a massive cloud of particles over India that would disrupt the monsoonal system from 1815 to 1817. Decreased rainfalls produced drought conditions, depleting supplies of healthy water and causing an outbreak of cholera in 1817 that would spread around the world over the next two decades, transmitted largely by EIC traders.⁹

Despite his ongoing travels, Sita Ram altered his approach to different sites and constantly shifted the balance of Mughal and Picturesque conventions as he crafted new visual narratives. These alterations occur across his work to large and small effect; architectural historian Mostafizur Rahman points out that Sita Ram's painting of the Eklakhi Tomb in Pandua, India, for instance, includes four cupolas on the four corners of the structure and a sharpened dome that didn't belong to the original

⁹ Gillen d'Arcy Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 79-88

structure, effectively transforming the Sultanate Tomb into a Mughal one. ¹⁰ Such alterations may, at times, simply reflect an aesthetic preference, but they can also raise questions about the Sita Ram's feelings toward such signifiers of power and cultural identity.

In View of a Mosque and Gateway at Motijhil, one of the fallen cupolas lying at the base of the gateway seems to be altered in a way that links it visually to images of the British crown (fig. 9). Veiled somewhat by Sita Ram's stippled brushstrokes, the object is studded with small marks that resemble the placement of gemstones lining the turnip-shaped crown donned at this time by King George III. Images of the British crown would have been familiar to Sita Ram through British coins and wax seals that circulated in India. Did Sita Ram intend to evoke the eventual fall of the British Empire by placing this image among the debris littering the ground? Or did the crown enter his painting subliminally?

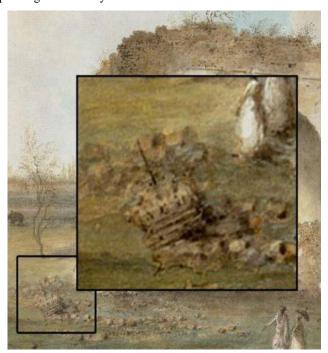


Figure 9. View of a Mosque and Gateway at Motijhil (ca.1817), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2002.461. Detail.

¹⁰ Mostafizur Rahman, "Muslim Architecture at Gour in Sita Ram's Paintings" Prantik (Rajshahi, 2019), p. 57

Whether or not Sita Ram's intentions here can be determined, the presence of such a detail is consistent with the particular way in which Sita Ram blended observation and imagination. His paintings reveal a mixture of personal, historical, and even mythological concerns. Architectural historian Madhuri Desai writes in *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories* that Sita Ram's paintings are "inflected with narratives of place that he felt were significant." She describes, by way of example, Sita Ram's

view of the riverfront at the Hindu pilgrimage city of Banaras in which he combined built elements from various parts of the riverfront and called it "the temple of Raja Dusserath with the house he lived in to the left" [see fig. 10] ... Dusserath is a character from the Hindu epic *The Ramayana*; Sita Ram was thus constructing a mythical landscape that maintained concrete visual connections to the actual built environment of this space. ¹¹



Figure 10. The Ghats at Benares: Dasasvamedh Ghat and the Temples Just Downstream, 1814, British Library Add.Or.4719.

¹¹ Madhuri Shrikant Desai, "In Search of the Sacred and Antique in Colonial India", *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories: Imperial Legacies, Architecture and Modernity* (Farnham, Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), p. 64

As Desai's example wonderfully illustrates, Sita Ram's alterations reflected his own knowledge of the historical, cultural, and mythological currents running beneath the sites he painted. In the face of the colonial-era pressure to assimilate - to forget one's histories, myths, and ways of seeing - Sita Ram carved out a space of his own through which to channel personal visions and cultural knowledge toward an uncertain future.

Institutional Frames



Figure 11. Unknown Artist, Portrait of Sita Ram, by a Calcutta artist, c.1820. (Inscribed on the verso: Setaram, native painter). Private collection, London.

A full-length portrait of Sita Ram painted in 1820 by an unknown Calcutta artist shows a poised man with a sharp, white moustache and a stern gaze (fig. 11). He is seated at a desk, displaying in his hand a small landscape that echoes the view outside

the window of the River Hooghly with the Danish settlement of Serampore visible on the opposite bank. ¹² His palette rests at the edge of the desk next to a water jar and a cloth spotted with shades of rose and violet paint, which he often used to offset the green and umber tones in his landscapes.

The work of Sita Ram's generation has long been underrecognized in modern art history, perhaps in part due to the difficulty of categorizing such a profusion of hybrid styles. More consequentially, the EIC's practice of private collection and hoarding often contributed to the obscurity of these artists from the outset. In 1823, Sita Ram's paintings were taken to Britain and remained hidden for about 150 years in a collection belonging to the heir of his EIC employer. None of his paintings have ever been displayed in India or Bangladesh near the sites they depict. Today, even as western institutions turn the occasional spotlight on the work of Sita Ram and his contemporaries, hierarchical practices remain ingrained in the way they frame and display the work. Indian artists who worked for the EIC are often lumped together under the term "Company School Painting," a term that historian William Dalrymple points out is problematic because "it emphasises colonial patronage of these works over the artistic endeavors of the brilliant Indian artists who actually painted them." This form of display also isolates the work of these artists from other landscape, architectural, botanical, and historical paintings of their time.

The British Library acquired the bulk of Sita Ram's paintings in the mid-1990s, and the most comprehensive study of Sita Ram's work remains *Sita Ram's Painted Views of India* by art historian and British Library curator, J.P. Losty. Underlying much of Losty's writing is the unevidenced assumption that Sita Ram wished to fully assimilate to the western academic style, and he evaluates Sita Ram's work according to that assumption. For instance, Losty characterizes Sita Ram's handling of perspective and proportion as "inaccurate" when it doesn't conform to western conventions. He studiously points out the presence of both Murshidabad and Picturesque conventions in Sita Ram's work, but assumes that Murshidabad conventions belong to the past, describing them regressively as "crutches" and as "instincts" that occasionally "come to the fore," or to which Sita Ram occasionally "reverts." 17

¹² Losty, Sita Ram's Painted Views of India, p. 11

¹³ William Dalrymple (ed.), Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2019), p. 12

¹⁴ Losty, Sita Ram's Painted Views of India, p. 18

¹⁵ Losty, Sita Ram's Painted Views of India, p. 14

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 19

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 232

The language surrounding Sita Ram's work in other institutional settings can be equally problematic. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art's online collection, the curatorial text accompanying Sita Ram's *View of a Mosque and Gateway at Motijhil* prioritizes picturesque meanings through the prevalence of words like "romanticized," "enchanting," and "timeless," and omits any reference to the artist's background in Murshidabad painting. Furthermore, the text alludes to the painting's colonial context, but does not mention the pivotal fact that the Motijheel complex was occupied by the British at the time Sita Ram painted it.

Sitaram [sic], the painter of this enchanting scene, was hired to record the travels of Francis Rawdon, the governor-general of Bengal between 1814 and 1821. The painting illustrates the Sang-i Dalan palace complex at Motijhil, Bengal, where the Rawdons traveled in 1817. The artist, working in the picturesque style, has chosen to depict the scene not by foregrounding the site's majestic palace but rather by emphasizing a romanticized state of decay, with fallen debris from the nearby structures. In doing so, Sitaram creates a melancholic view suggesting a nostalgia for the Mughal Empire before the arrival of the British. 18

A balanced study of Sita Ram's work must consider meanings beyond those associated with the Picturesque, and it must acknowledge historical realities. Faced with the decline of courtly patronage, Sita Ram and peers such as Sewak Ram and Ghulam Ali Khan had incorporated elements of western painting into their work and sought employment with the EIC at a time when other options were increasingly limited. These artists also faced any number of contradictions arising from the roles that their British patrons played in colonial rule. Sita Ram's own patron, Francis Rawdon, defended the EIC's practice of slavery and engaged continuously in wars designed to carve out new EIC territories.¹⁹ His journals reflect a condescending attitude toward Indian art and culture. One describes "a collection of Hindoo antiquities and curiosities" amassed by his colleague, Colonel Stuart, as "a wild incoherent and stupidly absurd pack of fancies...devised by the Brahmins to occupy the minds of the people."²⁰ In another entry, dated July 11th, 1814, Rawdon writes of "the expedience (and indeed necessity) of extinguishing the fiction of the Mogul government."21 Penned the day before his visit to Motijheel that year, his comment reflects a disdainful attitude toward the prominent role that Mughal culture and

¹⁸ Marika Sardar (n.d.), "View of a Mosque and Gateway at Motijhil", Metropolitan Museum of Art Online Collection. Accessed November 26, 2021, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/ collection/search/454429.

¹⁹ Andrea Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism, and Empire in India, 1772-1843* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 43

²⁰ Crichton-Stuart, The Private Journal of the Marquess of Hastings, p. 43

²¹ Quoted in Losty, Sita Ram's Painted Views of India, p. 32

identity continued to play in Indian society, and perhaps more broadly toward the notion of Indian self-governance.

The British colonial attitude toward Indian political and cultural autonomy was intricately connected to the one-way flow of aesthetic influence that Sita Ram experienced in his profession. Art historian Saloni Mathur refers to this dynamic as the "mimetic imperative," noting "its powerful role in determining meaning and identity in relation to the individual artist, whose fate was sealed at the outset by the structure of colonial art education and its emphasis on emulating the privileged traditions of the West." This imperative to assimilate was increasingly formalized in the nineteenth-century British education system, and it deeply affected how artists' work would come to be framed and assessed by western critics and educators who set the norms throughout the satellite centers of colonial empires. However, this assimilative pressure did not determine the artists' own intentions and creative choices. As Mathur writes, "Although the essential impulse of the Company School was assimilative, its results were quite the opposite: what emerged was a unique genre in its own right, characterized by a plethora of hybrid styles, and a blending of visual vocabularies unlike anything seen before." 23

Sita Ram responded to his historical moment through subversive documentary decisions, wide-ranging formal experiments, and an infusion of personal and mythical narratives into the spaces he painted. This essay has sought to develop a sensitivity toward the subtle narratives embedded in Sita Ram's paintings with the hope that vital new understandings of his work will emerge as discussion broadens.

Afterword

We first encountered the work of Sita Ram in an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2016. As artists who had met through a mutual friend, we found that we shared an interest in artistic research. Through weekly discussions over video chat, Sita Ram's paintings gradually made visible the intertwining of our own sociopolitical histories through colonialism, and prompted questions about how that history now influenced our interpretations of his work. They also took us on a personal journey. Motijheel, the site depicted in the first of his paintings that we saw, happens to lie just across the Padma River from our earliest homes in the cities of Rajshahi (Shamsuddin's hometown) and Ishwardi (where Thorpe lived as a child). Though our life paths had diverged widely, we both experienced in Sita Ram's

²² Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 86

²³ Ibid.

landscapes a blurring-together of history and memory. His landscapes drew us beyond our childhood years towards a past that we both sensed had been instrumental in shaping our imaginations. Perhaps by journeying through this terrain together we could deepen our understanding of ourselves and our connection to each other.

To that end, this essay belongs to a longer-term project involving site-specific research and public discussions. One of the desired outcomes of our work is the restitution of a portion of Sita Ram's paintings to cultural centers in Bengal and North India. More broadly, our collaboration, which is titled *Chitragati*, seeks to build intercultural dialogue through research-based art projects. *Chitragati* explores the contemporary resonance of overlooked cultural materials through a process of creative dialogue and co-authorship, and we plan to continue developing a model for intercultural artistic coalitions that can provide fruitful terrain for future projects.

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