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3. W.H. Morris-Jones, "Pakistan Post-Mortem and the Roots of Bangladesh", *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 18 (April-June), 1972, pp. 187-200.

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AN APPROACH TO THE FUNCTIONAL INTERPRETATION OF CONTEMPORARY BANGLADESHI MUSEUMS

Dilruba Sharmin *

Syed Abdul Halim **

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to comprehend the overall situation of the museums in Bangladesh as well as the functional efficiency and to raise a call to revitalize the museums. Present research focuses on three distinct aspects: a list of different types of museums in Bangladesh, their functional interpretation and some proposals for visionary practices in museums of Bangladesh. This research found that a total 157 museums are present in Bangladesh which could be divided into 14 categories. As a prosperous country we need more efficient step to develop our museum sector as it is a bridge between the past and future of a nation. It shows thoughts and creations of the best minds of the nation and the world, and transmits the spirits to the young and inquisitive minds of children, students and youths. Failure of this transmission and exposure to the visitor will result in the extinction of the museum itself. Do the museums of Bangladesh have achieved the capability to face this truth? Are they supporting the education system effectively? Are they prepared for the demand of the future generation? The answer to all these questions will lead us to rethink and restructure our concept of museum for a better future.

Key words: Museum, Revitalization, Impact, Education, Museology

1. Introduction

In the twenty first century, museums play a multidimensional role in the contemporary society. A Museum has been defined by the ICOM (International Council of Museums) as – “A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of

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humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”¹ This new concept is very much different from the concept of early museums, which are the private collections of wealthy individuals, families or institutions.

It is a general perception that museums display the relics from the past only. If we consider the past of Bangladesh, we know that Bangladesh has human habitation since the Stone Age. Ancient Bengal was settled by Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman, Dravidian and Indo-Aryan peoples’ consecutive waves of migration. Being a riverine country, it has a fertile land along with an ancient culture of peace and prosperity. Throughout the history, it has fascinated immigrants, traders and invaders from the other lands. Thus, the history and the heritage of Bangladesh have ample information and artifacts to offer in its museums for the purpose of educating the future generation.

Moreover, the museums of Bangladesh have not only responsibility to exhibit the nation’s identical past but also has the responsibility to innovate visionary initiatives and practices so that a value of appreciating art, science, culture and literature flourish among the citizens. It will help the citizens to cope with the challenges of the 21st century’s rapid scientific and social transformations.

2. Background of the Research

Museums provide knowledge so that people can understand and appreciate various cultures and their history. They promote our collective heritage and foster dialogue, curiosity and self reflection in a better understandable way. Further, they serve to help future generations comprehend their history and recognize the achievements of those who came before them. In Bangladesh, to utilize the museums as resources of knowledge, it is important to list them up in a single document. From this document, a more precise and accountable scenario and data can be derived for future researchers. It is expected that the publicity of this list will attract researchers from home and abroad to visit the museums.

3. Research Questions

This paper directly addresses three key questions in contemporary Bangladeshi museological discourse and practices: 1. what type of museums are serving as a key concern of cultural research 2. how the museums are functioning in the contemporary society? 3. what visionary steps can the museums adopt to face the needs of 21st century?

¹ “Definition of Terms” *ICOM Statutes 2017*, Article 3, Section 1, p.3

4. Research Methodology

This research is a descriptive-qualitative research that includes surveys, interviews, historical literature study and qualitative analysis of acquired data. To collect authentic data, plenty of surveys are done all across the country. Due to the restriction of photography inside the museum, importance is given on gathering information than photographs. Most of the photographs are collected from secondary sources. The proposals are developed on the basis of exploring the reality of the museums and the suggestions acquired from the museum officers and staffs.

5. Review of literature

In this research, the list of museums written by Syed Amirul Islam in his book *Bangladeshe Museum* (2006) provided a guideline to investigate.² The investigation led to some findings, such as:

- Some of the museums have different name from what is mentioned. For example- *Shadinota Stambha* is named as the *Museum of Independence* later. *Department of Sociology Museum* of the Dhaka University is named as *Professor Nazmul Karim Shangrahashala* etc.
- Some of the museums have no existence in reality. For example- *Business Faculty Museum* of Dhaka University, *Sangeet Mahabiddalay Museum* of Dhaka, *Sylhet Archaeological Museum* of Sylhet, *Railway Museum* of Nilphamari, *Artillery Museum* of Chittagong etc.
- Some of the museums are extinct. For example- *Ahoroni Museum* of Habiganj.

The other resources, mentioned in the bibliography have enhanced the knowledge on the museums and provided the references to evaluate the situation of the museums in Bangladesh.

6. Limitations of the research

Due to the limitation of time and funding, it was not possible to visit all of the 157 museums. Moreover, in some cases, the person in charge of the museum could not provide the accurate year of establishment due to the lack of documents or the knowledgeable person, who knew it, is dead. Thus, this research is based on the

² S. A. Islam, "Bangladesher Museum: Nam Talika", *Bangladeshe Museum*, (Dhaka: Jyoti Prakash, 2006) ISBN 984-300-0000-12-4

information provided by the available persons of concerning museums and completed with the limitation of time and money to pursue further investigation.

7. A Brief History of Museums in Bangladesh

To understand the context of the museums in Bangladesh, it is necessary to know how it started at the beginning. Apparently the British brought the concept of the museum to Bengal. The year 1796 was the starting point of the history of museums, not only in Bengal but also in the Indian subcontinent. The initiative came from the members of the Asiatic Society of Kolkata, who collected many archaeological, ethnographical, geological and zoological specimens and felt the need to house the materials suitably.³ Varendra Research Museum is considered as the oldest museum in Bangladesh which was established in East Bengal in 1910. The museum started out as the collection for *Varendra Anushandan Samiti* (Varendra Investigation Society) and got its current name in 1919. The Rajas of Rajshahi and Natore, notably prince Sharat Kumar Ray, donated their personal collections to Varendra Museum. Varendra was the metropolitan district of Pundravardhana territory which included considerable portions of the present Bogura, Rajshahi and Dinajpur districts.⁴ In 1964, the museum became a part of Rajshahi University.⁵

Although Dhaka Museum, the precursor of the Bangladesh National Museum, was formally established in 1913, though the effort had been started long ago in 1856. The editor of the *Dacca News*, Alexander Forbes originally proposed a museum at Dhaka in his paper as recorded.⁶ A committee, led by the Civil Surgeon of Dhaka, Dr. Green, was formed and Mr. Brenard (the principal of Dhaka College) dedicated three rooms to accommodate the artifacts. In the November of 1857, the museum was open to exhibit. But the museum got closed in 1858 as the key persons were transferred from Dhaka. It was the first attempt to establish a museum in Dhaka. Then at the turn of the 20th century Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, provided the political ground for the establishment of a museum in Dhaka. The proposal to start a museum in Dhaka was first mooted in the autumn of 1905 in connection with the transfer of the

³ S. Islam, (Ed.). "Bangladesh National Museum", *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, 2003 (Vol. 3). Asiatic society of Bangladesh.

⁴ R.C. Majumdar, *The History of Bengal*, (University of Dhaka, 1943), Vol.1, Chapter I, p. 20

⁵ S. Islam, (Ed.). "Bangladesh National Museum", *Banglapedia: National encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, 2003 (Vol. 3). Asiatic society of Bangladesh.

⁶ Muntassir Mamoon, "Dhaka Zadughor", *Dhaka: City of Memories*. (Dhaka: Ananya publications, 2015), p. 208

Shillong Coin Cabinet to Dhaka. As a result, Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, passed orders for the selection of a site for a museum in Dhaka. Then a long time passed without any visible progress.

The partition of Bengal was revoked on 1 April 1912. Because of the absence of a public museum in Eastern Bengal, many antiquities that turned up on a casual excavation in the Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions were removed to the Indian Museum in Kolkata. This position was unacceptable to the elites of Dhaka. They met Lord Thomas Carmichael, the Governor of the Presidency of Bengal in the Northbrook Hall on 25 July 1912. In the meeting, a number of antiquities were exhibited to the governor. When the meeting was over, most of the exhibits were provisionally deposited in the Dhaka Collectorate and in a few other places. To house the collection, a room in the Secretariat (now the Dhaka Medical College Hospital) was allotted. The setting up of Dhaka Museum was formally approved by the Governor in Council in the Official Gazette of 5 March 1913.

Dhaka Museum was formally inaugurated by Lord Carmichael on 7 August 1913. The Museum had a rapid growth. Mr. Nalini Kanta Bhattasali was appointed Curator by the Executive Committee on 26 June 1914. After the exhibits were displayed in the three rooms, Dhaka Museum was first opened to the public on 25 August 1914. On that day, the Museum had 379 objects on display. Another museum, which was started as a collection and library of old scripts, the Rammala Museum, was established in 1920.

On August 12, 1947, the responsibility of the Dhaka Museum was handed over to the University of Dhaka in the newborn state of Pakistan. Up to 1970, the authority of the museum remained the same. In 1970, the managing committee was dissolved and a separate trustee board was formed by the Government.

Among the significant museums, which were established in the Pakistan period are: Tagore Memorial Museum (1958), Geo-science Museum (1957), Ethnological Museum (1965), National Museum of Science and Technology (1965) etc.

After the emergence of Bangladesh, the new-born nation state considered a prime necessity to upgrade the Dhaka museum. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman wanted his countrymen to know the true history of the struggle of the Bengal. In his address he said “the time has come when our younger generation should know the

actual history of the past sacrifices and resistance movements.”⁷ He appealed to his countrymen to hand over to Dhaka Museum all objects connected in some way or other with the struggle for freedom. He himself provided 49 objects including the first shell fired upon the enemy and the national flag hoisted at the Bangladesh Mission in Kolkata on 18 April 1971.⁸ Bangladesh National Museum was formally inaugurated at Shahbag on 17 November 1983. Dr. Enamul Haque was the first Director General of Bangladesh National Museum.⁹ Now Bangladesh National Museum is accommodated in a four-storied building with 202,116 square feet of total floor space.

As citizens of sovereign country, the people of Bangladesh gradually became more concerned about the age-old heritage, cultural identity and historical artifacts. Thus the new museums flourished under the active patronization of the government.

8. Museums of Bangladesh: Category and Characteristics

With the legacy of this two famous museums of Bangladesh, other museums started to grow up little by little in all over Bangladesh. The later museums are mainly based on a specific subject or related to an institution. Most of the later museums were established in the early 70s, late 90’s and after 2002, the number was increasing day by day. In this research, all the present museums of Bangladesh have been categorized into 14 categories.

Table 1: Category of Bangladeshi Museums

Category	Example
<p>1. <u>National Heritage & Historical Museums</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 7.</p>	<div> </div> <p><i>Varendra Research Museum Source: tripadvisor.com</i></p>

⁷ Bangladesh National Museum Website. *History*. Available at: <http://bangladeshmuseum.gov.bd/site/index.php/2012-10-10-12-30-29/history> [15 September 2018]

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

<p>2. <u>Ethnological Museums</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 6.</p>	 <p><i>Ethnological Museum, Source: en.wikipedia.org</i></p>
<p>3. <u>Memorial Museums</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 37.</p>	 <p><i>Osmani Museum, Source: touristplaces.com.bd</i></p>
<p>4. <u>Museums on Liberation War 1971</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 18.</p>	 <p><i>Liberation War Museum, Source: touristplaces.com.bd</i></p>
<p>5. <u>Armed Forces Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 5.</p>	 <p><i>Bangladesh Air Force Museum, Source: commons.wikimedia.org</i></p>
<p>6. <u>Local Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 13.</p>	 <p><i>Faridpur Museum, Source: icwow.blogspot.com</i></p>

<p>7. <u>Museum of private collection</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 12.</p>	 <p><i>Alhaj M. A. Karim Museum, Source: Author</i></p>
<p>8. <u>Science Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 1.</p>	 <p><i>National Museum of Science & Technology, Source: online-dhaka.com</i></p>
<p>9. <u>City Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 2.</p>	 <p><i>Dhaka Nagar Jadughar, Source: thedailystar.net/ news-detail-45583</i></p>
<p>10. <u>Institution-based Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 8.</p>	 <p><i>Geoscience Museum, Source: Author</i></p>
<p>11. <u>University-based Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 16.</p>	 <p><i>Shaheed Muktadir Geological Museum, Source: Author</i></p>

<p>12. <u>Site Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 18.</p>	 <p><i>Paharpur Museum, Source: tripmondo.com</i></p>
<p>13. <u>Flora & Fauna Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 6.</p>	 <p><i>Fisheries and Anatomy Museum, Source: CVASU</i></p>
<p>14. <u>Special Museum</u>; Total number of museums of this category are at present 8.</p>	 <p><i>Water Museum, Source: the daily star 20.03.2015</i></p>

This research has possessed a goal to entitle all the museums of present Bangladesh with the year of establishment, type of collections and location. In the following tables, all categories are showed along-with the enlisted museums.

Category 1: National Heritage and Historical Museums: This category holds the museums which accommodates and exhibits country's heritage and heritage related historical artifacts.

Table 2: List of National Heritage & Historical Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Varendra Research Museum	1910	<i>Collections of old Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian scripts, stone sculptures and tribal utensils of Rajshahi region.</i>	Shador Hospital Road, Rajshahi
2.	Bangladesh National Museum	1913,1983	<i>Stone-craved calligraphy, muslin cloth, whale skeleton, traditional boats, paintings of famous national artists.</i>	Shahbagh, Dhaka.
3.	Museum of Folk Tradition	2017	<i>More than 500 artifacts on folk arts, collected from across the country</i>	Bangla Academy, Dhaka
4.	Asiatic Society Heritage Museum	2018	<i>Old Dhaka's forks, knives, dishes, plates, jewelry box, muslin, kettles, deer antlers, cash box, jar, copper and silver coins etc.</i>	Nimtali Deuri, Chankharpul, Dhaka
5.	Bangladesh Folk Art Museum	1975	<i>Folk arts, handicrafts, sculpture, fabrics, tools, weapon etc.</i>	Sonargaon, Narayanganj
6.	Lokayan Livelihood Museum	2006	<i>Sample water from various rivers of Bangladesh, indigenous agricultural equipment, old coins,</i>	Thakurgaon Sadar, Thakurgaon
7.	Grameen Jadughor O Loko Gobeshona Kendro	2016	<i>Folk & Tribal handicrafts, fabrics, tools etc.</i>	Durgapur, Netrokona

Category 2: Ethnological Museums: Bangladesh has a good number of small ethnic groups. Their lifestyle and daily utensils are indigenous and unique. The museums in this category exhibit the lifestyle and artifacts from these groups of people.

Table 3: List of Ethnological Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Ethnological Museum	1965	<i>featuring the history of Bangladesh's tribal people</i>	Agrabad, Chittagong
2.	Birisiri Upajaty Cultural Academy Museum	1978	<i>Featuring the history of Garo tribal people of Birisiri.</i>	Birisiri, Durgapur, Netrokona.
3.	Chakma Rajbari	1960	<i>Photographs of the past Chakma Rajas, canons etc.</i>	Kaptai Lake, Rangmati
4.	Tribal Cultural Institute Museum	1978	<i>Featuring the history of tribal people of Rangamati.</i>	Tribal Cultural Institute, Rangamati
5.	Manipuri Museum	2008	<i>Featuring the history of Manipuri tribal people of Sylhet</i>	Subidbazar, Sylhet.
6.	Chauba Memorial Manipuri Intellectual Property Museum	2007	<i>Featuring 116 artifacts of Manipuri tribal people including ornaments, daily utensils, musical instruments etc.</i>	Komalganj, Maulovibazar

Category 3: Memorial Museums: A Memorial museum preserves and exhibits the memory of an individual or an event. These types of museums are large in number in Bangladesh.

Table 4: List of Memorial Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Bangabandhu Memorial Museum	1994	<i>The household goods of Bangabandhu, the evidences of assassination etc.</i>	Dhanmondi, Dhaka.
2.	Bangabandhu Museum	1998	<i>In memory of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's captivity for Agartala Conspiracy Case, case documents & photographs, used easy chair and dress etc.</i>	Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka
3.	Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibor Rahman Jail Memorial Museum	2010	<i>Old jail rooms and relics</i>	Nazimuddin Road, Dhaka
4.	National Four Leaders' Jail Memorial Museum	2010	<i>Old jail rooms and relics</i>	Nazimuddin Road, Dhaka
5.	Poet Jashimuddin Museum (Mani Malar Manihar)	2015	<i>In memory of the famous poet of Bangla folklore literature</i>	Tambulkhana, Faridpur
6.	Museum of Rajas	2006	<i>The traditional utensils of the Raja family, the equipment used to make the famous film on Hason Raja.</i>	Zindabazar, Sylhet
7.	Osmani Museum	1987	<i>General M.A.G. Osmani's residence, used maps and furniture.</i>	DhopaDighir Par, Sylhet

8.	Hason Raja Museum	2009	<i>In memory of the famous poet of Sylhet, used household goods, family photographs etc.</i>	Teghoria Road, Sunamganj
9.	Bhai Girish Chandra Shen Museum	2018	<i>In memory of the first Bangla translator of Quran</i>	Panchdona, Narshingdi
10.	ShilpacharyaZainulAbedinSangrahashala	1975	<i>The collections of the artist</i>	Park Road, Mymensingh
11.	Zia Memorial Museum	1993	<i>In memory of President Ziaur Rahman who was assassinated in the same building of the museum.</i>	Shahid Saifuddin Khaled Rd, Chittagong
12.	Kangal Harinath Museum	2009	<i>In memory of Kangal Harinath who was a publisher of a newspaper</i>	Kumarkhali, Kushtia
13.	Michael Madhusudan Dutt Memorial	2001	<i>In memory of the famous poet of British Indian period, family tree, poems, photographs.</i>	Shagordari, Jessore
14.	S M Sultan Memorial	2006	<i>In memory of the famous artist and painter S M Sultan</i>	Narail
15.	Jagadish Chandra Bose Memorial Museum	2011	<i>Letters, oil paintings, utensils etc.</i>	Sripur, Munshiganj
16.	Gandhi Ashram Trust Museum	2000	<i>To promulgate the principles of non-violence and non-cooperation as set forth by Mahatma Gandhi</i>	Gandhi Road, Noakhali
17.	Language Martyr Abul Barkat Memorial Museum	2012	<i>In memory of the Language Movement martyr</i>	Polashi intersection, Azimpur, Dhaka

18.	Language Martyr Rafiq Uddin Ahmed Memorial Museum	2008	<i>In memory of the Language Movement martyr</i>	Shingair, Manikganj
19.	Language Martyr Zabbar Memorial Museum	2008	<i>In memory of the Language Movement martyr</i>	Pachua, Gafargaon, Mymensingh
20.	Language Martyr Salam Memorial Museum	2008	<i>In memory of the Language Movement martyr</i>	Laxmanpur, Matrivuiya, Dagonvuiya, Feni
21.	<i>Birshreshtha</i> Ruhul Amin Library and Museum	2008	<i>In memory of Ruhul Amin, one of the highest ranked war hero of the liberation war in 1971.</i>	Amin Nagar, Noakhali
22.	<i>Birshreshtha</i> Shaheed Noor Mohammad Sheikh Library & Memorial Museum	2008	<i>In memory of Noor Mohammad, one of the highest ranked war hero of the liberation war in 1971.</i>	Bhumudde Road, Jessore
23.	<i>Birshreshtha</i> Mostafa Kamal Library and museum	2008	<i>In memory of Mostafa Kamal, one of the highest ranked war hero of the liberation war in 1971.</i>	Hazratpur High School, Bhola
24.	<i>Birshreshtha</i> Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir Memorial Museum	2008	<i>In memory of Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir, one of the highest ranked war hero of the liberation war in 1971.</i>	Launch terminal road, Barishal
25.	<i>Birshreshtha</i> Munshi Abdur Rouf Library and Museum	2008	<i>In memory of Munshi Abdur Rouf, one of the highest ranked war hero of the liberation war in 1971.</i>	Roufnagar, Faridpur

26.	<i>Birshreshtha</i> Sipahi Hamidur Rahman Library and Museum	2008	<i>In memory of Sipahi Hamidur Rahman, one of the highest ranked war hero of the liberation war in 1971.</i>	Khalishpur, Maheshpur, Jhenaidah
27.	<i>Birshreshtha</i> Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Library and Museum	2008	<i>In memory of Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman, one of the highest ranked war hero of the liberation war 1971.</i>	Ramnagar, Raypur, Narshingdi
28.	Sher-e-Bangla Museum	1983	<i>In memory of the famous Muslim politician of British Indian period.</i>	Saliabakpur Union, Barisal
29.	Mir Mosharraf Hossain Memorial Museum	1999	<i>In memory of the famous Muslim novelist of British Indian period.</i>	Padamdi, Baliakandi, Rajbari
30.	Mir Mosharraf Hossain Memorial Museum	2008	<i>In memory of famous Muslim novelist British Indian period.</i>	Lahinipara, Kumarkhali, Kushtia
31.	Nazrul Museum	1985	<i>The poet's last residence at Dhaka</i>	Nazrul Institute, Kabi Bhaban, House: 330 B, Road: 2T(old), Dhanmondi, Dhaka
32.	Lalon Museum	2007	<i>Paintings, Musical instruments etc.</i>	Lalon Academy Complex, Kumarkhali, Kushtia
33.	Unoshottur	2008 Under Construction	<i>Shaheed Asad and the movement of 1969 collections</i>	Chankharpul, Dhaka

34.	<i>Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam Memorial Museum</i>	2007	<i>Books and used household goods of Jahanara Imam, who is known as an activist for war criminals' tribunal.</i>	Konika,355 , Elephant Road, Dhaka-1205
35.	<i>Comandant Manik Chowdhury Smriti Pathagar O Muktijuddha Jadughar</i>	2018	<i>Museum for the artifacts of the liberation war in 1971</i>	Habiganj
36.	<i>October Smriti Jadughar</i>	1986	<i>In memory of the students died in ceiling collapse at Jagannath Hall in 1985</i>	Jagannath Hall, University of Dhaka
37.	<i>Language Movement Museum</i>	2010	<i>preserving data and information on the history of the 1952 language movement, memories of the language martyrs and veterans</i>	Bangla Academy, Bardhaman House, Dhaka
38.	<i>Suchitra Sen Memorial Museum</i>	2017	<i>Photographs of the renowned actress at her ancestral house.</i>	Hem Sagar Lane, Pabna

Category 4: Museums on Liberation War 1971: The Liberation War of Bangladesh is one of the most important phenomenons of history of Bengalis. It provided the rise of a sovereign state for the Bengali people. To commemorate and boost up the spirit of patriotism, the government of Bangladesh has been promoting Liberation War museums all over the country.

Table 5: List of Museums on Liberation War 1971

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Museum of Independence (Shadinota Jadughar)	2015	<i>Commemorating the historic speech of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the then Race-course Maidan as well as relevant artifacts</i>	Sohrawardy Uddyan, Dhaka
2.	Liberation War Museum	1996	<i>National Museum for the artifacts of the liberation war in 1971</i>	Agargaon, Dhaka
3.	Muktijuddha Jadughor	1996	<i>Museum for the artifacts of the liberation war in 1971</i>	5 Shegun Bagicha, Dhaka
4.	Jader Rokte Mukto Shwadesh	2007	<i>Museum for the artifacts of the liberation war in Jessore area</i>	Jessore Cantonment, Jessore
5.	Liberation War Museum of Bangladesh Police	2013	<i>denotes the sacrifice of police soldiers during the Liberation War</i>	Rajarbagh Police Lines, Dhaka
6.	Muktijuddha Jadughar O Library	2018	<i>Museum for the artifacts of the liberation war in 1971</i>	Boglabazar, Sunamganj
7.	1971: Genocide-Torture Archive & Museum	2014	<i>Information and relics of the genocide occurred in Khulna during the liberation war in 1971</i>	Central Rd, Khulna
8.	Independence Museum, Bhola	2015	<i>The artifacts of the liberation war 1971 in Bhola.</i>	Charfassion-Bhola highway road, Bhola
9.	Liberation War Museum	2008	<i>Information and relics of the genocide</i>	Jalladkhana boddhobhumi,

	(Jalladkhana)		<i>occurred in Mirpur during the liberation war in 1971</i>	Mirpur, Dhaka
10.	Shahid Shagor (Shahid Smriti Jadughor)	2000	<i>Genocide ground at North Bengal Sugar Mill</i>	Natore
11.	Jadughar 71	Under Construction	<i>A torcher cell of the Pakistan Army</i>	Govt. Technical High School, Choumuhuni, Noakhali
12.	Gourobangon	2007	<i>Liberation war artifacts</i>	Jessore Cantonment, Jessore
13.	BijoyKeton	2000	<i>Liberation war artifacts</i>	Shaheed Sharani, Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka.
14.	BijoyGnatha	1999	<i>Liberation war artifacts</i>	Mymensingh Cantonment, Mymensingh
15.	Shaheed Smriti Shangrahasala	1976	<i>The artifacts of the intellectuals died in the liberation war of 1971.</i>	Rajshahi University, Rajshahi
16.	Bijoyangon	1995	<i>Liberation war artifacts</i>	Bogra Cantonment, Bogra
17.	Smriti Amlan	1995	<i>Bangladesh Army's weapon and liberation war artifacts at Chittagong Cantonment.</i>	Chittagong Cantonment Road, Chittagong.
18.	Rajbari Muktijoddha Smriti Sanrakkhan Jadughar	2013	<i>Freedom fighter Golam Mostafa Giash's initiative to preserve and display the history of Liberation War</i>	Kashima Village, Goalanda, Rajbari

Category 5: Armed Forces Museum: The armed forces of Bangladesh have a valiant legacy in the Liberation war and peace-keeping missions for the United Nations. The used guns, artilleries, aircrafts, vehicles, uniforms, insignia etc. are exhibited in these museums. These museums also publicize the contribution of these forces towards the development of Bangladesh.

Table 6: List of Armed Forces Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Bangladesh Air Force Museum	1987, 2014	<i>Bangladesh Air Force's historic aircrafts</i>	Agargaon, Dhaka
2.	Bangladesh Military Museum	1987	<i>Bangladesh Armed Forces historic, weapon, uniform, vehicles etc.</i>	Bijoy Sharani, Dhaka
3.	BGB Museum	2015	<i>Bangladesh Border Guard's historic relics, weapon, uniform etc.</i>	176 New Market –Pilkhana Rd Dhaka 1205
4.	Maritime Museum	2018	<i>Bangladesh Navy's used instruments, weapons, uniforms etc.</i>	Naval Avenue, Chittagong
5.	Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) Museum	1992	<i>BMA's used instruments, uniforms etc.</i>	Bhatiari, Chittagong

Category 6: Local Museums: Some of the old district towns have their age-old collection of historical artifacts and traditional local antiquities. These are preserved and exhibited in these local museums.

Table 7: List of Local Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Mohammad Ali Palace Museum & Park	1998	<i>Regional and historic artifacts</i>	Nawabbari Road, Bogra
2.	Dinajpur Museum	1968, 1985	<i>Sculptures, coins, inscriptions etc.</i>	Munshipara, Dinajpur

3.	Narshingdi Museum	2017	<i>Dr. Moazzem Hossain's initiative for regional and historic artifacts collection</i>	Pashchim Brahmandi, opposite of Shilpakala Academy, Narshingdi
4.	Bikrampur Museum & Boat Museum	2013	<i>Agrashar Bikrampur Foundation's collection of Boats, Terracotta, pottery etc.</i>	Balashur, Srinagar, Munshiganj
5.	Faridpur Museum	1977	<i>Regional and historic artifacts</i>	Rajendra College Rd, Faridpur
6.	Divisional Museum (Khulna)	1998	<i>Regional and historic artifacts</i>	Majid Sharani, Khulna
7.	Chalanbil Museum	1978	<i>Sculpture, Hand-written Quran, Coin, Terracotta</i>	Khubjipur Rd, Gurudaspur, Natore
8.	Dinajpur Museum	1968	<i>Regional and historic artifacts</i>	Munshipara, Dinajpur
9.	Nilphamari Museum	1953,1983, 2000	<i>Old lock, old manuscripts and regional artifacts.</i>	Dewan Alamgir Marshal Sharani, Nilphamari
10.	Rammala Museum	Approx. 1920	<i>Hand-written manuscripts of ancient literature</i>	Maheshangan, Comilla
11.	Barisal Divisional Museum	2015	<i>Regional and historic artifacts</i>	Fazlul Haque Ave, Barisal
12.	Lalmonirhat Zila Jadughor	2003	<i>Dr. Ashrafuzzaman Mondol's collection of coins, manuscript, ornaments etc.</i>	Shabuj Nir, Purbo Thanapara, Lalmonirhat
13.	Bhasha Sainik Matin Uddin Ahmed Museum	2004	<i>An Old clock, coins, stone inscription, ivory hand fan</i>	4 th Floor, Kendriyo Muslim Shahittya Shanshad, Amberkhana, Sylhet.

Category 7: Museums of Private Collections: Bangladesh has a good number of private collectors who loves to collect their favorite items. These collectors are not belongs to the upper class only. There is a radio collector in the list who had to sell his worn shoe to buy a rare radio set. This list is incomplete indeed. A lot of these collectors are shy of publicity. Discovering these collectors worth a lot of time and effort.

Table 8: List of Museums of Private Collections.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Vasha Andolon Jadughor	1989	<i>Language-activist Kazi Golam Mahub's Residence</i>	House: 5, Road: 10, Dhanmondi, Dhaka.
2.	Dhaka Museum of Toy	2013	<i>Saadi Rahman's collected toys, comics, posters etc.</i>	25,26,27, Kazi Nazrul Islam Ave, Banglamotor Dhaka
3.	Vintage Car Museum	1977	<i>Mahmudul Faruq's 60 classic cars from different eras, various kinds of motorbikes, and a small airplane</i>	MoynarTek, Dhaka's Dakshinkhan
4.	Zunaid Morshed Paiker's Cricket Museum	1998	<i>Cricket related artifacts</i>	Dhaka
5.	Prof. Iqbal Matin's Old Music Collection	1969	<i>6000 music records including gramophones</i>	Shagarpara, Rajshahi
6.	Pritom-Prionti Mini Museum	1994	<i>Rare artifacts of Chalanbil area</i>	Gurudaspur, Natore
7.	Mofazzal Hossain's Radio Collection	1985	<i>Collection of 600 radios</i>	Dhaka

8.	Bangali Shamagra	2004 This museum was closed for renovation at present research	<i>Tariq Rahman Shourov's collection of letters, historical documents</i>	235/2 Elephant road, Dhaka
9.	Azad's Collection	1994	<i>Coins, Sculpture, ivory etc.</i>	Gurudashpur, Natore
10.	Folk Collection of Saidur	1974	<i>Mohammad Saidur's collection of old manuscript, Nakshi Katha etc.</i>	Bogadia, Binnogaon, Kishoreganj
11.	Abdul Latif Documentary Collection	2004	<i>Paper cutting and documentation of various news</i>	Kaukhali, Pirojpur
12.	Alhaj M. A. Karim Museum	2001	<i>Dr. Abul Hossain's Collection</i>	Vobodia Road, Dhunchi Rd, Rajbari

Category 8: Science Museum: Science museums are dedicated museums to spread the principles of basic and advanced scientific discoveries. The spectators also get knowledge about numerous scientists and their researches in these museums.

Table 9: Science Museum.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established	Collection	Location
1.	National Museum of Science and Technology	1965	<i>Science and applied science related apparatus, experimental objects etc.</i>	Shahid Shahabuddin Shorok, Dhaka

Category 9: City Museum: Apart from the local museums, the city museums emphasizes on the urban settlements and historical artifacts of the city's old history.

Table 10: List of City Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established	Collection	Location
1.	Dhaka Nagar Jadughar	1987	<i>The historical relics and cultural heritage of Dhaka city</i>	RAJUK bhaban, Dhaka

2.	Municipality Museum	1997	<i>the historical relics and cultural heritage of Kushtia municipality</i>	NS Rd, Kushtia
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Category 10: Institution-based Museum: Age-old institutions and professional organizations want to preserve their legacy to inspire the future generation of professionals. In some cases this collection is part of the profession. For example, the Geological Survey of Bangladesh preserves its specimens in a museum instead of a store. These specimens are actually collected from the routine geological exploration across the country.

Table 11: List of Institution-based Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Bangladesh Maritime Museum	2010	<i>Bangladesh Marine Academy</i>	Bangladesh Marine Academy, Chittagong
2.	Postal Museum	1985	<i>Postal stamps, instruments, historical relics etc.</i>	Third floor, GPO, Dhaka
3.	Bangladesh Scout Museum	2007	<i>Badges, insignia, uniforms, achievements etc.</i>	The National Scout Training Center (NSTC), Mouchak, Gazipur
4.	Television Museum	2016	<i>Television broadcasting instruments, photographs etc.</i>	BTV, Rampura, Dhaka.
5.	Tea Museum	2009	<i>Special coins used by tea workers, compass, survey chains, dressing table used by British planters etc.</i>	Srimangal-Kamalganj Road, Moulavibazar
6.	Bangladesh Railway Museum	2003	<i>Railway engines, miniature tracks, cast iron designs etc.</i>	Ambagan Road, Chittagong

7.	Geoscience Museum	1957	<i>GSB's collection of fossils, minerals, rocks, models and charts</i>	Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB), 153 Pioneer Rd, Segunbagicha, Dhaka
8.	Supreme Court Museum	2014	<i>old furniture, dress and other objects used by judges</i>	Supreme Court, Dhaka

Category 11: University-based Museum: The numbers of universities are increasing rapidly. Every year, a large number of graduates pass out completing their list of courses. Some of these courses include collection of specimens as an integrated activity. These collections, when preserved with care, transform into museums. These museums are an essential part of the teaching process.

Table 12: List of University-based Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	<i>Daksu Shongrohoshala</i>	1991	<i>University of Dhaka students' union's historical relics.</i>	University of Dhaka, Dhaka.
2.	Emiretus Prof. Md.Kazi Zaker Husain Museum	1954, 2010	<i>Over 3000 zoological specimens</i>	Dept. of Zoology, University of Dhaka, Dhaka.
3.	Aquatic Laboratory	1998	<i>Dept. of Fisheries' collection of fish specimens</i>	University of Dhaka, Dhaka.
4.	Prof. Nazmul Karim Shongrohoshala	1959	<i>Old manuscripts, pottery, folk utensils etc.</i>	Dept. of Sociology, University of Dhaka, Dhaka.
5.	Botany Department Museum	1939	<i>Dept. of Botany's collection of specimens</i>	University of Dhaka, Dhaka.
6.	Shaheed Muktadir Geological Museum	1949, 1960	<i>collection of fossils, minerals, rocks, models, maps and charts</i>	Department of Geology, University of Dhaka
7.	Anatomy Museum	1956	<i>Human anatomical specimens</i>	Dhaka Medical College, Dhaka

8.	Histopathology Museum	1956	<i>Over 400 specimens</i>	Dhaka Medical College, Dhaka
9.	Sir Salimullah Medical College Anatomy Museum	1897	<i>Human anatomical specimens</i>	Mitford road, Dhaka
10.	Sir Salimullah Medical College Pathology Museum	1897	<i>Pathological specimens</i>	Mitford road, Dhaka
11.	Botany Department Museum	1995	<i>Dept. of Botany's collection of specimens</i>	Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka
12.	Zoology Department Museum	1990	<i>Dept. of Zoology's collection of specimens</i>	Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka
13.	Chittagong University Museum	1973	<i>Sculpture, handicraft, historical relics etc.</i>	Chittagong University, Chittagong
14.	Chittagong University Zoology Department Museum	1973	<i>Around 5,000 Zoological specimen</i>	Chittagong University, Chittagong
15.	Rajshahi University Geological Museum	1975	<i>Geological artifacts, stones, soil, sand crystals etc.</i>	Rajshahi University, Rajshahi
16.	Agriculture Museum	2007	<i>Agricultural specimens</i>	Bangladesh Agriculture University, Mymensingh

Category 12: Site Museums: The archaeological sites are the source of many unearthed antiquities. The tourists want to enjoy the archaeological sites as well as the hidden items found within. For this reason, site museum is a good destination for school and college study tours.

Table 13: List of Site Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Ahsan Manzil	1992	<i>the official residential palace and seat of the Nawab of Dhaka</i>	2/3 Islampum Road, Dhaka

2.	Rangpur Museum (Tajhat)	2005	<i>Maharaja Kumar Gopal Lal Roy's residence</i>	Tajhat Palace, Rangpur
3.	Uttara Ganabhaban (Dighapatia Rajbari)	2018	<i>Residence of Raja Dayaram Roy</i>	Patul road, Natore
4.	Bagerhat Museum	1999	<i>Artifacts and relics of the city of Khalifatabad, Shat Gambuj mosque etc.</i>	Shat Gambuj Mosque, Bagerhat
5.	Lalbagh Fort Museum	1974	<i>A fort built in the Mughal period and its relics</i>	Lalbagh Road, Dhaka
6.	Archaeological Museum of Mahasthangarh	1967	<i>The ancient city of PundraBardhan and its relics</i>	Mahasthangarh, Bogra
7.	Tagore Memorial Museum	1958	<i>Rabindranath Thakur's Kuthi Bari</i>	Shilaidaha, Kushtia
8.	Rabindra Memorial Museum	1958	<i>Rabindranath Thakur's Kachari Bari</i>	Shahzadpur, Sirajganj
9.	Rabindranath's in-laws' House	1995	<i>Rabindranath's in-laws' House</i>	Dakkhin Dihi, Fultola, Khulna
10.	Patishar Jadughor	2008	<i>Rabindranath Thakur's Kachari Bari</i>	Potishar, Atrai, Naogaon
11.	Nazrul Smriti Kendra	2008	<i>Residence of the Daroga who adopted the poet in his childhood</i>	Daroga Bari, Kazir Shimla, Trishal, Mymensingh.
12.	Paharpur Museum	1994	<i>ShompurMahabihara and its relics</i>	Paharpur, Naogaon
13.	Mainamati Museum	1966	<i>Shalbanbihara and its relics</i>	Shalbanbihara, Comilla
14.	Baliati Palace Museum	2015	<i>Govinda Ram Saha Residence</i>	Saturia, Manikganj
15.	Kirttipasha Jadughor	2004	<i>Zaminder residence</i>	Kirttipasha , Jhalokathi

16.	Mymensingh Museum	1969	<i>Garden House of Jamindar Madan Mohan Babu</i>	17 Amrita Babu Road, Mymensingh
17.	<i>Shadhinata O Muktijuddha Smriti Jadughor</i> (Mujibnagar Complex)	1996	<i>The place of establishing the first government of Bangladesh.</i>	Mujibnagar, Meherpur
18.	Wari-Bateshwar Museum	Under Construction	<i>The ancient city of Shonagarh and its relics</i>	Belabo, Narshingdi

Category 13: Flora & Fauna Museum: The flora and fauna museum, which are different from the university-based museum by the professional approach instead of academic endeavors. These museums play an important role in recording and preserving the indigenous species of flora and fauna.

Table 14: List of Flora & Fauna Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Bangladesh National Herbarium	1994	<i>plant specimens</i>	Botanical Garden, Mirpur, Dhaka
2.	Fish Museum & Biodiversity Center	2009	<i>Preserved specimen of fishes, eggs, breeding information etc.</i>	Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh
3.	Folbithi Horticulture (Germ-plasm) Center	1990	<i>Department of Agricultural Extension's program for varies species of trees</i>	Asad gate, Dhaka
4.	Fisheries and Anatomy Museum	2017	<i>Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Science University's collected fish specimen</i>	CVASU, Zakir Hossain Road, Khulshi, Chittagong
5.	Jessore Fisheries Museum	2006	<i>110 specimens of fish</i>	Bangladesh Fish Research Institute (BFRI), Chanchra, Jessore

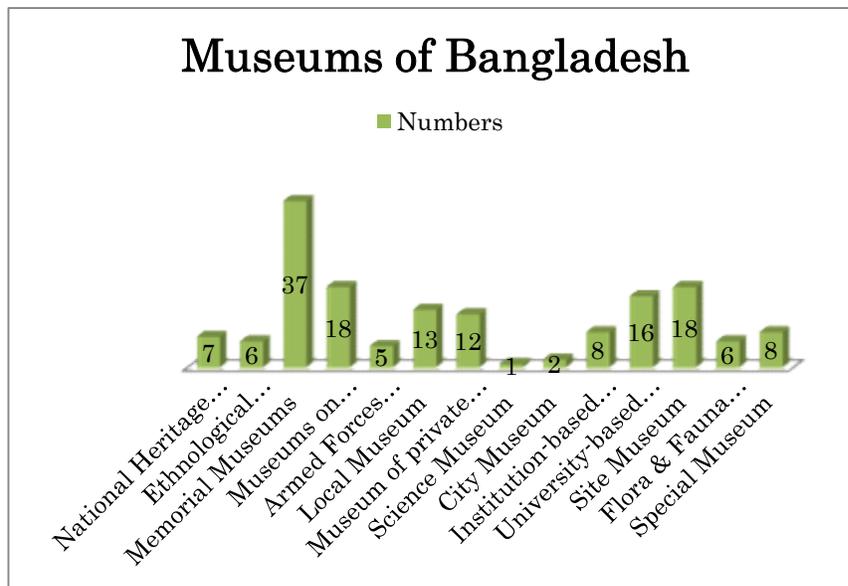
6.	Bangladesh National Zoo Museum (Jatiyo Prakritik Jadughor)	1993	<i>Stuffed animals, eggs, shells etc.</i>	Zoo Road, Dhaka 1216
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Category 14: Special Museums: The term 'Special Museum' is to distinct some museums with extraordinary displays of artifacts as well as by the thematic diversity. In an abstract, these museums work as glittering jewels among the other museums of a country.

Table 15: List of Special Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Established Year	Collection	Location
1.	Children's Museum (Shishu Academy)	1990	<i>Photographs of Sheikh Russel, relics of four child martyrs.</i>	Doel Chattar, Shahbagh, Dhaka
2.	Water Museum	2014	<i>Water collected from the various rivers of Bangladesh</i>	Pakhimara, Kalapara, Patuakhali
3.	Mukti Sangram Jadughar & Jamalpur Gandhi Ashram	1934, 2006	<i>Relics of Anti-British Movement during the British Colonial Period in Bengal.</i>	Melandah, Jamalpur
4.	Shadhinota Shongram Vashkorjo Jadughor (Liberation War Sculpture Museum)	1999	<i>Sculptures of renowned personalities of Bengal made by sculptor Shamim Shikdar</i>	Dhaka University, Dhaka
5.	Panchagarh Rocks Museum	1997	<i>Geological artifacts, stones, soil, sand crystals etc.</i>	Panchagarh Government Mohila College, Panchagarh
6.	Taka Museum	2013	<i>Coins, paper notes etc.</i>	Mirpur Rd, Dhaka

7.	National Toshkhana Museum	2018	<i>All gifts received by the President, Prime Minister, ministers and government officials in their official capacity</i>	Bijoy Sharani, Dhaka
8.	Mother Language Museum	2011	<i>Information on different languages, written scripts, recordings etc.</i>	International Mother Language Institute, Segunbagicha, Dhaka
9.	National Writers and Literary Museum	2011	<i>Writers' manuscripts, utensils etc.</i>	Bangla Academy, ShibaMandir Rd, Dhaka



Graph 1: Museum Category and Numbers of Bangladeshi Museums

Proposed Museums: During the present research, a number of museums are found in conception. The proposals of these museums are discussed in various ministry level meetings.

Table 16: List of proposed Museums.

Sl. No	Name of the Museum	Authority	Collection	Location
1.	Radio Museum	Bangladesh Betar	<i>Radio Instruments used during Liberation War</i>	Shahbag, Dhaka
2.	Bangladesh Agriculture Museum	Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council	<i>Various types of seeds</i>	BARC, Dhaka
3.	Shugandha: The Historical Rest House	Foreign Service Academy	<i>Bangabandhu's office and meeting place</i>	Baily Road, Dhaka
4.	Comrade Moni Singh Smriti Pathagar and Museum	Bangladesh National Museum	<i>In memory of Comrade Moni Singh</i>	Netrokona
5.	Abdul Haque Smriti Pathagar and Museum	Bangladesh National Museum	<i>In memory of Abdul Haque</i>	Rauzan, Chittagong

9. Characteristics of Museums.

The majority of the museums are memorial museum which are built centering the works and information of the great personalities who contributed significantly for the wellbeing of the society and the nation. Liberation war museums are the second highest in number which has an increasing trend in the future with the government patronization. The department of archaeology has been succeeded to establish some of the well maintained and most visited site museums situated in the historical places. One of the reasons for which these site museums get much visitors every year is that people loves to roam around the museums protected relaxing landscapes and the gardens. It is a significant feature of the site museums because these kind of public gardens are getting scarce both in urban and rural areas.

The institution-based museums are on the steady rise too. Day by day, more autonomous institutions are getting active to establish their own museum in their campus with the historical equipment's displaying the institution's own legacies. Two of the proposed museums are in this category.

Most of the museums of Bangladesh are silent museums where people can only see and read the displayed items but cannot experiment or interact with the process of how the artifacts were made and future projection as well as the application of the knowledge.

Nevertheless, there is a recent trend of establishing memorial museum incorporating a public library within the building. For example, the memorial museums of seven Birshreshtha(s) are of these kind. Hopefully this new idea will contribute to the development of the rural communities in which these museums are established.

10. The limitations of Bangladeshi Museums at present

There is only one Science Museum for the whole country which is not sufficient enough to spread the recent advancement of science and technology to the students. The lack of particular subject-based museums is also significant. For example, National Museum of History, Museum of Natural History are yet to establish in this country.

Some of the museums are going through very poor conditions due to the lack of funding, inadequate visitors and maintenance. Due to inadequate publicity, these museums are in the treat of being extinct in near future. Because as the land price are increasing, the trustees are persuaded frequently by the land developers and other interested buyers.

There is no national organization to unite, coordinate and to provide progressive leadership for the museums all over Bangladesh. No online database is found which will show the list of the museums in this country including their locations, open hours and catalogues of display items. So the researchers, tourists and travelers from foreign countries have to rely on other uncertain sources.

There is no national or private institution for the study of museology as well. So most of the people even who are working in some of the museums are not interested in the profession. If there was an institution which will encourage people to understand the value and interesting research aspects of working in a museum, the profession could get more talented and dedicated professionals.

11. Functional Interpretation of Museums

Functional interpretations of a museum are related to its social context and context of use. For example, the purpose of the museum architecture is to make it legible among its surrounding urban fabric. Both the interior and the exterior space of the museum should be fit for a certain scale of public gathering. This scale is proportionate to the amount and importance of the museum's display items. In the urban context, the

functionality of the museum depends not only on the museum's collection but also the space and environment it offers to the visitors. Because a good portion of the visitors come to museum to enjoy a quality time with their kids, family and friends in a decent environment.

If we look at the Varendra museum, the façade decoration is influenced by Hindu architecture but the structure and the spaces represent the British colonial architecture of Bengal. The building was initially planned and designed by Sarat Kumar Ray while Lord Carmichael laid its foundation in 13 November 1916.¹⁰

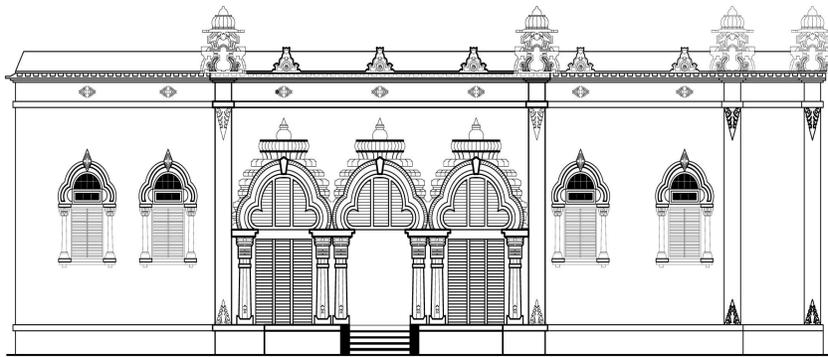


Figure 1: A portion of the South Elevation of Varendra Research Museum, Source: Metropolitan Architects

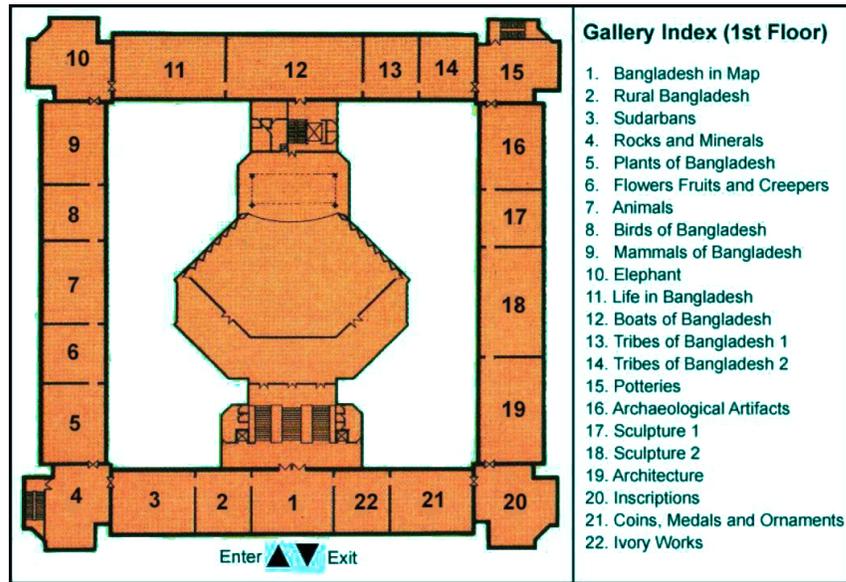
A rectangular open-to-sky courtyard is enclosed with veranda and galleries. Its roof was made of old beam and rafter system. Earthen tiles and lime mixed with brick-dust which was used as plaster. It has a high ceiling of about 17 feet which gives a comfortable lofty space for display. The high windows provide access to daylight. The collection of artifacts is dominated by stone sculptures. But due to the lack of exhibition space, many sculptures are displayed at the veranda of the main gallery space. The museum has one store which does not have an adequate and modern storage system to store the valuable artifacts in proper arrangement.

Varendra Museum can enhance its attraction if it puts the process of the making of stone sculptures on the display. A museum with such a rich collection should invite scholars and researchers to do research on these stone sculptures. By this process, the visitors can have a look into the past, with little effort.

¹⁰ University of Rajshahi website, "Varendra Research Museum: History of the Varendra Research Museum.", [online] Available at: http://www.ru.ac.bd/?page_id=146 [15 September,2018]



Figure 2: Veranda of Varendra Research Museum, Source: the dailystar.net



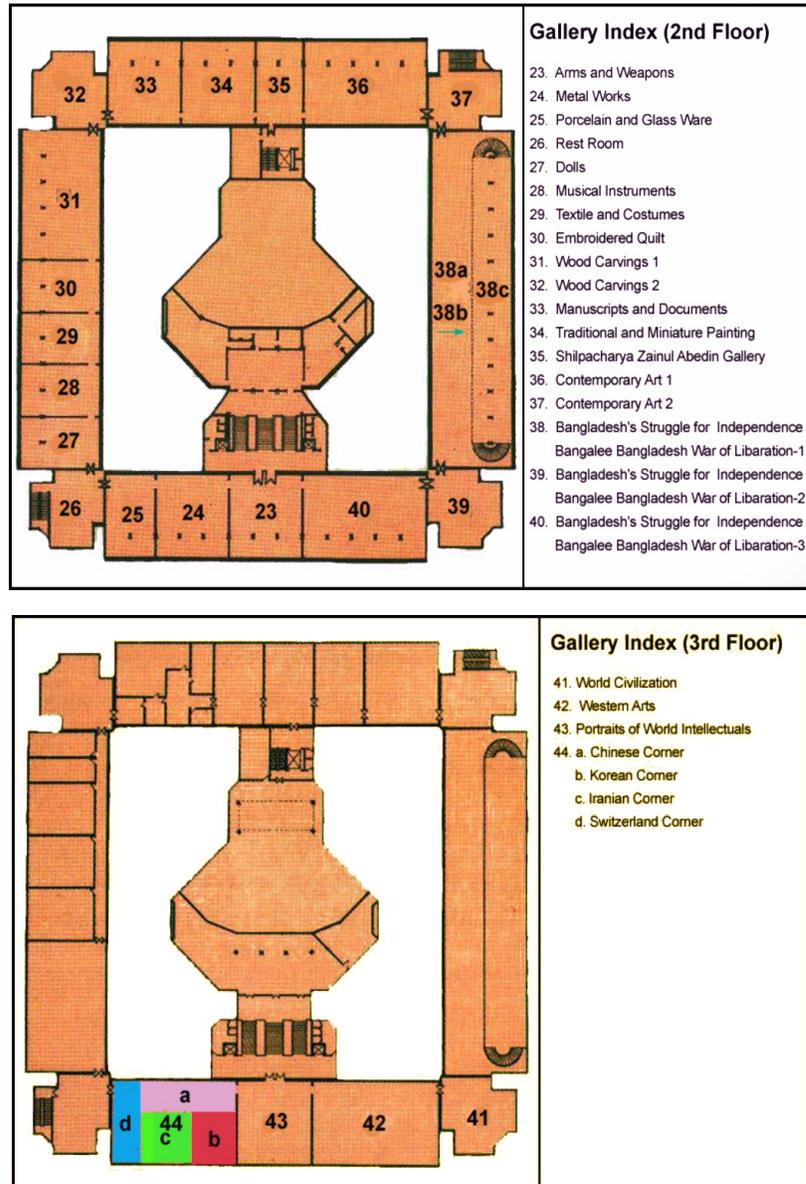


Figure 3: Gallery layout of the Bangladesh National Museum,
Source: Bangladesh National Museum website

With 44 galleries, Bangladesh National Museum is the largest museum in the country. Recently the museum authority has taken the necessary steps to reach the students by facilitating frequent school visits for school and college students. The museum has its own transportation bus for these school visits. Moreover, interactive stand-alone touch-screen kiosk computers to provide information. The museum also has auditoriums, library and art exhibition spaces which have made it one of a kind in the country.



Figure 4: Inside the Liberation War Museum, a kid is playing by going through the same kind of sanitary pipe which was used by the refugee children of Bangladesh during the war in 1971.

The form of the Liberation War Museum resembles a massive concrete warship. The 'masts' and the lights are visible from afar while approaching the museum. From the ground up, visitors need to take a majestic set of stairs to enter the museum from the front. Side entrances are reserved for special occasions as well as for school visits. The original museum, established on March 22, 1996, was a two-storeyed building with six galleries and had an outdoor theatre. The new museum now boasts of a 3,500 square meter gallery area along with spacious concourse halls and modern audio-visual equipment for a full perspective of the Liberation War and associated events. The new building at Agargaon, designed by architect Tanzim Hasan Salim and Naheed Farzana, is unique because of its architectural form. The style of the exhibition is also different from other museums.

The exceptional feature of this museum is that here, photography is not restricted and people can really enjoy taking photos with historical backdrops. There are 6 galleries which display the protracted struggle of the people of Bangladesh with an emphasis from 1947 to 1971.

Another well-exhibited museum is the Taka Museum, established by the Bangladesh Bank. Here, coins from the ancient Bengal to latest ones are exhibited in distinct 55 showcases divided in two galleries. This exhibition could have been more interesting if the spectators could know the history and the process of making coins from the ancient time to now on. Two very interesting features are present in this museum. One is a 'Photo kiosk' where visitors can get their picture in souvenir note by taking picture from the photo kiosk which can help their visit memorable. Another one is a digital kiosk which provides information about the displayed coins of the showcases and video of these coins.

Many of the memorial museums have libraries which are essential to attracting regular visitors and readers. For example, the memorial museums and libraries of seven Birshreshtha (highest military title for the liberation heroes of Bangladesh) are established at the war heroes' hometowns. These libraries can work as incubators for future writers in rural areas. Another way to revitalize all these memorial museums is to initiate activities which relevant to the work of the great personalities, to whom the museum is dedicated for. For instance, Poet Jashimuddin Museum at Faridpur can be a place for the study of rural poetry. Such activities will not only attract tourists from home and abroad but also generate money for the maintenance. The dependency on government grants will be lessened.

Local museums are the cradles for community consciousness as well as promoting local arts and crafts. These museums can lay the bedrocks of the government's initiative for branding each district individually. In Bangladesh, it is a custom to get acquainted with unknown people according to the identity of the districts. Local museums can boost up the identity of the locality.

To create enthusiasm for studying science and mathematics, the flourishing of science and natural history museum is a must. Unfortunately, Bangladesh has no natural history museum yet. The features of natural history are partially shown at the National Museum of Science and Technology. The arrangements are simply not enough. Nowadays, kids has smartphones at hand and they do not want to spend their time with old equipments. Artificial intelligence and robotics are the new craze. Moreover, various lectures and workshop on practical science in the supervision of the renowned scientist from home and abroad will boost up the curiosity and enthusiasm among the young minds. The enthusiasm is vital to develop an innovation-based industrial development in Bangladesh.

The university-based museums are another source of preserving important specimen for research. But apart from few exceptions, most of the specimen collections are stacked carelessly at the corridors of the departments. Providing additional funding is necessary to make an enriched museum which can be an attraction for the researchers from home and abroad.

Finally, the number of a private collection is increasing day by day. In spite of some political turmoil from time to time, Bangladesh is enjoying a good economic growth in the last two decades. As a result, the upper class and the upper-middle-class people have a growing tendency of collecting various items as hobbies. These are indeed national assets in a broader aspect. Sometimes the heirs of the collector are not so interested to look after their ancestor's collection. What will happen then to all the hard work of a diligent citizen? The government or the private art collectors can take the initiative to build a museum of people's collection, which can accommodated these private collection. The idea has the potentiality to boost up the local art & craft market while generating money from the visitors and occasional auctions.

12. Effects of Museums in the Society

Over the years, the museum culture has spread to nearly every part of the world and today it has become uncommon to find any country that does not have a museum, no matter how small it may be. This implies that the concept of the museum has become a global concept that has survived the 20th century.

The early museums were elitist, uninspiring and aloof as they encouraged only the educated people to visit them. The general public was excluded. This focus has today become too narrow and unacceptable in a changing world. Nowadays, museums have varying aims, ranging from serving researchers and specialists to serving the general public. The purpose of modern museums is to collect, preserve, interpret, and display items of artistic, cultural, or scientific significance for the education and enjoyment of the public.

The museum as an institution tells the story of the people all over the world and shows how the humanity has survived over the years. It houses things created by nature and by man. In our modern society, it holds the cultural soul of the nation. It preserves the cultural wealth of the nation for all generations. By its function and unique position, it has become the cultural conscience of the nation.

In our modern society, it has become necessary and indeed urgent for museums to redefine their missions, their goals, their functions and their strategies to reflect the expectations of a changing world. Today, museums must become agents of change and development. They must mirror the events in society and become the instruments of progress by calling attention to actions and events which will encourage development in the society. They must become institutions that can foster peace. They must be seen as promoting the ideals of democracy and transparency in governance in their communities. They must become a part of the bigger communities that they serve and reach out to every group in the society.

To retain their relevance and become positive partners in the development of our societies, the museums should use their unique resources and potentials to become more responsive to the dynamics of modern society and urban change. As institutions possessing critical resources in society, they can encourage, promote and foster the best of the cultural and democratic ideals of the nations. Without being political, they can give voice to the citizenry in matters pertaining to how they are governed by creating avenues for free discussions and dialogue. They can create a confluence where the events of today can be exhibited and discussed for the collective good of all. Through their programmes and activities, the museums can sensitize target groups like teachers, adults, the youth, and women's organizations through popular forum discussions on the goals of the nation for the promotion and better understanding of its heritage and its agenda for national growth and development.

13. Proposals for the visionary practices in Museums of Bangladesh

The goal of this paper is to enlist all of the museums of Bangladesh so that people of Bangladesh get a wholesome view on Bangladeshi museums. Most of the people including students, teachers, researchers, artists and policy-makers are not aware of these museums. For this reason, not only the people are getting deprived of the knowledge but also the museums are losing the possible revenue. The result is the worn-out status of the museums. To move forward with a goal to update the museums as well as to facilitate them for playing a progressive and proactive role in the society, the following visionary practices are necessary.

- A) To include the list of museums in the national curriculum:** One of the fundamental objectives of the museum is to educate. The museum has the capacity and the ability to impart cultural education effectively. In modern society, the museums enrich the educational process by exposing children and the public to their history in a positive way. In this process, they assist the future generations to understand and appreciate the history and culture as well as to take pride in the achievements of their forbearers. It is important for the educational planners to work closely with the museum experts on how the educational resources that are available in the museum can be integrated into the curriculum and the learning process at all levels. On its part, the museum should develop educational programs for the various tiers of the school system, namely, primary schools, secondary schools, teacher training colleges, technical colleges and universities. A properly articulated museum education program will become an essential component in the overall educational system of society. With this vision in mind an internet public database can be created so that the students as well as the tourists can search the whereabouts of Bangladeshi Museum for visit or research purpose.
- B) A frequent visit from schools at the local museums:** Educational visits to the museums should be developed and encouraged to cater for all interest groups, and as we approach the turn of the century, it has become very necessary and important for our museums to ensure that they become children-friendly.
- C) Special educational and cultural programs at the museum:** Special educational and cultural programs should be developed for the children and they should be allowed to be involved in discussing programmes that are made for them. Because the children do have ideas to contribute and speak out. For too long we have ignored our children, for too long we have taken them for

granted. As education becomes a global issue at the turn of the century, it should be clearly understood that the museum is a veritable institution in the learning process that should be fully integrated into the educational system

- D) Museum for the promotion of the city:** Museums do promote regional heritage and the cottage industries of the districts by using their resources. It will also ensure the understanding and appreciation of the regionally produced products and cultures that are unique to that district. For example, a display of the hand-loom fabrics produced in Narshingdi, an exhibition of the artificial prototype of the various ‘Pitha’ (cakes) that are made in Mymensingh district etc.
- E) Museum and politics:** The museums can also play an important role for developing regional politics. For example, Bangladesh can exhibit its age-old artifacts to its neighboring countries and in exchange, those countries can exhibit their artifacts in Bangladesh as well. It will attract more people to the museum who cannot afford to go abroad to see these items in those countries.
- F) Evaluating the Museum’s performance by the visitor’s feedback:** Recognizing the fact that most of the visitors are not interested or feel shy to provide any feedback, latest touch-screen kiosk can play an effective to get feedback from the visitors. The feedback is a very good source of innovative ideas for developing the service. This will also help the curator and custodian to check out the flaws in the display and the artifacts that they might have missed in monitoring.
- G) Interactive Museums:** Museums are increasingly creating interactive exhibits as a way to increase audience engagement. There are many ways to do that:
- ① Allow for social interaction among visitors by means of innovative competitions.
 - ② Involve physical activities like making the replica of an artifact by joining disintegrated parts together
 - ③ Quiz contest
 - ④ Selfie booths with historical backdrops.
 - ⑤ Costume trial
 - ⑥ Building interactive exhibits can be a powerful tool to encourage visitor engagement. It also gives the visitors a memorable experience and a bonding with the museum.

14. Conclusion

To cope up with the challenges of the changing world, museums must show leadership in the promotion of the heritage of the nation. As custodians of the cultural soul of the nation, they must have the capacity to spread peace, unity and understanding in times of conflict and disorder. As institutions, they must not be afraid to speak through their exhibitions and programmes for the good of the nation. In our society today, our museums must promote exhibitions that are relevant and challenging. They must broaden their scope and should not restrict themselves solely to the objects and materials in their collections. We hope that the museums of Bangladesh will be more innovative, people-oriented, programme-oriented and professionally solid with well-trained personnel and above all, children-friendly, to play a major role in the development of Bangladesh and the world in future.

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION INTERVENTIONS IN
BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED VILLAGES
OF SOUTHWEST REGION**

Tuhin Roy*

Abstract

This research deals with the problems encountered by stakeholders in different sectors attempting to meet the needs of natural disaster affected people in southwest region of Bangladesh. The work was set when disasters in Bangladesh used to be handled without a coordinated disaster management effort and gradually developed having various policies and laws aimed at mitigating disaster risks and vulnerabilities. This study is descriptive in nature. The subject has been approached using quantitative and qualitative research methods, including personal engagement in disaster zones. In the quantitative section, social survey method was followed. In the qualitative section, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and key informants' interview (KII) methods were applied to gain vital information and an in-depth understanding. Data were collected from 360 households to identify the disaster risk and vulnerability in the southwest region with a view to illustrate and evaluate the effectiveness of the existing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) interventions in the study area. The present study mainly incorporates Crunch model and Pressure and Release Model in explaining the mitigation strategies as well as the DRR intervention process. Findings included the three resistance factors occupying the most significant position to be: magnitude of disaster (risk and vulnerability); the state of disaster management actors both in formal and informal sectors; and DRR interventions in southwest Bangladesh. Any DRR interventions must also include these five factors: physical assets, environmental protection, livelihood, Water and Sanitation (WatSan) and training and awareness. For any DRR interventions to be successful, stakeholders should concentrate on the social structure and various socio-cultural factors like religious perceptions, social values, village politics, and dominance of local leaders and so on. This research seeks to address an identifiable problem that has not been previously examined sociologically, while also offering suggestions regarding the scope for further research on Disaster Risk Reduction interventions.

Introduction

Bangladesh is a disaster risk hotspot; ranked fifth among the top 15 countries with highest risk.¹ The country sits between Himalayan mountain range and cyclone-brewing sea in the south and is adjacent to the zone in Meghalaya where rainfall is

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¹ World Disasters Report (2012). World Risk Index, p. 9.

highest.² Bangladesh has more than 300 rivers, and the confluences of these rivers have made the country one of the most vulnerable countries to disaster in the world. The country's disaster profile is dominated by floods, cyclones, tornados, epidemics and river bank erosion that disrupt people's livelihoods, destroy infrastructures, divert planned use of resources, interrupt economic activities and retard development.³ She experienced frequent natural disasters particularly cyclones, in 1970, 1985, 1991, 1997, 2007, and 2009.⁴ Among them, cyclone *Sidr* in 2007 caused 3,363 lives and cyclone *Aila* in 2009 caused 325 deaths.⁵

Over the last two decades, Bangladesh faced a rising degree of vulnerability to disaster risk. This risk is the probability of a hazard turning into a disaster, with households or communities being affected so much so that their lives and livelihoods are seriously disrupted beyond their capacity to cope or withstand using their own resources, with the result that affected population suffer serious, widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses. But the humanitarian actors and development experts have taken many initiatives and there has been a shift in contemporary disaster risk reduction strategy from disaster management to mitigating its impacts. The Government of Bangladesh and different national and international NGOs have employed various strategies to reduce risks and vulnerabilities of the disaster-hit communities. The government is providing safe drinking water, rebuilding embankments in coastal areas and creating awareness about primary treatment in those areas.⁶ The government has also implemented several programmers to reduce risk through preparedness training, awareness campaign, warning signals, posters, leaflets, discussions, knowledge sharing, meetings and demonstrations through dramas and films.

² P. Rottech, Z. Hussain, N. Zahan, U. Sauda, T. Akhtar, P. Rani, and F. Rahman, "Climate Change Adaptation Through risk Assessment and Disaster risk Reduction in the Context of Climate-Related Natural Disasters in Bangladesh", *Prodipan*, (Daulatpur, Khulna-9203, Bangladesh 2010).

³ N. Mahbuba, *Coping with Arsenicosis: Socio-economic and Gender Response to Arsenic Contamination of Ground Water in Bangladesh*, March, 2009, ITN-BUET.

⁴ Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) (2007). Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. *Final Assessment Report on Cyclone SIDR*. Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

⁵ K. Roy, U. Kumar, H. Mehedi, T. Sultana, and D. M. Ershad, *Initial Assessment Report with focus on Khulna District*, Unnayan Onneshan Humanity watch-Nijera Kori, (Khulna: Bangladesh, 2009).

⁶ M. G. M. Sarwar, *Impacts of Sea Level Rise on the Coastal Zone of Bangladesh*, (Lund University, Sweden, 2005).

Moreover, in the last 35 years, the government has invested more than \$10 million to reduce the vulnerability of Bangladesh to disaster.⁷ Despite all this, the coastal people had to face devastating cyclones such as, *Nargis in 2008, Bijli in 2009, Rashmi in 2008, Sidr in 2007, Aila in 2009* and even the more recent earthquake in 2015.

Over the past few years Bangladesh has introduced more comprehensive and coordinated disaster management programs for mainstreaming disaster management in development plans and programs. A host of programs are now being implemented by the government to mitigate disaster risks and vulnerabilities such as Comprehensive Disaster Management Programs (CDMP I and II), Cyclone Preparedness Programs (CPP), Humanitarian Assistance Programs Implementation Guidelines 2012-13, World Food Programs (WFP), and Vulnerable Group Feeding Program (VGF).⁸ However, several national and international NGOs have been working to mitigate the disaster risks. Therefore, it is vital to mitigate the problem in a way that ensures a sustainable development for Bangladesh.⁹

The current study attempts to identify the risk and vulnerability in the coastal zones as well as the existing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) interventions with a view to illustrate the DRR interventions to evaluate the effectiveness of those interventions in southwest region of Bangladesh from a sociological viewpoint as such an approach did not receive adequate attention in Bangladesh.

Study context

Bangladesh is a deltaic country highly exposed to the risk of climate change. Exacerbation of water-related hazards and disasters will have far-reaching impacts on the social, economic and environmental aspects of people's lives, which warrant

⁷ Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GEDRR), *ACP-EU Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Program*. International Disaster Portfolio and Project Database. Washington, DC 2012. <https://www.gfdr.org/en/publication/global-facility-disaster-reduction-and-recovery-annual-report-2012>.

⁸ Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) (2013). *Bangladesh Report 2013 Disaster Preparedness Response and Recovery*. Department of Disaster Management, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

⁹ H. Hasan, S. Akhter, S. Ahmed, and A. Kabir, "Challenges of Integrating Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation Policies at the National Level: Bangladesh as a Case". *Global Journal of Human Social Science Geography, Geo-Sciences, Environmental Disaster Management*, Vol. 13, 2013, Part-4, pp. 29-34.

long-term planned adaptation capacity-building.¹⁰ Oliver-Smith (2009) argues that disasters in developing world occur at the interface of society, technology and environment and is fundamentally the outcomes of the interactions of these characteristics.¹¹ Nasreen (2004) and Oliver-Smith (2009) also noted that although occurrence of disaster is frequent, theoretical work in disaster research is limited.¹²

Recent years, numerous studies on the impacts of natural hazards and disasters have increasingly focused on the society,¹³ interpreting the ‘social disaster’ as a result of natural disasters. The effects of such natural disasters can also be determined by analysing the social situation and adaptation capability of the affected people. Being affected by disasters and, in consequence, by an increase in vulnerability may raise awareness among individual or even collective groups of adaptation strategies allowing them to respond to a disaster and to reduce risks.¹⁴ Thus, empowering those groups enables them to identify problems and needs and to increasingly assume responsibility in planning, managing and controlling the collective action that is necessary.

Some of the researchers¹⁵ have pointed out that any steps to control disasters, e.g. floods, should emphasize both the structural (i.e., building of embankments) and

¹⁰ A. Ali, “Vulnerability of Bangladesh to climate change and sea level rise through tropical cyclones and storm surges”. *Water, Air and Soil Pollution*, Vol. 92, Issue 1–2, November 1996, pp. 171–179; S. Dasgupta, M. Huq, Z. H. Khan, M. M. Z. Ahmed, N. Mukherjee, M. F. Khan, and K. Pandey, *Vulnerability of Bangladesh to Cyclones in a Changing Climate: Potential Damages and Adaptation Cost*. Policy Research working paper; no. WPS 5280. World Bank, 2010; B. Mallick, K. R. Rahaman, and J. Vogt, “Coastal livelihood and physical infrastructure in Bangladesh after cyclone Aila.” *Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change*. Vol. 16(6), 2011, pp. 629-648.

¹¹ A. Oliver-smith, “Sea Level Rise and the Vulnerability of Coastal Peoples: Responding to the Local Challenges of Global Climate Change in the 21st Century.” (Bonn: United Nations University; Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS)2009).

¹² M. Nasreen, “Disaster Research: Exploring Sociological Approach to Disaster in Bangladesh.” *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 1(2), July 2004, pp. 21-28.

¹³ B. Wisner, B. Blaikie, T. Cannon and I. Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People’s Vulnerability, and Disasters*, (2d Ed.) (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁴ B. Wisner, and H. R. Luce, “Disaster Vulnerability: Scale, Power and Daily Life”, *GeoJournal*, Vol. 30 (2), 1993, pp. 127-140.

¹⁵ J. I. Clarke, “Education, population, environment and sustainable development”. *International Review of Education*, Vol.39(1-2), 1993, pp. 53-61; L. Clausen, E. M. Geenen, and E. Macamo, *Entsetzlichesoziale Prozesse. Theorie und Empirie der Katastrophe*. Vol. 1, (Münster: Lit, 2003); H. Khan, E. Inamullah, and K. Shams, “Population, environment and poverty in Pakistan: linkages and empirical evidence,”

non-structural (i.e. people's initiatives) approach.¹⁶ In her pioneering gender-focused study, Mahbuba Nasreen (1995) argued that poor rural women play significant roles in disaster coping and their roles “relate to a complete range of socio-economic activities”. During floods women continue to be bearers of children and responsible for their socialization, and to be providers of food, fuel, water, fodder, building materials and to be keepers of household belongings. The female also represents a productive potential which was not recognized earlier”. Her study argues that “it is women's strategies, developed over the last few years that are vital in enabling the rural people to cope with disasters. The government and other institutions dealing with disaster management mainly communicate with wealthier, influential landowners who do not represent or serve the interest of the poor or of women.¹⁷

Disaster impacts in developing nations are potentially severe as they affect agriculture, health and water and food supplies,¹⁸ creating a semi-voluntary movement to areas that are more sustainable for human life. The risks of remaining in an affected area and the extent of damage to one's assets also have an impact on the decision to relocate.¹⁹ In one case of an involuntary relocation due to disaster, Miller et al. (1981) found that the possibility of a family's return to their community became a critical factor in recovery. Human-capital theory²⁰ also looks

Environment, Development and Sustainability: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Theory and Practice of Sustainable Development, Springer, vol. 11(2), April 2009, pp. 375-392.

- ¹⁶ J. R. Choudhury, *Cyclone Shelter and Its Multipurpose Use*. (Dhaka, 1992). <http://UNDP/World Bank/GOB Project/91/025>; J. Vogt, B. Mallick, and A. S. Mahboob, ‘Social Supremacy and Location of Cyclone Center: A Determinant of Social Vulnerability Analysis in a Coastal Union of Bangladesh’. In M. S. A. Khan, M. S. Mondol, M. A. Rahman, S. A. Shoaib, and M. H. Sarker (Eds.), *2nd International Conference on Water and Flood Management* (pp. 395-402). (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Institute of Water and Flood Management, BUET2009).
- ¹⁷ B. Mallick, U. K. Das, S. S. Islam, S. K. Das, and M. N. Iskam, *Living with Cyclone Aila*, (Khulna: Coastal Research Foundation, 2010), p. 64.
- ¹⁸ A. Swain, “Environmental migration and conflict dynamics: focus on developing regions”. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17(5), 1996, pp. 959-973.
- ¹⁹ A. Kirschenbaum, “Residential Ambiguity and Relocation Decisions: Population and Areas at Risk”. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, Vol. 14(1), 1996, pp.79-96.
- ²⁰ T. Kontuly, K. E. N. R. Smith, and T. B. Heaton, “Culture as a Determinant of Reasons for Migration University of Utah”. *The Social Science Journal*, Vol. 32(2), 1995, pp. 179-193.

at migration as a balance of costs and benefits, but includes psychical costs and non-economic amenity measures that produce quality of life. However, Bangladesh has shown itself to be a leading proponent of DRR, gaining recognition at the global level by pioneering a number of interventions. No single agency or actor can deal with DRR issues alone.²¹ Effective DRR relies on the efforts of many stakeholders, including UN agencies, regional and international organizations, CSOs, private sectors, media and academics. The collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholders is crucial in order to improve the resilience of communities.²² DRR is deeply linked to climate change, rapid population growth, environmental degradation and overall extent of vulnerability.

The framework of the present study has dealt with evaluation of effectiveness of existing DRR interventions. In particular, pre-disaster characteristics and conditions of the victims (e.g., socioeconomic status, gender, marital status, family size, available support networks, etc.) and disaster impacts (e.g., severity of exposure, financial and material loss, displacement of houses, etc.) all influence medium and long-term mental health in the aftermath of the disaster. All these characteristics and conditions can be interpreted as vulnerability indicators of coastal households. It helps to identify the family-related domains of disaster response. Current community-based approaches reinforce the idea that social domains of knowledge and action on the one hand and family domains of knowledge and action on the other are discrete concepts, each comprising different perceptions and interests as to vulnerability and disaster management.²³ Approaching the issue of vulnerability through this concept before designing any mitigation plan will enhance the search for complementarities and win-win situations between the above-mentioned social

²¹ T. Izumi, "Effectiveness of partnership between Civil Society Organizations and local governments for disaster risk reduction in Asia: perspectives from Indonesia and Malaysia". PhD Thesis, *International Environment and Disaster Management Laboratory, Graduate School of Global Environment Studies, Kyoto University*, (Kyoto 2012).

²² The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2007a). Guidelines national platforms for disaster risk reduction. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). Retrieved from [http://www.unisdr.org/files/601_engguidelinesnpdr.pdf]; T. Izumi, R. Shaw, Roles of stakeholders in disaster risk reduction under the Hyogo framework for action: An Asian perspective, *Asian J Environ Disaster Management*, Vol. 4(2), 2012, pp.165–182.

²³ B. Mallick, "Necessity of acceptance? Searching for a sustainable community-based disaster mitigation approach—The example of a coastal city in Bangladesh. Solutions to Coastal Disasters", 2011, pp.753-766.

and family domains of knowledge and action.²⁴ Besides, such an approach will encourage the promotion of strategies based on the community's actual needs rather than the promotion of those merely accepted.

Theoretical Framework

The present study mainly incorporates Crunch model and Pressure and Release Model in explaining the mitigation strategies as well as the disaster risk reduction process from a sociological point of view. The Crunch Model mainly focuses on both structure and process, which incorporates local, institutional and governmental bodies involved in the disaster risk reduction process. This Model shows that various social, political, economic and environmental reasons negatively affects the disaster risk reduction as well as the mitigation process which is the main concern of the present study. On the other hand, Release Model gives a different view that the affecting factors such as social, political, economic and environmental issues can positively influence on the overall risk reduction and mitigation strategies. That is why both the Crunch and Release models have been considered in the present study because of the socio-cultural and geographical setting of Bangladesh, which makes it more vulnerable to various disasters.

Methodology

Study Design and Source of data

The study was conducted through using mix-method research design which combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. The approach involves the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches and the mixing of both approaches in a study.²⁵ In quantitative section, social survey method was followed in the present study; as it enables quick investigation for large numbers of cases and its result have wide applicability. In qualitative section, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and key informants' interview (KII) methods were used to gain in-depth information and a deep understanding though qualitative data. Viewing the study as a two-phase project, quantitative data were collected in the first phase and qualitative data in the second phase. The purpose of this two-phase, explanatory mixed methods study was to obtain statistical, quantitative results from a sample

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ R. B. Johnson, and A. J. Onwuegbuzie, Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 33(7), 2004, pp.14-26.

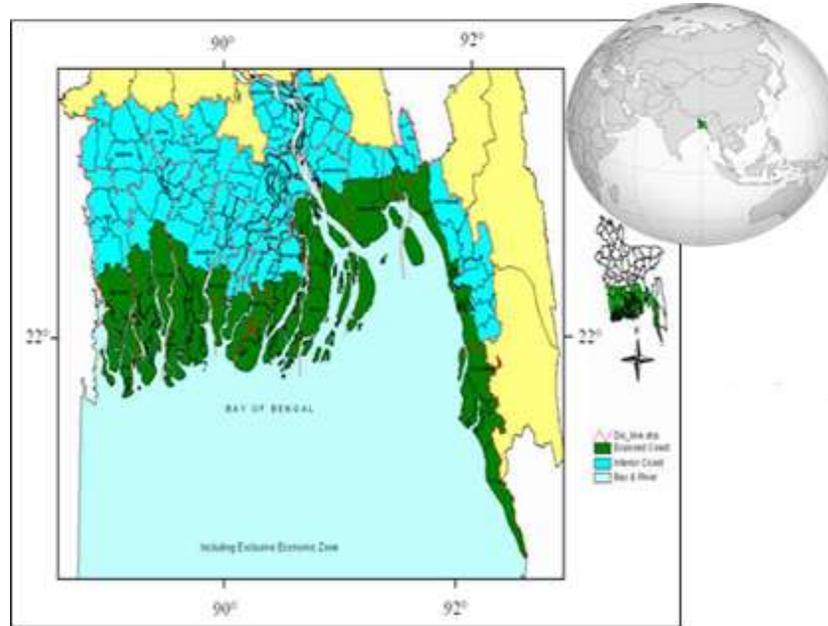
and then follow-up with a few individuals to probe or explore those results in more depth. For conducting the study, data were collected from two sources – primary and secondary. Primary data were collected from February to April 2015 by trained field investigators through face to face interaction with the trained interviewer through structured interview schedule. In this study, documents from various NGOs and Union Parishad of three upazila helped the researcher to get actual information to specify the informants. Additionally, data from relevant books, articles, journals, newspaper, booklets and so on were used to give the study a logical background.

Study Area

The southwest coastal region of Bangladesh is unique for its environmental characteristics. It is extremely vulnerable to disasters such as floods, cyclones, tornadoes, tidal surges, storm surges, river bank and coastal erosion. Cyclone Sidr struck the coastline of Bangladesh in 2007 and cyclone Aila hit the region in 2009 with 13 feet high waters, breaking river embankments and dykes in several places, washing away the lives and livelihoods of people. These disasters occur due to natural climate change and or human induced causes. People in this area are vulnerable to cyclones, tidal surges and river erosion along with salinized water and soil. The extreme poor suffer the most because of their exposure to, and dependence on, natural resources for their lives and livelihoods. This climatically challenged and ecologically fragile region is rendered more so by the rapid growth of shrimp farming in the region which exacerbates its vulnerabilities. Absence of research on disaster risk reduction interventions in this region from a sociological point of view provided a basis to select the region as the study area. Familiarity of the researcher with the language and cultural practices of the local people was another determining factor for choosing this area for the study. The study was conducted in three districts – Khulna, Bagherhat and Satkhira – of Khulna Division, one of the biggest coastal zones situated in the southern region of Bangladesh. Several rivers crossed over the area and linked with the Bay of Bengal. Considering the above facts of the area and the advantage of population and sample size determination, three upazilas (sub-districts) – Dacope, Sarankhola and Shaymnagar of Khulna, Bagherhat and Satkhira district respectively were purposefully chosen for the present study. Furthermore, *Kamarkhola* union, *Gabura* union and *Southkhali* union of Dacope upazila, Shaymnagar upazila and Sarankhola upazila respectively are the most cyclone affected areas. These three unions were selected as the study areas for the present study. In addition, three distinct villages

(Jaliakhali, Moddhum Khalisabunia and Rayenda were chosen from each of the union respectively.

Figure 1. Coastal zone of Bangladesh



Unit of analysis, techniques of data collection and development of study instruments

For this study, a number of specifications were made to identify the unit of analysis, e.g. (i) all the participants must be the head of the household (male or female), (ii) the household affected by different types of natural disaster and (iii) they must live in the study area for more or equal to five years. Household heads with the above mention characteristics were selected as the unit of analysis of the study. An interview schedule contained close-ended items, and was designed for this study upon carefully considering the study objectives. Besides, for in-depth investigation a semi-structured interview schedule and checklist was designed to conduct Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII) considering the main variables of the study. After developing interview schedule, a pre-test was conducted on 60 respondents (20 from each study area) before the

actual study, in order to find out some problems, such as defining measurement scale, and some factors affecting disaster risk reduction intervention programs.

Sampling and data collection

In the first phase, i.e., in the quantitative study, data were collected from 360 households to identify the disaster risk and vulnerability in the southwest region and to evaluate the existing DRR interventions in the study area. The questionnaire and the checklist included the following topics: name of major disasters, frequency of disasters, time of disasters, problems due to disasters, existing disaster risk reduction interventions and its effectiveness etc. From the census, a total of 360 households were selected by using simple random sampling for the conformity of greater validity of the present study as well as to give the equal chance and non-zero probability of being selected to every respondent (household head). Considering a confidence interval of 4.33 at 95 percent confidence level, the samples were calculatedly selected. Afterward, the sample of selected 360 households was further divided equally among the three study areas, i.e. (*Jaliakhali* = 120 households), (*Modhom Khalisabunia* = 120 households) and (*Rayenda* = 120 households). The sample size of the study was determined by the following formula

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 \times P(1 - P)}{C^2}$$

$$SS_i = \frac{SS}{1 + \frac{SS - 1}{POP}}$$

Here,
 SS = Sample Size
 SS_i = Sample Size, according to Population
 Z = Confidence Level (i.e. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)
 P = Percentage of Picking a Choice (i.e. 0.5 used for sample size needed)
 C = Confidence Interval (i.e. 4.33)
 Pop = Population

In the qualitative part, six FGDs were carried out (two in each study area), each comprising about ten purposively-selected household heads who had experiences of disasters and had knowledge about disaster risk reduction interventions. These 60 household heads were identified during the household survey as having been affected by various disasters. Purposive selection ensured the participation of household heads with varied demographic, economic, and DDR intervention experiences. The main purpose of using focus group interviews in the study areas was to learn about household heads' perceptions and experiences during disaster, the extent of loss due to disasters, existing DDR interventions and their

effectiveness. Again, six semi-structured Key Informant Interviews were also conducted (one in each study area) from Chairman of the union and policymaker (i.e. National Project Director-CDMP, phase-2; Additional Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief; Assistant Director, Department of Disaster Management).

Data analysis

During data collection, field editing was done examining the collected raw data to detect errors and omissions and to correct these when possible. Besides, before coding and input of the data, final editing was done by the researcher with the help of trained interviewers. Interview data were transformed in numerical form into the code sheets and according to the total response value of those answers, the information was categorized (e.g. high, medium, low) during data processing. Tabulation was presented by means of statistical techniques, like percentile distribution, measures of central tendency, Pearson chi-square and Pearson's correlation. It is noteworthy that data were computerized and tabulated by using computer software, such as SPSS-21, MS Excel, and MS Word.

Data presentation and ethical consideration

After collecting and analysing the data, the researcher had accomplished the task of drawing inferences followed by report writing. After data processing, data analysis and interpretation were done through using descriptive as well as inferential statistical techniques. Processed data were analysed and interpreted regarding the objectives of the study. The whole analysis and interpretation were held to develop a written research report with the major findings. For reasons of confidentiality all the personal data of the respondents that could lead to identification were concealed or transformed and pseudonyms are used instead of the real names of the research sites. Ensuring the accuracy of data is a fundamental principle in social science research. In this study, the accuracy of data internally and externally by keeping the subject's feelings and expressions, sometimes with their own voices were maintained.

Findings

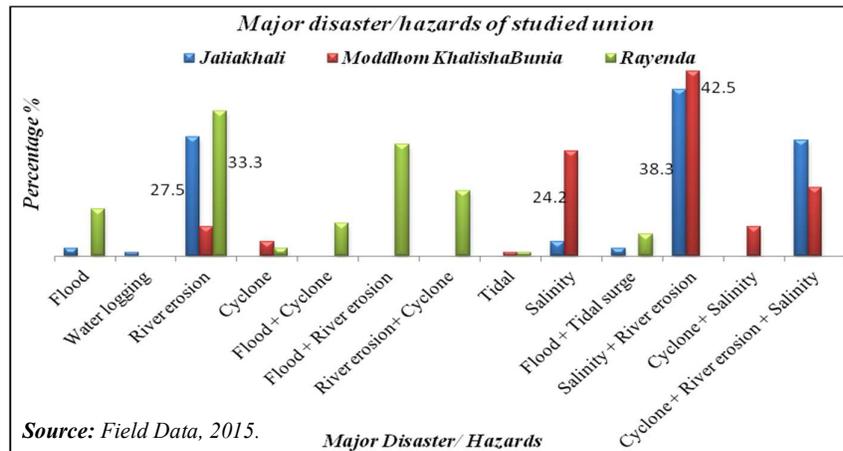
The southwest coastal region of Bangladesh is the pocket of disaster. Historical data show that from the time of its development to the present day, this area has faced disasters of various types, pattern and magnitude as well as in varying frequency every year because of its geo-morphological location. Notable disasters

that strike the coastal region include floods, cyclones, storm surges, river erosion, salinity intrusion and others, which are thought to be more intensified and frequent due to climate change (CC). But CC has both short-term and long-term effects. The study found that Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) have been crucial through reducing vulnerability of communities and help achieve sustainable development. The CCA community tends to focus on addressing more incremental processes with discussions focused at the international level and strategies at the national level. Following discussion illustrate the existing DRR interventions and its effectiveness in southwest region of Bangladesh.

Major disasters of study area

The disasters that strike the study area include floods, cyclones, storm surges, river erosion, salinity intrusion and others, which are thought to be more intensified and frequent due to climate change. People of *Rayenda*, in Bagerhat district, denote that they mainly face floods, cyclones and river erosions, which cause a huge loss to lives and livelihoods every year. People's experience and perception of disasters in *Jaliakhali* and *Moddham Khalishabunia* are almost the same: salinity, river erosion and cyclone. Findings show salinity and river erosion are the two most frequent disasters in *Jaliakhali* (38.3%) and *Moddham Khalishabunia* (42.5%). But river erosion is common in *Rayenda* (33.3%) and *Jaliakhali* (27.5%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Major Disaster Hazards in study area



Findings also shown that in *Jaliakhali* the severity of floods (34.2%) and erosion (91.7%) is maximum and the frequency of floods was high (32.5%) in 2000. Though the frequency of erosion was high (67.5%) in 2000 as well as very high (56.7%) in 2014, the severity of cyclone (57.5%) was medium whereas its frequency was high in 1980 (47.5%) and 2000 (45%). Salinity was maximum (75%) and its frequency was very high in 2000 (50.8%) and 2014 (73.3%). In *Moddhom Khalisabunia*, erosion (76.7%) and salinity (92.5%) was high. The frequency of erosion was very high (65.0%) in 2014 while the frequency of salinity was very high in both 2000 (58.3%) and 2014 (85.8%). Early rainfall (39.2%) and late rainfall (42.5%) was moderate and the frequency of early rainfall was medium in 1980 (36.7%) and 2000 (40.8%). The frequency of late rainfall was medium in 1980 (45%) and 2000 (41.2%). Flood in *Moddhom Khalisabunia* was medium (59.2%). In *Rayenda*, too, it was moderate (39.2%) but its frequency was high in 1980 (46.7%), 2000 (52.5%) and 2014 (45.8%). Cyclone there was medium (38.3%) and so too was its frequency in both 2000 (46.7%) and 2014 (45.8%). Salinity in *Rayenda* was moderate (38.3%) and its frequency was medium in both 2000 (46.7%) and 2014 (45.8%) (Table-1). From the disaster history by meteorological department and cross-checking this with the respondents' answer (obtained through open questions and FGDs), it is clear that people were affected most in 1988, 2007 and 2009. Regarding disaster affectedness, all the respondents in the study areas replied positively, which is quite natural.

Risk and Vulnerability Identification

To protect family and household from devastating disaster and climate change, knowledge about risk and vulnerability is needed. No one has power over natural catastrophes; and man can only take preventive measures to minimise the damage. To take any preventive measures, community must have the idea about disaster risk and vulnerability identification. Some of the best knowledge regarding identifying risk and vulnerability come from the nature. The knowledge about the disaster risk and precaution measures increases with time as people face disaster events. In *Jaliakhali*, most of the respondents were not positive about the preventative measures taken in 2007, though the number dramatically fell when asked about the precaution measures in 2009. All this has totally changed in 2015 and thereafter. They are now more aware and better prepared. While many preventative measures have already been taken, others are either underway or at the planning stage. This change in attitude is basically the result of their suffering from Aila, following

which the *Jaliakhali* people started taking initiatives to protect themselves from future disasters. Various government and nongovernment organisations also came forward with projects to create awareness. Because the area is remote, government and NGO people are reluctant to go there. That is why people got little support to prepare them for the Sidr and they suffered for almost three years after Aila.

In *Moddhom Khalishabunia* the scenario is almost the same. Since 2007 people have been more aware and knowledgeable about disaster risk and mitigation. This disaster-prone area suffers a lot of climatic variation and natural disasters every year. Since the super cyclone Sidr, the government and NGOs have intensified their activities to raise people's adaptation capacity. That is why, almost all respondents replied in the negative about their awareness and preparedness in 2007, but in the positive only two years later in 2009. As an impact of the NGO activities, they started thinking and planning about identifying the risk factors. Today, they are more knowledgeable and better prepared as to how best to cope with a disaster situation.

Comparatively *Rayenda* is in a more suitable situation now. Before Sidr, their knowledge of risk identification was zero. But after the disaster, they received training from various organisations that about awareness and preparedness to protect themselves against future disasters. Most of the projects were undertaken in *Rayenda*, because Sidr hit the area extremely hard. By the time Aila struck in 2009, they were already equipped with the knowledge about risk identification and making preparation accordingly. As a result, they suffered little damage to life and property (Table 1).

In 2007 and 2009, *Jaliakhali* people had no plan for savings for HH risk mitigation and risk mitigation of HH assets; did not communicate with relatives to mitigate HH risk; did not store any food; had no work to mitigate disaster risk; had no access to the market or health services; had no knowledge about health and hygiene; had no access to drinking water supply or had no shelter. Things were similar in *Moddhom Khalishabunia* in 2007 and in *Rayenda* in 2009. But in 2015, majority of the respondents in *Jaliakhali* said that they are planning and initiating various HH disaster risk reduction/mitigation activities. People in *Moddhom Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda* were found to be even more aware as they initiated various planning regarding HH disaster risk reduction/mitigation activities in 2009.

Table 1. Information regarding household disaster risk identification activities

HH disaster risk identification activities <small>[Codes for using: 0= No, 1= Just planning, 2= Planning and initiation, 3= Qualified yes, 4= Done, 5= Well-Done everything²]</small>	HH Level Performance								
	2007			2009			2015		
	<u>Jaliakhali</u>	<u>Rayenda</u>	<u>Moddhom Khalishabunia</u>	<u>Jaliakhali</u>	<u>Rayenda</u>	<u>Moddhom Khalishabunia</u>	<u>Jaliakhali</u>	<u>Rayenda</u>	<u>Moddhom Khalishabunia</u>
1. Identifying various types of hazards that may affect household	No (100%)	No (64.3%)	No (92.5%)	No (71.7%)	Just Planning (55.8%)	Just Planning (63.3%)	Just Planning (38.3%)	Qualified Yes (76.7%)	Planning and Initiation (43.3%)
2. Identifying probable hazard risks for respondent family	No (100%)	No (69.2%)	No (90.8%)	No (71.7%)	Planning and Initiation (47.3%)	Just Planning (43.3%)	Just Planning (40.0%)	Qualified Yes (73.8%)	Planning and Initiation (36.7%)
3. Plan to assess household (HH) vulnerability issues	No (100%)	No (81.7%)	No (93.0%)	No (70.0%)	Planning and Initiation (36.7%)	Just Planning (57.5%)	Planning and Initiation (41.7%)	Qualified Yes (60.8%)	Planning and Initiation (45.0%)
4. Plan to identify the vulnerable places beside HH	No (93.8%)	No (82.5%)	No (93.8%)	No (69.2%)	Planning and Initiation (41.7%)	Just Planning (59.2%)	Planning and Initiation (41.7%)	Qualified Yes (49.2%)	Planning and Initiation (37.5%)
5. Risk that may affect respondent's assets or savings	No (90.0%)	No (73.3%)	No (96.7%)	No (66.7%)	Planning and Initiation (37.3%)	Just Planning (53.3%)	Planning and Initiation (42.3%)	Qualified Yes (51.7%)	Planning and Initiation (26.7%)
6. Knowledge about risk ranking to identify disaster risk	No (93.8%)	No (66.7%)	No (90.0%)	No (58.3%)	Planning and Initiation (35.8%)	Just Planning (56.7%)	Planning and Initiation (45.0%)	Qualified Yes (54.2%)	Planning and Initiation (31.7%)
7. Institutional connections/networking to identify risk	No (93.3%)	No (81.7%)	No (93.0%)	No (69.2%)	Planning and Initiation (44.2%)	Just Planning (60.0%)	Just Planning (31.7%)	Qualified Yes (65.8%)	Planning and Initiation (37.5%)
8. Documentation/documents to identify the risk	No (96.7%)	No (89.2%)	No (98.3%)	No (73.3%)	Planning and Initiation (36.7%)	Just Planning (40.0%)	Just Planning (40.0%)	Qualified Yes (63.3%)	Planning and Initiation (34.2%)
9. Getting training on risk identification	No (92.3%)	No (83.0%)	No (90.8%)	No (63.8%)	Planning and Initiation (41.7%)	Just Planning (40.0%)	Just Planning (43.8%)	Qualified Yes (54.2%)	Planning and Initiation (42.3%)
10. Risk identification planning in HH level	No (90.0%)	No (78.3%)	No (100%)	No (56.7%)	Planning and Initiation (33.3%)	Just Planning (50.0%)	Just Planning (34.2%)	Qualified Yes (58.3%)	Qualified Yes (33.3%)
11. Knowledge about intensity of natural disaster	No (89.2%)	No (67.5%)	No (89.2%)	No (58.3%)	Planning and Initiation (35.0%)	Just Planning (65.0%)	Planning and Initiation (37.5%)	Qualified Yes (67.5%)	Planning and Initiation (38.3%)
12. Idea about frequency of natural disaster/hazards	No (88.3%)	No (79.2%)	No (94.2%)	No (49.2%)	Planning and Initiation (35.8%)	Just Planning (60.0%)	Just Planning (35.8%)	Qualified Yes (63.8%)	Planning and Initiation (42.3%)

Source: Field Data, 2015

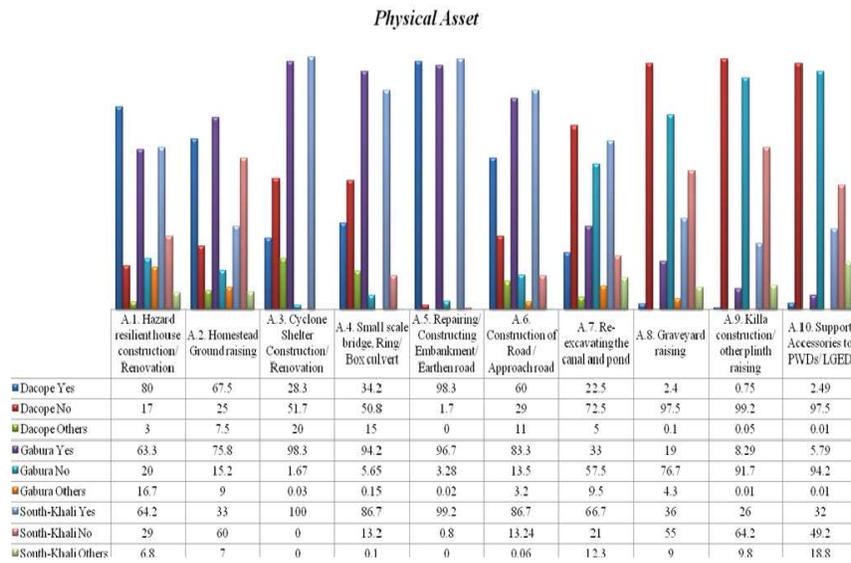
In 2015, they seemed to be much more organised (Table 2). Respondents in *Jaliakhali* and *Moddhom Khalishabunia* gave only a lukewarm response when asked about if they had houses good enough to withstand cyclone, storm, tornado etc. had access to alternative livelihoods options like cattle fattening, shrimp farming, agriculture, sea fishing, etc.; had work so they could provide adequate food for their families; had places to shelter their livestock; had resilient drinking water sources i.e. RWH (Rain Water Harvesting), PSF (Pond Sand Filter), tube well etc.; had any hygienic latrine; if the roads connecting their HH or the shelter centres were in good condition and so on. They said none of these were satisfactory. In *Rayenda*, however, things were not too bad when compared with those in *Jaliakhali* and *Moddhom Khalishabunia*.

Disaster Risk Reduction Interventions

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) share a common space of concern: reducing the vulnerability of communities and achieving sustainable development. Disaster risk reduction interventions play the vital role to reduce the disaster impact from the vulnerable areas. The DRR

interventions are classified in five categories i.e. physical, environmental protection, livelihood, WatSan and training and awareness.

Figure 3. Condition of Existing Disaster Risk Reduction Interventions (Physical Asset) in the study area



Source: Field Data, 2015

Figure-3 and Table-2 illustrate the physical assets of DRR interventions scenario in the study area during and after disaster. Most of the respondents in *Jaliakhali* (80%) said they built houses that can withstand some sort of hazard. They did it with their own finance, but since could not arrange funds for their badly needed maintenance. The same goes for *Moddham Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda* where 63.3 percent and 64.2 percent respondents built their homes to protect against hazards but were able to finance their maintenance. As for elevating their homestead grounds, 67.5 percent respondents in *Jaliakhali* and 75.8 percent in *Moddham Khalishabunia* responded positively, whereas 60% percent respondents in *Rayenda* responded negatively.

Table 2. Functionality & management and responsible person of Existing Disaster Risk Reduction Interventions (Physical Asset) in the study area

Input/Asset	Functionality (Select appropriate one)			Maintenance Work (Select appropriate one)			Who did this work				
	1=Good condition; 3=Not functional; 3=Lost			2=Need repairing 4=Sold out, 1=Never done 2=Done once 3=Done twice/more			1. GoB; 3. INGO; 5. Donor; 7. Close relatives; 9. Self-finance			2. NGO 4. CBO 6. LGED 8. Neighbor	
Material/Asset	Jaliakhali	Moddham Khalishabunia	Rayenda	Jaliakhali	Moddham Khalishabunia	Rayenda	Jaliakhali	Moddham Khalishabunia	Rayenda		
A.1. Hazard resilient house construction/renovation	Need repairing (63%)	Need Repairing (53.3%)	Need repairing (40.8%)	Done once (45%)	Done Once (49.2%)	Done once (39.2%)	Self-finance (51.7%)	Self-finance (37.5%)	Self-finance (35.8%)		
A.2. Homestead ground raising	Good condition (39.2%)	Need Repairing (58.3%)	Not Applicable (40%)	Done once (53%)	Done Once (45.8%)	NA (40%)	Self-finance (33.3%)	NGO (39.2%)	NA (40%)		
A.3. Cyclone shelter construction/renovation	NA (51.7%)	Need Repairing (66.7%)	Good Condition (87.5%)	NA (51.7%)	Done Once (67.5%)	Done once (82.5%)	NA (51.7%)	Government (62.5%)	NGO (37.5%)		
A.4. Small bridge, ring/ box culvert	Need repairing (46.7%)	Need Repairing (60.8%)	Good Condition (51.7%)	NA (49.2%)	Done Once (44.2%)	Done once (57.5%)	NA (49.2%)	Government (60%)	NGO (38.3%)		
A.5. Repairing/ constructing embankment/ earthen road	Need repairing (77.5%)	Need Repairing (52.3%)	Good Condition (50%)	Done once (73.8%)	Done Once (77.5%)	Done once (61.7%)	Government (37.3%)	Government (87.5%)	Government (39.2%)		
A.6. Construction of road / approach road	Need repairing (49.2%)	Need Repairing (63.3%)	Need repairing (43%)	Done once (42.5%)	Never Done (48.3%)	Done once (67.5%)	Government (50%)	Government (61.7%)	Government (46.7%)		
A.7. Re-excavating the canal and pond	NA (72.3%)	NA (42.3%)	Good Condition (40%)	NA (72.5%)	NA (42.5%)	Done once (44.2%)	NA (72.5%)	NA (42.3%)	NGO (47.5%)		
A.8. Graveyard raising	NA (98.3%)	NA (80%)	NA (82.5%)	NA (98.3%)	NA (80%)	NA (82.5%)	NA (98.3%)	NA (80%)	NA (82.5%)		
A.9. Killa construction/ other plinth raising	NA (100%)	NA (95%)	NA (100%)	NA (100%)	NA (95%)	NA (100%)	NA (100%)	NA (95%)	NA (100%)		
A.10. Support accessories to PWDs/ LGED	NA (98.3%)	NA (100%)	NA (88.3%)	NA (98.3%)	NA (100%)	NA (88.3%)	NA (98.3%)	NA (100%)	NA (88.3%)		

Source: Field Data, 2015

Majority respondents in *Jaliakhali* did this with their own money but the people in *Moddham Khalishabunia* did this with the support from NGOs. No maintenance work has been undertaken in either of the areas, and though homestead grounds in *Jaliakhali* are in pretty good shape, those in *Moddham Khalishabunia* require repair. Asked about construction/renovation of cyclone shelter centres, respondents in *Moddham Khalishabunia* (98.3%) and *Rayenda* (100%) positively repose while more than half in *Jaliakhali* in the negatively response. Respondents in *Moddham Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda* mentioned that the shelter centres were built by the government and NGOs, although no maintenance work has taken place since. But the people in *Rayenda* are happy with the condition of the shelter centres in their area. There has been similar physical intervention by the government and NGOs to build small bridges, rings, box culverts and so on. Most respondents in *Moddham Khalishabunia* (94.2%) and *Rayenda* (86.7%) responded positively about this while half respondents in *Jaliakhali* (50.8%) responded negatively. In all the three study areas nearly, all people positively responded about the intervention of repairing/constructing of embankments/earthen roads. In all the three sites, the government undertakes these intervention measures but no maintenance work was

done in any of the area. Half the respondents in Rayenda mentioned that embankments/earthen roads in their locality is in good condition, but majority respondents in *Jaliakhali* (77.5%) and *Moddhom Khalishabunia* (52.5%) said they need repairs. About construction of road/approach road, majority of the respondents in all the three areas responded positively, but again no maintenance has taken place. About re-excavating canals and ponds, only the *Rayenda* people responded positively (66.7%). Respondents in Rayenda mentioned it was done by NGOs and that they are in good shape.

The parameters which were taken in the study for environmental protection assets about DRR interventions are village protection/mound protection, roadside plantation, plantation for erosion protection and *murta* (Lard) cultivation etc. The scenario about the environmental protection asset of DRR intervention, in *Jaliakhali* village, the respondents answered positively about roadside plantation but negatively about the rest of the parameters. The plantation was done with finance from the NGOs, but now there is no monitoring in place. As a result, many of those roadside trees have either been destroyed by cattle or were fell by villagers who sold them or used them as firewood. But in *Moddhom Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda*, respondents answered positively about village protection/mound protection, roadside plantation and plantation for preventing erosion. They responded negatively about *murta* cultivation. In *Moddhom Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda*, village protection/mound protection work was mainly done by government and the rest two interventions (roadside plantation and plantation for erosion protection) were implemented mainly by NGOs. Most of the interventions need repairing in both *Moddhom Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda* except the village protection/mound protection in *Rayenda*, which is in good shape. Respondents in *Rayenda* mentioned that after the intervention, maintenance work was undertaken only once. In *Moddhom Khalishabunia*, however, respondents noticed no maintenance work.

It is the affected community that benefits from any scheme the government or other donor organisations take up to improve its condition after a disaster. So, the interventions about livelihood are vital for the vulnerable community. The affected people, having lost all their hope, look for a new start by doing whatever work they can get. Some want to return to their previous occupation while others want safer, risk-free work. After losing their homes, household belongings and little savings, starting everything anew for survival requires help. These people need livelihood

options after a disaster more than they need emergency relief. In many areas in the southwest Bangladesh, the one slogan the affected people raised everywhere after *Sidr* and *Aila* was: "We need no relief as alms, we need work to secure our future life". But most of the time after a disaster, NGOs and donor agencies provide some emergency relief (food, water, etc.) to the vulnerable community, without ever thinking of any long-term programme. Intervention about livelihood option is very low. In *Jaliakhali*, most respondents said they did not get any support from donor agencies in terms of livelihood options. After *Aila*, nobody came with livelihood schemes to improve their life. But they mentioned they got enough emergency relief. In *Moddhom Khalishabunia*, the situation is almost the same, though those in tailoring received sewing machines from NGOs. But the support for livelihood options in *Rayenda* is greater than in the other study areas. Highest number of respondents here answered positively about getting support for cultivation, fish farming, opening grocery shops, raising poultry/ducks/cattle and so on (Table 3). Findings shows NGOs play a key role to support livelihood. However, government projects helped them from long term perspective though, as per a responded

Nobody thinks about the locality and the previous job history of the local people; everybody comes with their pre-planned, profitable livelihood option without considering demand of local people.

As a result, at the end of the project, the local people gain little sustainability. Also, monitoring is very weak which impact the programmes most.

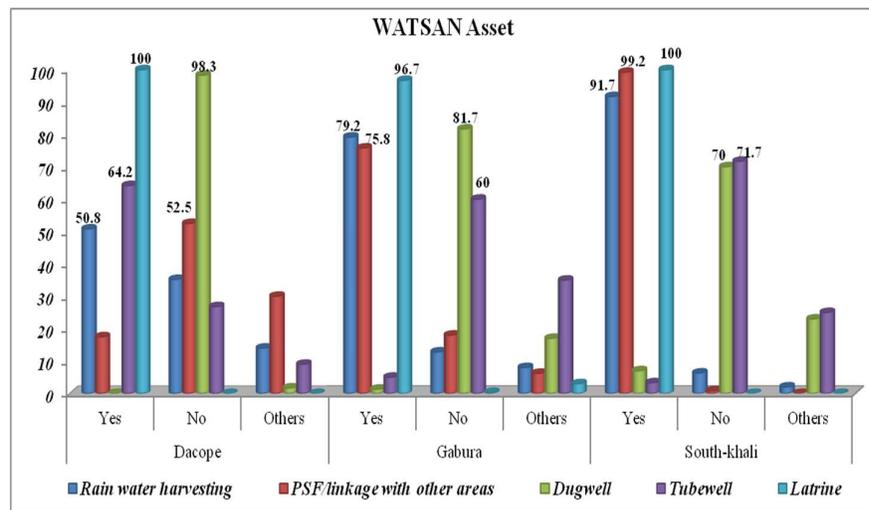
Table 3. Disaster Management actors in the study area.

Actors	Study Area		
	<i>Dacope (%)</i>	<i>Gabura (%)</i>	<i>Rayenda (%)</i>
Government	17.5	9.2	N/A
NGO	55.8	35	81.6
Local Elites	2.5	N/A	N/A
CPP Volunteers	8.3	5	N/A
NGO+ CPP Volunteers	3.3	7.5	0.8
NGO + Govt	4.2	39.1	7.5
NGO+ Local Elites	8.4	4.2	1.7
Young Generation	N/A	N/A	6.7
CBO + Youth	N/A	N/A	1.7

Source: Field Data, 2015

The parameters for WatSan assets about DRR interventions are rainwater harvesting, PSF, dug-well, tube-well, latrine etc. The real DRR intervention condition about WatSan. In Jaliakhali, the highest number of respondents replied positively about latrine (100%), tube-well (64.2%), rain water harvesting (50.8%) etc. and negatively about dug-well (98.3%) and PSF (52.5%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Condition of Existing Disaster Risk Reduction Interventions (WatSan Asset) in the study Area.



But in *Moddham Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda*, the respondents positively replied on latrine (correspondingly 96.7% & 100%), PSF (75.8% & 99.2%) and rain water harvesting (79.2% & 91.7%). They responded negatively about tubewell (60% & 71.7%) and dugwell (81.7% & 70%). The intervention about WatSan's maintenance, functionality and the provider of this service. In Jaliakhali, tubewells are not functioning, while the other assets need repairing (Table 4).

Table 4. Functionality & management and responsible person of Existing Disaster Risk Reduction Interventions (WATSAN Asset) in the study area.

Input/Asset	Functionality (Select appropriate one)			Maintenance Work (Select appropriate one)			Who did this work		
	1=Good condition; 2= Need repairing 3=Not functional; 4= Sold out, 5= Lost			1= Never done 2= Done once 3=Done twice/more			1. GoB; 2. NGO 3. INGO; 4. CBO 5. Donor; 6. LGED 7. Close relatives; 8. Neighbor 9. Self-finance		
Material/Asset	Jaliakhail	Moddham Khalishabunia	Rayenda	Jaliakhail	Moddham Khalishabunia	Rayenda	Jaliakhail	Moddham Khalishabunia	Rayenda
D.1. Rain water harvesting	Need Repairing (49.2%)	Need Repairing (45.8%)	Need repairing (59.2%)	Never Done (49.2%)	Never Done (42.5%)	Done once (70%)	NGO (49.2%)	NGO (44.2%)	NGO (56.7%)
D.2. PSF/linkage with other areas	NA (52.5%)	Need Repairing (73.3%)	Need repairing (66.7%)	NA (52.5%)	Done Once (62.5%)	Done once (64.2%)	NA (52.5%)	Government (38.3%)	NGO (60%)
D.3. Dugwell	NA (98.3%)	NA (86.7%)	NA (100%)	NA (98.3%)	NA (86.7%)	NA (100%)	NA (98.3%)	NA (86.7%)	NA (100%)
D.4. Tubewell	Not functional (35.8%)	NA (65%)	NA (99.2%)	Done Once (56.7%)	NA (65%)	NA (99.2%)	NGO (35.8%)	NA (65%)	NA (99.2%)
D.5. Latrine	Need repairing (67.5%)	Need Repairing (70.8%)	Need repairing (79.2%)	Done Once (65.8%)	Done Once (65%)	Done once (75%)	NGO (51.7%)	NGO (69.2%)	NGO (46.7%)

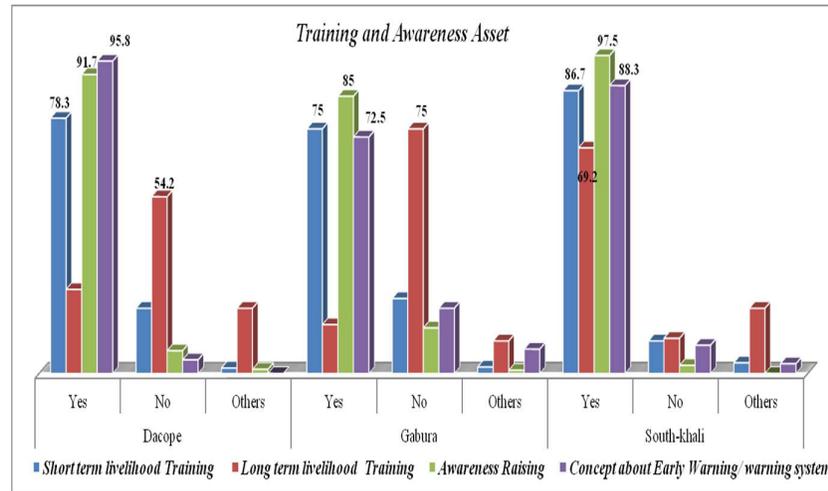
Source: Field Data, 2015

In most cases, all these assets underwent maintenance work only once; some never at all. Most intervention programmes were undertaken by NGOs rather than the government and other donor agencies, though the government plays an important role in their implementation.

Training and awareness building about disaster can prevent the loss of life and wealth. It is a prevention method rather than a protection method. For training and awareness intervention, programmes should be undertaken on short-and long-term livelihood training, general awareness raising and the concept about early warning / warning system.

Figure 5 explains in detail the real DRR intervention conditions about training and awareness. In all the three study areas, short-term livelihood training, general awareness raising and the concept about early warning/warning system are in place. The long-term livelihood training programme was also positively reported by respondents in Rayenda (69.2%). Most respondents in Jaliakhali (54.2%) and Moddham Khalishabunia (75%) responded in the negative when asked about this.

Figure 5. Condition of Existing Disaster Risk Reduction Interventions (Training and Awareness Asset) in the study Area.



Source: Field Data, 2015

But the training and awareness intervention's maintenance, functionality and benefactor of this programme about the functionality, most respondents in *Jaliakhali* and *Rayenda* wanted more training programmes to keep them safe from imminent disasters. But in *Moddham Khalishabunia*, 45.8 percent respondents expressed satisfaction about awareness rising and 40 percent about warning system, noting that they were effective because there was regular monitoring in place (Table 5).

In *Jaliakhali* and *Rayenda* only the short-term livelihood programmes have regular monitoring mechanism while other programmes have monthly monitoring system in place with some commendable work by some NGOs in the study areas.

Effectiveness of DRR Intervention

The study attempted to evaluate from a sociological viewpoint the impacts of Disaster Risk Reduction interventions and how these physical interventions the community in southwest region of Bangladesh benefits from them. Majority of the respondents in the three study areas pointed out that the interventions in the form of these physical assets, environmental protections and livelihoods offered them a secure living and additional income. Regarding benefits of water and sanitation

intervention, most respondents in all the three study areas said that both the severity of diarrhoea and the cost of safe drinking water drastically fell as a result of such interventions, while training and awareness campaign helped them identify disaster risks and take precaution measures to cope with the disaster.

Table 5. Functionality & management and responsiveness of Existing DRR Interventions (Training & Awareness Asset) in the study area.

Input/Asset	Functionality (Select appropriate one)			Maintenance Work (Select appropriate one)			Who did this work		
	1=Effective; 2=Need more 3=Not effective;			1=Never done 2=Regular monitoring 3=Monthly monitoring			1. GoB; 2. NGO 3. INGO; 4. CBO 5. Donor; 6. LGED 7. Close relatives; 8. Neighbor 9. Self-finance		
Material/Asset	Jaliakhali	Moddhom Khalishabunia	Rayenda	Jaliakhali	Moddhom Khalishabunia	Rayenda	Jaliakhali	Moddhom Khalishabunia	Rayenda
E.1. Short term livelihood Training	Need More (53.3%)	Need More 46(38.3%)	Need More (60.8%)	Regular monitoring (39.2%)	Regular monitoring (42.5%)	Regular monitoring (57.5%)	NGO (68.3%)	NGO (71.7%)	NGO (80.8%)
E.2. Long term livelihood Training	NA (54.2%)	NA (75%)	Need More (49.2%)	NA (54.2%)	NA (73%)	Monthly Monitoring (45.8%)	NA (54.2%)	NA (75%)	NGO (64.2%)
E.3. Awareness Raising	Need More (52.5%)	Effective (45.8%)	Need More (53%)	Monthly Monitoring (60%)	Regular monitoring (46.7%)	Monthly Monitoring (55%)	NGO (81.7%)	NGO (80%)	NGO (77.5%)
E.4. Concept about Early Warning/ warning system	Need More (53.3%)	Effective (40%)	Need More (41.7%)	Monthly Monitoring (64.2%)	Regular monitoring (46.7%)	Monthly Monitoring (49.2%)	NGO (90%)	NGO (66.7%)	NGO (57.5%)

Source: Field Data, 2015

Respondents in *Jaliakhali* and *Moddhom Khalishabunia* gave only a lukewarm response when asked about if they had houses good enough to withstand cyclone, storm, tornado etc. had access to alternative livelihoods options like cattle fattening, shrimp farming, agriculture, sea fishing, etc.; had work so they could provide adequate food for their families; had places to shelter their livestock; had resilient drinking water sources i.e. RWH (Rain Water Harvesting), PSF (Pond Sand Filter), tube well etc.; had any hygienic latrine; if the roads connecting their household or the shelter centres were in good condition and so on. They said none of these were satisfactory. In *Rayenda*, however, things were not too bad when compared with those in *Jaliakhali* and *Moddhom Khalishabunia*.

As already pointed out, this research deals with the many problems facing the stakeholders in different sectors attempting to meet the needs of affected people in southwest region of Bangladesh. The questions this paper sought to answer include: what are the disaster risks and vulnerabilities in that region; who are the main actors in disaster management; what types of intervention programmes are taken up by government organisations, development partners and national and

international non-government organisations (I/NGOs); how does the community view those intervention programmes and what are their expectations; and what are the changes observed due to those interventions in the studied coastal community? To find answers to these questions, a sociological perspective was adopted, but other approaches were not altogether excluded. The present study mainly incorporates both Pressure and Release Model in explaining the mitigation strategies as well as the DRR intervention process.

Findings included the three resistance factors occupying the most significant position to be: magnitude of disaster (risk and vulnerability); the state of disaster management actors both in formal and informal sectors; and DRR interventions in southwest Bangladesh. Any DRR interventions must also include these five factors: physical assets, environmental protection, livelihood, Water and Sanitation (WatSan) and training and awareness. For any DRR interventions to be successful, stakeholders should concentrate on the social structure and various socio-cultural factors like religious perceptions, social values, village politics, dominance of local leaders and so on. Moreover, limited participatory approach have been followed by stakeholders (both government and non-government) and using various indicators of existing DRR interventions such as physical assets and environmental protection in the study area. All these compromises the effectiveness of the existing DRR interventions in the study area to a great extent. For effective disaster mitigation and preparedness, it is vital to pay continued attention to these issues.

Discussion

It has been revealed from the study that in 2007 and 2009, when Sidr and Aila struck the region respectively, the *Jaliakhali* people had no knowledge of assessing their household (HH) vulnerability; had no plan to identify vulnerable places beside their households; had no knowledge of disaster risk identification; had no institutional connection/network to identify risk; had no document to help them identify the risk; and had no training on risk identification. It was quite similar in *Moddham Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda*. But in 2015, majority of the respondents in *Jaliakhali* said that they are planning and initiating various risk identification activities. People of both *Moddham Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda* were even more conscious as they already started various risk identification activities and they seem much more organized than they were in the past. Hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness practices can limit the physical impacts and the ways in which

community recovery resources and extra-community assistance can reduce social impacts of disaster.

Besides analysing disaster risk and vulnerabilities, the study tried to identify and illustrate the existing Disaster Risk Reduction interventions in the study areas. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief has taken many initiatives to incorporate disaster and environmental risk issues in sectoral plans (e.g. agriculture, water management, education, livestock, fisheries, water and sanitation, health and small cottage industries). To identify the existing DRR interventions various materials as well as assets were considered, which were then divided into five categories: physical assets, environmental protection, livelihood interventions, water and sanitation interventions and training and awareness programme. Physical assets like construction/renovation of hazard resistant houses, cyclone shelters, small bridges, ring/box culvert, embankment/earthen road, approach road and re-excavating canals and ponds etc. were identified as the existing Disaster Risk Reduction interventions in *Jaliakhali*, *Moddhom Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda*. In *Rayenda*, these physical assets are in quite good shape, but they are in an urgent need of repair in *Jaliakhali* and *Moddhom Khalishabunia*. Findings show, *Rayenda* people had full participation in the whole intervention process unlike their counterparts in *Jaliakhali* and *Moddhom Khalishabunia*. In these two areas people did not participate in those activities for various reasons such as religious perceptions, social values, village politics, and dominance of local leaders and lack of coordination between various groups as well as stakeholders.

Further, people of *Moddhom Khalishabunia* and *Rayenda* are quite happy about the existing environmental protections in their areas such as village protection/mound protection, roadside plantation and plantation for preventing erosion and so on. However, there is no such environmental DRR intervention in *Jaliakhali* because of its geographical, cultural and social setting.

DRR interventions through livelihood were nowhere to be seen in *Jaliakhali* and *Gabura*. But the picture was different in *Rayenda* because of the social values such as religious and gender-based perceptions and village politics and coordination between local people, NGOs, local leaders and government officials. But this kind of coordination in *Jaliakhali* and *Moddhom Khalishabunia* is difficult to be had because of village politics, corruption, socio-cultural values, religious perceptions, lack of participation approach and so on.

Educational institutions, healthcare facilities, water and sanitation infrastructures that are disaster resistant reduce child mortality rate, improve maternal health and eliminate incidence of chronic diseases, for example, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis etc. in disaster-prone area²⁶. Water and Sanitation is also a significant aspect of DRR interventions in Bangladesh. Among various indicators of water and sanitation dimensions (rain water harvesting, PSF/linkage with other areas, dugwell, tubewell and latrine), majority of the respondents in the three study areas replied positively about them. Nevertheless, all of these need proper and timely maintenance to improve the health and livelihood conditions of the people.

Rahman and Mokhlesur (2013) said that training programmes, awareness raising campaign should be conducted to educate people about climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies. Without proper training and awareness, the idea of effective DRR interventions only through various physical assets as well as natural resources is impractical. In all the three study areas, respondents spoke highly about short-term and long-term livelihood training, awareness raising campaigns and the early warning systems that are now in place.

Finally, the study attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of the DRR interventions in southwest region of Bangladesh from a sociological point of view. All these interventions, including physical and environmental, contributed to a secure living and additional income of the people, because those interventions created jobs. The interventions on the WatSan front helped reduce the severity of various water-borne diseases, including diarrhoea, and the cost of safe drinking water. Lastly, training and awareness was the last dimension of Disaster Risk Reduction interventions in this study. Like all other interventions, training and awareness-building programmes contributed to their secure living and additional income.

Conclusions

The study shows community people are at the centre of successful DRR interventions. So they need more information, encouragement and support during disaster events from government and other actors, particularly from NGOs. Community's participation and control is essential for any successful implementation, orientation and maintenance of any DRR interventions. Although

²⁶ Rahman, and M. Mokhlesur, "Assessing Natural Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change Mitigation Strategies in the Coastal Areas of Bangladesh". The HKU Scholars Club, Pokfulam, (Hong Kong 2013).

the government runs several DRR intervention programmes to reduce vulnerability, it is important to involve people in the decision-making process for the greater good of the community. However, community-based Disaster Risk Reduction can play a vital role to bridge communities, governments, donors and other stakeholders. Community driven disaster risk reduction approach will be more reliable and effective, because without community involvement no DRR interventions can sustain in the long run. But then again, it successful DRR interventions require political commitment of the highest level of the government. DRR in development initiative is an integral part of the national policy. A host of issues must be addressed for a sustainable DRR policy to be in place. Scientists and policymakers should have dialogues to formulate a technical solution. Also, the current policy is incomplete and ambiguous at some paces, which needs urgent attention. For a better result, traditional knowledge must be integrated in the DRR policy. Clearly, while physical assets, especially embankments, must be considered as an important determinant of effective DRR intervention, a number of social factors such as community feelings, local perceptions, existing social structure and system need to be considered before taking up any such programmes. But this cannot be done without collaboration between government and non-government organisations as well as other agencies. This all-important collaboration is “not satisfactory” in the study area and respondents maintain this is vital for any effective DRR interventions to be in place. Cultural factors such as religious and gender perceptions as well as religious practices and political factors like village politics negatively impact the emergency response and relief distribution. All these factors must be taken into consideration and addressed because they impede DRR interventions. That’s a big challenge, given there is no quick fix to these problems and the emergency response has to be immediate. Also, an integrated, multi-pronged approach for the economic recovery of the affected area is needed to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable members of the society.

**AN ASSESSMENT OF ENACTMENT OF THE DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE (PREVENTION AND PROTECTION) ACT 2010
IN THE BANGLADESH PARLIAMENT**

Marufa Akter*

Abstract

Increasing the number of women in political institutions and their capacity to deliver desirable policy outcomes have become a topic of constant debates. This paper examines the process of substantive representation of women legislators in formulating policies that address marginalisation of women. This paper considers Bangladesh's parliament as a critical case and investigates the extent to which women legislators acted for women's interests in the 9th Parliament (2008-2013). It examines the enactment process of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 and reviews the complexity of the substantive representation of women—taking into the critical actors; the conditions and steps followed to advocate gender equity changes. The findings of the study highlight that (a) the change in women related policy occurs through a process of combined efforts of actors and series of actions; (b) women successfully acted for the development and advocacy for women's concerns. This study reveals the form and extent of women's involvement in supporting women-friendly policy change (in other words, enactment of substantive representation), such as direct, indirect and intervening influence. Using descriptive data (meeting minutes of the parliamentary proceedings) and qualitative methods, such as interviews with members of the parliament and other relevant stakeholders, this paper reconsiders claims made in the extant literature regarding women's substantive representation. It does so by situating women as a critical actor for bringing change in public policy and advancing gender equity in the parliament.

1. Introduction

The gradual increase in numbers of women in the parliament raises expectations for women parliamentarians bringing women's issues forward in politics, an arena which has largely been dominated by men. The growing number of women raises an expectation that the presence of women representatives would facilitate their role in the promotion of women's interests, i.e., substantive representation of women.¹ The

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¹ Lena Wängnerud, "Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and Substantive Representation", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12(1), pp. 51–69, 2009.

literature on gender and politics has focused on two aspects of women's parliamentary representation—descriptive (incorporation of women) and substantive representation (promotion of women's interest). The descriptive form of representation refers to increasing women's participation to reflect the diversity of perspectives and to ensure the presence of marginalised groups, which are missing from the representative bodies.² Such justification offers an understanding that an increase in the presence of women representatives would facilitate their role in the promotion of women's interests, i.e., substantive representation of women (SRW). However, the relationship between women's presence and their ability to address women's interest in national policies remains unclear in the existing scholarship. The question also arises as to what extent and how the sheer presence of women in parliament influences the promotion of women's concerns in policies. This article, therefore, investigates the patterns of women legislators' engagement in the process of policy making relevant for women. This would address the gap to our understanding of women legislators' contribution in a specific women friendly policy enactment.

This article focuses on the process-oriented activities of legislative process of Bangladesh, which starts with initiating, drafting of a bill and ends with it passing with majority votes in parliament. It is important, however, to be aware of the fact that an individual MP has a limited scope of contribution in the context of Bangladesh parliament.³ Most of the legislation reflects the prerogatives of the government rather than individual representatives as most of the bills passed in Bangladesh parliament were actually initiated by the government.⁴ Therefore, measuring substantive representation from the outcome perspective (e.g., the number of bills passed) is problematic. This is because the policy outcome is dependent more on the institutional settings than on women parliamentarians as it involves distinct stages, actions, and political environment. With this backdrop, this article traces the process of women friendly policy enactment by taking a case of the Domestic Violence Act in order to investigate how women in Bangladesh parliament contribute in the policy process within their limited capacities. The article argues that women can still be involved in the process of enactment in various

² Anne Philips, *The Politics of Presence*. USA: Oxford University Press, 1995. Jane Mansbridge. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes". *Journal of Politics* 61(3), pp. 628–657, 1999.

³ Nizam Ahmed, *The Bangladesh Parliament: A data Handbook* (Institute of Governance Studies, Dhaka, 2012), p. 123.

⁴ Nizam Ahmed, *Limits of Parliamentary Control* (University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2006), p. 85.

capacities, even though they have limited authority; their presence becomes instrumental in initiating, following-up, drafting and facilitating the enactment of women friendly policy. Such analysis would allow exploring other additional associated factors that may facilitate or hinder the process of enactment.

The Domestic Violence Act of 2010⁵, a law relevant for women in Bangladesh, is chosen to illustrate the role of women legislators and to identify the patterns of the relationship between women's presence and their substantive contribution. The purpose of the act is to prevent violence against women committed by the members of their own family. Domestic violence is a daily reality for many women in Bangladesh. A law that safeguards them from it has long been awaited, as observed by the frequent and urgent calls for such an act from the civil society and women rights organisations.⁶ The ninth (9th) parliament has taken a number of legal steps to improve the situation of women. Enactment of the Domestic Violence Act 2010 is one of the significant achievements in the field of women's equity policies, which occurred during the tenure of this parliament. Researchers have previously analysed the Domestic Violence Act in Bangladesh, emphasizing the contribution of civil society organisations, and showed how informal network with key decision makers was instrumental for the successful enactment.⁷ That is an exciting way of looking into a policy representation but it offers a partial view. Crucially, it might overemphasise the role of external actors and overlook the role of women legislators including other associated macro level factors, such as institutional and political factors, which would better account for policy representation.

The purpose of the article is two folds. First, it unpacks the process of adaptation of legislation that benefits women. The emphasis is given on the scope of influence of a woman legislator in Bangladesh parliament and the collective actions of different actors in the process of policy enactment. The analysis will also reveal the role of men legislators, if there were any in the process. Second, it also reveals the patterns of the relationship between women's presence and SRW. Particularly, it examines the type and extent of women legislators' involvement in supporting women-friendly policy change (in a way, enactment of substantive representation). This article demonstrates three types of women's involvement in the process of policy enactment—direct, indirect and intervening. The direct relationship emerges when a woman legislator, as an individual

⁵ In Bengali, ঘরোয়া সহিংসতা (প্রতিরোধ ও সুরক্ষা) আইন, ২০১০

⁶ Sohela Nazneen, *The Women's Movement in Bangladesh: A Short History and Current Debates* (Dhaka: The Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES), 2016, pp. 5-7.

⁷ Nazneen, 2016, *Ibid*, pp. 5-7.

or within a group, plays a critical role in moving forward the bill, building a support base, creating awareness on the issue and pushing the issues to the top of the agenda by subverting the constraints which emerges on the way. The indirect relationship, on the other hand, refers to institutional, formal and informal procedures, and political contexts that facilitate the drafting, legal vetting, attaining Cabinet approval, and finally, approval for the bill from the members of parliament. The third type of women's involvement suggests that a set of intervening factors along with women's presence can facilitate the policy representation. The intervening factors include different external actors and women friendly political atmosphere in the parliament. The purpose of the intervening factors is to facilitate the relationship between women's numerical presence and their policy representation.

This article draws on a combination of primary sources consisting of parliamentary debates from 2010 (year of the enactment of the bill), standing committee meeting reports, and interviews (with Speaker, Ministers, legislators, personnel from ministries, civil society actors involved in the process of policy enactment; and experts). The content of the debates (2010) and standing committee meeting reports were analysed using data driven qualitative content analysis. Case oriented process tracing is used to analyse the data to trace the stages of the policy-making process and identified actors that supported the formulation of a draft bill on domestic violence.⁸ The discussion here follows three steps: first, it discusses the existing literature on the relationship between women's presence and their contribution in women friendly policy making, with an aim of exploring the patterns of women engagement. Second, it illustrates the adoption story of the Domestic Violence Act (from the policy initiation to the end passing it through the parliament). Finally, it discusses three types of possible influence women legislators may have in the process of passing the Domestic Violence Act 2010.

2. The Relationship between Women's Presence and Substantive Representation

Studies discussed a link between women's presence and their contribution in policies pertinent to women did find some support for a direct relationship between the presence of women legislators and attention to women issues. Few studies suggest that women legislators have demonstrated their attention to women by identifying with them as a group, and by feeling a responsibility to speak out for them.⁹ Another group of

⁸ Derek Beach and Brun Rasmus Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (USA: University of Michigan Press, 2013), pp. 11-14.

⁹ Debra L. Dobson, and Carroll J. Susan, *Reshaping the Agenda: women in State Legislators* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for the American Women in Politics, Rutgers University, 1991); Karin

researchers has identified that women office-holders are most likely shaping the government agenda by giving higher priorities to women's as well as to children's and family issues than their male colleagues.¹⁰ These results lend support to a direct relationship between women's presence and policy representation.

Studies on the system where legislators' have limited authority on policy making showed how they focus on alternative strategies through which women were seen drawing attention to issues important to women. For instance, women legislators from the Canadian parliament have used parliamentary motions and statement to highlight women's concerns and give voice to women's overlooked interest.¹¹ Other studies reveals gender variation in participation in legislative debates, where women were often engaged in speaking twice as often as men on women issues.¹² Only a few studies assess women's substantive representation outside of Western contexts. For example, research examines gender differences in bill initiation in the Honduran Congress during 1990-93 and 1994-97 terms, and found that women placed a higher priority on women and children rights issues and participate in debates on those bills.¹³ Likewise, Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi also showed that women legislators were more interested and active than

Tamerius, 'Sex, Gender, and Leadership in the Representation of Women', G. Duerst-Lahti and R. M. Kelly (eds.), *Gender, Power, Leadership, and Governance* (University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 93-112; Beth Reingold, *Representing Women: Sex, Gender, and Legislative Behavior in Arizona and California* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 123-127.

- ¹⁰ Barbara Burrell, *A Women's Place is in the House: Campaigning for Congress in the Feminist Era* (An Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 131. Kathleen Bratton and Haynie L. Kerry, "Agenda Setting and Legislative Success in State Legislatures: The Effects of Gender and Race", *Journal of Politics* 61(3), pp. 658-679, 1999. Michelle A. Saint-Germain, "Does Their Difference Make a Difference? The Impact of Women on Public Policy in Arizona Legislature", *Social Science Quarterly* 70(4), pp. 956-968, 1989. Sue Thomas, "The Impact of Women on State Legislative", *Journal of Politics* 53(4), pp. 958-976, 1991. Sue Thomas and Welch Susan, "The Impact of Gender on Activities and Priorities of State Legislators", *Western Political Quarterly* 44, pp 445-456, 1991. Christina Wolbrecht, 'Female Legislators and the Women's Rights Agenda: From Feminine Mystique to Feminist Era', Cindy Simon Rosenthal (ed.), *Women Transforming Congress*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), pp 170-210. Naseem Akhter Hussain, *Is Gender Equality a Democratic Imperative? Under Representation of Women and Electoral Politics*, Fifth Monthly General Meeting Council 2018 and 2019, (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh), p. 23.
- ¹¹ Sarah Childs and Withey Julie, "Women Representatives Acting for Women: Sex and the Signing of Early Day Motions in the 1997 British Parliament", *Political Studies*, 52(3), pp. 552-564, 2004.
- ¹² Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson and Heath Michelle Roseanna, "Do Women Legislators Have Different Policy Priorities than Their Male Colleagues?" *Women & Politics* 24(4), pp. 77-101, 2003. Manon Tremblay, "Do Female MPs Substantively Represent Women? A Study of Legislative Behaviour in Canada's 35th Parliament", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 31(3), p. 435, 1998.
- ¹³ Mark P. Jones, "Legislator Gender and Legislator Policy Priorities in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies and the United States House of Representatives", *Policy Studies Journal* 25(4), pp 613-629, 1997. Taylor-Robinson and Heath, 2003, *ibid.*, pp. 77-101.

their male colleagues to submit women's rights bills in the Argentinean parliament.¹⁴ These studies largely support the importance of women's presence for promoting pro-women policies than their male counterparts. These studies provide some compelling evidences that women in public office make a difference even if they do not directly contribute, which ultimately supports an indirect link between the presence of women legislators and their contribution in making policies pertinent to women.

Lovenduski discusses the significance of circumstantial evidence by assessing the role of British women politicians who have made a difference in the parliament.¹⁵ Lovenduski argues that women operate within a context that expects them to bring change against considerable resistances. A variety of other factors from greater political context, such as the political opportunity structures and actors outside the parliament, may influence over how actors within an institution work. The findings in Columbia and Costa Rica show that even women with influential voices are not enough to enhance the articulation of women's interest and substantive representation due to the absence of a suitable political environment.¹⁶ Against this backdrop, the type of political party in power and policy agenda of the party chief could affect women legislators' preferences and activities on women issues.¹⁷ In addition, studies have also suggested that external actors, such as women's movements and civil society groups are successful in putting pressure on the government for women-friendly policy changes and in providing extra-governmental voices for marginalised groups.¹⁸ Studies conducted in Bangladesh have emphasised the contribution of women's movement and women's rights organisations in facilitating the women-related policy outcomes and improving women's condition.¹⁹ Within a majoritarian political system, such as that of Bangladesh, a women-friendly political atmosphere by the party in power and influence of external actors might create

¹⁴ Mala Htun, M Lacalle, and P. J. Micozzi. "Does women's presence change legislative behavior? Evidence from Argentina, 1983–2007", *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 5, pp. 95, 2013.

¹⁵ Joni Lovenduski. *Feminizing Politics* (London: Cambridge Polity Press, 2005), p. 190.

¹⁶ Maria C. Escobar-Lemmon, Leslie, A. Schwindt-Bayer and Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson, 'Empirical Insights from Legislatures and Cabinets in Latin America', Maria C. Escobar-Lemmon and Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson (eds.), *Representation: The Case of Women*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 205-226.

¹⁷ Denise Walsh, 'Party Centralization a Debate Conditions in South Africa', Susan Franceshet, Mona Lena Krook, Jennifer M. Piscopo (eds.), *The Impact of Gender Quotas*, (Oxford Press, New York, 2012), pp. 119-131.

¹⁸ Ana Alice Alcantara Costa and Andrea Cornwall, 'Conservative Modernization in Brazil: Blocking Local Women's Political Pathways to Power', M. Tadros (ed.), *Women in Politics: Gender, Power and Development*, (London: Zed Books, 2014), pp. 259-282.

¹⁹ Sohela Nazneen and Maheen Sultan, "Struggling for Survival and Autonomy: Impact of NGO-ization on women's organizations in Bangladesh", *Development*, Vol. 52, No 2, pp. 193-199, 2009.

an opportunity for women legislators to act substantively on behalf of women. However, a political atmosphere less friendly to women might hinder such attempts and reduce their frequency.

From the discussion of existing studies, this article draws a set of patterns of women legislators' involvement in the process of women friendly policy making and makes an attempt to contextualise these for Bangladesh. The following sections critically examine the case of Domestic Violence Act 2010 to set forth exploring the patterns of women legislators' contribution in making women related policy in Bangladesh.

3. The Domestic Violence Act 2010

Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Minister of Women and Children Affairs, introduced the Domestic Violence (Protection and Prevention) Act in the parliament that time on 21 July 2010. The parliament of Bangladesh passed the Bill on October 5, 2010. Subsequently, it came into force in December of the same year and criminalised the act of domestic violence. The underlying motivation behind such a bill was to stop all kinds of physical, mental, and sexual abuse suffered by women, which occur within their respective households and are perpetrated by their family members.²⁰ The law was unique in various ways. First, it includes a definition of domestic violence which was previously unrecognised as an act of violence in Bangladesh. Second, the bill adds urgent and interim protection orders for women and children subjected to such abuse. Finally, it specifies the duties of concerned authorities, including the police, health services, and lawyers, in addressing such violence, which was not discussed before by the existing laws dedicated to stop violence against women.

This section traces the process of enactment of the bill in light of the formal stages involved in the legislation process of Bangladesh, in general. The legal process of the passage of the law occurs in two distinct steps: a) policy development, drafting and Cabinet approval; and b) parliamentary discussions. Each stage highlights the role of different actors, motivations they hold, strategies they used in moving forward the bill, creating awareness on the issue and pushing it to the top of the agenda by subverting the constraints which emerged on the way.

3.1. Policy Development, Drafting and Cabinet Approval

The Domestic Violence Act is a government-led legislation. However, the demand for making such a bill came from the civil society organisations in the first place. As the

²⁰ The previous laws were not enough or sufficient to criminalise the domestic based violence and also not enough to protect women from the violence they face in their own house.

Speaker noted, the “government’s decision to make a law mostly depends on the need and demands coming from the people.”²¹ The need and demand for a law to stop violence against women by their family members emerged within a specific context. During the 1990s, domestic violence acts were adopted in the neighboring countries, such as in India, Malaysia, and Pakistan. Following these initiatives, women movement organisations along with civil society organisations took the effort of drafting the legislation in 2002 and kept working and mobilizing the demand to the government.”²²

In 2006, the law commission of Bangladesh took the initiative of exploring the relevance of such a law in the context of Bangladesh following the continuous demands of the civil society and women rights organisations. They have tailored bills from the aforementioned countries and attempted to adopt it to the realities in Bangladesh, such as harassment due to the failure to have a son, violence related to dowries, and acid attacks. Women rights organisations formed a coalition called Citizen’s Initiative against Domestic Violence (CiDV) to initiate the process of drafting of such a law. The coalition formed with 38 human rights and women rights organisations in 2007, which brought together all the civil society organisations, government officials, MPs, politicians, and other relevant stakeholders in the county. The objectives of the coalition were to draft the law, maintain advocacy, and keep lobbying with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) for their attention and support.²³

During the military-backed technocratic government from 2006-2007, the CiDV approached the Ministry and submitted a suggested draft of the Domestic Violence Act. Because of the political uncertainty, the process was halted in the face of governmental shifts. After the general election of 2008, the Bangladesh Awami League formed a new government with at two-thirds of the majority in November of that year. Dr. Chaudhury was in charge of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) at the beginning of 2009. Once more, the coalition approached the Minister (at that time) Dr. Chaudhury and some other influential legislators, including a few influential male legislators. The coalition organised a national dissemination workshop to deliver the rationale behind the law and the relevance of different provisions under the act. The purpose was to get the urgent attention of relevant executives from relevant stakeholders of the government, and create public awareness²⁴

²¹ Author’s interview with a woman legislator of Bangladesh Parliament on 13 September 2015, Dhaka.

²² Author’s interview with a member of the coalition 20 December 2016, Dhaka.

²³ Author’s interview with a member of the coalition 20 December 2016, Dhaka.

²⁴ Author’s interview with a woman activist 13 January 2017, Dhaka.

The coalition's draft policy received support from Dr. Chaudhury, who is a lawyer by profession, and had previously been associated with women's rights movements. Under her supervision, the ministry took over and decided to use its donor-funded Multi-Sectoral Project on Violence Against Women (MSVAW)²⁵ to lead the drafting process. A series of consultation meetings with relevant stakeholders took place during 7 to 8 months of the whole process of drafting. These stakeholders included women's rights organisations, women members of parliament, national women's associations, the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, and the Department of Women's Affairs. All came together to work for the law.²⁶

A large number of discussion sessions took place, and different concerns were raised considering the sensitivity involved in making such a law, as informed by the coalition members. One significant concern came from both government officials and legislators that this act should not break families.²⁷ In response to such objection, Minister and coalition members argued that the bill is a nonbinding act with limited option of penalty, as the purpose of the bill is to seek remedies and ensure interim protection for women subjected to violence.²⁸

According to the Secretariat Instruction²⁹, concerned ministry MoWCA and its division (Department of Women Affairs) are responsible for the formulation, execution, and review of the policies within its jurisdiction. However, in the case of the domestic violence act, the coalition CiDV submitted a preliminary draft to the Ministry in 2008. MSVAW Project on behalf of the department has organised several consultation

²⁵ The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs as part of the Government of Bangladesh, has embarked upon a joint effort with the Government of Denmark entitled the "Multi Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women". The objective of this project is to redress and prevent violence against women. Some components of this project include a public awareness campaign regarding violence against women, a one stop crisis center for women of domestic or sexual violence, a national trauma counseling center, and the establishment of the first National Forensic DNA profiling laboratory. For further information, visit at <http://www.mspvaw.gov.bd/>.

²⁶ Author's interview with a government official at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on 10 December 2016, Dhaka.

²⁷ Author's interview with an official from Women's Rights Organisation on 17 September 2015, Dhaka.

²⁸ Author's interview with an official from Women's Rights Organisation on 17 September 2015, Dhaka.

²⁹ Ch. IV, Instruction 100 of the Secretariat Instruction. The primary purpose of the Secretariat Instructions is to ensure uniformity and efficiency in the observance of administrative practices and procedures. The secretary, who is the senior civil servant within each ministry or division, is responsible for the observance of the Instructions.

meetings including an inter-ministerial meeting³⁰ in order to collect the feedback on the draft during 2009.³¹ Senior ministerial officials, joint secretary (in general) and the Secretary of MoWCA (in some instances) chaired those consultation meetings where civil society actors, women activists, politicians, lawyers were present and again shared their views. Legislative drafters from different ministries, including the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, attended those meetings and provided their legal advice, as required.³² The inter-ministerial meeting also took place after finalizing the draft bill. As per the Rules of Business, MoWCA prepared a note with a summary of the bill and a note on the importance of the bill and sent them to the Cabinet committee for the approval of the cabinet members.³³ Being a member of the Cabinet, Dr. Chaudhury was the one who had to convince the Cabinet members including the Prime Minister as to the importance of the bill and its' relevance in the context of Bangladesh. Finally the bill was accepted by the members of the Cabinet.

Following the approval of the Cabinet under the leadership of Prime Minister, as per the rules of the procedures, the preliminary, or draft bill, in general, was sent back to the Ministry with a discussion note listing different concerns that need to be addressed in the draft bill. In this case of domestic violence act, Cabinet passed the draft bill without any rigorous changes in the text except for a few little suggestions of further improvement in relation to the use of legal words in the bill.³⁴ As per the Rule of the Business, the already passed draft bill from the Cabinet was then sent to the Ministry of Law and Justice for legal vetting. The drafting wings of the ministry³⁵ check the precision of the draft bill and translate the approved proposal into an acceptable draft bill through the application of technical legal language.³⁶

Usually, in case of any disagreement between the drafting committee and the concerned ministry over the bills' substantive contents, the ministry can ask for a further

³⁰ It is a format of a meeting where representatives from different relevant ministries, and related departments come together to discuss about certain policy issues and to provide their valuable feedback.

³¹ Author's interview with a government official at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on 10 December 2016, Dhaka.

³² Author's interview with a government official at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on 10 December 2016, Dhaka.

³³ Author's interview with a representative from civil society organisation on 21 August 2015, Dhaka.

³⁴ Author's interview with a government official at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on 10 December 2016, Dhaka.

³⁵ The drafting wing of the ministry was set up in 2000.

³⁶ Author's interview with a selected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 1 November 2015, Dhaka.

consultation meeting. However, no such disagreement was evident in the case of the Domestic Violence bill, according to the organisations and government officials involved in the process and interviewed. Finally, the acceptable version of the bill was sent to the Cabinet again by the concerned ministry for consideration, as a government led legislation. After receiving its final endorsement from the Cabinet and Prime Minister's Office, the bill was only then sent to the Parliament Secretariat to commence the parliamentary phase. The entire process of policy development, drafting, and approval of the bill from Cabinet took place within 2009.

3.2. Parliamentary Phases

The parliamentary phase includes the introduction of the bill to the parliament, scrutiny through the committees and the enactment of the bill by the votes of the legislators. As per the rules of the house, every act has to go through three parliamentary phases, referred as the first, second and third readings. The first reading means the introduction of the bill; then it is considered for the second reading, and finally passed during the third reading.³⁷ Interestingly, Domestic Violence act was passed after going through its first and second readings. Therefore, the entire parliamentary phase took only three months to complete, which indicates lack of opposition from the parliamentarians and full of support from government, as claimed by a women activist.³⁸ By going through each phases, this section maps out the stories, discussion, negotiations, and actions which took place within the parliament in relation to the Domestic Violence Bill.

First Reading: Unlike in Canada and the United Kingdom, the first reading in the Bangladesh parliament is only a formal procedure by which the bill is introduced into the house.³⁹ Dr. Chaudhury introduced the draft bill (which had already received approval by the Cabinet members) on 6th of June 2010. At this stage, the draft bill was presented by her with a summary and objectives of the bill,⁴⁰ but no debates took place.⁴¹ The ceremony is meant to garner the approval of the Speaker for sending the bill

³⁷ Ahmed, 2012, *ibid*, p. 127.

³⁸ Author's interview with a representative from Women's Rights Organisation on 19 September 2015, Dhaka.

³⁹ Gavin Murphy, "How Legislation is Drafted and Enacted in Bangladesh". *Statute Law Review*, 27(3), pp. 133–149, 2006.

⁴⁰ The government bill needs to submit the notice 7 days before. In case of private member's bill, it requires to provide 15 days' of notice.

⁴¹ At the First Reading the title of the Bill is announced but there is no discussion and no amendment can be moved. The Member-in-charge who introduces the Bill may propose a number of measures. S/he may forward it for consideration by the House, refer it to a standing or select

to the standing committee for further scrutiny. It is a constitutional obligation for the Parliament to appoint a committee for further evaluation, and it is a recent practice that bills are referred to the standing committee⁴² on a systematic basis.⁴³ On the very same day of 6th of June, the bill was forwarded to the Standing Committee of Women's and Children's Affairs following the consent of the Speaker and members of the house.

Committee Stage: Like any other government bill, the draft Domestic Violence Act was sent to the committee, where the members of the committee reviewed the clauses of the bill again. Apart from discussing clause by clause, the committee made sure of their consistency with the principles and subject matters of the bill. At this stage, it is only the members of the committee under the leadership of the chair of the committee who take part in the discussion. The entire process of scrutinizing and collecting feedback from the members of the committee on the draft bill took around three months. The committee consists of ten legislators including the chair.⁴⁴ Two men and eight women legislators (from both direct elections and reserved seats), are appointed in the committee. In most cases, the committee chair is a member of the winning party. As a chair of the standing committee on Women and Children Affairs, Ms. Meher Afroze Chumki, MP, lead the evaluation process in the standing committee and organised various consultations with different stakeholders, including male members of the parliament, and officials from other ministries.

Intensive discussion on the proposed bill took place at the committee level consequently at the 13th, 14th and 17th meeting of the committee that was scheduled in between August and September of 2010. The entire 13th and 14th standing committee meetings⁴⁵ were dedicated to the discussion of the draft bill. The representatives from civil society organisations were also invited to be a part of the meeting.

committee or circulate it to elicit public opinion. From the seventh parliament, all government bills are referred to standing committees for detail scrutiny followed by first reading.

⁴² As per the Role of Procedure, it carries out oversight, examine legislation relevant to the department and carry out investigations. The activity of the PSCMOWCA during the parliamentary tenure of 2009-2013 promoted awareness and open discussion on various police-related issues.

⁴³ Murphy, 2006, *ibid*.

⁴⁴ There are on total of 350 MPs in Bangladesh parliament all serving in the committees, with overlapping of membership in various committees, with overlapping of membership in various committees. There are in total 19 elected women legislators' and 50 women legislators from reserved seats that serve in a total of 46 committees. There is 16% women participation in the 47 committees.

⁴⁵ There was a total of 40 Standing Committee meeting took place during the entire 9th parliament.

In the first meeting (13th meeting), members of the committee discussed and decided how to proceed on the scrutiny of the bill. Members of the committees decided to invite different stakeholders (mostly civil society organisations who were part of the coalition) to attend the next standing committee meeting. The 14th committee meeting took place on 19th of August 2010. Members had intensive discussion and shared their comments on the bill. Along with the chair of the committee, a total of 8 other members of the parliament (7 women and one male), including Minister Dr. Chaudhury, and another 17 participants from the Ministries, national women's associations, women's rights organisations and civil society organisations, were present in the meeting. The executive director of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad (member of CiDV coalition); executive director of Bangladesh Women Lawyers' Association (member of coalition as well); executive director of Bangladesh Nari Pragati Songsha (member of the coalition); secretaries from Ministry of Social welfare, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; and representatives from the political parties participated the meeting.

Dr. Chaudhury was present in two of the meetings (on 13th and 14th of the committee meeting) as a representative of the Prime Minister and participated in the discussion and even responded to queries that came from the participants. While going through the meeting minutes of the standing committee, the content suggested that debates took place among the participants on various issues relating to few specific provisions of the bill. Some of the concerns were raised from the male participants about how to maintain the family values. Only two participants: a male legislator and a female managing director of Department of Women Affairs raised concerns of incorporating a provision of 'Arbitration' in the bill. It justified through a concern about the possibility of filing a false case against a man who then would become a victim of the situation. They argued that victims of domestic violence could fail to prove the abuse took place in some cases, because of a lack of witnesses. In response, the participants proposed specifying the distinction between a false accusation and a situation in which the accusers failed to meet the burden of proof, as these are distinct. Yet, Joint Secretary of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs did not support the idea of incorporating the provision of arbitration with words such as 'mutual understanding'. She argued that any case with 'false allegations' or 'mistakes' could be resolved under the consent of both parties and with a goal of mutual compromise.

In addition, criticism arose from the male participants was about maintaining the family values or keeping the marriage intact. They justified their position with the argument:

“complication may increase if a woman goes directly to police and court with a complaint about a simple family problem which may break a family so easily.”⁴⁶ In response to such criticism, chair of the committee Meher Afroze along with other women legislators justified the bill by claiming that the “domestic violence bill is supposed to act as spouse counseling, mediation, and arbitration in the case of violence, not to break up the family structure.”⁴⁷ Minister Dr. Chaudhury supported the justification of the Joint Secretary, chair of the committee and continued explaining that:

This act is designed to protect women and children from violence and provide mechanisms so that victim can stay within their family. But this act does not have the provision of punishment in such incidence. This act is aimed to provide interim safety to victims within their household and in case of violation of such interim protection; there is a provision of punishment. But there is no provision for penalizing the perpetrator for domestic violence.⁴⁸

The committee members also urged for the expansion of the definition of domestic violence, as it has been the case that in the absence of a precise definition, victims frequently received no remedies under the existing laws which address violence against women. Participants of the meeting advocated for revising the definition by adding ‘any act committed against women which cause physical and mental sufferings.’ It was also urged to replace words like ‘violation of respect’ to ‘physical and mental abuse,’ which is considered more appropriate. Similarly, a few others voiced their dissatisfaction at the failure to incorporate marital rape into the definition of domestic violence. In reply to such suggestions, the chair of the committee responded that “there is no option of adding marital rape as a category of domestic violence at this stage.”⁴⁹ The bill is the outcome of series of discussion with legal experts in the field and was already vetted by the Ministry of Law. Therefore, any significant change in the draft might delay the process of enactment, as opined by Dr. Chaudhury:

The committee has limited chances to bring any substantial changes in the text of the bill as the legal department already has reviewed it.⁵⁰

This statement suggests that bringing change into the existing provision of the bill at the committee level is extremely constrained. The civil society actors and other participants

⁴⁶ Bangladesh Parliament. “First Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry for Women and Children Affairs, (Bangladesh Parliament: Dhaka, 2010)’ p. 142.

⁴⁷ Author’s interview with a representative of women rights organisation in Bangladesh on 5 November 2015, Dhaka.

⁴⁸ Author’s interview with a selected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 7 November 2015, Dhaka.

⁴⁹ Bangladesh Parliament, 2010; p. 138, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Bangladesh Parliament, 2010; p. 145, *ibid.*

at the meeting could not use the committee system to change the content of the bill or incorporate any additional provision. The committee itself cannot alter the rules of the legislative process. The issue of including marital rape as an act of violence itself is a contentious issue, and may give rise to a multitude of criticisms, which would complicate the process of enactment, as claimed by Standing Committee Chair. While talking to a woman legislator who was involved during the drafting stage of the bill, she reconfirmed that the coalition members wanted to incorporate the marital rape clause in the first place.⁵¹ However, it was dropped from the draft during the planning stage at the Ministry to avoid any plausible challenges from different interest groups such as religious groups.⁵²

Second Reading: The second reading takes place only after submission of the committee report to the house.⁵³ At this stage, the principal provisions of the bill were discussed in the House, with an eye towards consulting public opinion. Ms. Meher Afroze presented the bill with key recommendations of the committee on 5th of October 2010, after three months of the initial introduction of the Bill. Only the general provisions and recommendations were discussed as per the Rule of the Secretariat.⁵⁴

After the presentation, open debate on the bill took place on the floor. Although the chair of the standing committee, Ms. Meher Afroze, presented the Bill in the second reading, the Minister was seen replying to every question. It is important to mention here that the law did not face any significant opposition in the floor of the parliament. However, a few male legislators, such as Mr. Fazlul Azim MP, had shown their dissatisfaction with using the word ‘domestic’ for the title of the bill. In response to his request, Ms. Meher Afroze further reminded the house explaining that the procedure of the drafting of the bill followed every legal arrangement and went through several consultations with different stakeholders and was based on extensive discussion.

⁵¹ Author’s interview with a selected women legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 27 December 2016, Dhaka.

⁵² It was anticipated from the previous experience from the National Women’s Development Policy (NWDP) in 1997. Soon after authorisation of NWDP at Advisory committee the debate around this policy raised. It was known that the policy give the equal rights to men and women in movable and immovable properties. Islamists oppose this policy by saying that it is challenging the rule of quran and sunnah.

⁵³ After detailed scrutiny, the committee returns the Bill to the House with a report, which may or may not contain proposed amendments. Copies of the report are made available to MPs. At this stage, if the committee rejects the bill, it will not be included in the Orders of the Day. The researcher could not collect the committee report from the archive of the parliament library.

⁵⁴ As the case in Canada and Australia (Murphy, 2002, *ibid.*)

In response to the concern of tackling domestic violence against women socially instead of legally, Ms. Meher Afroze argued that the government, as well as many civil society organisations, have already undertaken several programmatic interventions for the protection of women from abuse. When it comes to protecting women within their household, the government could hardly do anything. She emphasised “the significance of providing interim safety and security to women and affected children within their house.” She further reemphasised the fact that ‘family is not beyond society or state.’⁵⁵

Another significant recommendation came from Mr. Azim on the expansion of the definition of the victim by adding male members of the family along with women and children. Again, the Minister disagreed by explaining that domestic violence is acute against women as per the data of United Nations, and in most of the cases physical, mental, and sexual assaults against women occur inside the house. The Speaker presented his (Mr. Azim’s) proposals on the floor for an open vote as a part of the parliamentary procedure. The majority of the house voted to reject his proposals, and they were, therefore, rejected.

In the absence of any real opposition, Minister moved the bill to pass on the same day of second reading. Usually, third reading is designed to pass the bill after incorporating recommendations. In the absence of the real opposition, Speaker submitted the bill to the house for vote in the same day of the second reading. The Amendment Bill passed by the two-third of a total number of MPs on the same day 5th of October, 2010. There is no roll call system used in the Bangladesh parliament for passing any bill. Instead, MPs pass the bill by saying ‘YES’ or ‘NO’ (voice vote). The entire process of enactment—from introducing the bill in the parliament to the end—followed almost the same procedure (except going through the third reading), but took three months, which is shorter than any other government bill.⁵⁶

This section traced the process of domestic violence act to explore the active role played by the different actors such as the Minister, Chair of the Standing committee, the members of the standing committee, the civil society coalition, women legislators, and officials from concerned ministries. It demonstrated the fact that women were involved in the policy process at various capacities. Women’s formal and informal presence was instrumental in initiating, following up, drafting and moving forward the bill to its end.

⁵⁵ Author’s interview with a selected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 1 November 2015, Dhaka.

⁵⁶ Author’s interview with a representative of women rights organisation in Bangladesh on 18 September 2015.

The discussion also projected the limited role men legislator played behind the successful implementation of the bill. Rather, they were seen raising some fundamental questions either in relation to the importance of having another law addressing violence against women in the private spheres or changing the title of the act.

4. Presence of Women Legislators and their Participation in Policy Adoption

This section discusses the trajectories of different actions, which were involved unifying the energy towards the outcome of the Act. It also illustrates how the formal procedures, informal practices, and political atmospheres have been crucial in facilitating the drafting, legal vetting, approval of the cabinet, approval from the members of parliament, and containing the opposition to the bill. The previous section provides evidences that women did play an important role in drafting and passing the bill of Domestic Violence Act. This section looks more in detail on how they did contribute, what kind of influence they extended and what role the different kinds of influence played in passing the bill. The following subsections identify three distinct types of influence of women legislators and other associated factors (such as direct, indirect and intervening) and provide evidence in support of them. The discussion starts with direct types of influence.

4.1. Direct Types of Influence

As it is mentioned earlier, the direct relationship emerges when a woman legislator plays a critical role in moving forward the bill and contributes directly until it passes through parliament. This section provides evidence or examples to support the proposition that women legislator's direct influence matters in the process of enactment of government-led women-friendly policies. Many respondents, including legislators, activists, and civil society actors, repeatedly cited Minister Dr. Choudhury's presence among the party elite as instrumental for advancing the Domestic Violence Act. Some informants named ex-foreign minister Dr. Dipu Moni and chair of the standing committee who also sought to ensure the representation of women within their respective capacities. Across multiple interviews with legislators from the opposition, it became evident that they also perceived the presence of those aforementioned women were essential; however, they have shown dissatisfaction towards the executives' domination.

Being successive Ministers of the Women and Children Affairs Ministry, Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and Ms. Meher Afroze actively participated in the drafting and parliamentary phase of the bill. Their positional power in the Cabinet and parliament played a significant role in the process. In an interview with Ms. Meher Afroze, she confirmed their involvement in the process, described it, and explained their

collaboration.⁵⁷ The two women legislators have not only taken part in the process but also influenced the adoption of the policy. Interviews with actors from civil society organisations and officials from Ministry further informed that a close relationship between the Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs and the Prime Minister has been instrumental in expediting Cabinet's discussion on the law, and the process of legal vetting.

Interview findings also highlighted the formal and informal mechanisms through which women legislators could influence government's policy and initiatives. Several informants felt that women's presence at the right place can affect the tone of the debate or can defend women's position better. According to an expert, who was part of the drafting committee and worked closely with the Ministry, the Minister commonly had to sit with the Prime Minister to justify the urgency and specialty of the Act for Bangladesh. The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs was not happy to bring another new law to protect women from violence.⁵⁸ They were skeptical about targeting only women as the victims of domestic violence and recommended to incorporate men under the provision of the Domestic Violence Act. When asked to recall specific examples of any opposition, chair of the standing committee pointed to parliamentary debates and discussions at the standing committee meeting as instances of women legislators exerting power over the discussion. The inclusion of the word 'domestic' in the title of the act was a big concern for the representatives of the government, most of whom were men. The similar concern surfaced from men legislators at the parliamentary debate. Mr. Fazlur Azim MPs' case was already mentioned in an earlier section. Male MPs' criticism were mostly related to the concern that women may misuse the law against their partners, which would lead to break ups of families.

The Minister played a crucial role in justifying the purpose of the law and making the Cabinet and Ministries understand the importance of having a specific law to stop violence against women in intimate relations, committed by their family members. To reply to their queries and concerns, the Minister had to defend the position of the Act and to justify not incorporating men into the act in the first place. Her arguments were:

⁵⁷ Author's interview with an elected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 4 November 2015, Dhaka.

⁵⁸ Author's interview with a government official at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on 10 December 2016, Dhaka.

Domestic violence is caused to women mostly. The existing Penal code rules do not address domestic violence. Therefore, it is not often recognised as a crime and remains one of the biggest threats to women's security.⁵⁹

Furthermore, she presented facts and figures on violence against women and explained that wife beating in Bangladesh constitutes by far to be the most common form of violence against women and girls, and also a significant cause of physical injury.⁶⁰ The presence of women mattered in this instance to address the criticisms and lead the enactment process. A member of the standing committee mentioned, "We handled objections from our male colleagues well."⁶¹

The process of enactment of the bill described earlier in section 3 and this section demonstrated that women legislators with executive position were essential at the policy formation stage. Their presence also mattered in ensuring support from the different ministries, the Cabinet and members of parliament. All the interviewees confirmed that it was Dr. Chaudhury and Ms. Meher Afroze, under the supervision of the Prime Minister, who led the process of the bill. It is also important to note that a previous attempt to pass the bill was not successful, partially because of the lack of interest of the then adviser in charge of the Ministry of the military backed Caretaker Government back in 2007.⁶² CiDV coalition members approached to advisor of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and tried to convince her to lead the process. An expert in an interview with the author, discussed "Rasheda K. Chowdhury (ex-adviser of the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh in 2007) supported the bill, however, she was not ready to lead the process. The Caretaker Government was not interested to initiate any bill that may cause controversy as they are not an elected government."⁶³ Therefore, the first attempt did not succeed due to the lack of political interest of the then government.

⁵⁹ Author's interview with a selected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 1 November 2015, Dhaka.

⁶⁰ Bangladesh Parliament, The Second Report of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women and Children Affairs (Bangladesh Parliament: Dhaka, 2010).

⁶¹ Author's interview with a selected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 1 November 2015, Dhaka.

⁶² The Caretaker Government was introduced in the Constitution of Bangladesh in 1996 after a settlement between major political parties in the parliament. For a three-month long tenure in the governmental transition, the caretaker administrations were comprised of politically neutral personalities from the society and were headed by the most-recent retired Chief Justice of Bangladesh. The national elections of 1996, 2001 and 2008 were held under this system. However, in 2011, the ruling AL-led government amended the constitution (15th amendment) to remove this 'Caretaker' system by using the pretext of the Supreme Court verdict (see: Riaz, 2014).

⁶³ Author's interview with a selected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 1 November 2015, Dhaka.

A total of 18 small and significant consultations, and national dissemination meetings took place before and after the Ministry took over the process of drafting.⁶⁴ The Minister, along with the Chair of the standing committee, chaired a few of the drafting consultation meetings and national dissemination workshops. A member of parliament and a member of a civil society organisation mentioned that, without the Minister's direct intervention, the Domestic Violence Act might have been dropped from the party's policy agenda. After the successful transition to the democratic government in November 2008, the MoWCA took over the responsibility of finalizing the initial draft prepared by the CiDV coalition. The entire process of enactment of the Act took seven to nine months, as claimed by an official of the Ministry.

Dr. Chaudhury, Ms. Meher Afroze, and Dr. Dipu Moni were named as being directly involved in multiple domains of the process. Women legislators interviewed here emphasised the importance of their activities through the standing committee. Being a member of the committee, they enjoyed comparatively more power than others (who are not members of Women and Children Standing Committee) to get involved in women-related policy making. A few claimed their participation at the early stage of policy development as a member of CiDV coalition. They attended series of consultation meetings at the ministerial level that primarily contributed to the draft of the bill. The author also interviewed five women legislators who were holding neither executive nor party positions. They confirmed their participation in various consultation meetings where they provided inputs. While interviewing the members of CiDV coalition and the director of the Multi-Sectorial Project, they reconfirmed the presence of women politicians and legislators in the consultation meetings organised by them. The attendance record further confirmed their presence, and their contribution in the development, drafting, sharing, and revisions of the bill. This evidence and examples support the fact that a few women legislators played a crucial role in the process of enactment of government-led women-friendly policy.

Almost all respondents uniformly stated that the presence of frontbench women legislators, who hold a position in the relevant ministries, or in the parliamentary committee, or the party, mattered to a great extent. Their positional power allowed them to contribute directly and influence the process because of the policy-making system in Bangladesh. Their role was not limited to the drafting process but also ensured that the policy would pass through Cabinet, Prime Minister's office and remain on the

⁶⁴ Author's interview with a government official at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on 10 December 2016, Dhaka.

parliamentary agenda, as well as the party's agenda. In another way, it is plausible that women legislators are better able to influence policy outcomes when they have an institutional position or greater policymaking authority for women. The direct relationship between women's presence and their policy-making ability may only occur when the institutional framework allows women to contribute substantively on women policy. Therefore, the advancement of women to the frontbench could be considered as one of the mechanisms through which women's presence in the parliament remains consolidated.

In summary, the discussion in this section confirmed the significance of direct influence of women legislators in the process of enactment of the Domestic Violence Act. The discussion showed that some women legislators specially those who are holding relevant executive position in parliament and in the relevant Ministry had chance to influence directly. Women legislators were also observed using their positional power not only by pushing the issues to the top of the agenda, but also leading the process including subverting male opposition in the Ministry and in the parliament. In addition, women were also observed supporting the policy by raising concerns of domestic violence in the parliament.

4.2. Indirect Types of Influence

Women legislators presence was beneficial as they also provided moral supports in favor of the bill.

An indirect influence, such as moral support became crucial to build a support base and create awareness that facilitated the drafting, legal vetting, attaining Cabinet approval of the bill, and finally, the approval from the members of parliament. Indirect influence has mostly been exercised by the back-bench women legislators, those who do not hold any position in the parliament and have limited scope to participate in the legislative process. This section presents evidence of legislators who were not part of the legislative process of the bill, but who however, have offered their moral support to those women legislators who contributed directly to the process.

Apart from advocating the policy in the parliament, women legislators were seen speaking about it outside of the legislature, mostly at the constituency and party level. Several women legislators, who were not involved directly in the process, claimed that they always took the opportunity to talk about the benefit of the bill in any political or public meeting at the constituency. Being a member of the standing committee, women legislators used to attend different consultation meetings organised by the Ministry to

discuss the draft. Apart from attending those consultation meetings, one of the main tasks of the committee members was to talk about the importance of the bill in their respective constituencies. The purpose was to build the support chain informally outside of the parliament and raise awareness among the general public. An official who worked with the legislators from the 9th Parliament in a UNDP project, in an interview, confided that the presence of women within the parliament and party in power made a difference for the women executives. Few women legislators claimed that because of systematic constraints such as, lack of positional power, they were not able to involve or contribute directly to the process of policy development and drafting. Even though they were not involved directly, they have provided their moral support for its success. Women legislators were also observed highlighting the issue of violence against women through different legislative interventions to seek more public attention. The majority of those interventions took the form of either asking for an immediate response to stop violence against women or asking for the government's plans for preventing violence at home. When asked about any interventions (through questions or motions), two women legislators responded that they had raised questions (both written and oral) concerning domestic violence and dowry-based violence on the platform in the parliament to show their support for the government's initiative. Asking about updates on the enactment of the bill also allowed the Minister to make repeated statements on the issues, hence raised awareness on the subject matter. The questions themselves were phrased to show their support for the government's initiatives under the leadership of the Minister.

This section highlights women legislators' indirect influence over the policy process. By referring to the indirect influence, this sub-section does not suggest that these group of women are not interested to influence or not interested to contribute directly. Rather, they were not able to attend some of the drafting meetings. Being back benchers in the parliament and not holding any executive position, these women were not entitled to participate in the legislation process. In addition, some legislators talked about informal constraints with regards to their presence in the consultation meeting related to the Domestic Violence Act.⁶⁵ Most of the backbench women legislators were invited to attend in the consultation meetings without any designated roles. They were hesitant to participate in such meetings since they were not given a distinctive role to perform in the meetings. It happened in those occasions when an official from the Ministry, such as Joint-secretary, chaired a session and treated women legislators as a mere participant to

⁶⁵ Author's interview with a government official at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on 10 December 2016, Dhaka.

provide their comments. As per the Warrant of Precedence of Bangladesh, a member of parliament ranks a higher position from that of a joint-secretary. In conversation with a woman legislator and also a member of the standing committee, it came out that:

MPs could only attend those consultation meetings where they have roles as discussants or as chairs along with secretary.⁶⁶

The similar explanation came from the director of the Multi-Sectoral Project while explaining women legislators' contribution and lack of participation in the consultation meetings during the drafting stage. He further commented that legislators usually liked to attend only those meetings where Dr. Chaudhury (the Minister) and Ms. Meher Afroze (chair of the standing committee) performed as chair and co-chair respectively.⁶⁷

Women legislators across all parties were optimistic about the adoption of the bill. Women legislators from the opposition noted that they had worked together with the coalition in the beginning. However, they left the process since they became an opposition in the parliament and felt that it is not their place to influence the policy enactment, as the formal authority lies with the executives and frontbench women legislators. Instead, they viewed their role "as representing the interest of women on the floor of the parliament."⁶⁸ A woman legislator from the opposition, in an interview, responded that they were not present in the house on the day of enactment of the Domestic Violence Act. However, the bill has received moral support from the opposition as they were not observed showing dissatisfaction or any disagreement with the provision, either at the committee level or in the parliamentary debate, before the enactment of the bill.

The discussion presented here suggests that women legislators have participated in policy representation at multiple stages wherever they had scope to contribute in their respective capacities. The discussion also showed that backbench women legislators' limited authority to influence the policy representation could hamper their direct involvement in the process. Even legislators, who desired to contribute, were refrained from voicing their concerns and stating their opinions because of their lack of official

⁶⁶ Author's interview with an elected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 15 December 2016, Dhaka.

⁶⁷ Author's interview with a government official at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on 10 December 2016, Dhaka.

⁶⁸ Author's interview with a selected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 18 October 2015, Dhaka.

position and clash of hierarchy. However, findings suggested that these backbench legislators tried to influence indirectly the policy-making process by providing their informal and moral support to the frontbench legislators publicly. These findings shed light on the indirect types of influence that women legislators had in the policy making.

4.3. Intervening Influence

Intervening influence focuses on different factors that facilitate women's policy representation. Women holding executive position including the Prime Minister exerts two types of influence: direct influence as described in section 4.1 and another intervening influence by setting a certain type of positive climate in parliament which turned into a favorable condition for women related policy making. The other intervening factor is the contribution or influence of external actors, especially women rights organisation in the context of Domestic Violence Act. The following section provides evidence on how such intervening factor facilitate the relationship between women's numerical presence and their policy representation.

Interviews with experts, civil society actors, and women legislators revealed the different views on the influence of women legislators in the adaptation of the Domestic Violence act. They claimed that the political will of the Prime Minister and the role of women's rights organisation (or a coalition of such organisations, in this case) are undeniable in Bangladesh. The discussion here demonstrates the role of women rights organisations in mobilizing the support base during the policy development stage. Civil society organisations as part of external actors were successful in attaining sufficient attention of the Minister of Women and Children Affairs and several parliamentarians at the first place. They managed to create a momentum and urgency for a new law to protect women from domestic violence, as opined by an expert.⁶⁹ They primarily started the drafting of the bill and mobilise the attention of the Law Commission to conduct further research. The contribution of civil society organisations was also mentioned by Dr. Choudhury, in an interview, she cited, "The Domestic Violence Act was a combined effort."⁷⁰ She went further explaining the emergence of any laws in general by saying that Government can lead enactment process of any kind of laws whenever there is a need for it and a request can arrive from people's side including the civil society organisations. Not only by Dr. Chaudhury, the coalition of CiDV was also eager to take the credit as they were the first ones who had contributed to the policy initiation stage and the initial draft. There

⁶⁹ Author's interview with an academic working on women and gender in Bangladesh on 16 December 2016, Dhaka.

⁷⁰ Author's interview with a selected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 1 November 2015, Dhaka.

is no doubt that the civil society coalition and activists were successfully able to carry the movement from 2002 to 2009 and made it to the government's desk.

The overall political atmosphere and Prime Minister's political will were instrumental in receiving an approval from the Cabinet members. Her moral support had also influenced the process outside of the Cabinet i.e., in the house of the parliament. For example, Dr. Chaudhury discussed the positive impact of the women-friendly political attitudes of the Prime Minister as a mechanism, which facilitated the enactment process. Being the chief of the Cabinet, the PM had a role in gaining support from the Cabinet and approval from the Ministry of Law and Justice. In a system like that of Bangladesh (inspired by the Westminster system), agenda setting control is located at the Cabinet and lies with the chief of the cabinet, Prime Minister. The Cabinet is composed of a group of politically appointed executives who are involved in policymaking. Women legislators interviewed for the analysis argued that without the support of the Prime Minister and her good political will, the Domestic Violence Act 2010 might have been dropped from the overall policy agenda. The role of the Prime Minister and her election commitment were described as supportive and beneficial to the empowerment of women. In an interview with an ex-Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, she reconfirmed the claim by saying that:

It was not that difficult to convince the Cabinet minister, as Prime Minister was in support of the initiatives. The Prime Minister wants this law. Without her command, it was not possible. She wanted to get it through the Cabinet.⁷¹

Legislators received a clear signal on PM's optimism about the bill as it was placed to the parliament after the approval of the Cabinet members, Prime Minister's Office, and even after it's (the bill) legal vetting by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. It also delivered the message of urgency to pass the Bill without delay. Indeed, the entire process from introduction to enactment with a majority vote took only three months. The short duration also left little scope for holding any extensive debates or initiating parliamentary scrutiny. Although there were some criticism about some specific provisions of the bill inside the parliament, no firm opposition was recorded against the enactment of the act.

The discussions in this sub-section demonstrates how a set of intervening factors, such as the role of external actors other than women legislators and women friendly political atmosphere have facilitated the enactment process of the Domestic Violence Act. The discussion also reveals how these intervening factors played an important role in the enactment process. This argument does not mean to reduce the importance of women's

⁷¹ Author's interview with an elected woman legislator in Bangladesh Parliament on 28 October 2015, Dhaka

presence or their involvement in the process. Instead, it argues that the legislators' capacity and ability are influenced by intervening factors, for example, the strength of the Prime Minister and external actors' interest in campaigning for women's concern. In a way, it stresses external actors and political context as a macro factors, both of which has been useful for the successful enactment of the Act.

5. Conclusion: Discussion and Implication of the Domestic Violence Act

This article examines the scope of women legislators' participation and their contribution in enactment of a legislation benefiting women. The analysis here offers an insight in a specific way of looking at substantive representation of women legislators in parliament by taking a case of the Domestic Violence Act 2010. The case was a result of combined efforts of different actors and presence of different factors. The analysis reveals that while women legislators with positional power contribute directly in the policy enactment, women's policy representation can also be shaped by their indirect or informal involvement with the process. The analysis of the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act also shows a third type of influence—intervening. The influence of favorable women friendly environment within the parliament and mobilisation of women rights organisation contributed in shaping women's policy representation.

Given the dominance of the executive branch over the parliament, it is unlikely that women's presence in legislature directly influences women's policy representation. Rather, the direct relationship is likely to occur through women's access to key positions. Primarily, only women who hold appropriate institutional position, such as Dr. Choudhury, Ms. Meher Afroze, and Dr. Dipu Moni, in this case, played a critical role by steering the wheel and subverting the opposition within and outside of parliament.

The presence of women legislators among backbench representatives is also necessary because of their indirect influences over policy representation. The concerned Ministry (Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs) and Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs are solely responsible for finalizing the draft and legal vetting. As claimed by Luvenduski and Norris, women legislators will still play an essential role in "developing and debating public policy, shaping and revising legislation, scrutinizing the actions of government department."⁷² The case of the Domestic Violence Act shows similar results, where women other than those in power have offered their support indirectly for the policy by working behind the scene, through advocacy and by supporting women in executive positions. A few women legislators were also part of the

⁷² Joni Lovenduski & Pippa Norris, "Westminster Women: The Politics of Presence", *Political Studies*, Vol. 51, 2003, pp. 84-102.

coalition and took part in the advocacy to add their support in the initiatives. Women's presence within the parliamentary standing committee made a difference for the women, even if the impact was not very large. It is essential to have women as representatives not only at the executive position but also at the backbench to indirectly influence women-related policy change.

The act represents a successful case of collaboration among women rights organisations, civil society organisations, women politicians, and the government, who worked together for the bill. In response to the overemphasised contribution of external actors and overlooking role of women legislators by existing studies, this article offers plausible evidences to show different types of influence of women legislators on the enactment process. The investigation of substantive representation of women in parliament could be misguided if the focus solely remains on the role of external actors in this particular case. Therefore, the combined efforts of the presence of women legislators, their direct and indirect role, and different intervening factors, were crucial for the enactment of the policy. Unlike the literature in British politics⁷³, this article acknowledges a combination of intervening factors, such as importance of the role of Prime Minister and agenda of her party, which can be considered to understand women's policy representation. The case is also an example of how the link between women's presence and their policy representation is informed by the political, contextual aspects as well as the role of external actors in Bangladesh.

Although this article added to our understanding of women legislators' contribution to the process of policy enactment, it constitutes a limitation for not having a failed case or any failed previous attempt of Domestic Violence Act. It influences in a way that the conclusions drawn here are tentative and limited to the legislative intervention on the floor of Bangladesh parliament. At the same time, this article possibly manages to provide detailed data which includes both parliamentary proceedings, committee reports and interviews of different stakeholders to demonstrate the significance of women's presence in policy representation. Importantly, the analysis of a specific case in this article complements the analysis of the parliamentary debates which shows that women legislators have played a substantive role in speaking up on contentious issues that are pertinent to women in the context of Bangladesh.

⁷³ Claire Annesley and Francesca Gains. "The Core Executive: Gender, Power and Change", *Political Studies*. Vol. 58, issue 5, 2010, pp. 909-929.

**NIZAM-UL-MULK AND THE CHAOTIC DECCAN POLITICS
DURING THE REIGN OF MUGHAL BADSHAH MUHAMMAD
SHAH UPTO 1724 A.D.**

Lucky Khan*

Abstract

The pioneering work of Yusuf Hussain Khan *Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I* can never be overlooked by a scholar working on the history of the Deccan in general and the history of Nizam-ul-Mulk in particular. This work along with the other few is a landmark in the history of the Deccan. The other works include M.A Nayeem's, *Administration of Deccan under Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah*, P.M Rao Setu's, *Eighteenth Century Deccan* and Zahiruddin Malik's, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah 1719-1748*. The sources explored by these scholars are innumerable and one can get an idea from where to start. In this paper I tried to bring forth the chaotic politics of the Deccan after the accession of Badshah Muhammad Shah. In the preceding years the campaigns of Badshah Aurangzeb were successful in conquering the Deccan Subahs of Bijapur and Golconda and subduing them in to the Mughal Empire. But after the death of Badshah Aurangzeb Deccan became the centre of constant struggle amongst the Mughal nobility. The struggle between Nizam-ul-Mulk and Mubariz Khan ended with the victory of Nizam-ul-Mulk and the death of Mubariz Khan at the battle of Shakarkheda in 1724 A.C. Nizam-ul-Mulk thus emerged as the master of the Deccan which he served with loyalty until his death in 1748. The career of Nizam-ul Mulk was full of challenges which he tactfully dealt and tried to restore the declining Mughal authority.

Khwaja Abid, grandfather of Asaf Jah was a native of Samarqand. He came to India in 1654, after the death of his father. Shahjahan was the reigning monarch at that time. In the Mughal court Khwaja Abid was received with distinction and was offered a post, which he excused at that time and promised to join it after performance of *Haj*.¹ He served the empire till his last breath and was killed during the siege of Golkonda on 28th January, 1687 A.C.

Khwaja Abid's son, Mir Shihabuddin, was one of the principal nobles of Badshah Aurangzeb, and in time attained the rank of 7,000 with the title of 'Ghazi-ud-din

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1 Qadir Khan Bidari, *Tarikh-i-Asafjahi*, Eng. tr, Zaib Hyder, Andhra Pradesh Government Oriental Library and Research Institute, Hyderabad, pp. 1-9.

Khan Bahadur Firoz Jang', and as a reward for his eminent service at the battle of Bijapur, he received in addition to his former titles the honour of being called 'Farzand-i-Arjumand' by the Badshah. During the reign of Shah Alam, Bahadur Shah (Reigned 1707-1712 A.C), the successor of Badshah Aurangzeb appointed Mir Shahabuddin the governor of Gujarat where, he died in 1710 A.C.²

Mir Qamaruddin Khan (the future Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I) born on 11 August, 1671, was the son of Firuz Jang from his wife Safia Khanam, daughter of Sadullah Khan, *Wazir* of Shahjahan. The Chronogram³ of his birth reads '*Nek Bakht*' which means 'Man of destiny'. It is believed that Aurangzeb gave newborn the name Qamar-ud-din.⁴

Nizam-ul-Mulk received consideration from the Badshah Aurangzeb from the beginning of his career. At the age of only six years, Qamaruddin received a *mansab* of 450 horses. The very next year in 1778-79, at the age of seven years this *mansab* was increased to 900 and even received more increments in the next few years. The title of 'Chin Qilich Khan' (boy swordsman), was also conferred on him along with the other titles of his grandfather and father. Nizam-ul-Mulk seems to have strained his relationship with his father twice in his career but sorted it out with him under the instructions of the Emperor.⁵

In the 45th (1702), Regnal year of Aurangzeb he was appointed as the *Faujdar* of Bijapur-Karnataka in place of Namwar Khan. In the 47th Regnal year of the Emperor, he was appointed the governor of the province of Bijapur. In 1704 itself he was entrusted with the *Faujdari* of Talkonkan and Azamnagar and was made the *thanedar* of Sanpgaon. Further 1,000 horses were also added to his *mansab* along with a gift of 1 crore *Dam*.⁶

Nizam-ul-Mulk accompanied the Emperor in the siege of Wakinkheda. That was the last siege by the Emperor, in which Nizam-ul-Mulk offered satisfactory

2 Khan, Shahnawaz, *Masir-ul-Umara* (c.1742), 3 Vols., Ed, Maulvi Abdur Rahim and Mirza Ashraf Ali, *Bib. Ind. Series*, Calcutta 1890, Vol. II, pp. 875-879.

3 1082 AH which is the date of birth of the first Nizam.

4 *Tarikh-i-Asaf Jahi*, p. 8. For details, Yusuf Hussain, *The First Nizam, the Life and Times of Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I*, Bombay 1963.

5 Lala Mansaram, *Masir-i-Nizami*, f.19.

6 Yusuf Husain Khan, *The First Nizam*, p.36.

services. In recognition of his ability and service, he was raised to the rank of 5000 *zat* and 5000 *sawar* and was awarded one crore and fifty lakhs of *Dams*, a sword and an elephant.⁷

His ability and hard work provided him an opportunity to serve on various important positions during the future reigns as well. In the 4th year of the accession of Badshah Muhammad Shah, on 10th February, 1722, orders were issued for making arrangements for holding the *Diwan-i-Am*. All the *grandeess* and high *Mansabdars* were ordered to be present there. The Emperor thus conferred on Nizam-ul-Mulk, the office of *Wizarat*. Nizam received the usual robe, a dagger, an ornamental case (*Qalamdan-i-Wizarat*), and a diamond ring.⁸

Muhammad Shah was said to be under the direct control of a cunning women known as ‘koki’ or the ‘foster sister’. Hafiz Khidmatgar Khan, a eunuch of the palace, and some other position holders also seem to have an influence upon the emperor. Samsamud-Daulah Khan Dauran, *Mir Bakshi* was also not on good terms with Nizam. In this situation the new *Wazir* found himself thwarted at every step by the group of opposition.⁹

Whatever he did or proposed was presented to the emperor with criticism and highlighted with the negative aspects. As a *wazir*, Nizam-ul-Mulk found the financial situation of the state challenging and the *Jagirdari* system, which was once the basis of administrative stability, was now suffering with many defects. Due to the high prices of the commodities the common people suffered in general while the *Khanzad* nobles were reduced to impoverishment due to the growing unemployment.¹⁰

Nizam-ul-Mulk tried hard to do away with the practice of *Ijara* (farming out the revenues to the highest bidder) and the practice of securing posts and favors by paying *Peshkash* and other precious gifts. He also suggested that competent persons

7 Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, (c.1731), 3 Vols., Ed. Kabiruddin Ahmad and Ghulam Qazi, Bibliotheca Indica Series, Calcutta 1860-74, Vol. II, p.538

8 Shivdas, *Shahnamah-i-Munawwar Kalam*, tr. Syed Hasan Askari, Patna, 1980, p.150, Munim Khan, *Sawaneh Deccan*, MSS, OMLRI, f. 94b, cf. Khafi Khan, gave 29 January, 1722 for the appointment of Nizam-ul-Mulk as *Wazir*, *Muntakhab*, Vol. II, p.930.

9 *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, Vol. II, p. 940.

10 Qazim Aurangabadi, *Ahwal-ul-Khawaqin*, R-36, Seminar Library, CAS, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, India, f.181a.

should be appointed to important offices.¹¹ Considerable fall in the revenues of the state made it difficult for the regular payment of salaries. The empire was on the verge of bankruptcy.¹²

The natural calamities also aggravated the existing problems of the people. Earthquakes, floods and epidemics affected large areas and caused much inconvenience to the public.¹³

In his reform scheme, Nizam-ul-Mulk was opposed at every step. There were many who were gaining out of the mismanagement that was prevailing and were not actually ready to accept the reforms as they were afraid of losing their own shares in this reform scheme. Haidar Quli Khan, the governor of Gujarat, who was deprived of *Wizarat*, and since then he was not liking the Nizam and also tried to harm him.¹⁴ Nizam-ul-Mulk, abstained from attending the court, as he was not able to bring the positive change he wanted to implement for the smooth working of the administration.¹⁵

Thus it was rather the weakness of Nizam and not his strongness at the court that forced him to leave the court. He left the post of wazir and went to the Deccan to build his fortune there¹⁶. This step of his was not guided by his lust for power rather he found himself confronted at each and every step by his rivals and the emperor himself was on the side of those who were harming the empire. The Nizam did not want to be a part of this destruction. However, Qudsiya Begum patched up these differences of the Nizam with Muhammad Shah. The Nizam's scheme of reforms was given only the consent by the Emperor, but no efforts were genuinely made to implement it. Thus Nizam-ul-Mulk found himself in an embarrassing and difficult position.¹⁷

11 Yusuf Muhammad Khan, *Tarikh-i-Fathiya*, MSS, APSA, Hyderabad, f-16a, qf, Z.U. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah 1719-1748* (2nd ed.), Bombay, 2006.

12 *Ahwal-ul-Khawaqin*, f.182a. For details, Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah 1719-1748*.

13 *Ibid*, f.207.

14 Ashub M. Baksh, *Tarikh-i-Shahadat-i-Farrukh Siyar-wa-Julus-i-Muhammad Shah*, R.69-70, CAS, History, Aligarh, f.46.

15 *Ahwal-ul-Khawaqin*, f.183a.

16 Munis D. Faruqi, 'At Empire's End: The Nizam, Hyderabad and Eighteenth Century India.' *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43 (1) (2009), pp. 5-43.

17 *Muntakha-ul-Lubab*, Vol. II, p. 947.

During the period of his *Wizarat*, the Nizam made an enquiry of the salaries of Mubariz Khan, and the other associates. He found large arrears due between Hyderabad and the Centre, thus the Nizam made a sharp demand upon Mubariz Khan's representative at court (one of his sons) for payment of the due revenues of the *mahal-i-Khalisa* of Farkhunda- bunyad suba Hyderabad¹⁸. *Kaifiyat of Jama wasil baqi* against Mubariz Khan related to sarkar Sangakol Suba Hyderabad of the *Mahal-i-Khalisa sharifa* also clearly mentions the dues on Mubariz Khan¹⁹. The Nizam showed his displeasure against Mubariz Khan relating to the dues, but Mubariz retaliated to this. The *Wazir* then made two subsequent attempts to transfer Mubariz Khan to other governorships: first to Kabul and later to Gujarat.²⁰

Nizam-ul-Mulk after facing all these problems, decided to leave the post of *Wizarat* and started for Muradabad, his jagir on an excuse of climate but in his way, he got the news of the Maratha incursions into the territory of Malwa and Gujarat, where his son Ghaziuddin Khan was posted. The Nizam then sought the permission of the Emperor to proceed to chase the Marathas. A *Farman* was issued granting the permission to Nizam-ul-Mulk. The Marathas retreated from Malwa when they heard that Nizam-ul-Mulk had crossed Narmada.²¹

Satish Chandra in his, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court* writes that "Nizam-ul-Mulk had always looked upon the Deccan as the land of his dreams. He had spent most of his youth there and since the dispossession of the Saiyids, he considered it his own by right of the sword".²² But the Nizam had never tried to win Deccan by force. However he had served there as a subahdar and could try to win over the locals and establish his own position. When he was called by the Emperor to look after the *Wizarat*, which was nothing but a bone of contention as all the leading nobles had tried to get the position for themselves. And to make the Nizam's work impossible they had tried to do every evil they could harm the Nizam. But Nizam accepted it as it was against the wishes of the emperor to say no to the post offered to him. He joined it as soon as he received the call for that.

18 Document VIII 2/165, Enayat Jung Collection (Mal), NAI, New Delhi.

19 Document VIII/8/168, Enayat Jung Collection (Mal), NAI, New Delhi.

20 *Masir-ul-Umara*, Vol. III, p.736.

21 Yusuf Husain Khan, *The First Nizam*, p. 153.

22 Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1719-1740*, Aligarh 1959, p.176.

When he withdrew from the *Wizarat* and marched towards the south, he had only Deccan in his mind as his destination.²³ It was his affection towards his homeland and moreover he also served there previously. Thus when he found himself lonely at the centre due to the factions at the court, he tried to find refuge in his own land. It is informed by Yusuf Khan in his monograph that when Nizam-ul-mulk had taken the Deccan, the Mughal Amils were not discharging their duties and the condition of the peasantry was also poor. No care has been taken for imparting justice and no one cared about the grievances of the public. It was the Nizam's hard work that he brought back the law and order and took care of the administration and looked into it that no one would be able to oppress the cultivator.²⁴ Thus it was not the wealth of the Deccan that attracted the Nizam rather it was also in its challenging situation due to the weakness of the centre.

This was the point where the turn of events took place and the Nizam took the decision to move to south, but at this point too he was not challenging the authority of the emperor nor decided to establish an independent kingdom there for himself. It was actually Mubariz Khan who tried to play the opponents of the Nizam against him so that he could not enter into the Deccan.

Mubariz Khan however left no stone unturned to create barriers for the Nizam. For the realization of his purpose he started raising an army. The Emperor had also made a grant of five lakh of rupees for the expenses of the expedition against the Nizam who was presented as the enemy of the empire and the Emperor Muhammad Shah. Orders were sent to Iwaz Khan (deputy of the Nizam in the Deccan), Bahadur Khan, Abdul Nabi Khan, Raja Shahu and other chiefs to help Mubariz Khan in every possible way against the Nizam.²⁵

Nizam-ul-Mulk was not interested in any kind tussle and conveyed his message of peace through his deputy Iwaz Khan. But in a fit of anger and to show off his power Mubariz Khan paid no heed to it instead he busied himself in preparation for the final encounter.²⁶ The Nizam also got support from his men. His deputy Iwaz

23 Z. U. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah 1719-1748* (2nd ed.), Bombay, 2006, p.85.

24 Yusuf Husain Khan, *The First Nizam*, p.249.

25 *Ahwal-ul-Khawaqin*, f.186a.

26 Mausavi Mir Hashim Khan, *Munshat-i-Mausavi Khan*, MS, State Lib. Hyderabad, R.204, CAS, Department of History, Aligarh, f.44-47.

Khan persuaded Raja Shahu, who had sent the Maratha troops under Peshwa Balaji for helping Nizam-ul-Mulk against his enemy.²⁷

When Nizam-ul-Mulk had reached Aurangabad unopposed, Muhammad Shah at this point realized that Mubariz Khan would not be able to challenge the Nizam and changed his mind and wrote to the Nizam to pacify him. It is believed that Nizam-ul-Mulk was not happy with the economic condition of the Deccan subah thus another person had been appointed there and if the Emperor knew the wishes of the Nizam he would never have taken such a decision. Thus the Deccan was restored to the Nizam while Mubariz Khan was transferred to Azimabad and Patna, the Nizam was directed not to create problem for Mubariz Khan and instead allow him to move to his new destination. But before these orders could reach or take effect the fight had already started and the decision was left to be decided by sword.²⁸

On the 23rd *Muharram* 1137 AH (11th October, 1724) a severe battle was fought near the town of Shakarkheda, in Berar, about 40 miles from Aurangabad, in which Mubariz Khan was killed.²⁹ Nizam-ul-Mulk was lucky enough that very few of his men succumbed while, on the other hand, the men of Mubariz Khan perished in large number as high as 3500. Mubariz Khan was buried in the plain outside the town of Shakarkheda.³⁰

After his victory in the battle of Shakarkheda in 1724, the Nizam wrote a letter to Muhammad Shah and the letter ends with a brief report of the events that took place between himself and Mubariz Khan. He further wrote that it was Mubariz Khan who had initiated the fight and made his mind to decide the matter by force, in spite of his calls for peaceful settlement. Further, he wrote that Mubariz himself perished along with thirty-three of his chief men, ranking from 1000 to 7000 in Mansab, and a large number of other soldiers.³¹

After getting his desired post in the Deccan, the Nizam tried to maintain the cordial relation with the Emperor show on every possible occasion his loyalty and

27 *Masir-i-Nizami*, ff.72-73, In this Manuscript, a letter on behest of Nizam-ul-Mulk by Iwaz Khan to Raja Shahu is present.

28 *Ahwa-ul-Khawaqin*, ff.191ab.

29 *Ibid.*, f. 191a.

30 *Ibid.*, f. 196b.

31 William Irvin, 'Letter of Nizam-ul-Mulk to Muhammad Shah after his victory over Mubariz-ul-Mulk', *Asiatic Miscellany* 1885, pp.482-493.

allegiance, in return the Emperor on many occasions sent to Asaf Jah special gifts of fruits and robes of honor which he responded gratefully and wrote letters of thanks.³²

Nizam-ul-Mulk, served as the subahdar of the Deccan twice before he permanently settled there in 1724 after the battle of Shakarkheda. In the battle Mubariz Khan perished along with large number of his men. This battle was to be avoided by Nizam but it was Mubariz Khan who did not listen to his advice of peaceful settlement. Muhammad Shah who also realized the Nizam's position tried to intervene by sending a letter of appointment in favour of Nizam-ul-Mulk but it was too late as the fight had already taken place. On the basis of the information present in the contemporary accounts it can be said that the event that took place from 1719-1724 disappointed the Nizam to such an extent that he had left the prestigious position of Wazir and made his way to Deccan where he lived till his death (1748 A.D). After getting the subahdari of the Deccan for the third time the Nizam engaged himself to reform the administration of the Deccan. Muhammad Shah, the Badshah was also in the hands of some of the nobles who were the critics of the Nizam's reform scheme and did not let the Emperor listen to his proposal. In these changing political conditions the Nizam found it a better option to utilize his energies in the Deccan which was far away from the Centre.

32 *Munshat-i-Mausavi Khan*, ff. 17, 18, 21, 22, 28.

INTO THE INKY FRAY: A PREMODERN *PĪR*-POET AND THE POLITICS OF BANGLADESH'S REGIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Ayesha A. Irani*

Abstract

This paper examines the scholarly debates around the genealogy and geography of Saiyad Sultān, the seventeenth-century author of the *Nabīvaṃśa* (“The Lineage of the Prophet”), the first biography of the Prophet Muhammad to be written in Bangla. Though the *Nabīvaṃśa* is no longer read widely, its author has been drawn into a modern-day politics of regionalism, for Saiyad Sultān has been claimed by literary historians of both Chittagong and Sylhet. As a *pīr*-poet, he has been drawn into discrete and occasionally overlapping regional agendas of scholarship and faith, which are based upon his perceived symbolic capital as a poet and as a charismatic figure. In this paper, I will delineate the Saiyad Sultān of scholarship, examining the terms of this debate in scholarly writing and evaluating the empirical bases of claims used to establish the times and regions associated with Sultān’s life.

Introduction

Written in the seventeenth century, the *Nabīvaṃśa* (“The Prophet’s Lineage”) of Saiyad Sultān is the first major work of Islamic doctrine to be written in Bangla. It chronicles the life of the Prophet Muhammad, beginning with creation, tracing the lives of the traditional Islamic prophets and not-so-traditional Hindu prophets, up to the life of the Prophet of Islam.¹ Though Bengali Muslim intellectuals of early modern Southeast Bengal hailed the *Nabīvaṃśa* as the guiding light of Islamic doctrine and practice, by the late-nineteenth century it had become obsolete. Unlike many other early modern Bangla works, this text did not successfully make the transition from manuscript to print.² As I will show, however, notwithstanding the diminished status of the *Nabīvaṃśa* in the print era, its author has been drawn into Bangladesh’s politics of regionalism. In modern Bengali scholarship, Sultān is remembered as a historical personage whose genealogy and geography have cultural

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1 For more details, see Ayesha A. Irani, *The Muhammad Avatara: Salvation History, Translation, and the Making of Bengali Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

2 The reasons why certain early modern works, like the *Nabīvaṃśa*, did not successfully make the transition into print are detailed in Ayesha A. Irani, “From Manuscript into Print: Islamic Bangla Literature and the Politics of the Archive,” *Religions of South Asia* 12:3, 2018 (forthcoming).

cachet. His legacy has been subject to competing claims by scholars and the faithful which would enhance the prestige of their respective regions.

While Saiyad Sultān remains a somewhat elusive figure, much scholarly ink has been spilt in determining his *floruit*. Such is also the case with regard to his birthplace, disputes around which tend to be cast along regional lines. Those who are most invested in the issue mainly hail from either Chittagong or Sylhet, claiming Sultān's heritage for their own regions. As a *pīr*-poet, Saiyad Sultān has been claimed by various discrete and occasionally overlapping regional agendas of scholarship and faith, which are based upon his perceived symbolic capital as a poet and as a charismatic figure.³ While I have written about the Saiyad Sultān of faith elsewhere, in this essay, I will examine the terms of this debate in scholarship and weigh the empirical bases of claims used to establish the times and regions associated with Sultān's life.

Situating Saiyad Sultān in Time

All debate concerning the history and geography of Sultān's life initially sprang from the evidence of a single, elusive manuscript, which the Chittagonian scholars, Muhammad Enamul Haq and Ahmad Sharif, have personally scrutinized but few other scholars have had access to. Confusion reigns in this scholarship on the meaning of the following passage found in a unique manuscript of the *Nabīvaṃśa*:⁴

3 On the Saiyad Sultān of faith, see Irani, "One Saint, Two Tombs: Memory, Materiality, and Regional Authority in the *Pīr*-Cults of Bangladesh," *International Journal of Islam in Asia*, forthcoming.

4 I have yet to set eyes on the manuscript which contains this significant, oft-quoted, passage. Most of this passage, which M.E. Haq reproduced from a manuscript of the *Śab-i Merāj*, was first cited by him in his "Kavi Saiyad Sultān." Monsur Musa (ed.), *Muhammad Enāmūl Hak racanāvalī*, Vol. 5 (Dhaka: Bangla Academy 1934/1341 B.Ś., reprint 1997/1404 B.Ś.), pp. 315-316. The longer passage provided here is quoted from M.E. Haq, "Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya [Bāmlā Sāhitye Muslim avadānera saṃkṣipta itihāsa]." Monsur Musa (ed.), *Muhammad Enāmūl Hak racanāvalī*, Vol. 1 (Dhaka: Bangla Academy 1957, reprint 1991/1398 B.Ś.), pp. 294-295. From this article (M.E. Haq, "Kavi Saiyad Sultān," p. 314), it would seem that the manuscript in question was in the private collection of Munṣī Ābdul Karim. However, an examination of the manuscripts in his collection in the Dhaka University archives shows that this is not the case. Ahmad Sharif also quotes the passage in his *Saiyad Sultān: Tāmra granthāvalī o tāmra yuga [pariciti khaṇḍa]*, (Dhaka: Āgāmī Prakāśanī, 1972/1379 B.Ś., reprint 2006), p. 66, citing Ahmad Sharif (ed.), *Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada-saṃkalita puthi-pariciti: Sāhityaviśārada kartṛka Dhākā Viśvavidyālaya pradatta Bāṅglā puthira paricāyikā* (Dhaka: Dhākā Viśvavidyālaya, 1958), p. 551. This raises the hope, thereby, that the manuscript cataloged as No. 490, Ms. 433 in *Puthi Pariciti*, p. 551, would contain the said passage. Close

I shall now attempt to speak about this book, not capable of bearing in mind all that is to be conveyed. Obeying the Commander (*laškar*) Parāgala Khān's orders, Kavīndra [Parameśvara, the poet] thoughtfully narrated the tales of the *Mahābhārata*. Hindus and Muslims, thus, read it in every household. None listen to the tales of Khodā and the messenger. The year/s (*abda*) calculated via the addition (*yoga*) of *graha śata* and *rasa* has/have passed. [Yet] no one has told these tales in the local language. In Arabic and Persian, there are many books. The learned understand these, not the fools. Feeling pained, I internally resolved to narrate the tales of the messenger in great length. In the settlement of learned men of the Commander's town (*laškarera pura*), I am but a fool, a descendant of a *saiyad*. I ask for forgiveness at the feet of the learned. If they find fault, let them forgive me, and not complain.⁵

In particular, the following lines have fueled much controversy in scholarship:

graha śata rasa yoge abda goñāila | deśī bhāṣe ehi kathā keha nā kahila ||

[A number of] years (*abda*), calculated via the addition (*yoga*) of *graha śata* and *rasa*, have passed. [Yet] no one has told these tales in the local language.

Since number is not specified in Bangla this verse could also be translated as:

The year (*abda*), calculated via the addition (*yoga*) of *graha śata* and *rasa*, has passed.⁶

[Yet] no one has told these tales in the local language.

examination of the manuscript, however, reveals that beyond the opening two couplets, which Sharif quotes correctly, the essential next few couplets, beginning with *ebe pustakera kathā....* and ending with *sahāya rasūla yāra taribe sāgara*, were erroneously ascribed to this manuscript. While Sharif also quotes this passage in his introductions to volumes one and two of the *NV*, the passage is nowhere to be found in the critical edition itself. Ahmad Sharif, "Introduction," *Saiyad Sultān viracita Nabīvaṃśa* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1978), vol. 1, p. 9, and "Introduction," *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 7.

From two random, but crucial, statements about this manuscript, provided by Munīṭ Ābdul Karim and Sharif in *Puthi Pariciti* (1958), it is highly probable that this manuscript was in the private collection of Muhammad Enamul Haq. For details of these statements and other background information, see the ms. cataloged under "*Śab-i Merāj*" in Appendix One of Irani 2011. Haq's manuscript collection was posthumously donated by his son, Ibne Inam, to the Jahangirnagar University. While this collection had not been catalogued by the University, when I visited in December 2013, I was able to examine the manuscripts in this collection in person. I was unable to locate the concerned manuscript among the thirty or so manuscripts of this collection at Jahangirnagar University.

5 *ebe pustakera kathā kahite juyāya | prakāśya sakala kathā mane nāhi laya || laškara parāgala khāna ājñā śire dhari | kavīndra bhāratākathā kahila vicāri || hindu musalamāna tāe ghare ghare pare | khodā rachulera kathā keha na soñare || graha śata rasa yoge abda goñāila | deśī bhāṣe ehi kathā keha na kahila || ārabī phārchi bhāṣe kitāba bahuta | ālimāne bujhe nā bujhe murkhasuta || dukṣa bhāvi mane mane karilum̃ ṭhika | rachulera kathā yatha kahimu adhika || laškara purakhāni ālima vasati | muñi mūrkhā āchi eka chāiyāda santati || ālimāna pade āmhi māgi parihāra | khemibā pāile doṣa na kari gohāra ||* Haq, "Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya," pp. 294–95.

6 My translation takes into account Muhammad Sahīdullāh's emendation of *yoge* to *yuge*, detailed below.

With the exception of Sukhamaya Mukhopādhyāya, every scholar who has attempted to unravel this couplet has understood it in the second sense, assuming thus that it encodes a chronogram specifying the year in which the *NV* was written. The alphanumerical term *graha* (“planet[s]”) is perhaps the most unequivocal element, since it is invariably associated with the numerical value of “nine.” The terms *rasa*, *yoga*, and *abda*, however, are more slippery. Scholarly debates focus upon three issues: first, the textual soundness of the reading *yoge* and the ambiguities of a proposed emendation, *yuge*; second, the equivocality of *rasa* as an alphanumerical term; and third, the ambivalence of the term *abda*. Concerning the first issue, M.E. Haq, in one of the earliest articles ever to be written on Saiyad Sultān, in 1934, took the date to be constructed “via the addition (*yoge*) of *graha śata* and *rasa*.” He thus read the “chronogram” as 906 A.H. or 1500 C.E., making Saiyad Sultān a junior contemporary of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, the founder of the Gauṛīya Vaiṣṇava movement.⁷ Muhammad Śahīdullāh, however, proposed to emend the term *yoge* to *yuge*.⁸ Haq later modified his view, having accepted Śahīdullāh’s emendation. With this emendation, the text would now read:

The year *graha śata rasa yuga* has passed....

Most other scholars follow Śahīdullāh and consider his emendation both appropriate and helpful. On this matter, some scholars have pointed out that *yuga* is ambivalent as an alphanumerical term: the term usually signifies “four,” these being the number of eons (*yuga*), but in rare cases, since *yuga* can (in Sanskrit) also mean “pair,” the term could indicate “two.”⁹ In any case, while I appreciate Śahīdullāh’s refutation of Sukumar Sen’s unwarranted emendation of *graha* to *daśa*, his emendation of *yoge* to *yuge* seems problematic, as discussed below.¹⁰

The term *rasa* in this couplet has caused much consternation. M. E. Haq (in his later scholarship) and Ahmad Sharif, for instance, neither of whom adduces suitable evidence from Sanskrit or Bengali literature, argue that the term is ambivalent and can connote either “six” or “nine”—the former value associated with the six flavors (*rasendriya*), and the latter with the nine aesthetic moods (*rasa*).¹¹ Preferring the

7 Haq, “Kavi Saiyad Sultān,” p. 316.

8 Haq, “Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya,” p. 295.

9 D. C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965, reprint 1996), pp. 230–231, and *ibid.*, n. 1, p. 229. Kalpanā Bhaumika, *Saṃskṛta o Bāṅglā bhāṣā-sāhitye saṃkhyāvacaka śabdera vyavahāra* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy 1993), p. 274. For examples from Sanskrit metrics, *chandaśāstra*, *ibid.*, 30–31.

10 Muhammad Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, Vol. 2 (Dhaka: Māolā Brothers 1965, reprint 2002), p. 97.

11 Among scholars of Islamic Bangla literature, Haq and Sharif, as we will see, subscribe to this view. Cf. Bhaumika, *Saṃskṛta o Bāṅglā bhāṣā-sāhitye saṃkhyāvacaka śabdera vyavahāra*, p. 278.

latter, Sharif reads the chronogram as 992 or 994.¹² However, the matter of *rasa*'s precise numerical value remains unresolved in scholarship on Bengali codicology.¹³ It is noteworthy that while the *NV* makes no mention of the *navarasas* (the "nine *rasas*"), the association of the number nine with *rasa* is attested in middle Bengali literature, as can be seen in Mohāmmad Khān's eulogy quoted above which describes Sultān as the *navarasa 'dadhi*, "the ocean of the nine *rasas*." Such general attestations in the literature, however, do not prove that the alphanumerical term *rasa* was conventionally associated with the value of nine. Because the question remains unsettled in scholarship, five readings for the "chronogram" have emerged: 906, 962, 964, 992, and 994.

12 Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān: Tāmra granthāvalī o tāmra yuga*, p. 63.

13 In Sanskrit the alphanumerical term *rasa* is not ambivalent: based on attestations in texts and epigraphs, Sircar provides a single value, "six" in his *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 231. Cf. also Ifrah's view that in Sanskrit texts, *rasa* denotes "six," not "nine." Georges Ifrah, *The Universal History of Numbers: From Prehistory to the Invention of the Computer*. Translated by David Bellos, et al. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2000), p. 490. Codicologists of Bengali are divided on the issue of whether Bengali developed its own alphanumerical conventions or simply followed Sanskrit. Sukumar Sen, for instance, was of the opinion that *rasa* never signifies "nine" in the *śaka* dating system of Bengal. Sukumar Sen, *Bāṅgālā Sāhityera Itihāsa*, Prathama Khaṇḍa, Pūrvārdha, Caturtha Saṃskaraṇa, 1963, p. 523 quoted in Muhammad Ābul Kāiūm, *Pāṇḍulipi pāṭha o pāṭha-samālocanā* (Dhaka: Gatidhārā 2000), p. 123. Kalpanā Bhowmika's detailed study of alphanumerical terms attributes both values to *rasa*. Bhaumika, *Saṃskṛta o Bāṅglā bhāṣā-sāhitye saṃkhyāvācaka śabdera vyavahāra*, p. 278. Yet all of her examples from Sanskrit or Bengali texts, such as *Stavamālā*, *Jyotiṣatattva*, Kālidāsa's *Manasāmaṅgala*, Bhāratcandra's *Anadāmaṅgala*, and Giridhara's *Gītāgovinda*, attest *rasa*'s unequivocal association with "six." Ibid., 110, 114, 118-9. Even when she cites authors such as M. E. Haq, who tend to favor "nine" over "six," she reads the chronogram based on the numerical value of "six" for *rasa*. For instance, cf. K. Bhaumika's (ibid., 109-110) and Haq's ("Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya," p. 290) dating of Shaikh Faijullāh's text. Thus, it seems that as a Sanskritist and scholar of medieval Bengali literature, she tacitly favors "six" as the numerical value of *rasa*. Following Ādamuddīn's dating, Śahīdullāh (in his *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 97) too, based on the lack of literary attestations for reading *rasa* as "nine" in Sanskrit and Bengali texts, favors reading the chronogram as 964. Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee, the compiler and editor of the *Catalogus Catalogorum of Bengali Manuscripts*, specifically mentions the problems of deciphering chronograms in Bengali texts when the ambiguous alphanumerical term *rasa* is used, as it can be read as both "six" and "nine." Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee (comp. and ed.), *Catalogus Catalogorum of Bengali Manuscripts. (Bāṅglā puthira tālikā samanvaya)*. One volume (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society 1978), p. 376. Given his extensive experience in cataloguing Bengali manuscripts, his view has considerable weight in this regard.

The next question that has absorbed scholars concerns the interpretation of the term *abda* in the couplet and the importance of establishing an appropriate dating system.¹⁴ Without providing any thoughtful analysis, Ādamuddīn,¹⁵ Muhammad Śahīdullāh,¹⁶ M. E. Haq, Ahmad Sharif, and Saiyad Ābdullāh¹⁷ independently, and equally perfunctorily, assume that *abda* signifies the *hijrī* calendar. Ādamuddīn and Śahīdullāh thus read the date as 964 A. H. (1557 C.E.), and Haq,¹⁸ and Sharif following him, read it as 992 or 994 A.H. (1584 or 1586 C.E.).¹⁹ Concerning *abda*, however, Mazharul Islam opines, “this is not the usual term for the Hijri era, which is as a rule denoted by the term *hijrī*.”²⁰ According to him, the term indicates the author’s reference to “some common era known to him and accepted by Muslims and non-Muslims alike in Bengal.”²¹ As Islam shows, for scholars such as Muhammad Āsāddar Ālī, this is a reference to the *maghī* calendar. Ālī, who favors 992/994 as possible readings of the chronogram, estimates the *maghī* date to be equivalent to 1630-32 C.E.²² Islam, however, argues:

Abda does not as a rule refer to the Maghi era either. Actually it simply means “era,” and this makes it possible that Saiyad Sultān has referred to some common mode of reckoning known to all. When one examines the various eras in use in Bengal of those times and considers the fact that what is referred to must be some year in the latter part of the sixteenth century or the earlier part of the seventeenth century, then the only era which remains is the Bengali era. Does 994 refer to this era, which would then correspond to 1587-1588 A.D.? ... However, in this case we would also have to take into account that, though the year from which the Bengali era is counted is 1556, the order of Akbar promulgating it is dated 1585. Did it nevertheless gain such rapid and common acceptance that Saiyad Sultān used it without further comment just two years later?²³

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- 14 Concerning various dating systems and their calculations, see Ayesha A. Irani, “Sacred Biography, Translation, and Conversion: The *Nabīvaṃśa* of Saiyad Sultān and the Making of Bengali Islam, 1600–present,” Ph.D. diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 2011), prefatory notes.
- 15 Ādamuddīn’s unnamed article in *Māsika Mohāmmadī*, Prathama saṃkhyā, 1352 sāla, cited in Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 97.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Saiyad Ābdullāh finds it convenient to accept the *hijrī* dating, as he operates on the presumption that the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph (see below) is the poet of the *NV*. Saiyad Ābdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera anyatama sthapatī Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān* (Sultānśī, Habiganj: Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān Sāhitya o Gabeṣaṇā Pariṣad, forthcoming), p. 24.
- 18 Haq, “Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya,” p. 295.
- 19 Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān: Tāmra granthāvalī o tāmra yuga*, p. 63.
- 20 Islam, “Saiyad Sultān: His Birthplace and Time,” p. 153.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Muhammad Āsāddar Ālī, “Sileṭera Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān.” *Sileṭ Ekādemī Patrikā* (Baiśākha 1979/ 1386 B.Ś.), p. 127.
- 23 Islam, “Saiyad Sultān: His Birthplace and Time,” p. 154.

Even though Islām accepts that the *abda* issue remains ambivalent, he ultimately favors the use of the *maghī* calendrical system, preferring 964 (corresponding to 1602 C. E.) over 994 as a more suitable reading for the chronogram because of the supposedly wider attestation of *rasa* as “six” in the sources.²⁴ Furthermore, he adds: “it is peculiar that two different terms, namely *graha* and *ras*, should have been used to denote the same number 9.”²⁵ Though medieval Bengali texts occasionally flout Sanskritic dating conventions,²⁶ this does not seem to be the case here. For by Sanskritic convention, repeating an alphanumerical term in a chronogram to denote the same numeral would indicate a lack of poetic finesse.²⁷ Even if Islām considers the author’s indication of *rasa* as “nine” to be unconventional, with regard to his second concern, Sultān is clearly beyond reproach.

Finally, I would like to put forth the view of Sukhamaya Mukhopādhyāya, who to my mind provides the most thoughtful and plausible treatment of the translation of these lines and the chronogram set therein.²⁸ Rejecting the more unconventional value of *rasa* as 9, and also preferring not to emend *yoge* to *yuge*, he makes an argument that supports the following translation of the verse in question:

[A number of] years (*abda*), calculated via the addition (*yoga*)
of *graha śata* and *rasa*, have passed.

[Yet] no one has told these tales in the local language.

This brings us back to Muhammad Enamul Haq’s original reading of the chronogram as 906, but with a difference. Since number is ambivalent in Bengali noun-formation,

24 Ibid., 155.

25 Ibid.

26 In at least three instances, the repetition of a specific term to indicate the recurrent use of the same numerical value is attested. Muhammad Khān, Sultān’s own disciple, supplies the chronogram for his *Satya-Kali Vivāda Saṃvāda* as *daśa śata vāṇa śata vāṇa daśa dadhi* and *vāṇa bāhu sama abda āra vāṇa śata* as the chronogram for the completion of his *Maktul Hosen*. In each case, the term *vāṇa* is repeated twice to connote the numerical value of “five” each time. Haq, “Muslim Bāṃlā sāhitya,” p. 296; Śahīdullāh, *Bāṃlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 99. The chronogram *aṅka mṛgāṅka rasa mṛgāṅka* of Kālidāsa’s *Manasāmaṅgala* also follows a similar convention, whereby *mṛgāṅka* is repeated twice to indicate the numeral “one.” Bhaumika, *Saṃskṛta o Bāṅglā bhāṣā-sāhitye saṃkhyāvācaka śabdera vyavahāra*, 118. From these instances, it seems that some medieval Bengali writers repeated a single alphanumerical term to indicate the repetition of the same numerical value.

27 Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 228.

28 This summary of his arguments is based on Sukhamaya Mukhopādhyāya, *Madhyayugera Bāṃlā sāhityera tathya o kālākrama* (Calcutta: G. Bharadvāja and Co., 1974), pp. 191–193.

rather than taking *abda*, in the singular, to refer to a specific year, Mukhopādhyāya's argument hinges upon accepting *abda* as a plural noun. In his opinion, Saiyad Sultān is suggesting that the *NV* is based upon an Arabic text on the Prophet Muḥammad composed 906 years ago, which had not been translated into the *deśī* up until Sultān's time. Mukhopādhyāya supports his argument via a similar construction in Ālāol's *Tohphā*, wherein the poet suggests that 278 years had passed since the learned (*ālīms*) had grasped the *Tohphā*'s essence, whereas it had remained obscure to the public:

duiśata aṣṭottara sattara rahila |

*ālīme pāila marmma āme nā pāila ||*²⁹

For two hundred and seventy-eight years

the theologians grasped its essence, but the masses did not.

Of all the arguments presented thus far, Mukhopādhyāya's seems to be the most credible for a variety of reasons. The passage does not mention any calendrical system, and may therefore not have been intended to provide a dating chronogram, but simply to indicate the number of years that passed before the tale of the Prophet was told in Bengali. Mukhopādhyāya's reading is also more compelling for not requiring one to emend *yoge* to *yuge*. Furthermore, though Mukhopādhyāya does not trace the Arabic text Sultān is referring to, his suggestion raises an interesting possibility.

It is possible that the text this *NV* manuscript refers to is none other than Muḥammad ibn Ishāq's renowned *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*. Ibn Ishāq was born c. 85/704, and according to tradition, died in 150/767.³⁰ The earliest extant manuscript (*riwāya*) of the *sīra* was written in Medina by Ibrāhīm ibn Sa'd (110–184 A.H.).³¹ The *NV* manuscript would probably have been referring, however, to Ibn Ishāq's death date, for the latter date is an established convention in traditional Islamic scholarship. We know that Mohāmmad Khān completed his *Maktul Hosen* in 1056/1646 and began composing this text at some point in time after 1635, the date of completion of his earlier text,

29 *Tohphā* of Ālāol, edited by Mohāmmad Ābdul Kāium and Rājiyā Sultānā. In *Ālāol Racanāvalī* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2007/1414 B.Ś.), p. 412.

30 Several dates have been suggested for his death, ranging from 144 A.H. to 153 A.H., but the majority of the sources provide this date. J. M. B. Jones, "Ibn Ishāq, Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Yasār b. Khiyār (according to some sources, b. Khabbār, or Kūmān, or Kūtān)." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. 2nd ed. 2011. Online ed. Leiden: Brill.

31 Alfred Guillaume, "Introduction" to *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, with Introduction and Notes (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1955 reprint 2004), p. xxx.

Satya-Kali Vivāda-Saṃvāda. It can be surmised that he probably met with Saiyad Sultān at some point after this, since the authorial colophons of this text, unlike in the case of *Maktul Hosen*, make no mention of his master, Saiyad Sultān. On completion of the *NV*, Sultān purportedly instructed Khān to write *Maktul Hosen*. From this emerges an intriguing, and in my view potentially compelling scenario: that the problematic couplet makes reference to Ibn Ishāq's death date, and that Sultān's text was completed just prior to Mohāmmad Khān's 1056/1646 *Maktul Hosen*, in the same year or the year prior. For if Ibn Ishāq died in *hijrī* year 150, adding Mukhopadhyāy's 906 to this (assumed to be *hijrī* years) would yield 1056, that is, 1646 C.E. Admittedly, this would leave a short window of time for Khān to complete his work, but there is no reason to rule this out. There is also a margin of error to the dating: the gap between the texts could in reality be slightly larger.

Why Ibn Ishāq? Several authors of *sīra* and *maghāzī* preceded him, most notably 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (d. 94/712) and his pupil al-Zuhri.³² Nonetheless, as Alfred Guillaume comments, "no book known to the Arabs or to us can compare in comprehensiveness, arrangement, or systematic treatment, with Ibn Ishāq's work."³³ It is to this work, particularly with regard to arrangement, structure, and its place in the political history of Islam, that the *NV* has been compared by Richard Eaton.³⁴ While Book II of the *NV* does cover many of the broad themes and episodes of the *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, as we have it in the Ibn Hishām recension, it is more likely, as discussed elsewhere, that the author is using an abridgement of the Prophet's life, many exemplars of which circulated in the Persian *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* tradition, which the *Nabīvaṃśa* bears an intertextual relationship with.

Setting aside the wranglings in scholarship over this chronogram, I turn now to the most important evidence that helps to establish Sultān's floruit. First, as Āsāddar Ālī notes, it is a manuscript of the *Maktul Hosen* of Mohāmmad Khān, Sultān's chief disciple, which provides the most unequivocal evidence available to determine Sultān's floruit.³⁵ The manuscript provides a chronogram, which supplies both the *śaka* date and the *hijrī* date, a doubly-verifiable, definitive date for the completion of

32 Tarif Khalidī, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, in *Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994 reprint 1996), p. 30.

33 Guillaume, "Introduction" to *The Life of Muhammad*, xvii.

34 Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 286–287.

35 Muhammad Āsāddar Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān* (Habiganj, Sylhet: Mahākavi Saiyad Sultāna Sāhitya o Gabesaṇā Pariṣada, 1990/1397 B.Ś.), p. 122.

the *Maktul Hosen*: 1567 Śaka (1646 C.E.) and 1056 A.H. (1646 C.E.).³⁶ It is also important to recall that Mohāmmad Khān perhaps only came into contact with Saiyad Sultān sometime between 1635 and 1645. For, as noted, in contrast to his repeated invocations of Sultān in the *Maktul Hosen*, he does not mention having a master in his earlier work, *Satya Kali Vivāda Saṃvāda* (“The Debate between Satya and Kali”), completed in 1635.³⁷

Āsāddar Ālī provides a second piece of internal evidence from Mohāmmad Khān’s writings to determine the earliest possible date for Sultān’s birth. He highlights Khān’s description of Sultān as *śyāma nava jaladhara sundara śarīra... pūrṇa candra dhika mukha kamala locana*, quoted earlier. Based on this portrayal of a handsome man, “dark as a new raincloud, of beautiful body ... whose lotus-eyed face is more [radiant] than the full moon,” Ālī considers Sultān to have been between 25 to 35 years of age when Khān wrote his description. Even if one were to take into account the hyperbolic nature of such eulogistic utterance, one could push the age-limit to a maximum of sixty-five years before 1646, as Ālī suggests, making the earliest possible date for Sultān’s birth to be 1581, a circa 1580 date for our author.³⁸ The author’s avid interest in composing what Ālī calls “*rasātmaka*” passages, those “juicy” passages of an overtly sensual nature, suggest to Ālī that he was at the younger end of this spectrum when he composed the work (!).³⁹ However, in my view the erudition required of a project like the *NV* supports the author’s age being between thirty-five and sixty-five years of age.

Another piece of crucial evidence in dating Sultān is provided by the family tree of Mohāmmad Khān. While Saiyad Sultān gives away little about his forebears, Mohāmmad Khān, in his introduction to *Maktul Hosen*, provides an extensive description of his ancestors. This poetic description has been reconstructed by the Bangladeshi historian Ābdul Karim, following Ahmad Sharif, into two charts of his

36 Haq, “Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya,” pp. 326–327. Concerning the manuscript from which this colophon is taken, see *BPPV*, Ms. 241, 161. This manuscript, according to Eaton (*The Rise of Islam*, p. 294), is preserved in the National Museum Dhaka, Ms. No. 2826, Acc. No. 6634. I have personally seen this manuscript on display in the National Museum Dhaka, but was unfortunately not given permission to examine it in person.

37 This has been pointed out, for instance, by scholars such as Ālī (in his *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 122).

38 *Ibid.*, p. 124. On this basis, Ālī rejects Śahīdullāh’s dating of Sultān’s birth as c. 1537, and also considers Haq’s and Sharif’s dating of Sultān’s birth of c. 1550 as incompatible with Mohāmmad Khān’s description. *Ibid.*, pp. 125–126.

39 Based upon the *rasātmaka* passages in the *NV*, Ālī suggests that it is likely that the poet was between his mid-thirties and late forties when he composed the text. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

male predecessors on his maternal and paternal side.⁴⁰ In Karim's chart, reproduced below, we also see how the two sides were linked by marriage:

Maternal line

1. Śekh Śarīph Uddīn
2. Kājī Ālām
3. Mīr Kājī
4. Khān Kājī
5. Śekh Hāmid
6. Bābā Pharid
7. Hāmid Ālām
8. Śāh Nāsīruddīn
9. Pīr Mokārram --- Śāh Ābdul Ohāb (*sadar-i jāhāna, śāh bhikhārī, pīr-i muluk*) +
Daughter of 8* below

10. Śāh Āhmad

Daughter + Mobārīj Khān (10** below)

Paternal line

1. Māhi Āsoyāra [contemporary of Pīr Badaruddīn Badar-i-Ālam, d. 1440]
2. Hātim
3. Siddik
4. Rāsti Khān (*cāṭigrāma deśa pati*) [Hāthahāzārī inscription, dated 1474]
5. Minā Khān
6. Gābhūra Khān (*yāra kīrti gaṛadeśa bhari*)
7. Hāmājā Khān Machalanda (*tripurā o pāthāna vijetā*) [alive in 1550]
8. * Nasrat Khān (*cāṭigrāma pati*) [contemporary of Īsā Khān (Bengal),
Amarmāṇīkya (Tripurā), and Man Phalaung (Arakan)]

Daughter --- 9. Jālāl Khān (*cāṭigrāma deśa kānta*) [probably a contemporary of Saiyad Sultān]

10. ** Mobārīja Khān ----- Birāhim Khān

11. Mohāmmad Khān

40 Abdul Karim, "Mohāmmad Khānera vaṃśa-latīkāya itihāsera upādāna," *Sāhitya Patrikā* 8: 1 (1964/1371 B.S.), pp. 153-174; 154. Ahmad Sharif, "Kavi Daulatujir o Kavi Muhammad Khān sambandhe natuna tathya," *Sāhitya Patrikā* 6:2 (1962/1369 B.S.), p. 211. Also see *Satya-Kali Vivāda Saṃvāda* of Mohāmmad Khān, edited by Ahmad Sharif. *Muhammad Khān viracita Satya-Kali-Vivāda-Saṃvāda vā Yuga-Saṃvāda* (Dhaka: Dhaka University, n.d.); first published in *Sāhitya Patrikā* (Monsoon 1959/1366 B.S.), pp. 101–110. Information provided in square brackets in the chart above are my own insertions, following the dates and other information provided by Karim in the article above, who frequently and justifiably refutes the dates proposed by Sharif. For details of the ms. of the *Maktul Hosen* which contains this description of Mohāmmad Khān's ancestors, see Ms. 241, *Bāṅgālā prācīna puthira vivaraṇa*, 1 (1): pp. 157–161, and No. 356, Ms. 643, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts in Munshi Abdul Karim's Collection*, pp. 357–360.

This family tree, as Abdul Karim and Ahmad Sharif independently show, links Mohāmmad Khān to several important historical personages of Chittagong with known dating. His legendary forefather, Māhī Āsoāra, the Fish-Rider, was probably a sea-faring Arabian trader,⁴¹ who settled in Bengal possibly during the lifetime of the well-known Pīr Badr al-Dīn Badr-i Ālam (d. 1440).⁴² Most significant for our discussion, Rāstī Khān of Mohāmmad Khān's family tree, described as ruler of Cāṭigrāma (*deśa pati*), is identical with both the Rāstī Khān of the Hāthahāzārī mosque inscription (dated to 1474), Chittagong, and of Kavīndra Parameśvara's *Mahābhārata*.⁴³

According to the inscription found in the Jobrā mosque of Hāthahāzārī, just north of present-day Chittagong city, Rāstī Khān, who commissioned this mosque, bears the title “Majlis-i Ā'la””; this suggests that he was an important official during the rule of Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh (1459-74).⁴⁴ Some scholars have proposed that Rāstī Khān had two sons: Minā Khān, noted in Mohāmmad Khān's family tree, and Parāgal Khān of the Bengali *Mahābhārata*, not mentioned in Khān's genealogy.⁴⁵ Parāgal Khān is known to have commissioned Kavīndra Parameśvara to translate the *Mahābhārata* into Bengali, a work that has come to be popularly known as the *Parāgalī Mahābhārata*; Kavīndra, who describes him as a son of Rāstī Khān, mentions that under the rule of Ḥusayn Shāh (1493-1519), the Sulṭān of Gauṛa, he was given the responsibility of the management of Tripurā.⁴⁶ It seems probable that

41 Evidence, at least from the eighth century, exists of Bengal's contact with Arab traders. *Satya-Kali Vivāda Saṃvāda* of Mohāmmad Khān, 105.

42 Karim, “Mohāmmad Khānera vaṃśa-latikāya itihāsera upādāna,” pp. 155–156 and p. 159. The importance of both these figures in popular piety are discussed further below.

43 Karim and Sharif are in agreement on this issue. *Ibid.*, p. 158; *Satya-Kali Vivāda Saṃvāda* of Mohāmmad Khān, pp. 107–110.

44 Concerning details of this inscription, see Abdul Karim, *Corpus of the Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bengal* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1992), pp. 173–174. The fact that Mohāmmad Khān describes Rāstī Khān as “the ruler of Chittagong,” probably indicates that despite his being the Bārbak Shāhī governor of Chittagong (as per the Hāthahāzārī mosque inscription), he was actually Chittagong's *de facto* ruler. Suniti Bhushan Qanungo, *A History of Chittagong, Vol. 1: From Ancient Times down to 1761* (Chittagong: Dipankar Qanungo, 1988), p. 154.

45 Karim and Sharif have independently proposed this view. *Satya-Kali Vivāda Saṃvāda* of Mohāmmad Khān, p. 110. Karim, “Mohāmmad Khānera vaṃśa-latikāya itihāsera upādāna,” p. 165.

46 *rāstikhāna tanaya bahula guṇanidhi | pṛthivīte kalpataru niramila vidhi || nṛpati husenaśāh haya mahāmati | pañcama gauṛete yāra parama sukhyaṭi || astraśastra viśarada mahimā apāra | kaliyuge hari yena kṣṣṇa avatāra || sulatāna husena pañcama gaura nātha | tripurera bhāra samarpila yāra hāta || sonāra pālāṅga dila ekaśata ghorā*

the Parāgalī branch administered the eponymous Parāgalpur on the southern banks of the Fenī river, which marked the natural boundary between Chittagong and Tripurā), while Minā Khān's branch settled in central Chittagong, present-day Patiya.⁴⁷ One possible reason for Mohāmmad Khān's omission of the Parāgalī branch was perhaps because it perished in an attack by the Tripurā king, Devamāṇikya, around 1532.⁴⁸ Suniti Bhushan Qanungo has suggested the alternative possibility that Parāgal Khān is identical with Minā Khān.⁴⁹

Further down the tree, Hamzā (Hāmjā) Khān, the grandson of Minā Khān, may well be, as historians have suggested, Amirzā Khān of Portuguese accounts, who defeated Sher Shāh's Paṭhān general with Portuguese help.⁵⁰ Hamzā Khān was probably a military general under Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Māhmūd Shāh (1532-38),⁵¹ while his son Nasrat Khān (also named in this family tree) was a contemporary of 'Īsā Khān (d. 1599), the leader of the Bengal chiefs (*bhuiyān*); the Tripurā king, Amaramāṇikya (1577-1586); and the Arakanese ruler, Man Phalaung (1571-1593).⁵² Nasrat Khān's floruit could thus be calculated to 1560–1590, with his birth probably some time between 1520–1540. Such a calculation would have placed the birthdate of his son-in-law, Jalāl Khān, the paternal grandfather of Mohāmmad Khān, sometime between 1540 to 1570. Thus, working downwards through Mohāmmad Khān's chart, it is

| *sañjoga sahite dila vividha kāparā* || *daridra varaṇa kare anāthera gati* | *laskara parāgala khāna ati se sumati* || *tāhāna ādeśa tabe śireta dhariyā* | *kavīndra kahila kathā pāñcālī racyā* || *Mahābhārata* of Kavīndra, edited by Kalpana Bhowmik. *Kavīndra Mahābhārata: Lipitāṭṭvika-bhāṣātāṭṭvika samīkṣā o Sanskrita Mahābhāratera saṅge tulanā*, two volumes (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 331-332. Furthermore, the poet Śrīkara Nandī wrote the *Aśvamedha Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* in Bengali under the patronage of Chuṭī Khān (also known as Nasrat Khān), the son of Parāgal Khān; both father and son were administrators of Chittagong or some part thereof. Dinesh Chandra Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, two vols. (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1909 reprint 2007), vol. 1, p. 12. Concerning citations from manuscripts of the *Chuṭīkhānī Mahābhārata* that provide the relation between Chuṭī Khān, Parāgal Khān, and Caṭṭagrāma, see *Satyā-Kali Vivāda Saṃvāda* of Mohāmmad Khān, p. 109; Karim, "Mohāmmad Khānera vaṃśa-latikāya itihāsera upādāna," p. 162; and *Mahābhārata* of Kavīndra, vol. 1, pp. 6–8.

47 Karim, "Mohāmmad Khānera vaṃśa-latikāya itihāsera upādāna," p. 165. It is not clear on what basis Karim establishes Patiya as the area of settlement for Minā Khān's/Mohāmmad Khān's line. Note that both these regions are discussed below in connection with the geography of Saiyad Sultān's life.

48 Qanungo, *A History of Chittagong*, p. 173.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

50 Karim, "Mohāmmad Khānera vaṃśa-latikāya itihāsera upādāna," p. 167.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 169–170.

possible to determine the possible range of birthdates for Jalāl Khān, which, in turn, would help to better corroborate Sultān's possible birthdate, determined thus far to be no earlier than 1580. Working upwards from Mohāmmad Khān in the chart of his paternal ancestors, it is conceivable (if Sultān was not a contemporary of Mohāmmad Khān's own father), for him, as Mohāmmad Khān's *pīr*, to be a younger contemporary of the Khān's paternal grandfather, Jalāl Khān. Hence, Mohāmmad Khān's family tree seems to allow for our projected birth date of c. 1580 for Saiyad Sultān to be within the realm of possibility.

Sharif puts forward an argument that may have some potential in dating our author; however extensive research would be required to verify his speculations. Sharif points out that Śekh Mutālib, who refers to the *NV* and the *Śab-i Merāj* in his *Kiphāyatul Musallin*, speaks of being the son of Śekh Parāṇa of Sītakuṇḍa. He also points out that Śekh Parāṇa, the author of the *Nūrnāmā*, refers to the *NV*. Furthermore, following Haq, Sharif supplies 1049–49 A.H./1638–39 C.E. to be the date of completion of *Kiphāyatul Musallin*.⁵³ Based on this date, and Mutālib's statement that he lost his father at a young age, Sharif then approximates Mutālib's birthdate to be c. 1603 C.E, and Śekh Parāṇa's dates to be 1575–1615 C.E. Thus, according to Sharif's calculations, Saiyad Sultān is a senior contemporary of Śekh Parāṇa.⁵⁴ The crux of Sharif's argument rests upon his presumption that Mutālib's father is none other than the Śekh Parāṇa who composed the *Nūrnāmā*, wherein Parāṇa also cites the *NV*. Without any other evidence to confirm the father-son relationship between these two poets, such a statement is entirely speculative. Second, there is debate about the dating of the *Kiphāyatul Musallin* according to the Arabic *abjad* system: there is controversy as to the precise Arabic terms to be used in the calculation.⁵⁵

53 Haq, "Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya," pp. 332–333; Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 54. Cf. Sharif (ed.), *Abdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada-saṃkalita puthi-pariciti*, p. 58, and *Kiphāyatul Musallin o Kāyḍānī Kitāb* of Śekh Mutālib, edited by Ahmad Sharif. *Kiphāyatul Musallin o Kāyḍānī Kitāb: Śekh Mutālib viracita* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1978/1385 B.Ś.), pp. "Na"–"Dha."

54 Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, pp. 53–55.

55 See, for instance, the alternative reading of in *Munshi Abdul Karim's Collection*. Compiled by Munshi Abdul Karim. Translated with an Introduction by Syed Sajjad Hussain, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan. provided in Ahmad Sharif (ed.) *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts in Munshi Abdul Karim's Collection*, compiled by Munshi Abdul Karim; translated with an Introduction by Syed Sajjad Hussain (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1960), p. 62. One could also consider including the Arabic terms in the couplet immediately preceding that were used by Sharif in his calculations: *isalāma ebādāta nāmāja samāpta | sei anubandhe kahi śuna diyā citta* || Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 54.

A significant piece of internal evidence appears to bolster a seventeenth-century dating for the *NV*. The author states that the reason why he excludes the tale-cycle of Yūsuf from his tales of the Prophets is that it is already well-known to local peoples. While it is certainly possible that oral accounts of the Yūsuf tale were in circulation, intertextual evidence, examined in detail in elsewhere, suggests that Sultān was likely familiar with Śāhā Mohāmmad Saghīr's *Iusuph-Jolekhā*, the earliest extant Bengali retelling of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's *Yūsuf-Zulaykhā*.⁵⁶ This was probably composed towards the end of the sixteenth century.⁵⁷ I argue that Sultān took Saghīr's aesthetic choice of representing the pious Yūsuf as the antithesis of the dissolute Kṛṣṇa into new, polemical, and iconoclastic directions. While dispensing entirely with the well-known tale-cycle of Yūsuf, Sultān replaces it with the tale of the debaucherous Kṛṣṇa.

Sultān's invective against Kṛṣṇa, moreover, would only have been necessary at a time when Vaiṣṇavism, newly charged by the charisma of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, was perceived as a potent threat to Islam. As I argue below, the inaugural Khetari festival, organized some time between 1615 and 1620, and then celebrated annually in years to come, was a historical moment in the consolidation and spread of the Gauṛīya Vaiṣṇava movement in East Bengal. It was in the early seventeenth-century that Gauṛīya missionizing activities were at their apogee, surely making them the greatest rivals of Islam in the region.

In sum, as against a late sixteenth-century date usually been supposed for the composition of the *NV*, the weight of the evidence favors a seventeenth-century date, definitely after 1615, but closer to 1646, the most recent date possible. The earliest reasonable date for Sultan's birth, as argued, would be c. 1580. The erudition and maturity required to write such a text suggests that it was written by a person over the age of thirty-five, but perhaps not much older than this, if Āsāddar Ālī is correct that Sultān's eulogy by Mohāmmad Khān suggests his master's youthfulness. But this borders on speculation. In my view, Sultān's strong polemic against the Vaiṣṇavas, suggests that the *NV* was written in the post-Kheturī period of Vaiṣṇavism's missionary expansion and consolidation, most likely situating it sometime between 1630 and 1645.⁵⁸

56 Irani, *The Muhammad Avatāra*, Chapter Four, forthcoming.

57 For a discussion of the dating of Sagīr's work, see Ayesha A. Irani, "Love's New Pavilions: Śāhā Muhammad Chagīr's Retelling of Jāmī's *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā* in Early Modern Bengal," in *A Worldwide Literature: Jāmī (1414–1492) in the Dār al-Islām and Beyond*, edited by Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas (Brill: Leiden 2018), pp. 692–751.

58 For more details on Sultān's anti-Vaiṣṇava polemic, see Irani, *The Muhammad Avatāra*,

Sites of Contestation: A Regional Perspective

As mentioned earlier, disputes around Saiyad Sultān's birthplace have been cast along regional lines. In order to determine the evidential basis of their claims, I shall analyze, in what follows, the assertions of scholars of Chittagong and Sylhet who attempt to lay claim to Saiyad Sultān's cultural legacy. Sultān's contested legacy, to complicate matters further, is wrapped up with the contested histories of two early modern figures: Saiyad Śāh Gadā Hāsān, as he is known in Sylhet, in Chittagong known as Saiyad Śāh Gadī, a venerable *pīr* in both regions considered to be connected by blood to some or another Saiyad Sultān; and Saiyad Musā, the brother of the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph (Sylhet).⁵⁹ In what follows, I examine the terms of this debate in scholarship and weigh the empirical bases of claims used to establish the regions associated with Sultān's life.

The Saiyad Sultān of Parāgalpur and Cakraśālā: The View from Chittagong

Bangladeshi literary historians Muhammad Enamul Haq, Ādamuddīn, Āli Āhmad, Ahmad Sharif, and Muhammad Shahīdullāh have all argued in support of Sultān's association with Chittagong.⁶⁰ I will primarily discuss the argument of Ahmad Sharif, the strongest proponent of this view, bringing in the opinions of the others as necessary. The first piece of evidence scholars on both sides of the divide turn to is Sultān's autobiographical sketch quoted above, with particular reference to the following lines:

Obeying Commander (*laškar*) Parāgala Khān's orders,
Kavindra thoughtfully narrated the tales of the *Mahābhārata*...
...
In the settlement of learned men of the Commander's town (*laškarera pura*),⁶¹
I am but a fool, descendant of a *saiyad*.

forthcoming.

59 See below for the family tree of the Saiyads of Taraph.

60 From *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts* it would seem that Munśī Ābdul Karim also supported this thesis; however, his confessions to Jatindra Mohana Bhattacharjee in a personal letter approve of the Sylheti argument. See below.

61 *Lashkar* is Persian for "army," while *lashkar-kash* refers, in Persian, to "a commander, general." F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be met with in Persian Literature being Johnson and Richardson's Persian, Arabic and English Dictionary*, rev. ed. (New Delhi; Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1892 reprint 1992), s.v. "lashkar" and "lashkar-kash," p. 1122. In Bangla, *laškar* is primarily used in the sense of "army." However, it is also used, as this passage suggests (see next note), as a title: *Laškar Parāgal Khān*, "Commander Parāgal Khān." Hence, *laškarera pura* could refer, in this case, both to the town of the commander and to that of his army encampment. Concerning the modern family name "Laškar" emerging from the latter title, see Yūthikā Basu Bhaumika, *Bāṅglā puthira puṣpikā* (Calcutta: Suvarṇarekhā, 1999), p. 78.

Ahmad Sharif, following M. E. Haq,⁶² Ādamuddīn,⁶³ and Āli Āhmad,⁶⁴ takes *laškar* in *laškarera pura* to refer to Parāgal Khān, since he is mentioned a few lines earlier.⁶⁵ Sharif thus identifies the Commander's town as Parāgalpur, established by Parāgal Khān, who was appointed as governor of Chittagong during the reign of 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh. Sharif's view is plausible, and supplies context to Sultān's statement that he lived in a settlement of learned people.⁶⁶ Being an active premodern town, it is reasonable to expect that a number of scholars and elite families must have settled there, Sultān being one among these.

Though Parāgalpur is no more than a sleepy village today, its status as a significant premodern center is demonstrated by the presence of two Mughal-period tanks (*dighi*), one being named after Parāgal Khān. The town continued to be of significance into the colonial period, as evidenced by the present-day village's location on what was once the Nawāb Sirāj al-Daulā Road: the old Dhaka-Chittagong highway and the first arterial road built by the British in the region, which also connected Parāgalpur directly with the Chittagong port.⁶⁷

Additionally, Ahmad Sharif supported the thesis put forward by his fellow-Chittagonian, Haq, who claimed that Saiyad Sultān was born in Cakraśālā, in the present-day Patiya district of Chittagong.⁶⁸ I highlight here the two most significant

62 Haq, "Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya," pp. 297–298; and "Kavi Saiyad Sultān," pp. 315–316.

63 Since I have not been able to trace the article that Sharif (*Saiyad Sultān*, n. 27, 64) cites, I have personally not been able to read Ādamuddīn's views. However, the concerned article (title not provided) can be found in *Māsika Mohāmmadī*, 1352 B.Ś. (Baiśākha).

64 *Ophāte Rasul* of Saiyad Sultān's *Nabīvaṃśa*, edited by Āli Āhmad. *Ophāte-Rasul, Marhum Saiyad Sultān viracita* (Comilla: Ānjamān Ārā Begum, 1949/1356 B.Ś.), p. 1.

65 Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 63.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 63 also mentions that Sultān's use of *laškarera pura* in the sense of Parāgalpur suggests that, first, in 1585–86 (when Sharif supposed Sultān composed his *NI*) Parāgalpur was still a regional administrative center, and second, Parāgal Khān was still well-known in local memory.

67 The village is off the modern Dhaka-Chittagong highway. Coming down this highway, one passes the village of Chāgalnāiyā until one reaches the intersection that leads to Khāgrāchari, Korhāṭa, and Jorvārgaṅja. One takes the road that leads to Jorvārgaṅja to find the village of Parāgalpur. Fieldwork conducted in July 2009. Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee (1944–45, 96) identifies the location of Parāgalpur in Mirasarāi Thānā, Mahājanahāṭa Post Office, Chittagong subdivision. Bhattacharjee, "Kavi Saiyad Sultān (ālocanā)" *Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā* 51 (1 and 2), 1944–45/1351–52 B.Ś., p. 96. Cf. also Dulal Bhowmik, "Paragal Khan." *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, edited by Sirajul Islam. Online ed. (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2006). 10 vols. Accessed here: http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Paragal_Khan on June 24, 2018.

68 Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 53. Cf. Haq, "Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya," p. 297.

pieces of evidence which Sharif, following Haq, uses to buttress his argument. First, Muzapphar, the copyist of a manuscript of Mohāmmad Khān's *Mohāmmad Hāniphār Larāi*, and the author of *Iunān Deśera Puṁthi*, mentions that he is "the son of Sultān's daughter, and resides in Cakraśālā."⁶⁹ As Mazharul Islam has pointed out, we should note that Muzapphar merely states that he is a certain Sultān's daughter's son, and resides in Cakraśālā.⁷⁰ Āsāddar Ālī, a Sylheti scholar, refutes this statement as proof of the residence of Sultān himself in Cakraśālā since "he is unaware of any universal rule" that states that the maternal grandfather's home is the same as his grandson's.⁷¹ However, Muzapphar's statement should be read in the context of the second piece of evidence which Sharif provides, concerning Muhammad Mukīm, the author of *Phāyedula Mukatadī* (composed in 1773 C.E.)⁷² and *Gulebakāuli*, and a resident of Nayāpārā, Chittagong. In paying his salutations to earlier poets, this author's list is headed by "*pīr* Mīr Saiyad Sultān of Cakraśālā," who is followed by Mohāmmad Khān, Daulat Kāji, Ālāol, and others.⁷³ Mukīm also mentions that his own *pīr*, Saiyad Mohāmmad Saiyad, is Saiyad Sultān's daughter's son.⁷⁴ Another important reference from the same manuscript of the *Gulebakāuli* provides further evidence of Saiyad Sultān and his descendants' association with Cakraśālā: this town is called *pīrjādā ṭhāma*, "place of the *pīr*'s progeny," *pīr* most probably referring to Saiyad Sultān (and perhaps his male descendants, some of whom, like Saiyad

69 *sulatāna dauhitra hīna cakrasālā ghara | kahe hīna mujaphhare ejida uttara* || Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 55. Sharif does not mention which manuscript he refers to, nor is there any such relevant mention in any of the manuscripts of the text listed in *DCBM*. Cf. Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 99.

70 Islam, "Saiyad Sultān: His Birthplace and Time," p. 136.

71 Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 52.

72 Sharif provides this assessment of the chronogram in Mukīm's text. Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 57. On the basis of the internal evidence of Mukīm's *Gulebakāuli*, Islam suggests a mid-nineteenth century date for this text. Islam, "Saiyad Sultān: His Birthplace and Time," p. 137.

73 *ebe pranāmiba āmi pūrva kavi jāna | pīra mīra cakrasālā chaida cholatāna || mohāmmada khāna vitarpaṇa daulata kājivara | ehi tina āra eka āche tatpara || gauravāsi raila āsi rosāṅgera ṭhāma | kavi guru mohākavi ālāola nāma ||* I have corrected here and in the other notes below, Sharif's hyper-editing of the text in *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 57, following instead the version provided in Sharif (ed.), *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts*, pp. 88–89. Cf. Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 100.

74 *cakrasālā bhūmi mauddhe pīra jādā ṭhāma | chaida cholatāna vaṁṣe sāhādallā nāma || eke tāna bhrātīputra dutīye jāmatā | sarva śāstra viśārada śariyata jñātā || tāna putra śrī chaida mohāmmada chaida | nijapīra sthāne dui hāila murīda || Satya-Kali Vivāda-Saṁvāda of Mohāmmad Khān, p. 112. Cf. Sharif (ed.), A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts, p. 85; and see Sharif, Saiyad Sultān, p. 57.*

Mohāammad Saiyad, were acclaimed *pīrs* in their own right).⁷⁵ Though there is debate about Mukīm’s dates, with some scholars such as Mazharul Islam suggesting that he could have flourished as late as the mid-nineteenth century, Mukīm’s text at least demonstrates the association in local memory of Saiyad Sultān as a poet and a *pīr* who was connected with Cakraśālā along with his descendants. Furthermore, as I have shown elsewhere, local memories of the villagers of Baṛaliyā of modern day Cakraśālā in the Paṭiyā district, collected by local historians corroborate Mukīm’s statements, showing that Saiyad Sultān had an enduring connection with this village.⁷⁶ Such evidence serves to bolster Sharif’s otherwise speculative claims discussed further below. Furthermore, Śahīdullāh opines that the Cakraśālā of Muzapphar and Mukīm’s texts is none other than the *laškarera pura* mentioned by Sultān.⁷⁷ He insists that Sultān’s village was neither Laškarpur, Sylhet, nor Parāgalpur, Chittagong, on the basis of the following speculation: during Sultān’s time (which he considers to be 1537–1637 C.E.),⁷⁸ Cakraśālā, along with Rāmu and Deyānga, was one of three subdivisions of Chittagong, each of which were governed by their own Magha [Arakanese] representative, who was “probably” addressed as Laškar. Śahīdullāh’s hypothesis that Sultān’s *laškarapur* refers to Cakraśālā seems to be well-considered.

As Sharif demonstrates, numerous other premodern poets, some of whom are Chittagonian, refer to Saiyad Sultān and/or his *NV*.⁷⁹ However, Sharif’s mapping of various genealogies of ancestral and spiritual descent between Saiyad Sultān, Saiyad Hāsān, Mīr Mohāammad Saphī, and Śekh Mutālib that serve to root Sultān more firmly

75 Mukīm also mentions that the city of Cāṭigrāma is blessed by the tombs of *phakirs* (*phakira āstāna*), among whom he lists Śāh Jāhid, Śāh Panthī, Śāh Pīra, Hādī Bādaśā, Śāh Sondara Phakir, Śāh Sultān, Śāh Śekh Pharid, and Burā Badar. Sharif asks whether the Śāh Sultān mentioned in this case is Sultān Bāyejīd Bistāmī.

*cāṭigrāma dhanya 2 mohotta vākhāna | dhārmika athitaśālā phakira āstāna || śā jāhida sāhā panti āra sāhā pira | hādī bādaśā āra sāhā sondara phakira || śāha cholatāna āra sāhā śekha pharida | śaharera maidhye burā badarera sthita || Satya-Kali-Vivāda Saṃvāda of Mohāammad Khān, p. 112. Indeed, Sharif notes yet another descendant of a certain Sultān, Kānti Śāh Tājuddīn, whom Śekh Mansur (1703), the author of the *Sirnāmā*, claims as his *pīr*. *cholatāna vaṃsera kānti śāha tājuddīna | bhāgyaphale hailuṃ āmi tāhāra adhīna || tānapada pādukāra reṇu bhurudeśa | dīyā mane āśā kari āchie viśeṣa || Sharif, Saiyad Sultān, p. 57. Cf. Sharif (ed.), Ābdul Karīm Sāhityaviśārada-saṃkalita puthi-pariciti, p. 519. In this case, however, it is noteworthy that there is no mention of Cakraśālā, or of Saiyad Sultān, the poet of the *NV*.**

76 Irani, “One Saint, Two Tombs: Pīr Cults and the Politics of Siting the Dead in Bangladesh,” forthcoming.

77 Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 101.

78 For Śahīdullāh’s dating of Sultān, see *ibid.*, p. 103.

79 Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, pp. 60–61.

in Chittagong are entirely conjectural. As Mazharul Islam shows, it is impossible to conclude from the evidence Sharif provides that Saiyad Sultān had a son by the name of Saiyad Hāsān, or that our Saiyad Sultān is identical with Śāh Saiyad, whom the poet Mīr Muhammad Śaphī claims to be his grandfather.⁸⁰ References to Saiyad Sultān by various Chittagonian poets do not *per se* prove Saiyad Sultān's residence in Chittagong, as Sharif unjustifiably seeks to establish,⁸¹ but nonetheless do attest to his renown and the extensive circulation of his texts in south-east Bangladesh. Given that manuscript collection in Bangladesh has been a haphazard and incomplete endeavour, it is impossible to determine in the present state of the field whether the circulation of Sultān's manuscripts was limited to the south-east corner of Bangladesh. At least one manuscript of the *NV*, for instance, has been found by a private collector in Barisal.⁸²

Another piece of evidence that Sharif cites is from the eighteenth-century *Śamsēra Gājīnāmā* of a Chittagonian, Śekh Manohar.⁸³ In this text, Śekh Manohar eulogizes a military adventurer by the name of Śamsēr Gājī (d. 1760), who had established his kingdom in the Feni region of Chittagong.⁸⁴ The text makes reference to Gadā Hosen Khondakāra, a *pīr* in the line of Saiyad Sultān, who was Śamsēr Gājī's spiritual master. Being pleased with the Ghazī, who had sought his guidance, the *pīr* bestowed him with a horse and a sword. The *pīr* states that the sword and the ancestor of this horse were both gifted to his forefather, Saiyad Sultān, by the ruler of Arakan.⁸⁵ From

80 Ibid., pp. 55 and 58. Cf. Islam, "Saiyad Sultān: His Birthplace and Time," p. 135.

81 "Saiyad sultān ye caṭṭagrāmera cakrasālāvāsī chilena, tā ājakāla āra pramāṇera apeṣā rākhe nā. Kenanā tāra nāma nānā prasaṅge caṭṭagrāmavāsī aneka kavira mukhei śraddhāra saṅge uccārīta hayeche." Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 53. See also Ālī's critique of this statement. Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 50.

82 See Irani, "Sacred Biography, Translation, and Conversion," Appendix One.

83 Sharif lists this manuscript, in his bibliography, as being located in his private collection, which now forms a part of the Dhaka University Archives. Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, pp. 275 and 278. For further details of his private collection, see Irani, "Sacred Biography, Translation, and Conversion," Appendix One.

84 Concerning Śamsēra Gājī, see D. N. A. H. Caudhurī, "Śamsēra Gājī," in *Islāmī Viśvakoṣa* (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1997/1418 A.H./1414 B.S.), vol. 23, pp. 408–411.

85 Śekh Manohar hailed from the Feni region, in the Chittagong subdivision. Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 275. For local tales concerning Śekh Manohar's connection to Śamsēr Gājī, see *ibid.*, p. 59. In the *Gājīnāmā*, Śāh Gadā Hāsān sends one of his disciples to Śamsēr Gājī, to summon him into his presence:

... Humbly bowing his head, the Gājī venerated the *pīr*.
He praised the chief of *pīrs*, making Āllā pleased.
Then, the disciple said, "Show me the goal (*mañjil*)."

Sharif's calculations of the date embedded in the *Gājīnāmā* textual passage he cites, it seems that Śamsar Gājī met with Gadā Hosen before 1726 C.E. Sharif also mentions that Manohar, the poet, heard this story from his father, Tāhir Ukil, who was a follower of Śamsar Gājī, and identified the Gājī to the Nawābī government as one who *de facto* ruled over the area, thereby winning the Gājī the official award of a land deed (*sanad*).⁸⁶ The second volume of the *Tripurā Rājamālā* commissioned by the local king, Amar Māñikya, incidentally, provides a differing version of this tale.⁸⁷

Being taught the distinctions in knowledge, he learnt them all.
 He offered a thousand *tañkā*s... at the feet of the *pīr*,
 ... As robes of honour (*khelāt*) to the Gājī, the sea of grace bequeathed
 a horse and a fine weapon of the value of a thousand *tañkā*s.
 The *pīr* said, "Listen, O son of a guard (*piruvāna*, probably Persian *parwān*), to what I
 say.

Know that this horse and sword are of immense value.
 The pious Buddhist king of Rosānga gave Saiyad Sultān these very things.
 Sultān gave these to his own son.
 Through the family line, they came into my hands.
 I am but an insignificant drop in his lineage.
 In the year seventeen hundred and twenty-six,
 Nāsir will die, and you shall gain landownership.
 Having destroyed the royal line, you shall become the master of the land.
 For personal reasons, I have bestowed upon you this sword and horse.
 Know that you shall be successful in battle.
 The Gājī asked, "O *Pīr*, in how many years?"
 The *pīr* said, "Know at once that it will be twenty-five."
 Saying this the chief of *pīr*s returned to his land.

This is my translation of the following passage:

namraśira haī pīra bhajileka gājī | praśamsila pīra mīra āllā hailā rāji ||
tabe tāliba kaila bhedāi mañjila | māraphata bheda kahe sakala śikhila ||
dileka hājāra tañkā pīra mīra pāya | ...
hājāra tañkā mūlyera ghorā astravara | gājīke khelāt dilā kṛpāra sāgara ||
pīre bole śuna kahi piruvāna suta | ehi ghorā kharaga jāna kimmata bahuta ||
rosānge magara rājā dhārmika āchila | saida sulatāna prati ehi dravya dila ||
sulatāne bakasāila āpanā beṭāre | paryākrame āsiyā thekila mora kare ||
tāhāna vaṃsēra āmi kṣudra eka bindu | tapana bhuvana mājhe sāgareta indu ||
nāsira yāiba mārā pāibā jamidārī | rājavamśa bhaṅge deśa haibā adhikārī ||
ehi kharaga āśva tomā dīnu mata kāraṇa | yuddhe vijaya haiba jānio āpana ||
gājīe bulilā pīra katheka vatsara | pīra bole pañca viṃśa jānio satvara || e buliyā pīra
mīra cali gelā deśa | Ibid., pp. 58–59. For the date, see Ali Nawaz, "Shamsher Gazi." In
Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh, edited by Sirajul Islam. Online ed.
 (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2006). 10 vols. Accessed on November 4, 2011.
http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/S_0284.HTM.

86 Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 59.

87 Mazharul Islam mentions a third text, which also provides this information, Svarupacandra Rāy, *Suvarṇa Grāmera Itihāsa*, which I have not been able to trace. Islam, "Saiyad Sultān:

Although in the *Gājīnāmā* Śamsēr Gājī is glorified as an East Bengali Robin Hood, in the *Rājamālā* he is discredited for scheming, with some success, to usurp the lands of the hill peoples of Tripura.⁸⁸ With the blessings of Saiyad Śāh Gadā Hāsān, it is said in the *Rājamālā* that Śamsēr Gājī seized the Tripurā district of Rośanābād, which corresponds to the modern-day regions of southern Comillā and northern Noākhālī.⁸⁹

This evidence of the *Gājīnāmā* in fact jeopardizes Sharif’s argument in ways he had perhaps never anticipated: it opens up a Pandora’s box of contentious issues, which his Sylheti opponents have readily seized upon to further their own argument—a matter we turn to in the next section.

The Saiyad Sultān of Taraph: The View from Sylhet

The view that Saiyad Sultān hailed from Bangladesh’s northeastern region of Sylhet (Śrīhaṭṭa) has been put forward by the scholars Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee, Mohāmmad Āsrāph Hosen, Mazharul Islam, Saiyad Asāddar Ālī, Deoān Nūrul Ānoyāra Hosen Caudhurī, and Saiyad Ābdullāh. Saiyad Hāsān Imām Hosseinī Chishtī, a respected contemporary *pīr* of Sylhet, has also written on the subject, and claims to be Sultān’s eldest living descendant.⁹⁰ Though Munśī Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārād, a Chittagonian scholar and uncle to Ahmad Sharif, originally put forward the view that Saiyad Sultān’s birthplace was Chittagong,⁹¹ he later came to accept Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee’s view that Sultān was from Sylhet.

Saiyad Āsāddar Ālī, the most articulate proponent of this view, initially builds his arguments upon those first put forward by Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee, who,

Janmashāna evam samaya,” in *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, by Asāddar Ālī, Pariśiṣṭa 4 (Habiganj, Sylhet: Mahākavi Saiyad Sultāna Sāhitya o Gabeṣanā Pariśada, 1981/1388 B.Ś. reprint 1990/1397 B.Ś.), p. 137.

88 For the latter, see Kailāśacandra Siṃha, *Rājamālā vā Tripurāra Itihāsa*, edited by Nīmāicandra Pāla. Calcutta: Sadeśa, 1896 reprint 2006), p. 124; for the former, see *ibid.*, n. marked with a “*”, p. 123. See also Nawaz “Shamsheer Gazi.”

89 *Ibid.* These lands were seized from a certain Nāsir Muhammad, whose father had been gifted these plain lands of southern Tripura by Jagat Mānikya of Tripurā, himself a usurper of the claims of Tripurā Prince Kṛṣṇamaṇi to the district of Rośanābād. Siṃha, *Rājamālā vā Tripurāra Itihāsa*, pp. 120–122.

90 *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān Sāhitya o Gabeṣanā Pariśad: Smāraka grantha*. Vol. 1 (Sultānśī, Habiganj: Saiyad Hasan Imam Husseny Chishty, 1988).

91 Munśī Ābdul Karim, “Bāṅglā sāhitye Caṭṭagrāma,” in *Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada racanāvalī*, vol. 1, edited by Ābul Āhsān Caudhurī (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1915 reprint 1997), pp. 569 and 574.

commenting on Sultān's words, "*laškarera purakhāni ālima basati / mui murkha āchi eka saiyada santati*," states,

From the poet's specific reference to his village as *laškarera pura*, one can infer that this village was well-known as *laškarera pura*. From the second statement the poet makes about his place of residence, the poet informs us that he is born of Saiyad-lineage. Not a single person from any well-known Muslim landlord families of present-day Chittagong's Parāgalpur claims to be of Saiyad lineage.⁹²

Next, Bhattacharjee points to Acyutacarāṇa Caudhurī's early twentieth-century local history of Sylhet, *Śrīhaṭṭera Itivṛtta*, wherein reference is made to the reputed Saiyad family of Laškarpur village of Taraph *pargaṇā*, in the present-day Habigañj district of Greater Sylhet.⁹³ Though Caudhurī does not cite all his sources, he evidently gleans some of his information about the Saiyad family of Taraph from *Taraphera Itihāsa*, an history of Taraph (1887)⁹⁴ written by Saiyad Ābdul Āgphar, a descendant of the Saiyads of Taraph, and from personal communication with a certain Saiyad Emdādul Hak.⁹⁵ Following Caudhurī, Bhattacharjee traces in Ābdul Āgphar's text the latter's family tree; relevant to our discussion, among his ancestors he names two sons of a Saiyad Mikāil—Saiyad Musā, the elder, and Saiyad Minā, also known as Sultān.⁹⁶ It

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- 92 Bhattacharjee, "Kavi Saiyad Soltān (ālocanā)," p. 96; translation mine. From Ālī's quotation of Bhattacharjee, it seems possible that the very same article was also published in the journal *Āl Islāh*, 8 Varṣa, 1-3 Saṃkhyā, Māgha/Caitra 1350. While my visit to Parāgalpur in July 2009 corroborates the fact that the resident landlord, Hābibullāh (Dolā) Caudhurī, who owns the medieval tanks established by Parāgal Khān, does not claim Saiyad ancestry, Bhattacharjee's statement should have been bolstered by a detailed study of the movement of peoples in Parāgalpur's history to provide firm evidence for his claims.
- 93 Bhattacharjee, "Kavi Saiyad Soltān (ālocanā)," p. 97. Cf. Acyutacarāṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, two vols. 3rd ed. (Dhaka: Utsa Prakāśana, 1910/1317 B.Ś. reprint 2009), vol. 1, pp. 281–287. Probably alluding to Bhattacharjee's refutation of his earlier article on Saiyad Sultān, Haq in "Muslim Bāmlā sāhitya" (p. 297) astutely challenges Bhattacharjee's argument, pointing to the subtle but important distinction between *laškarera pura* and *laškarpur*, which Bhattacharjee conflates. He emphasizes that in the context of Sultān's writing, *laškarera pura* refers to Parāgalpur.
- 94 In the publication details of Utsa Prakāśana's new edition of this text, the original publication date has been mistakenly supplied as 1214 B.Ś. The original date is, in fact, 1294 B.Ś., as is faintly visible in the facsimile of the title page of the original publication provided in the new introduction to the Utsa edition by Śekh Phajale Elāhī. The 1294 B.Ś. date is easily reconcilable with 1292 B.Ś., the date when Āgphar signed off the "Upakramanikā" prior to publication. Saiyad Ābdul Āgphar, *Taraphera itihāsa* (Dhaka: Utsa Prakāśana, 1887/1294 B.Ś. reprint 2008), front matter (pages unnumbered).
- 95 Acyutacarāṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, n. 13, p. 285.
- 96 Bhattacharjee, "Kavi Saiyad Soltān (ālocanā)," p. 97. Cf. Āgphar, *Taraphera itihāsa*, pp. 47–52, and for his family-tree, *ibid.*, pp. 95–96. Cf. Acyutacarāṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera*

is noteworthy that Āgphar’s text, quoted in greater detail below, makes no mention of this Sultān as being the poet of the *NV*.⁹⁷ Finally, in support of the Sylheti case, Bhattacharjee quotes a couplet from a *padāvalī* ascribed to Saiyad Sultān, in which the author makes a reference to “the city of Śrīhaṭṭa”:

ajapā pañca śabda kari bhāle |
*śrīhaṭṭa nagare bājāe ekatāle ||*⁹⁸

Having sounded the unvoiced five on the *bhāla* (a musical instrument),⁹⁹
[these] resound to a single beat, in the city of Śrīhaṭṭa.

Mere reference to Śrīhaṭṭa does not, of course, demonstrate a strong connection. Moreover, given that names of holy places were routinely used by mystic poets to name specific centers of the yogic interior landscape, Muhammad Śahīdullāh dismisses a similar argument made by Mohāmmad Āsrāph Hosen.¹⁰⁰ This is a sound observation, though the author’s mention of *śrīhaṭṭa nagara* at least suggests familiarity with this important religious center of north-east Bengal. Most problematic, however, is the fact that we cannot be sure whether the author of the *padāvalī* is the same as the author of the *NV*.

The crux of Āsāddar Ālī’s argument, which we will now consider in detail, rests upon medieval sources and later scholarship, not the least being Ahmad Sharif’s own arguments, which provide triangulated connections between three key Sylheti figures: Saiyad Sultān, Saiyad Musā, and Saiyad Gadā Hāsān Khondkāra. First, he emphasizes that Saiyad Musā, of the afore-mentioned Saiyad family of Taraph, Sylhet, was accepted by Munšī Ābdul Karim, and Muhammad Śahīdullāh, following him, as the minister at the Arakanese court under whose patronage Saiyad Ālāol completed the *Sayphulmuluk Badiujjamāl* around 1670.¹⁰¹ However, Karim simply mentions that

itivṛtta, vol. 1, pp. 281-287, and the family tree he supplies in *ibid.*, Parisiṣṭa Kha, pp. 592–93. See below for the family tree of Saiyad Sultān.

97 Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 101.

98 Bhattacharjee, “Kavi Saiyad Sultān (ālocanā),” p. 98.

99 Since *bhāla* also means “the forehead,” a more esoteric translation is, “Having sounded the unvoiced five in the forehead,” where “the forehead” may refer to the *ājñā cakra*, the seat of concentration situated at the point where the brows meet.

100 Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 102. Muhammad Śahīdullāh points out many flaws in Mohāmmad Āsrāph Hosen’s arguments. I have not been able to trace the relevant article, which should be found in *Māsika Mohāmmadī*, 24 Varṣa, 1 Saṃkhyā, cited in Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 100.

101 Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 44. Cf. Munšī Ābdul Karim, “Ālāolera ātma-kāhinī.” In *Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada racanāvalī*, vol. 1, edited by Ābul Āhsān Caudhurī (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1950-51, n. 12, p. 259, and “Ālāolera ātma-ṽṛttānta.” In *Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada racanāvalī*, Prathama Khaṇḍa, edited by Ābul Āhsān Caudhurī (Dhaka:

Saiyad Musā is the brother of Saiyad Sultān of the *NV*; he does not specify a link to the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph. While Karim does not cite his sources, it is likely that he follows Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, who seems to be the first historian to correlate Saiyad Musā, the poet Ālāol's patron, with the Saiyad Musā of Taraph.¹⁰² Caudhurī, in turn, does not provide any evidence, and it is unclear how he arrives at this conclusion.

Second, Ālī points to the evidence of the *Śamśera Gājīnāmā*, discussed earlier. Ālī recognizes that by citing this text, Ahmad Sharif has provided the Sylheti group with the perfect segue into their argument.¹⁰³ Moreover, Sharif's use of this piece of evidence implies an unquestioning acceptance of the identity of the Saiyad Sultān of the *Gājīnāmā* with Saiyad Sultān of the *NV*, evidence that the *Gājīnāmā* itself does not provide. This crucial link is also missing in the Sylheti argument. Once this tenuous connection between Saiyad Sultān of the *NV* and the Saiyad Sultān of the *Gājīnāmā* is accepted from Sharif's writings, it would seem but a small step to demonstrate that the *Gājīnāmā*'s Saiyad Sultān and his descendant, Gadā Hosen/Hāsān, are identical with the genealogically-linked homonymous pair (called Saiyad Sultān and Gadā Hāsān) in the Saiyad family of Taraph, Sylhet.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, the *Gājīnāmā* furthers the Sylheti case by establishing a parallel connection between Saiyad Sultān and the Arakanese court, aligning his inter-regional movements between Sylhet and Arakan with those of our poet's supposed elder brother, Saiyad Musā of Taraph.¹⁰⁵

Bangla Academy, 1951/1358 B.Ś. reprint 1997/1404 B.Ś.) n. 13, p. 280; Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 99.

102 Cf. Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, p. 284. In this context, it is relevant to note Munśī Ābdul Karim's private letter to Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee in which he accepts his argument that Saiyad Sultān was a native of Laškarpur, Sylhet. The letter has been published by Ālī in support of the Sylheti case. Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, Parisiṣṭa 1, pp. 101–103.

103 "*Pramāne saiyada sulatānera vaṃśadhara hisebe saiyada gadā hāchana khondakārera nāma yoga kare nijera janye ābāra ārekaṭā mahāvīpada ḍeke enechena!!*" Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 51.

104 Ibid., p. 44. Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, Parisiṣṭa Kha, pp. 592–93. See also the mention made by Ālī (ibid.) following Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī (*Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, p. 288), of Gadā Hāsān receiving a land grant from the emperor of Delhi; the area is known as Gadāhāsānagar *pargaṇā* situated in greater Sylhet.

105 In this context, Ālī quotes the following *padāvalī* ascribed to Sultān, taking these philosophical *padas*, in an entirely literal sense: "I am a foreigner; I come from afar. I have remained in this place. For a day or two, I have stayed, residing [here]. I know not where I go." (Translation mine.) *hāma paravāsī, dūra honte āsi | rahi geluṃ ehi ṭhāi || dina dui cāri raichi vāsā kari | nā jāni kon khāne jāi ||* Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 50.

In making a case for the identity of the Saiyad Sultān of the *Gājīnāmā* with the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph, Āsāddar Ālī does not refute the possibility that Sultān may have lived in the Chittagong region during his lifetime. He explains away the evidence that Sharif provides about Sultān and his grandsons by suggesting that Sultān may have taken another wife while living in the area.¹⁰⁶ Ālī, following Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee, argues that the Chittagonian case is weakened because of the inability of scholars to trace a single respectable family of Saiyads in the modern-day Cakraśālā area. In itself, this is a weak argument. Moreover, my ethnographic fieldwork in the Cakraśālā area, documented elsewhere, reveals that a present-day family of Saiyads does link their family tree to Saiyad Śāh Gadī (the local name for Śāh Gadā Hāsān Khondakār of Narapati, Taraph), and, through him, to the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph.¹⁰⁷

Āsāddar Ālī proposes several different scenarios to explain the failure of the Sylhetis to trace even a single manuscript of Sultān's works in the greater Sylhet region. While traveling to Arakan, claims Ālī, Sultān may have met with Mohāmmad Khān, his chief disciple, leaving behind the manuscripts of his work with him before his return to Sylhet. Alternatively, Sultān could have met with an untimely death,¹⁰⁸ before he had made arrangements for the copying of his manuscripts in Taraph. Finally, Ālī suggests that a lack of familiarity with the Bengali script in Sylhet, where the *sylheṭī nāgarī* script was prevalent, may have limited local circulation of Sultān's manuscripts.¹⁰⁹

Another aspect of Āsāddar Ālī's argument concerns the identity of Saiyad Sultān's *guru*, stated in Sultān's writings to be a certain Śāh Hosen. Following Nijām Uddin Ahmad, Ālī identifies Sultān's master with Śāh Hosen Ālam, the author of the *Richālat* (Pers. *Risālat*) and *Bhedasāra*, who was a resident of Pīrera Gāmo, Jagannāthpur sub-district, Sunāngaṅj district, greater Sylhet.¹¹⁰ The strongest pieces of evidence he adduces for this are the following. First, two medieval authors with similar names, who are predecessors of Saiyad Sultān, are Gulām Hosan and Saiyad Śāh Hosen Ālam. Of the two, Ālī rejects the former because he is not a Saiyad, and hence, probably considered unsuitable to be accepted as the spiritual master of another

106 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

107 For the family tree of Saiyad Śāh Gadī Hāsān in the Cakraśālā area, see Irani, "Sacred Biography, Translation, and Conversion," Appendix Seven.

108 Āgphar, *Taraphera itihāsa*, p. 50.

109 Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, pp. 50–51.

110 *Ibid.*, pp. 94–97.

Saiyad—namely, Sultān.¹¹¹ Second, there is a close correspondence between the Sufi writings of Saiyad Sultān and that of Śāh Hosen Ālam. One verse, in particular, from Saiyad Sultān’s *NV* paraphrases a verse from the *Bhedasāra*, while closely imitating its syntax:

dudata nabani yena āchae mīsā |
*temate rahiche parabhu bhuvana yuṛiā || Bhedasāra*¹¹²
 Just as butter is fused with milk
 so also does the Lord remain conjoined with the world.
yehena āchae nanī gorasa sahita |
*tenamata āchae prabhu jagata vyāpita || NV*¹¹³
 Just as butter exists with[in] cow’s milk
 so also does the Lord pervade the world.

Since Śāh Hosen Ālam was a Sylheti, and since no *pīr*-poet in the relevant time-period has been found in the greater Chittagong region who matches the name of Sultān’s master, Ālī believes that this buttresses his argument for Sultān being a Sylheti. While this is a promising line of argument, more research is required on the *Bhedasāra* to determine whether other internal connections can be made between the works of these two poet-*pīrs*.¹¹⁴

Finally, Ālī argues that it is possible to prove that the *NV* is written by a native of Sylhet based upon linguistic evidence alone.¹¹⁵ While this is indeed a propitious line of inquiry, the state of research in the field of East Bengali linguistics make me wary of such arguments. Compare such a claim with Munśī Ābdul Karim’s assessment more than a century ago of the language of the *Jñāna Pradīpa*, attributed to Saiyad Sultān:

111 *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98. It is likely that this is a modern concern in the choice of a spiritual master, rather than a significant medieval concern.

112 *Ibid.*, p. 99. Translation mine.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 100. *Nabīvaṃśa* of Saiyad Sultān, vol. 1, p. 2. Translation mine. For other esoteric songs from the *Bhedasāra*, see Phajlur Rahmān, *Sileṭera maramī saṅgīta* (Dhaka: Rāgīva Ālī, 1993/1400 B.Ś.), pp. 14–15. The author mentions that a manuscript of the *Bhedasāra* is preserved in the Muslim Sāhitya Samsad, Sylhet.

114 I am indebted to Mohāmmad Sādīk, a scholar of Sylheṭī Nāgarī, for kindly providing me with a copy of a rare manuscript of the *Bhedasāra* of Śāh Hosen Ālam; he himself has a photocopy of the original manuscript of D. N. A. H. Caudhurī’s private collection. For a facsimile of page 57 of this manuscript, see Mohāmmad Sādīk, *Sileṭi Nāgarī: Phakīri dhārāra phasala* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2008), p. 107. Dr. Sādīk also graciously provided me with a copy of a rare early twentieth-century publication of this text. Future research plans include a careful study of these documents.

115 Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, pp. 62–89.

There is no way to evaluate from the perspective of language as to which region he was a native of. This is because there exists such a beautiful similitude between the various regional languages of old Bengali literature, that unless otherwise stated [in the text], to ascertain which text comes from which region is somewhat difficult.¹¹⁶

The study of linguistic features of modern East Bengali regional dialects has advanced since the early 1900s: important research on Chittagonian and Sylheti dialects has been conducted by scholars such as Muhammad Enamul Haq,¹¹⁷ for Chittagonian, and Śivaprasanna Lāhiṛī¹¹⁸ and Muhammad Āsāddar Ālī,¹¹⁹ for Sylheti. Nonetheless, such research is still in its formative stage. Even less has been produced on premodern Bengali dialectal variations.¹²⁰

While Ālī is unable to link the Saiyad Sultān of the Saiyad family of Taraph to the poet of the *Nabīvaṃśa* conclusively, he justifiably queries Sharif's sloppy mapping of evidence on logical, philological, and other grounds, exposing the ambiguity of some claims, as discussed earlier in this essay. Nonetheless, I believe that Sharif makes a strong case for Cakraśālā being associated with Saiyad Sultān and a couple of his descendants. As I have argued, this textual evidence is independently corroborated by the work of local historians, who have uncovered the ways in which people of the Patiya district continue to remember Saiyad Sultān today. Unless further evidence is uncovered that disproves this, Saiyad Sultān's life seems to be connected to Cakraśālā, whether or not this be his birthplace.

In this battle of regional affiliations, the Sylhetis feel particularly vindicated by the private testimony of Sharif's own uncle, Munśī Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada, the revered collector of Bengali manuscripts. Āsāddar Ālī, and Saiyad Ābdullāh, following him, published the latter's private letter to Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee,

116 Munśī Ābdul Karim, "Jñāna Pradīpa," in *Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada racanāvalī*, vol. 1, edited by Ābul Āhsān Caudhurī (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1900/1307 B.Ś. reprint 1997/1404 B.Ś.), p. 380.

117 M.E. Haq, "Caṭṭagrāmī Bāṅgālāra Rahasya-Bheda," in *Muhammad Enāmul Hak racanāvalī*, vol. 1, edited by Monsur Musa (Dhaka: Bangla Academy 1935 reprint 1991), pp. 479–603.

118 Śivaprasanna Lāhiṛī, *Sileṭī bhāṣātattvera bhūmikā* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1961/1368 B.Ś.).

119 Muhammad Āsāddar Ālī, "Sileṭī Bhāṣā," in *Āsāddar Racanā Samagra*, Tṛtīya Khaṇḍa (Sylhet: Tāiyiyā Prakāśanī, 1998/1405).

120 A few medieval works have been analyzed for language. With the exception of Dimock and Stewart, these are mostly rudimentary and haphazardly treated. Edward C. Dimock, Jr. and Tony K. Stewart, "Introduction," in Caitanya Caritāmṛta of *Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja: A Translation and Commentary*, translated by Edward C. Dimock, Jr. Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. 56 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 41–47.

in which he approves of Bhattacharjee's proposal that Saiyad Sultān was from Laškarpur, Sylhet.¹²¹ Ālī thus accuses Sharif of thrusting "his own views [about Saiyad Sultān's birthplace] upon the shoulders of Sāhityaviśārad Sāheb"¹²² through his *Puthi Pariciti*, the descriptive catalog of Bangla manuscripts in the Dhaka University archive, which he co-edited with Munśī Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada, and which was published four to five years after his uncle's demise. Another valid issue that Saiyad Ābdullāh raises also concerns Munśī Ābdul Karim. He highlights the curious fact that a respected and untiring scholar like Karim, who was himself a resident of Patiya district, did not find any trace of Saiyad Sultān and his descendants in the area.¹²³ Even in light of the fact that Munśī Ābdul Karim was primarily a text scholar, not an ethnographer,¹²⁴ this objection is reasonable considering the prevalence of the afore-mentioned local memories of Saiyad Sultān, collected by Muhammad Ishāq Caudhurī from the Patiya area, all of which I have documented elsewhere.¹²⁵

In evaluating the strength of the Sylheti case, I would like to highlight the following significant concerns, the first having already been put forward by Muhammad Śāhīdullāh in his refutation of Mohāmmad Āshrāph Hosen, a scholar who supports the Sylheti case. The family tree of Saiyad Sultān of Taraph provided below should be referenced in order to better understand the genealogical relationships mentioned here.

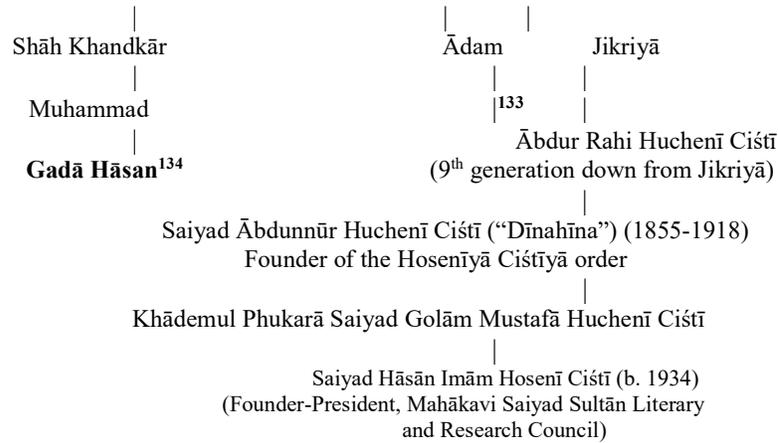
121 See, for instance, Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, Parisiṣṭa 1, pp. 101–103. Ābdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera anyatama sthapatī Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, pp. 11–12.

122 Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, Parisiṣṭa 1, p. 103.

123 Ābdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera anyatama sthapatī Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 12.

124 In the case of the poet, Ālāol, on whom Munśī Ābdul Karim published numerous articles, he had made an attempt to collect local lore from Chittagong about the poet, and writes about his attempt to trace his descendants in Myanmar. See, for instance, Munśī Ābdul Karim, "Ālāol sambandhe kayekaṭi nūṭana kathā," in *Ābdul Karim Sāhityaviśārada racanāvalī*, Prathama Khaṇḍa, edited by Ābul Āhsān Caudhurī (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1952/1359 B.Ś. reprint 1997/1404 B.Ś.), pp. 247–248. It is clear from his writings that Munśī Ābdul Karim did not invest his scholarly energies in studying Saiyad Sultān; however, it is indeed curious that despite being a resident of Patiya, he did not hear of any local lore related to Sultān.

125 Irani, "One Saint, Two Tombs," forthcoming.



(Note: See, the family tree at a glance end of this paepr.)

In an attempt to determine the dates of Saiyad Sultān of Taraph, Śahīdullāh adduces the evidence of the *Ma'dan al-Fawā'id* ("Mine of Morals"), a Persian work written in 941 A.H. by Saiyad Shāh Isrāīl, the uncle of Taraph's Saiyad Sultān.¹³⁵ The date of composition of this work corresponds to 1534 C.E.¹³⁶ Assuming that the author would be at least eighteen to have written such a work on ethics, the latest possible date for the birth of Saiyad Shāh Isrāīl would be 1516. His younger brother, Saiyad Shāh Mikāīl, could have been born at the earliest by the year 1517. Given that Saiyad Shāh Mikāīl had at least two children (only male descendants being named in family

Habiganj, Greater Sylhet, and the other at Pāthure Kellā, medieval Arakan, modern Myānmār. At least one relative of the Saiyad family believes he could be buried at the Muṛārband *dargāh*, Habiganj, Greater Sylhet.

¹³³ Saiyad Ābdul Āghar, author of *Taraphera itihāsa*, is a descendant of Saiyad Ādam, several generations removed.

¹³⁴ He too has two purported graves: one, in Narapati, Sylhet; the second, in Vārikhārā, Paṭiyā, Chittagong.

¹³⁵ Śahīdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera kathā: Madhyayuga*, p. 101.

¹³⁶ Śahīdullāh (ibid.) wrongly calculates the corresponding Christian era date as 1514 A.D. For a facsimile of this text, especially reproducing its *hijrī* date, see D. N. A. H. Caudhurī 1983, last few unnumbered pages, and especially the last page for the date. I am grateful to the author for kindly allowing me to personally verify this date by viewing this treasured manuscript, which he inherited through the family line, and is in his private collection. Concerning details about this text, see Mohāmmad Ābdul Bākī, *Bāmlādeśe Ārabī, Phārsī o Urdute Islāmī sāhitya carcā (1801-1971)* (Dhaka: Islāmīc Phāundeśana Bāmlādeśa, 2005/1412), p. 334. I am grateful to D. N. A. H. Caudhurī for providing me with this reference.

trees) before the birth of his son, Musā, this would bring the birth dates of Saiyad Musā and his younger brother, Saiyad Sultān, to 1535–36 at the earliest.¹³⁷ Only if one were to speculate that Musā and Sultān and/or Saiyad Isrāil and his brother, Saiyad Mikāil, had different mothers, would it be possible to push Saiyad Sultān's birthdate to 1580, the dates I have suggested as the earliest possible birth date of the poet of the *NV*. From this reconstruction of dates, it seems likely, therefore, that the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph is not the same figure as the Saiyad Sultān of the *NV*. Sylheti scholars have also argued that Saiyad Musā, the elder brother of Saiyad Sultān of Taraph, is the same figure as Saiyad Ālāol's patron, his namesake, who was a minister at the Arakanese court. However, as we have seen, Taraph's family tree produces dates for Saiyad Musā that cannot be reconciled with the dates of the Arakanese minister, Saiyad Musā. Even if one were to take into consideration the long life-span claimed for Saiyad Musā of Taraph in *Śrīhaṭṭera Itivṛtta*,¹³⁸ he could not possibly be the same figure as Ālāol's patron, at whose request Ālāol completed *Sayphulmuluk Badiujjamāl* in 1668-69.

It is also important to scrutinize the evidence presented in *Taraphera Itihāsa*: as stated earlier, the text makes no mention of Saiyad Sultān as a poet and *pīr*. Rather than depicting a venerable, scholarly figure, Saiyad Ābdul Āgphar, who is a direct descendant of Saiyad Musā of Taraph,¹³⁹ portrays Musā's brother, Sultān, as a jealous and crafty man, who usurped the inheritance of his nephew—Saiyad Musā's son—Saiyad Ādam:

Having inherited the responsibility of the administration of the region, Saiyad Musā governed for thirty years. He departed to the next world leaving behind a son by the name of Saiyad Ādam. Saiyad Musā was an extremely capable individual; it goes without saying that, even though he was not a Nawāb, of course, he demonstrated the ability to be as capable in such [administrative] tasks as a Nawāb.

Immediately after Saiyad Musā inherited the responsibility of the administration, Rājā Kaṃsa Nārāyaṇa killed Nawāb Samchuddīn, and took over the throne of Bengal. However, under the Pathans, all of Bengal came under their governance. Neither were his [Rājā Kaṃsa Nārāyaṇa's] son or grandsons able to bring all of Bengal under their control. At this time, various Muslim states were losing their territorial sovereignty. Even though the ruler of Tripurā and various other uncivilized kings had managed to separate the region beyond the Meghanā from Muslim sovereignty, no one was able to touch the regions under Saiyad Musā's control. The only exception were the

137 By similar calculations, Ābdullāh determines Sultān's birthdate as c. 1544. Ābdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera anyatama sthapati Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 24.

138 Ayyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, 284. Cf. Āgphar, *Taraphera itihāsa*, p. 48.

139 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

uncivilized peoples who lived near the mountains, and who accepted the control of the Tripurā ruler; Saiyad Musā lost his grip over a part of this area. Even though no agreement had been officially made between them, there was no mutual opposition [either]. At this time, a terrible revolt arose around the Delhi throne. Various regions in Bengal, in separatist fashion, also acquired independence. Until Akbar, the greatest of the Moghuls, none who ascended the Delhi throne could conquer the regions east of the Gangā. Hence, for this extended period of time, Saiyad Musā and his descendants were able to maintain their independent governance [of the region]. This material well-being, good fortune, fame, respect and influence, and the matter of Saiyad Musā's acquiring happiness through all forms of mundane comforts reached the allured heart of Saiyad Minā, Saiyad Musā's younger brother, who resided in the city of Delhi, and set alight the blazing fire of the affliction [of envy] for another's wealth. Enticed (?), thus, he spread a crafty net. First, he endeavored to assist various eminent officials of the city of Delhi. Over time, as he came to befriend them, he expressed his mental unease and pleaded for their help; however, no one was able to supply him with a suitable *mantra* to attain accomplishment in this endeavour. In point of fact, many created obstacles in his path. However, this blazing temptation remained in his heart; it was not extinguished. He then tried another means. Saiyad Minā had not the least want of all those ingredients germane to the human heart, which are necessary for selfish endeavour. He was extremely crafty, resourceful, and honey-tongued. Hence, the way to his desired goal gradually began to clear.

He began to declare to the [Delhi] emperor that Saiyad Musā had departed for the next world without an heir. "Hence, [said he,] "let the flourishing kingdom that he left behind be given to me. According to the Muslim *dāyabhāga* system, I am his natural heir. I am no less suitable than Saiyad Musā in the task of administration. Hence, there can be no doubt that [my] subjects will be very fond of me." Since there was no disputant, there was no hindrance to the fulfillment of Minā's plea. Significantly, before making his entreaty, he had ensured that none would support the opposite party, by bringing under his influence courtly officials through the handing out of numerous bribes. Thus, the king, as per his entreaty, presented him with the *sananda*, land deed, of the administration of Taraph. On the other hand, Saiyad Minā remained especially cautious, planting spies at various places, so that news of the existence of Saiyad Musā's son would by no means reach the ears of the Delhi emperor. Hence, even though many made several attempts to convey the news of the existence of Saiyad Musā's son to the emperor, they were unsuccessful.

Bringing with him the *sanand* from the emperor, Saiyad Minā abandoned Laṣkarpur, and established his residence not more than three miles north. Because Minā's other name was Sultān, the place where he settled became known as Sultānaniṣi. In this disagreeable manner, six years passed. During these six years, even though Saiyad Minā was not able to bring the entire region under his control, he did not make the mistake of not sending the specified revenue to the royal treasury. Sadly enough, even after perpetrating all kinds of machinations he was not able to enjoy the contentment of his kingdom. The sun of his life proceeded towards the setting mountain. Leaving behind two sons, he abandoned this human play.¹⁴⁰

140 Translation mine. Ibid., pp. 48–50.

From this description of Saiyad Sultān, it is clear that he was inscribed in family memory as an administrator whose “evil machinations (*ṣaḍyantra*)” sowed the seeds of rivalry between two generations of the Saiyad family.¹⁴¹ It could be argued that Saiyad Ābdul Āgphar, the author, being a direct descendant of Saiyad Musā, is the aggrieved party and rival to Saiyad Minā/Sultān’s descendants; hence, he retells a family tradition sympathetic to the case of Saiyad Musā and his son, Saiyad Ādam. Nonetheless, this portrait of Saiyad Sultān does not readily accommodate the image of the venerable learned man and *guru* whom Mohāmmad Khān describes, nor the various images of Sultān as *ālim* and Sufi that emerge from his own autobiographical sketch. Neither does Āgphar’s account provide any evidence for Sultān as the author of the *NV*.

Saiyad Ābdullāh and Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, respectively, argue that Saiyad Āgphar’s 1885 family history is not a comprehensive, systematic document on the Taraph family, nor are its dates always reliable.¹⁴² Saiyad Ābdullāh defends Saiyad Sultān’s actions, highlighted in the passage above, by calling attention to a significant moment in the history of the Saiyad family of Taraph, omitted in Saiyad Āgphar’s history, which links the history of Taraph with that of Tripurā, as set down in the *Rājamālā*, the the royal history of the Tripurā rulers produced at the court. Rājā Amar Māṇikya is reported in the *Rājamālā* to have ordered the construction of a tank, for which he commanded local administrators, such as Saiyad Musā of Taraph, to dispatch a contingent of labourers.¹⁴³ When Musā declined, the affronted Rājā marched upon Taraph with a vast army, completely overwhelming Taraph’s small standing army. Musā and his son, Saiyad Ādam, were captured by the Tripurā king

141 Ibid., p. 50.

142 Ābdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera anyatama sthapatī Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 13. Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, n. 13, p. 285.

143 Kālīprasanna Sen reports that Amar Māṇikya’s conquest of Śrīhaṭṭa was celebrated by the minting of a silver coin in the year 1503 Śaka (1581). *Śrīrājamālā*, edited by Kālīprasanna Sen. *Śrīrājamālā [Tripura-rājnyavargera itivṛtta]*. 2nd ed. (Agartala, Tripura: Tripurā Sarkār, 1931/1341 Tripurābda reprint 2003), Vol. 3, p. 155. The Tripurā war with Taraph, according to his reading of the *Rājamālā*, should have taken place soon after this, between 1503 and 1504 Śaka. For the photograph of the coin’s recto and verso (both erroneously printed upside down), and its decipherment, see *ibid.*, p. 154, and the facing photograph respectively.

and taken to Udayapur, the Rājā's capital.¹⁴⁴ Saiyad Ābdullāh speculates that Saiyad Sultān, who was probably then at the Delhi court, having heard of this terrible war, feared the worst—the death of Saiyad Musā and, Ādam, his only son—and entreated the Delhi king to transfer the *sananda* of Taraph onto his name.¹⁴⁵ While this is, indeed, a possible scenario, it does not help us prove that the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph is anything but an administrator; in the absence of evidence proving his identity with the poet of the *NV*, this in no manner bolsters the Sylheti case.

The importance of the 1581 C.E. date of the Tripurā-Taraph war lies in the independent evidence it provides in dating the Saiyad Musā of Taraph. In 1581, Saiyad Ādam, as a youth who fought in the battle, would have been around 18 years of age or older, making the age of his father, Saiyad Musā, between 35 and 40 years of age, at the least. This assessment of the age of Saiyad Musā corroborates the dating of Saiyad Musā's birth (1540-50) arrived at through the evidence of the *Ma'dan al-Fawā'id*, mentioned earlier. It also independently buttresses the argument that the Saiyad Musā of Taraph cannot be the same figure as the Saiyad Musā of the Arakanese court, since in c. 1670 he would have been 129 years of age.

What becomes evident is that authors such as Saiyad Ābdullāh and Āsāddar Ālī, who support the Sylheti cause, have not been able to reasonably accommodate Sultān's dates within the following two historical parameters that the corpus of Sylheti arguments raise: 1668-69, the date of composition of Ālāol's *Sayphulmuluk Badiujjamāl*, under the patronage of the Ārākānī minister, Saiyad Musā;¹⁴⁶ and 941 A.H./1534 C.E., the date of composition of the *Ma'dan al-Fawā'id* of Saiyad Shāh Isrāil of Taraph along with the 1581 C.E. date of the Tripurā-Taraph war, and the consequent calculations these dates present for the dating of Saiyad Sultān and Saiyad

144 Ābdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera anyatama sthapati Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 15. Cf. *jikyā grāmete sainya koṣha bāndhi raila | muche laṣkar saiddhirāma tāte dharā gela || pitā putra dui jana piṅjare bhariyā | udayapure laiā gela tvarita kariyā || Śrīrājamālā*, vol. 3, p. 4. "Muche Laṣkar" refers to a commander by name of Musā, and his son, "Saiddhirāma," which could be a corruption of "Saida Ādam," as suggested by the editor, *ibid.*, p. 153.

145 Ābdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera anyatama sthapati Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 16.

146 Thibaut d'Hubert suggests that the date of composition of this text is 1668–69. Personal correspondence, July 24, 2009. Cf. also Thibaut d'Hubert, *In the Shade of the Golden Palace: Ālāol and Middle Bengali Poetics in Arakan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 143.

Musā of Taraph. Āsāddar Ālī is able to accommodate the former, but unable to encompass the latter; in the case of Saiyad Ābdullāh’s argument, the reverse prevails. Either approach makes it impossible to associate the Saiyad Musā of Taraph with the Saiyad Musā of Arakan. Saiyad Ābdullāh’s dating has the further disadvantage of completely overlooking the evidence of Mohāammad Khān’s *Maktul Hosen*. All of this strongly suggests that, despite speculation about the purported identity of the two Musās, they are entirely different people. This issue significantly weakens the Sylheti argument, and reveals how regionally allied authors have conflated separate historical figures bearing similar names with a view to enhancing regional prestige.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

A curious trend may be observed in the writings of Bengali literary historians—particularly, in this case, the apologetic writings of scholars on the Sylheti side of this debate, though scholars who have supported the Chittagonian case are not altogether exempt. In the absence of concrete evidence to prove their argument, they tend to indulge in two kinds of rhetoric: first, padding their argument with an extensive selection of quotations from (or rather invocations of, since these are often made without proper citation) various speculative historiographic writings in Bangla, as though by dint of citing a partial truth often enough it could become true;¹⁴⁸ and second, the cumulative juxtaposition of weak evidence, often without proper citation, to make what the author considers to be a “strong” case.¹⁴⁹ These exemplify two deeply entrenched problems within Bengali scholarship, which have plagued the systematic study of Bengali literature: speculative historiographic writing, and sloppiness in documentation. As should be evident from the above discussion, modern scholars who are carefully empirical face the frustrating experience of having to strip

147 The specific instance of Ahmad Sharif’s enlisting the evidence of the *Śamśera Ghāzīnāmā*, thereby providing fuel to the Sylheti argument, has already been highlighted. Innumerable such examples in secondary literature, in his and other’s writings, exist. See discussion below.

148 See, especially, D. N. A. H. Caudhurī on “Kurāyaśī Māgan,” “Saiyad Musā,” and “Saiyad Sultān,” in *Āmādera sāmśkṛtika svādhīnatā: Uttarādhikāra o Musalmānī Nāgarī* (Dhaka: Advocate Mohammad Muminul Hak, 2001/1408 B.S.), pp. 44-59; and Ābdullāh, *Bāmlā sāhityera anyatama sthapati Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*.

149 See, for instance, the independent arguments put forth by Bhattacharjee and Ālī (though the latter is systematic about citation) discussed above. See also Sharif’s flawed arguments discussed earlier.

away layer upon layer of imitative, repetitious, speculative “scholarly” writing to arrive at the original, vacant core of evidence an argument is often built around.

In sum, all of the arguments linking the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph with the poet of the *NV* remain speculative. The cross-regional movement of peoples between Sylhet, Chittagong, and Arakan is plausible given the interconnected histories of these regions. It is indeed likely that after the 1581 Tripurā aggression, the elite of Taraph took shelter with the Arakanese king.¹⁵⁰ An important piece of evidence for this inter-regional movement is a coin, minted during the reign of the Arakanese king, Salīm Śāh I (1593-1612), which Sharif and Caudhurī independently note figures three scripts: Arabic, Burmese, and Nāgarī (reflecting the movement of elite Muslims between Sylhet and Arakan).¹⁵¹ Additionally, some scholars have suggested that Māgan Ṭhākur, the first patron of Ālāol’s *Sayphulmuluk Badiujjamāl*, was the Sylheti Muslim known as Koreśī Māgan.¹⁵² While this latter claim too is a point of contention between historians of Sylhet and Chittagong,¹⁵³ one cannot entirely rule out the possibility of fluid inter-regional movement between Sylhet, Chittagong, and Arakan during the premodern period. However, there are simply no strong grounds to conclude that the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph is identical to the Saiyad Sultān of Cakraśālā, the poet of the *NV*.

Recall that the focus of the debate over Sultān’s birthplace lies in the competing interpretations of *laškarera pura*, “town of the army or commander,” where Sultān claims to have lived in a settlement of learned men (*ālim*). Sylheti scholars, such as Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee¹⁵⁴ and Āsāddar Ālī,¹⁵⁵ on this basis link Saiyad Sultān to Laškarpur, the medieval capital of Taraph, established in the fourteenth century by

150 D. N. A. H. Caudhurī, *Āmādera sāmṣkṛtika svādhīnatā*, p. 44.

151 D. N. A. H. Caudhurī, *Āmādera sāmṣkṛtika svādhīnatā*, pp. 49 and 67. Cf. Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 24. Neither of the two authors provide their source. Concerning similar coins of Selim Shah, struck in Arabic, Bangla, and Arakani, see Vasant Chowdhury, “The Arakani Governors of Chittagong and Their Coins,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* 42:2 (1997), pp. 145–162.

152 The concerned scholars are Āsāddar Ālī, D. N. A. H. Caudhurī, and Deoyāna Muhāmmad Ākhtārujjāmān Caudhurī, who have been cited in D. N. A. H. Caudhurī, *Āmādera sāmṣkṛtika svādhīnatā*, p. 46. Others claim that Māgan Ṭhākur settled in Cakraśālā in Chittagong.

153 D’Hubert, *In the Shade of the Golden Palace*, p. 49.

154 Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee, “Kavi Saiyad Sultān (ālocanā).”

155 Ālī, *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān*, p. 54, and so on.

Taraph's first Muslim ruler, Saiyad Nāsiruddīn.¹⁵⁶ Chittagonian scholars such as Muhammad Enamul Haq and Ahmad Sharif, on the other hand, have linked Sultān's *laškarera pura* to Parāgalpur of Chittagong, a medieval town founded by Laśkar Parāgal Khān, the governor of Chittagong appointed by 'Alā al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh.¹⁵⁷ On the basis of passages from medieval Bengali texts—many of which have been justifiably queried by scholars such as Āsāddar Ālī and Mazharul Islam—Sharif also proposes that Sultān's birthplace lay in the medieval Cakraśālā district, modern Patiya in Chittagong.¹⁵⁸ While the question of his specific birthplace remains uncertain, the weight of literary evidence lies in favor of associating Saiyad Sultān's life with Cakraśālā since we have evidence for local memories surrounding Saiyad Sultān from the Baraliyā village in modern-day Patiya.¹⁵⁹

Oral tales and local memories of Chittagong draw two significant connections: first, between Sultān as *pīr* (not poet) and the Arakanese court, and second, between Saiyad Sultān and his indirect descendant, Saiyad Gadā Hāsan Khondakār. The latter connection remains enigmatic, since a figure by the same name is independently noted

156 The argument that the place where Nāsir al-Dīn's army (*laškar*) encamped/settled came to be known as Laśkarpur is put forth by Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī in *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, p. 281. Āgphar opines that Taraph's Laśkarpur was named after Saiyad Musā, who was also known as Laśkar. Āgphar, *Taraphera itihāsa*, p. 46. It is more plausible that the capital's name was associated with its founder, or his army encampment, rather than with Saiyad Musā, the founder's descendant, five generations removed. When exactly the place came to be known as Laśkarpur is also uncertain, but Ābdul Āgphar's text seems to suggest that it was probably known as such during Saiyad Musā and Sultān's lifetimes. While emphasizing the lack of evidence for the view that Laśkarpur came to be known as such before Saiyad Musā's time, Rejā (2008, 6), a member of the Laśkarpur Saiyad family, also tacitly reinforces Caudhurī's view. Deoyān Saiyad Aphikur Rejā, "Saiyad Musā (R.A.) o Kichu Prāsaṅgika Kathā." In *Saiyad Nāsira Uddīn (rahaḥ) Sipāh Sālār era vaṃśa vṛkṣera pañcama adhaḥsthāna puruṣa Saiyad Muchā vaṃśīya Saiyadgaṇera smṛtira smarāṇe Laśkarpurera Milana Melā—2008 Im Smaraṇikā* (Sylhet: Milan Melā Udyāpan Kamiṭi, 2008), p. 6.

157 Haq, "Kavi Saiyad Sultān," pp. 315-316. Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 63.

158 *Ibid.*, 53-63.

159 Concerning the association of medieval Cakraśālā with modern Patiya, see Qanungo, *A History of Chittagong*, pp. 78-79. That the poet Saiyad Sultān's daughter's family lived in Cakraśālā is corroborated by literary evidence. Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 55. As Mazharul Islam points out, this alone does not suggest that Cakraśālā was also Saiyad Sultān's place of residence. Islam, "Saiyad Sultān: Janmasthāna evam samaya," p. 134. The poet Mukīm also associates Cakraśālā with Sultān's name. Sharif, *Saiyad Sultān*, p. 57. Regarding philological and other problems related to Mukīm's passage, see Islam, "Saiyad Sultān: Janmasthāna evam samaya," pp. 135-136.

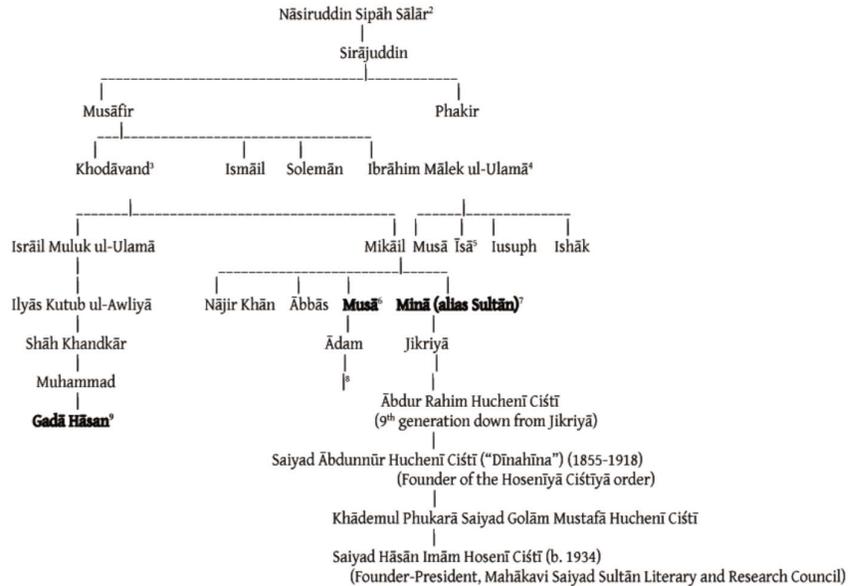
in the histories of Chittagong and Sylhet as a descendant of their respective Saiyad Sultāns. The hopes of Sylheti scholars supporting the argument for identifying the Saiyad Sultān of Cakraśālā with the Saiyad Sultān of Taraph are raised by the *Śamśera Gāṇināmā*, which records an ancestral relationship between Saiyad Sultān and his descendant Gadā Hāsan. However, the case would also require reconciling two divergent family trees of Saiyad Gadā Hāsan Khondakār, and resolving several contentious issues concerning tombs and gravesites. These are matters for another time, another venue, where I discuss the Saiyad Sultān of faith.

Though scholars have quibbled over Saiyad Sultān's birthdate based upon the putative chronogram provided by a unique manuscript, the most crucial evidence to determine his floruit comes from the dating of Mohāmmad Khān's *Maktul Hosen*. This evidence, first brought to light by Āsāddar Āli, helps us determine the *terminus ad quem* of Saiyad Sultān's floruit to be 1645. This date is also corroborated by Sukhamay Mukhopādhyāya's decipherment of the afore-mentioned chronogram. Other evidence cited here provides 1615 as the *terminus pro quem* of Sultān's floruit. This assessment allows us to determine c. 1580 as the possible birth date for Saiyad Sultān.

To literary historians of present-day Chittagong, Saiyad Sultān as *pīr*-author of the first major work of Islamic doctrine in Bangla, held deep cultural significance. Historians of Sylhet and their supporters have also sought to claim this famous figure to bolster the prestige of their own region. So thick and furious have been these inter-regional scholarly claims and counter-claims to Sultān's legacy that Saiyad Hāsān Imām Hosenī Chishtī once called this raging battle of wits "the inky fray" (*masīyuddha*).¹⁶⁰ These debates, however, and their intensity, are proof of Sultān's abiding appeal as a cultural symbol to local Bangladeshi regional groups. In this way, I would argue, Sultān the biographer has followed the very arc of Islamic historiography he had sought to bend to his own ideological ends. He has become, like the Prophet Muhammad, his biographical subject, a cultural symbol of potent value in present-day Bangladesh for those seeking to make Islam relevant to the living present and in enunciating their vision for the future.

160 *Mahākavi Saiyad Sultān Sāhitya o Gabeṣaṇā Pariṣad: Smāraka Grantha*, Vol. 1. (Sultānśī, Habiganj: Saiyad Hasan Imam Husseny Chishty, 1988), p. 10.

Family tree of the Saiyads of medieval Taraph, modern Habiganj district, Greater Sylhet¹



¹ As supplied in Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, Parīṣiṣṭa Kha, pp. 592-3, and corroborated with the family tree provided in Āgphar, *Taraphera itihāsa*, pp. 95-96; where discrepancies between the two exist, I have favored Caudhurī. This has been further corroborated and added to from the family-tree compiled by Saiyad Hāsān's father, Saiyad Golām Mustafā Huchenī Cīstī (1933), as well as the hand-written family-tree supplied me by Saiyad Hāsān Imām Hochenī Cīstī, July 2009.

² His renowned grave is the focus of the Muṛārband *dargāh*, Greater Sylhet. Many of his descendants, listed here, are also buried at the same *dargāh*. Special enclosures around the graves of the *pīr*, Saiyad Illyās Kutub al-Awliyā and his father, a learned scholar, are regularly worshipped by devotees at the *dargāh*.

³ Khodāvand had five sons, namely Sareph Uddīn, Barkat, Isrāil, Mikāil, and Āvej (in order of birth), though only two have been shown here. Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, Parīṣiṣṭa Kha, p. 593.

⁴ Legend has it that Ibrāhim Mālek ul-Ulamā married the eldest daughter of the Bengal Sultān, Jalāl al-Dīn Fath Shāh (1481-86). Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, p. 281.

⁵ This is the Bārā Bhuiyān Isā Khān Masnad-i 'Alā,' who ruled over Suvarṇagrāma. Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī, *Śrīhaṭṭera itivṛtta*, vol. 1, p. 281.

⁶ He has two putative graves: one at Laškarpur, Habiganj, Greater Sylhet, and the other at the Muṛārband *dargāh*, Greater Sylhet. At least one member of the Saiyad family believes he is buried in Arakan.

⁷ While Acyutacaraṇa Caudhurī lists the name as provided above, Āgphar lists the name as "Śā Minā" in the family tree. Āgphar, *Taraphera itihāsa*, p. 49. He does, however, mention in his text that Minā was also known as Sultān. Saiyad Hāsān mentions "Hazrat Syed Sultān (Minā) in his family tree, while his father lists the name as "Hazrat Chaiyad Sāh Chāleh uraphe Minā Chāheb." He has two purported graves: one at Sultānśī, Habiganj, Greater Sylhet, and the other at Pāthure Kellā, medieval Arakan, modern Myānmār. At least one relative of the Saiyad family believes he could be buried at the Muṛārband *dargāh*, Habiganj, Greater Sylhet.

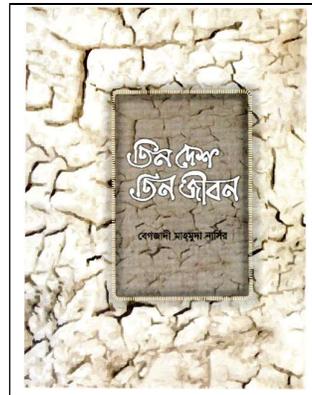
⁸ Saiyad Ābdul Āgphar, author of *Taraphera itihāsa*, is a descendant of Saiyad Ādam, several generations removed.

⁹ He too has two purported graves: one, in Narapatī, Sylhet; the second, in Vārikhārā, Paṭiyā, Chittagong.

Book review

**Beggzadi Mahmuda Nasir, *Tin Desh Tin Jibon*: Dhaka 2015,
Pages 419, Price Tk. 350.00**

Professor Beggzadi Mahmuda Nasir, one of the pioneers of Muslim women's education in Bangladesh, was the founder Principal of Central Women's College, and later, the founder Vice Chancellor of Central Women's University, the first private university exclusively for women in Bangladesh. Her autobiography 'Tin Desh Tin Jibon' describes the journey of her becoming an "enlightened" independent woman as well as the journey of her mission to educate women through the shifting political and cultural landscapes from undivided British India to East Pakistan and finally Bangladesh.



Published in 2015 by a family member, 'Tin Desh Tin Jibon' (literally, 'Three Times, Three Lives') which is written in Bangla begins at Professor Nasir's birth on 16th April, 1929 and ends at the dusk of her illustrious career around 2007. In three chapters of 419 pages, the autobiography covers a first person view of three major political eras within which unfurls a life of consistent struggle and negotiation with the changing alignments of patriarchal forces to establish a very unconventional Bengali Muslim womanhood. Unfortunately, Professor Beggzadi Mahmuda Nasir passed away before she could see her autobiography published.

While Muslim women's agency and empowerment are much debated issues on a global scale, the journey of Bengali Muslim women is still little understood within mainstream Eurocentric feminist historical studies. In this context self representational narratives are important historical sources that could help us understand the dynamics of the lives of middle class Bengali Muslim women. Beggzadi Mahmuda Nasir, who is among the few women of her time to write an autobiography stands out as she presents a life that puts those very notions of agency and empowerment into question.

The first chapter of the autobiography spans from 1929 - the year of her birth to 1947 - the partition of India and Pakistan. Here, Professor Nasir recounts her growing up years where, following the legacy of her mother and aunts, she is exposed to various systems of education - from a combination of missionary and *madrassa* (Muslim schooling) in early years, to a year in the renowned Lady Brabourne College in Kolkata, to mixed gender education in Braja Mohan College in Barisal. She delineates the rise of a confident and resolute girl who takes a path that is different from others by gradually breaking some social and religious taboos that were meant to restrict women's mobility in public spaces and confine them to the domestic sphere. Born within an elite kinship network, her early years were shaped to a large extent by her Anglophile maternal grandfather and her anti-British father who rose to prominence later for his role in the Indian National Congress. This chapter shows the social and political ascension of upper class Bengali Muslims who began claiming their stake in the nation, and who, being positioned within the nationalist politics as the communal other, were growing increasingly disillusioned with the Congress politics, especially in the face of raging communal violence all over India.

The second chapter stretches between 1948 - post partition and 1972 - the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan. After her father's tragic untimely death, Begzadi Mahmuda becomes desperate to fulfill a mission - of becoming a financially independent woman working to build a just and ethical society. This chapter covers the next three phases of her life, starting with life at the University of Dhaka where she gets admitted to a Master's programme in English Literature, being always at the forefront of literary and cultural activities, in the course of which she meets Abdul Matin - a renowned teacher and theater performance artist, and a most compatible life partner for her both ideologically and professionally. The next phase describes her life as a Lecturer in Kumudini College, Tangail, her marriage to Abdul Matin, and the germination of the idea for Central Women's College in order to tackle the crisis in women's education in East Pakistan. The final part of the chapter abundantly details Professor Nasir and her family's tireless struggle to build the institution from scratch. Every bit of her life's energy is seen to be spent in networking with government authorities and potential members of the college, procuring approvals, designing the campus and curriculum, liaising with parents, raising funds, and numerous other tedious activities that brought the college to life within a short time. But very soon, even before the dust could settle down the social life of East Pakistan, another violent political upheaval - the

Liberation War of Bangladesh - takes place that throws her mission into a bottleneck.

The third and last chapter, beginning in the first days after the independence of Bangladesh and ending sometime around 2007, rounds off her life's mission with the successful functioning of Central Women's College and the establishment Central Women's University in Dhaka. In this way, this chapter captures the peak of her career. On one hand she rises in administrative and pedagogic excellence both nationally and internationally, winning awards and being nominated to hold important executive positions in notable academic institutions like the University of Dhaka. On the other hand, the social and economic condition of the newly independent state propels hurdle after hurdle in her path and she gradually finds it difficult to negotiate her way within the new, changing, profit oriented, excess based ethics of this time. She makes enemies of those who cannot see her mission with similar ideological motivations. Legal battles hit her hard, and the fact that she nurtured no materialistic ambitions in her life turns the financial crisis into an emotional one as well. This, coupled with the loss of her valuable colleague and life partner Abdul Matin to death, is what slowly makes her withdraw into a small social circle. Until her last days, she lives a work-filled life.

In the light of how Bengali Muslim women have been predominantly identified and described in history, Professor Beggzadi Mahmuda Nasir stands apart on many counts. Not only because she established large educational institutions, but also because of her exemplary life as a Bengali Muslim woman who not only escaped being defined by dominant definitions of Bengali Muslim womanhood but also threw the notions of agency, empowerment, public and private into jeopardy.

In her own life, she blended Muslim spiritual living with European enlightenment ethics. Honesty, humility, charity, justice, discipline and communal living were the values that she believed were what made the society modern and democratic (See, for e.g. pp. 243, 334, etc.). Her kinship affiliations created the condition for her becoming and acted as the basic driving force of her mission - the community's collective aspiration for a modern, justice based society. As she navigated the changing nature of patriarchal forces through the three political periods, she harnessed her kinship network to push the agenda of her mission irrespective of who was in political power. Although her strategy was far from being confrontational, she did use her social position to challenge religious orthodoxy whenever she found the opportunity. "I am my own *Maulavi*", she proclaimed as she made cutting critique of the irrelevant rituals and customs that hampered women's freedom of practicing a religious-spiritual life independent of male

guardianship (pp. 129). She was equally critical of the segregation practices of upper class Hindus, and the dominance of any one social group over the other. She promised her father to live by the role model of Fatema, the teacher and wise daughter of Prophet Muhammad (p. 123). And that she did until her last breath, from being the only woman in her hometown to recite the *milaad* in public events, to reaching high acclaim and popularity as a model educationist. Her life's philosophy is reflected in her educational practices and the ideas that she taught her young women students (See, for e.g. pp. 176, 193, 141, etc.). She made no prescriptions for ideal womanhood. She never glorified the mother or wife figures, never invoked the nationalist image of the goddess to describe womanhood, and never considered marriage as obligatory for women (See, for e.g. pp. 70, 81, 83, 243, 253-56, etc.) She believed that everyone should lead disciplined, productive lives working for others as humans, and not as males and females (See, for e.g., pp. 136, 216, etc.). Freedom would be in being able to choose how best to do that.

Her marriage and domesticity practices further confirm the uncommon nature of her womanhood, as she never performs 'womanly' work like household chores including cooking, cleaning or looking after children. In the absence of other domestic help, Abdul Matin, rather, was the one looking after these concerns. Here too intellectual partnership was the goal for them, and not the reproduction of the typical submissive wife-macho husband binary (See, for e.g. pp. 160-61, 154-56, 162-63, 183-84, 297, etc.).

To the west-trained scholar, the most remarkable aspect of her womanhood would most likely be her *borkha*. In the 19th century, the *borkha* was part of many upper class Bengali Muslim women's attire. The early imaginings of modern Bengali Muslim womanhood not only did not do away with the *borkha*, rather it expanded its functionality to accommodate the modern requirements of mobility, productivity and efficiency. Debates in the 20th century on the practices of seclusion and *purdah* gave rise to various interpretations of *purdah* and its implications for modern Bengali Muslim women. Since every moment of Professor Nasir's life was engaged in academic and cultural work, one could say that she led a predominantly public life. So, in terms of freedom of movement, she enjoyed that to the fullest without caring for the shock and curiosity her *borkha*-clad comportment evoked in most people. This *borkha* or veil of hers demonstrates how a garment typically understood to hide or cover can be a tool for freely participating in public life; a sartorial practice that identified her as a Muslim woman in public space. As she did not opt for the dominant (Hindu) nationalist public dress code - *sharee*, to her the *borkha* was not a sign of oppression, but it was her chosen attire that signified

unadorned living and resistance to sexual objectification rather than absence of education and culture.

She mixed freely and often traveled with men both in Bangladesh and abroad, and while she was fully aware of how negatively people often judged a woman in her traditional styled *borkha*, it set her free (For e.g. pp. 204, 210, 234, 260, etc.).

The story of someone's struggle always exposes the contradictions and crises that society they inhabit is going through. In the end, when in a secular, sovereign democratic system, civility and moral uprightness ceased being valuable strength, and instead started being perceived as vulnerability, Beggzadi Mahmuda Nasir had an existential crisis.

In terms of the language of 'Tin Desh Tin Jibon', the readers will notice that English words and expressions (in Roman script) are frequently mixed with Bangla. One may find the text choppy and often discontinuous (See, for e.g. pp. 88, 268), with some inconsistencies in spacing, punctuation and spelling (notably, the spelling of the name of the college on page 91). The book is also replete with multiple, sudden back and forth references in time, which may sometimes lend difficulty to its reading. She expresses regret for this, explaining the hurry with which at an advanced age she dictated the entire book and the equally hurried editing and proofreading process that resulted in unchecked shifts in time and overall syntax throughout the book (See for e.g. pp. 268). For a future edition, the editor should consider a thorough proofreading of the book.

However, this does not diminish the value of Professor Nasir's life story. In the present times, when the debate over how to deal with religious orthodoxy's political power has resurged within our current secular democratic framework, which as always has culminated in how gender ideals should be defined and regulated, Professor Beggzadi Mahmuda Nasir becomes even more relevant. Her autobiography compels readers to renew their imagination of Muslim womanhood beyond the empowerment-subordination, or oppression-emancipation binaries. '*Tin Desh Tin Jibon*' is therefore highly recommended to both academic and non-academic readers interested in the history of modern Bengali Muslim women who lived out their lives outside the typical norms and patriarchal expectations. Without doubt this autobiography is a valuable addition to the genre of Muslim women's autobiographical narratives that will be useful for historians of post-colonial modernity to make sense of Muslim women's empowerment.

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