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Correspondence : All correspondence may be addressed to: Editor, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Humanities), 5 Old Secretariat Road, Nimali, Ramna, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh.

Telephone : (880+2) 9513783

E-mail : asbpublication@gmail.com

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CONTENTS

UPON TEXTS AND TIMES: CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN EDWARD SAID AND DANIEL BARENBOIM	
Natasha Afrin and Maswood Akhter	1
AKSHAY KUMAR MOITRA: HIS IDEAS AND METHOD OF INTER- PRETATIONS AS REFLECTED IN HIS HISTORICAL WORKS	
Ichhamuddin Sarkar	13
THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY ON KUTUBDIA UPAZILA OF COX'S BAZAR DISTRICT	
Arobia Khanam and Maruf Mia	41
THE <i>UNITED ARAB LIST</i> IN ISRAELI POLITICS: BETWEEN IDEALISM AND PRAGMATISM	
Md. Mahmud Alam	65
TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES: THE CASE OF ROHINGYA WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH	
Tazrin-A-Zakea	95
Short Communication	
ROQUIAH SAKHAWAT HOSSEIN: OF PURDAH AND EDUCATION	
Niaz Zaman	111

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**UPON TEXTS AND TIMES: CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN
EDWARD SAID AND DANIEL BARENBOIM**

Natasha Afrin*
and
Maswood Akhter**

Abstract

Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim's engrossing and profound conversations—published under the title *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (2002)—on the entwined relationship between aesthetics and politics, and the experiences of their shared histories and parallel geographies, in effect, subvert or reverse the existing paradigm of interpreting texts, documenting histories or constructing identities that tend to beget, as they point out, nationalist tribalism, religious extremity and such other evils. The book showcases a sort of dialogic interaction between two intellectuals— who hail from a supposedly contrastive geo-political location, Palestine/Israel— by carving out a space for them from where they are able to pose resistance against variegated forms of tyranny that include totalising trends and mindless mediocrity, or the exclusivity of scientific specialisation. Through articulating alternative interpretations of music, culture, identity, or history, and highlighting thereby the concept of interrelatedness of human cultures, they inculcate a vision of reconciliation of the Palestinians and the Jews. Such a vision refers to a paradigm of confluence or convergence of counterpoints, of contradictory arguments and opinions— a philosophical paradigm which is ultimately able to offer, as this paper illustrates, empathetic and plural possibilities of texts and histories, or of self and the nation.

Sometime in the early 1990s, academic Edward W. Said and musician Daniel Barenboim's personal and intellectual trajectories cross-cut through a chance-meeting at a London hotel-lobby; their intellectual intimacy and a deep sense of friendship grew since then, and *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* emerged out of the conversations between these two outstandingly powerful and brilliant minds who were simultaneously keen and courageous witnesses to contemporary life and time. The book showcases a collection of scholarly and a gripping series of conversations —taking over the span of almost five years—that registered the authors' reflections on the nature of art and life and

* Assistant Professor, Institute of English and Other Languages, Rajshahi University

** Professor, Department of English, Rajshahi University, E-mail: maswood2005@gmail.com

recorded their explorations into the discourses of music, culture and politics, and thereby shed light on the intertwined relationships among those. This collaborative intellectual enterprise thus offers an insightful network of dialogues that captures not simply the authors' musings on the related problems of our time but also— by delving deep into the issues of history, identity as well as global politics— paves ways for collective epiphany.

The present article is principally premised on a critical evaluation of the text, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, and attempts to explore the diverse yet intertwining threads of Barenboim and Said's discussions on multifarious issues, as mentioned above, ranging from literature to music as well as culture to politics, and shows how the text provides its readers with philosophical insights regarding aesthetics and life, or regarding the moral crises that plague the world and the time we happen to inhabit.

Said and Barenboim, as we know, hail from two distinct culturally complex backgrounds and much-disputed territories: Palestine and Israel. Born in an Argentinean family of Russian Jews and raised in Israel, Barenboim has spent most of his life travelling across Europe. Said, on the other hand, spent most of his life as an exile; he was born in Jerusalem and spent the formative years of his childhood in the colonial Cairo and Lebanon. Barenboim and Said shared a tangential relationship with their cultural roots since they do not inhabit the actual geographical spaces of their "homes," yet they were not unmindful of the grim realities of their homelands— the tragic consequences of the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, the dehumanising civic existence of Palestinians, and the violation of human rights perpetrated by Israel and its strongest international ally, the United States. Said remained an immensely courageous and fearless advocate of Palestinian self-determination and pursued the cause of coexistence of Israelis and Palestinians till the last breath of his life. Barenboim, too, has been able to transcend his professional boundaries as an artist, a performer and an interpreter of music, and to draw connections between the world of music and contemporary human reality. He has been a fierce critique of Zionism, the sanctified/purist discourses of nationalism, patriotism and identity politics. Obviously, Barenboim and Said not only inhabited "parallel personal geographies,"¹ but also shared

1 Daniel Barenboim and Edward W. Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*. AraGuzelimian (ed.), (Bloomsbury 2002), p. ix.

similar set of serious intellectual concerns, and *Parallels and Paradoxes* undoubtedly testifies to that.

The issue that commences at the very beginning of their conversation is the notion of *home*. On being asked about belonging and feeling at home in a particular place by AraGuzelimian —the editor of this collection of conversations —Barenboim replies that he feels at home wherever he makes music.² Barenboim was ten years old when he moved to Israel with his parents and lived in Tel Aviv —a much modern city for the 1950s —that relied on Jerusalem for intellectual and spiritual upliftment. Though Barenboim feels “at home in the *idea* of Jerusalem,”³ his feeling of “belonging,” feeling at home, is correlated with the idea of transition, with the idea of perpetual motion and fluidity. Similarly, for Said the idea of home does not figure as a specific geographical, mythic space evoking memories and nostalgia; he is rather critical and skeptic about the exaggerated sentimentality that people attaches with their homelands, as these romanticised concepts regarding “home” tend to generate fervours of xenophobia or even bellicose jingoism; Said rather feels at home with the idea of “wandering around.” As individuals moving across diverse cultures and continents, Said and Barenboim do not seem to care much about a permanent home; the idea of remaining static and fixed in a geographical location hardly figures out as a desirable form of existence to them; these peripatetic intellectual souls rather feel comfortable with the idea of moving across borders and territories as well as discourses and disciplines.

For Said and Barenboim such an existence of a wanderer, of a traveler, no doubt, has its own set of enriching effects. Their journeys across diverse territories, their crossings of multiple cultural registers may be fraught with a deep sense of pain, of angst and “unpeace of non-belonging”⁴, yet they are aware of the unique insider-outsider positionality of their existence and the disguised blessings that it showers on them. Said and Barenboim’s essential insider-outsiderness endows them with a “double vision,” a plural perspective from which certain critical perceptions about the discourses of identity and historiography become possible.

As carriers of plural histories, Said and Barenboim are well aware of the idea of belonging to more than one culture, and more than one identity, and have come to

2 Ibid. p. 3.

3 Ibid. p. 4.

4 For details see Maswood Akhter, “Bangladesh Revisited: A Monograph on Adib Khan’s Fiction”, *Musings Post Colonies*. Maswood Akhter (ed.), (Chinno 2012), pp. 227-318, p. 231.

view cultural fragmentation as an inevitable human condition. Their early exposure to diverse cultural traditions, norms and practices, their peripatetic life through continents, instilled in them a broad understanding of humanity where xenophobia never occurred as a possibility. The gift of this enriching vision is that the authors are able to view identity as a set of “flowing currents, rather than a fixed place or a stable set of objects”⁵ and are able to understand the notion of identity as a journey towards another “self,” another “being,” and being able to situate themselves in the mental position of others. They believe that our understanding of the idea of identity must be informed by the knowledge that we derive from our explorations into the mindscapes of other individuals. Regrettably, there is “more of a concentration today on the affirmation of identity,”⁶ on the needs of clutching to one’s cultural roots, one’s sense of belonging and values of one’s culture that it has become quite rare to “project one’s self outward,”⁷ to transcend the boundaries of social conventions and have a broader perspective. It is the lack of a broader understanding of identity and the consciousness that a human individual can have multiple identities simultaneously, for which one feels the need of affirming a singular identity, the need of defining oneself as belonging to a monocultural society, leading people to live a ghettoised existence amidst cultural intolerance as well as political conflicts.

Said and Barenboim are well aware of the pitfalls of global identity-politics shrouded in discourses of fascism and fundamentalism, and of consolidating structures of injustice and inequalities as well as ones causing belligerency and conflicts among communities and nations. Reflecting on the phenomenon of massive escalation of such kind of crises in the national and political scenario worldwide, Said identifies, categorically, two reasons —firstly the “reaction *against* global homogenization” and secondly the “legacy of empires”⁸ —that have intensified contemporary national or political conflicts. Said notes that the phenomenon of globalisation and free-market policies have generated the unrestrained flow of cultural commodities and values, making it possible to eat a “Big Mac on the Champs-Elysees and in Cairo”⁹; however, the “sense of an all-

5 Barenboim and Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, op. cit. p. 5.

6 Ibid. p. 11.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid. p. 14.

9 Ibid. p. 13.

encompassing global atmosphere— represented by America”¹⁰ has generated a sense of insecurity within a large group of people. In the Islamic world, for example, many people are wearing veils and traditional dresses, not necessarily as a “form of piety,” or for any religious reasons, but as a way of asserting their own independent identity that poses formidable resistance against global power,¹¹ and as a way of resisting the global homogenising process that emphasises on, as Amartya Sen succinctly puts it, a “solitarist approach” to identity.¹² On the other hand, the “legacy of empires” has divided people along nationalistic, religious, linguistic, cultural and ethnic frontiers, creating neat demarcations between “self” and the “other.” Whenever the imperial powers were forced to leave a place they would divide it up; however, the idea of “partition as a quick way of solving the problem of multiple nationalities”¹³ has uncontestedly failed in the colonial outposts of British governments, for example, in India, Ireland or Palestine, because colonialist agendas of dividing people based on parameters of race, class and religion have inevitably left behind fissures and cracks causing deep and far-reaching wounds of isolation, marginalisation and exclusion. According to Said, both of these factors have contributed hugely to the production of xenophobia and identity conflicts deeply endangering our present world.

Such kind of xenophobia and isolationism, moreover, leads to criminalisation of certain communities and individuals, creating a sense of collective paranoia that leaves no room for a healthy exchange between the self and the other.¹⁴ The real problem, according to Said, is that there is hardly any mediation between alternative perspectives: either everything is absorbed into a “monochromatic, homogenous, mindless whole or there’s an active sense of the classic civilization threatened by new forces.”¹⁵ In other words, there is either a mindless indulgence in the “chest-beating exercise”¹⁶ about a community’s superior virtue, or there is an outburst of an ultra nationalist, militant zeal against people of different race and colour. The sense of exchange or the culture of conversation, Said opines, is

10 Ibid. p. 14.

11 Ibid.

12 For details see Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, (Penguin Books 2006), p. xii.

13 Barenboim and Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, op. cit. p. 14.

14 Ibid. p. 152.

15 Ibid.

16 Adib Khan, “In Janus’ Footsteps”, *Australian Humanities Review*, Vol. 22 (June), 2001, pp. 26-28, p. 27.

gradually disappearing in Europe and the United States. Thus, in America, many people tend to feel that they need not know about “the rest of the world,”¹⁷ their arts, environment, or history; instead, parochialism, insularity and an obsession with homogeneity have gained a momentum. The search for an uncontaminated past and the need to find pure or unsullied roots have never been so catastrophic before; with the end of the Cold War, the defeat of Communism, and the rise of the United States as the most formidable neo-imperialist power, the world has witnessed the crude and cruel politics of war-mongers thriving on tensions of identity-conflicts and jingoism.

Against such a backdrop, argues Said and Barenboim, we are in need of a “humanistic mission” —whether in the field of arts, music, literature or the humanities —that emphasises on the preservation of different identities without “sinking into the desire to dominate”¹⁸ or criminalising any particular identity or community. The kind of humanistic mission Said envisages is premised on the philosophy of coexistence where people will learn to accept difference as a norm and not as a crime; where people will be tolerant toward diversity, eccentricism, or aberrations, and thus articulate and translate ways of peaceful accommodation of people from divergent affiliations and backgrounds— in AimeCesaire’s great phrase, there is room for everyone “at the rendezvous of victory.”¹⁹

Along with preservation of different identities, Said’s humanistic mission espouses the preservation of divergent interpretations of texts and histories as well. His humanistic project is premised on a philological understanding of text and history, that is, a close reading and interpretation of words, where the reader reads a text situating it in its historical context, trying to understand the discipline of language, its forms, and the discourses which constitute the architecture of a text.²⁰ For a humanist reader the task of interpretation entails the daunting endeavour of “putting one’s own identity to the side in order to explore” the identity of the author, the “other”²¹; thus the act of interpretation involves the articulation of other selves, where the interpreter penetrates the consciousness, and situates himself in the position of the writer or the artist who is involved in the act of composition. Said in

17 Barenboim and Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, op. cit. p. 149.

18 Ibid. p. 154.

19 Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, (Vintage 1996), p. 39.

20 Barenboim and Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, op. cit. p. 58.

21 Ibid. p. 12.

this regard refers to Goethe, for whom art was “all about a voyage to the “other,” and not about “concentrating on one-self” which is an insular, parochial way of conceiving the heterogeneous reality that surrounds us.²² Thus for Said, the act of interpretation means discovering the intricate network between the text, the author and the world, and applying an empathic understanding which is able to view them not as disjointed fragments, rather as the constituent elements of a tapestry that forms a unified whole.

Said’s philological methodology of interpreting texts applies to history as well. As an exile, Said is able to view history in its plural avatars; the condition of exile, no doubt, enables one to view things from a necessary detachment or distance, and thus perhaps a bit more dispassionately. History, for him, becomes a complex archive of scattered stories narrated from diverse points of view. Thus, in his understanding of history, the Palestinian narrative of self-determination and the Israeli narrative of the search for an ancestral homeland, both exist simultaneously in an overlapping/intertwined manner, without invalidating the presence of each other. The idea of “different but intertwined histories”²³ is therefore crucial to any discussion that deciphers instances of injury, inequality, and oppression. In the case of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, for example, he believes that one must try to bring into focus the intertwining and inseparable threads that connect both of the histories “without necessarily resolving them into each other,”²⁴ and to understand the histories in their complexities and minute details, because people’s histories are complex, yet still intelligible, things; human beings are capable of understanding their history since they are the makers of it— an insight into history that Said derives from Giambattista Vico. Said’s idea of secularity is based on this humanist and philosophical standpoint; his secularist notion about history and his plunge into the Israeli-Palestinian macro-history has enabled him to dismantle the discourses of sanctification that scripts the narrative of Israeli victimhood and oppression undermining the sustained saga of Palestinian suffering and dispossession. That is why Said believes that if peace projects, such as the Oslo Accord, fails to highlight the question of Palestinian suffering, their dispossession and exile as realities and not as fictions, and if it fails to pave passages for a redress, then the peace process would not be translated into a viable political reality.

22 Ibid. p. 11.

23 Ibid. p. 27.

24 Ibid. p. 27

On the other side, Barenboim opines that “if conflicts are one day to be solved, they are only going to be solved by contact between warring parties,”²⁵ that the conflict between Palestine and Israel cannot be solved “merely through political means, through economical means, or through arrangements”²⁶; there must be an atmosphere of conversations and dialogues, there must be a genuine display of collective courage, of collective innovation of artistic and imaginative selves,²⁷ without which solutions to “the real profound humanitarian problems” would not be possible.²⁸ Moreover, it would remain impossible if writers, artists, activists, intellectuals as well as university professors do not congregate and march towards the ideals of justice and equity, if they succumb to immediate material temptations and become slaves of the establishment, forgetting their responsibility to “speak truth to power”²⁹ and to articulate —with clarity of vision and intellectual honesty—viable formulas for coexistence.

According to Said and Barenboim, universities should function as alternative social spaces where ideas of human freedom, liberation, and enlightenment can be substantiated and expounded, and from where formidable resistances can be waged against unjust authorities and systems. A university should be a place of exploration and examination, rather than confirmation and consolidation; it is not meant to be a place for the accumulation of information or expertise; rather, it should educate us to think, to reflect, to interpret, and to emerge with higher ideas and ideals, which can transform our reality and our world for the better. University should neither be a place of ideological indoctrination, nor a space for technical and professional specialisation. So much importance is given by the capitalist organisations on specialised training that the “idea of a common discourse” has almost become redundant; the entire “funding apparatus is geared toward the fragmentation of knowledge, so that people do more and more about less and less.”³⁰ Moreover, as Said adds, the so-called traditional humanists— that includes figures like Alan Bloom—define education from an elitist and a white supremacist standpoint, confining the idea of education to a disciplinary ghetto, popularly conceived as the “western humanism,” where the study of Greek philosophers,

25 Ibid. p. 11.

26 Ibid. p. 60.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid. p. 62.

29 Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, op. cit. p. 97.

30 Barenboim and Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, op. cit. p. 149.

Homer, Virgil, and French poets are appropriated as a means for not only beating down contemporary literatures— such as, ethnic literature, women’s literature and black literature— but also to devalue and denigrate contemporary concerns.³¹ The question that arises is: what should be the role of education and aesthetics in a world that is plagued with globalisation’s sinister shadows or capitalism’s hideous hegemonic policies?

One of the major insights that we derive from these great thinkers’ conversation is that aesthetics must address the issues of material injustice and inequality, the instances of inequity that perpetuate discriminatory structures. Said believes that it is very important, and useful at times, to “think of the aesthetic as an indictment of the political and that it’s a stark contrast, forcefully made, to inhumanity, to injustice”³²; thus “the aesthetic” should stand against unjust systems and become concerned with issues that plague the marginalised sections of society. It is therefore of supreme significance that as an artist, as an interpreter as well as a reader one is able to transcend the disciplinary borders of, say, literature, music or politics, and to connect with the contemporary concerns of distressed humanity: there is no point, according to Said, in “writing material that makes people just feel good.”³³ And Said has always been interested in not making people comfortable since he believes that it is supremely important to ask questions, to dismantle stereotypes or clichés, to formulate alternatives, to intervene into the unjust structures and practices that not only have failed to critically address the crises of contemporary civilisation— such as, the phenomenon of terrorism or the war against terrorism, and the violation of human rights— but also have consciously undermined the crises of conscience, which has culminated in the gradual decline of public moral, ethical and spiritual standards. In the given context, we have to bank, according to Said, on the blessings that real education entails, that is, not to “accumulate facts or memorize the “correct” answer, but rather to learn how to think critically *for oneself*”³⁴

Reflecting on the interrelation between literature, music and culture, Said and Barenboim finally come to this conclusion that our negotiation with arts and aesthetics should not be detached from the historical and socio-political realities of

31 Ibid. p. 128.

32 Ibid. p. 168.

33 Ibid. p. 78.

34 Ibid. p. 182.

our time. The domain of art may exist as a shelter providing its aspirants with a respite and a sense of escape from the terrible concerns of the present; still, we should not remain unmindful of the global and local, socio-cultural as well as political issues they raise— issues that are immediate and eternal, issues that anyone can attend to across centuries and civilisations. That is why Said and Barenboim stress on the needs of a productive and wholesome interaction among widely divergent cultural/aesthetic creations and practices. Referring to Israeli taboos against Palestinian poetry or Richard Wagner³⁵ as well as a section of Palestinian individuals' decision to forfeit any contact with Israelis, Said opines that any wholesale rejection of opportunities for a conversation between two oppositional parties, or a “blanket ban” of any cultural or aesthetic phenomenon/element, leads to a situation of cultural atrophy where the idea of cultural convergence or communion are undermined to make room for an absolute monopoly of a singular community or tradition. Importantly however, in such contexts, it is the responsibility of the citizens to formulate formidable resistance against the hegemonic neo-colonial authorities that marginalise and discriminate people. It is their duty to apply their reason, understanding, and intellectual acumen, and to guard themselves against the encouragement of uncritical collective and primitive passions,³⁶ because real life and real concerns cannot be ruled by mindless mediocrity and “taboos and prohibitions,” and because ignorance and indifference cannot be adequate political strategies for the present time.³⁷

Said and Barenboim both believed that the training in music should constitute a significant part of one's education. They saw music as one of the best ways to learn about human nature; Barenboim, for instance, mentioned in one of his interviews that “[w]e can learn a lot about ourselves [from music] . . . about the human being, about politics, about society, about anything that [we] choose to do.”³⁸ Said and Barenboim indeed viewed music in a broader perspective. They believed that music, or more specifically, aesthetic, should function as a voice of resistance, as

35 Wagner's music is banned in Israel; because, for many Jews his music symbolises anti-Semitism.

36 Barenboim and Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, op. cit. p. 181.

37 Ibid. p. 184.

38 Barenboim qtd. in Hakem Rustom, ‘The Arab/Jewish Counterpoint: An Interview with Daniel Barenboim’, Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (eds.), *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, (University of California Press 2010), pp. 229-246, p. 231.

an expression of defiance. Expressing his interest in the *interventionary* aspects or potentials of music³⁹ Said mentions: “For me, as somebody who cares so deeply about music, a very important part of the practice of music is that music, in some profound way, is perhaps the final resistance to the acculturation and commodification of everything.”⁴⁰ Said and Barenboim’s conception of bringing together young Arab and Israeli musicians to play as *one* orchestra in the West-Eastern Divan Workshop, and carving out thereby an alternative mode of conversation and coexistence, demonstrates that music can move beyond national, cultural and ideological confines, and can act as a medium to “transgress the political and military abyss between Palestinians and Israelis.”⁴¹ Indeed, Said and Barenboim’s way of looking at life, their views about culture, politics, or history seem to be significantly shaped by their knowledge of and passion for music.

To wind up the discussion so far: Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim’s conversations are not only adorned with deep intellectual insights and philosophical reflections, and the worldviews of the authors concerned, but they also offer profound wisdom regarding life’s guiding principles and an insight into the essential heterogeneity embedded in individual and cultural identity. Interestingly, Said’s methodology of interpreting identity, text as well as history is premised on this philosophical perspective: that you have to cross the borders of your “self,” that you require to transcend insular ideological boundaries, religious or racial parochialism as well as nationalistic or patriotic excess, in order to have a holistic, plural, and empathic view of life, literature and community. Said’s and Barenboim’s explorations into diverse discourses ultimately stress on the need of critical consciousness, where the habit of rational examination, critical outlook, and an ability to imagine and articulate alternatives become intrinsic part of human

39 Said mentions the example of Bach who was writing in the security of the church, “in the security of society in which there’s no challenge.” Conversely, he reflects on the performance of Beethoven, “under the Nazis or under any kind of totalitarian regime, whether left or right,” and points out how Beethoven’s music assumes the “call for freedom” and even becomes a very direct criticism of the policies of the regime and, therefore, is actually a much more disturbing and, at the same time, uplifting thing.” For details see Barenboim and Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes*, op. cit. pp. 40-44.

40 Ibid. p. 168.

41 Rokus de Groot, ‘Edward Said and Polyphony’. Adel Iskandar and HakemRustom (eds.), *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, (University of California Press 2010), pp. 204-226, p 207.

existence. One of the principal outcomes of going through these conversations is to derive inspirations for a rethinking of much of the conventional/popular wisdom— about aesthetics, about methods of interpreting text and history, the role of humanism, the discourse of identity-politics and so on— that might pave passages for a plural and empathic vision with regard to life and literature.

**AKSHAY KUMAR MOITRA: HIS IDEAS AND METHOD OF
INTERPRETATIONS AS REFLECTED IN HIS HISTORICAL
WORKS**

Ichhamuddin Sarkar*

Abstract

This article is an attempt to present an exhaustive study on the works (both books and articles) of Akshay Kumar Moitra who had confined his area of studies on Ancient, Medieval and Modern Bengal as well as Pundravardhana in particular (North Bengal) which bear historical significance till date. His numerous writings such as *Bharat Shilpker Katha*, *Mir Qashim*, *Gauder Katha*, *A Short History of Natore Raj*, *Siraj-ud-daulah* and so on are not only sources of our study and research in new dimension but also to suggest how to use the available documents of history and construct systematic arguments to explore the truth behind the facts. Here the method and ideas of historical thinking and mode of writing of A.K. Moitra as a historian appear to be sound and unique. In our discussions, we have tried to show how he proved himself to be an unbiased historian and thereby he explored the method to refute vehemently the concocted story and facts behind historical interpretation either by the foreign historians as well as by a few Indians historians. This essay is, on the whole, to highlight A.K. Moitra's profound conviction needed for a historian and to make historical research a meaningful one.

In the introduction of the scientific historical writing in Bengali version as well as by founding the internationally reputed academic cum research centre Varendra Research Museum, Akshay Kumar Moitra or Maitreya (henceforth A. K. Moitra) drew the attention of the academic world in nineteenth century India. In fact, he was a historian par excellence and his contributions in archaeology, history and in various branches of knowledge-building including literary activities are still appreciated by the scholars either as source materials or references. Immediately after the establishment of the British rule in India, he gradually exposed himself as a historian and archaeologist, although his literary activities side by side had an exceptional academic recognition among his contemporaries. A scholar like Kshitish Chandra Sarkar paid his respect in an article published in 'The Modern

* Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal, India,
E-mail: isarkar_nbu@yahoo.com

Review' titled 'Contributions to Art and Archaeology' by late Akshay Kumar Moitra and the languages he put up the matter about A.K. Moitra are as under:

Educated sons of Bengal should yet recall to their minds with admiration the contributions Srijut Moitra has made to the reconstruction of the history of Bengal and its culture as a pioneer. He first took up as his special subject of study, the period of the last days of the Mughals immediately before the British conquest of Bengal. The patriotic spirit which induced him to make his debut with '*Siraj-ud-daulah*', '*Mir Qashim*' and '*Firingi Banik*' gradually attracted him to the history of ancient Bengal. His '*Gaudalekhamala*' (appeared in 1912) as the first collection of important inscriptions of the Pala Kings of Bengal will always rank among the source book of the history of Bengal.¹

But unfortunately Akshay Kumar Moitra happens to be less remembered by the modern scholars and whatever the isolated works on him or on his writings have been produced and referred to in rare occasions are not sufficient as per his research and contributions in the various fields of ancient/early-medieval Bengal, particularly on the history of Varendri (Varendra) or Pundravardhana. It is Akshay Kumar Moitra who wrote '*Siraj-ud-daula*' and vehemently sorted out the debate on the concocted story of the 'Black Hole Tragedy' centering Siraj-ud-daulah and thereby effaced the sign of scandal popularized by a few so-called British historians. In this way, he not only reinstated the prestige of Siraj-ud-daulah but also brought back the lost glory of the Bengalis. In 1899, he started the publication of a journal titled '*Aitihāsik Chitra*' and is said to have "received great encouragement from Rabindranath Tagore in this earliest adventure of the kind in the Bengali language."² His collections of articles as well as mode of his writings undoubtedly ushered a new era of historical writings. The Copper Plate Grants of the Pala Kings and their Bengali translation having been shaped in his book '*Gaudalekhamala*' again opened a new dimension of historical research on ancient Bengal.

It is something curious that till date there is no comprehensive work as such on A.K. Moitra excepting a thorough research in Bengali on his life and achievements by Shri Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury (the spelling written in the book) with a

1 'The Modern Review', March, 1952, p. 227

2 See the inaugural address by D.C. Sircar of a seminar held at Balurghat College, South Dinajpur on February 4 and 5 1982 which has been incorporated in *Early Historical Perspective of North Bengal*, (ed.) by B.N. Mukherjee & P.K. Bhattacharyya, published from North Bengal University, Darjeeling, 1987, p.11

caption *Akshay Kumar Maitreya: Jiban O Sadhana*³ published by the University of North Bengal in 1984. We may recall that the University of North Bengal has in its credit to establish the Akshay Kumar Maitreya Museum in 1965 and here also we have to recall Shri Nirmal Chandra Chawdhury in the background.

The works of A.K. Moitra are voluminous and among them we may refer to *Bharat Shilper Katha*, *Mir Qashim*, *Gauder Katha*, *Sagarika*, *Uttar Banger Puratattva Sangraha*, *A Short History of Natore Raj* and so on. Beside these, there are huge numbers of articles and reviews of books which were published in different journals and contemporary periodicals and each of them have thrown light on many unknown areas of history and archaeology of ancient Bengal. It is a fact that, in the last part of the nineteenth century India, most of the Indian historians took a turn to accomplish historical researches from a tone or discourses what one might term as nationalist viewpoints. Incidentally, the nationalist historians were/are stick to an ideology to highlight and glorify the Indian nation in their writings with a view to sensitise national feeling (i.e. nationalism) among the Indians and side by side to counter the agenda of the British historians (mostly officials and administrators) who viewed the Indians as uncultured and uncivilized. Moreover, they popularized that India and the Indians were brought to the limelight of modern culture because of the British rule^{3a}. Rabindranath Tagore never subscribed to the view of the British historians and he had an independent stand to

3 Shri Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury, *Akshay Kumar Maitreya: Jiban O Sadhana*, University of North Bengal, 1984. Incidentally, we have also in our disposal another outstanding research work on this scholar (A.K. Moitra) by Fazlul Haque, titled *Aitihāsik Akshaykumar Maitreya: Jiban O Karma*, Muktaadhara, Dhaka, 1991.

3a. See an article titled Sampratīk Itihās Bhabna (Thoughts on Recent Historical Research) an article by Sabyasachi Chattopadhyay in *Itihāscharcha-Sampratīk Prabandā* (Historical Research-Recent Trends) Kolkata, 2011, p.45

3b. Rabindranath Tagore, *Itihās* (a Bengali book), Viswabharati Granthanabibhag, Calcutta, (1368 B.S.), p.10. In fact during the last decade of the nineteenth century, Rabindranath Tagore started writing many essays criticism etc. related to Indian history and he clearly expressed his view- points about the proposed nature of Indian history (See Mriduchchhanda Palit's book *Itihās Chintay Rabindranath*, Kolkata, 1998, p.127)

Against this trend there is, however, an important component of Indian history highlighting the theory of the Aryan race which in the long run produced the trend of writing Indian history with the propaganda once James Mill did and periodised Indian history in terms of the Hindu civilization, the Muslim civilization and the British period. For details see Tej Ram Sharma, *Historiography-A History of Historical Writing*, New Delhi, 1905, p. 167

treat Indian history and culture because he saw Unity in diversity and only assimilation and not division of the Indians.^{3b} By the way, A. K. Moitra belongs to this group of nationalist historians and his special choice to write and present most of the above-mentioned works clearly illustrate this perception till date. If we look at the mode of writings of our Indian historians of the colonial period it clearly shows that an extraordinary patriotic sentiment seems to have dominated the mind of these historians and A. K. Moitra was a direct product of the same tradition.

Incidentally, the research on regional history of our country is still neglected. In this respect, we must record our thanks and gratitude to A. K. Moitra who had systematically devoted to pick up many aspects of the history of Varendra/Pundravardhana side by side some issues that drew his attention to fill up the gaps of historical research in general. In fact, not only his own writings on history, archaeology and art of Bengal were prolific, but surprisingly he gave a new direction and dimension to the historiography of Bengal which was by and large authentic, critical and well documented. It is, however, to be noted here that it is really impossible to present a review of all his works but there may be an attempt to chalk out certain important writings which still bear its historical significance for the present and coming generation.

It is again important to note that there may be some problems to present our observations on his writings chronologically. But attempts will be made to categorise his works in course of our assessment and to communicate the readers accordingly. Initially let us see what importance does indicate the *Gaudalekhamala* edited by A. K. Moitra. In this epigraphic collection one may come across the Bengali translation of sixteen inscriptions. In the introduction, Mr. Moitra has clarified about the incorporation of some inscriptions and Copper Plate Grants and that the later have not outnumbered the inscriptions. The importance of epigraphic sources has clearly been indicated by Mr. Moitra and it stands as “In a country where there is no written history, and in the attempt of compiling the archaeological evidence, one is to depend mainly on the old inscriptions. So, hundred years before, there was an effort to decipher the inscriptional evidences and gradually these have become popular among the academicians through scientific methods. These may not be considered as history as we mean in terms of its literary view point, yet in respect of their illustrations of contemporary history, there is no space to ignore its importance at any point. In course of their study and explanation by the scholars

over the years, dynastic history and the base of historical interpretation has been established so far. Not only that, whatever have been unearthed from the traditions or ancient literature as well as sculpture and heritage, these ancient inscriptions help us to understand the actual meaning and significance of the facts and stories written in those evidences.”⁴

A.K. Moitra has enlightened us about the historical evidence gleaned from the inscriptions and also the rise and fall of the dynasties, role of the *Prakritipunja* (general public), land and land rights and so on. In a way he has detailed the objectives of the book (*Gaudalekhamala*) and furthermore how can it be an important source material to glance into the history of ancient Bengal has been put up succinctly.

Incidentally, it is only Shri Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury, a reputed scholar on regional history specially History of North Bengal, who seems to have made a sincere and thorough study on the works of A. K. Moitra and has divided them into 15 heads. The list by Shri Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury is as follows: 1) Essays identifying historical truths, 2) Essays on art and architecture, 3) Biographical essays, 4) Literature, 5) Race and society oriented writings, 6) Archaeology and inscriptions, 7) Criticism, 8) Sculpture, iconography and paintings, 9) Essays on excavations of archaeological sites and also memoirs in visiting various historical places, 10) Essays on patriotic feeling and glory of Bengal, 11) Essays on Dramas, 12) Life style of the Bengalis, 13) Indigenous industries and silk industry, 14) Ancient Hindu dynasty and lastly 15) The Bengali civilization in the Far-East.⁵ In fact, in all these writings A. K. Moitra has proved an exceptional caliber of his own. It is however not easy to focus on each and every area of his investigation and

4 Shri Aksha Kumar Maitreya, *Gaudalekhamala*, Vol. 1, Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi, 1319 B.S. pp. 4f. It is likely that, A. K. Moitra had developed this view from an observation of J. F. Fleet published in the Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.11. Fleet has written that “Rich as has been their bequests to us in other lines, the Hindus have not transmitted to us any historical works which can be accepted as reliable for any early times. And it is almost entirely from a patient examination of the inscriptions, the start in which was made more than a century ago, that our knowledge of the ancient political history India has been derived. But we are also ultimately dependent on the inscriptions in every other time of Indian research. Hardly any definite dates and identifications can be established except from them. And they regulate everything that we can learn from tradition, literature, coins, art, architecture or any other source.” (cited by A.K. Moitra, *Gaudalekhamala*, f.n. p.5.

5 Shri Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury, *op. cit.* p.156.

in order to understand his style and historical ideas we like to select a few works by him and to enlighten his historical ideas and style of writing

A short sketch on the History of North Bengal with a title *Uttar Banger Puratattva Sangraha* is no doubt an outstanding research work based on field survey by the author Mr. Moitra. Incidentally, the topics written by him have been compiled and edited by Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Malay Sankar Bhattacharya in 1984.⁶ About eight items have been taken up in the collection and in the opening one titled *Uttar Banger Puratattva Sangraha* gives us an intensive historical investigation on the remains constructed during the Hindu-Buddhist rule in ancient Bengal. Since A. K. Moitra made a field study he gives us the eye witnessed descriptions of numerous *Dighis*, ornamented gateways of various buildings, broken forts, *gumphas* and so on. He has also referred to the *chaityas* and the Buddhists monasteries and how these monasteries were used as academic centers. In this collection we also come across the excavations of Pundravardhana and that how the author was really surprised to locate the historical tradition of Pundravardhana as a region of Hindu-Muslim entity. A. K. Moitra has admitted that Pundravardhana undoubtedly represents a region of ancient heritage and civilization but at a time its glory spread far and wide. The natural beauty, excavated remains, bricks and stones lying here and there may still justify how the Hindu kings and there after the Muslim rulers took special care to brighten their rule and also a tradition blended with the touches of the Hindu and Muslim vis-à-vis the Bengalis.⁷ A. K. Moitra then paid attention to the Adina Mosque. According to him, this Mosque has lost its beauty but he referred the description by Major Francklin who visited the mosque in 1810 and having seen the remains of the Adina, he made a survey of its length and breadth as well as the pillars, prayer hall and the throne (*Takht*).⁸ But the massive structure of the Mosque seems to have struck his artistic mind and as an art historian he has made some observations on the architectural style of the mosque.⁹

The view of Eklakhi Tomb was also visited by A. K. Moitra and he presents a lively description of the same in the book under consideration. According to him,

6 Published by Ratna Prakashan, Calcutta, 1984.

7 Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Malay Sankar Bhattacharya, *Uttar Banger Puratattva Sangraha*, Calcutta, 1984, pp. 16-18.

8 *Ibid*, pp. 19f.

9 *Ibid*, p. 22.

Adina is a Mosque and definitely it happens to be a prayer hall of the Muslims but the Eklakhi is a Tomb. There is no tablet or any inscriptional evidence. Following the opinion of Ravenshaw, A. K. Moitra concludes that Sultan Ghiyasuddin constructed this Tomb for his wife and daughter-in-law. We also come across a quotation from Ravenshaw's work by Mr. Moitra and it is represented as "Proceeding a short distant further on the road (Dinajpur Road), we come upon the Tomb of Sultan Ghiyasuddin known as the Eklakhi Mosque, and built of embossed bricks and hornblende combined. The building is 80 feet square and covered by one dome."¹⁰

As this special study in the above-mentioned title is based on his field study, there is interesting description of the villages he visited during his travel throughout North Bengal. By the way the issues and the facts he recorded are numerous and each item still throws sufficient light on the historical past of the region incidentally, he visited a place named Deopara. As per information of A. K. Moitra, Metcalf came to this place in 1865 and he is said to have got an inscription which is still preserved in the Asiatic Society (Kolkata). There is also a lake and that inscription was found near the shore of the lake. An old Dargah is also one of the remains of Deopara and that the lake is named as Padumsahar (city of Padum). Beside this we come to know that in the said locality there are other two lakes and A. K. Moitra informs us that these lakes are named *Shitalasahar* and *Tapasahar*. Anyway, this inscription is written in Sanskrit language but inscribed in old style of Bengali words.¹¹ In this way, we come across a huge number of places and historical remains that A. K. Moitra visited and his descriptions are so attractive that the sites which apparently cannot claim their past glory but the presentation of Mr. Moitra is unique and informative.

The statement of the Tapan Dighi or Tarpan Dighi in the district of Dinajpur (at present Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal) located in the South-Eastern side of Bangarh and with a distance of 6-7 miles from this spot is another piece of historical study by this scholar. A. K. Moitra has collected some myths and local stories and lastly concludes that this Tapan Dighi was excavated by a legendary king named Bana. In addition to this, he has informed us in a note that in the

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 24.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 32.

geographical map drawn by Major Renell one may come across a place named Tubbene and even Buchanan Hamilton has again identified the same place as Tapan. Moitra concludes that, Buchanan has not mentioned the place name as Tarpan based on the popular belief or tradition and that it was nothing but a holy place for the king Bana.¹²

One of the important sections of this study is about Varendri. In this respect, he specially laid emphasis on a particular point that wherever there are historical ruins of Varendra Mandala, both Mosque and Dargah are situated very near to the heritage buildings of the Hindus. A. K. Moitra has depended on the records left by Westmacott and in the light of these records he has elaborately described the ruins of Mahisantosh which is situated very near to Balurghat, Dakshin Dinajpur. We come across in the available account that the old Dargah is barricaded by the bricks and the place is again shaped like a fort. Mr. Moitra has also referred a huge number of stones over there and he presumed them as the slabs of the temple. In a personal memoir, he has interestingly noted his experience how he paid a visit again in the month of November 1916 and requested a few officers and pleaders of Balurghat to visit Mahisantosh. Some inscriptions were found there and in his opinion these inscriptions (two in number) might help to find out a link line of the history of Bengal. They had collected some coins which were handed over to the then sub-divisional officer of Balurghat. After this, A. K. Moitra has noted the beginning of the excavation of this historical place within a short time and a few remains lying here and there of Mahisantosh. Thus, we come to know about a mosque complex and also a Muslim graveyard. It is said that the Dargah had not been totally ruined rather was found still in standing position. The excavation of Mahisantosh and the description of that particular place appear to us not only well documented but also bear evidences to rewrite the archaeological history of Varendri. In some parts of the book A. K. Moitra has taken initiative to record the historical place of Mahisantosh, the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khalji, the family feuds of the Khaljis and so on.¹³ In a separate statement Mr. Moitra has noted the importance of the places namely Lakhnawati, Debikot etc. where the Muslims for the first time established their rule in Bengal.¹⁴ In this section he has also presented

12 *Ibid.* p.52 n.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 63-71.

14 *Ibid.* p. 92.

a long list of the Iliyas Shahi dynasty and that Sikender Shah, son of Iliyas Shah had the credit to construct the Adina Mosque and thereby, as Moitra has stated, Sikender Shah made a mark of his name by such an achievement in the history of the Muslim rule in India.¹⁵ Barbbakabad and his history is the last item incorporated in the book under consideration. In course of his statement A. K. Moitra has noted a historical truth that wherever the Muslim rule was established in Bengal or somehow ruled by them one may come across either the construction of mosque or inscriptions but those areas where these remains are not found may prove that the rule of the Muslims were established in later time. From Lakshnawati to Devkot and also up to Subarnagram, we may find the Muslim inscriptions but the Eastern area of Devkot in between the rivers Atreyee and Karatoya specifically in the centre of Varendra Mandala, we do not find any Muslim inscription. A. K. Moitra draws a conclusion that in this area for the first time we come across the inscription of Barbak Shah and finally he comes to a point that up to the middle of the fifteenth century this part of Bengal was not under the Muslim rule and that the rule of the Hindu king Ganesh justifies the truth behind such a historic event.¹⁶

Lastly, Akshay Moitra has presented some more important historical facts about Barbbakabad and that this place was known by that name during Akbar and about 38 Parganas were included within this Sarkar. But the name of Mahisantosh is not found among the Parganas of the Sarkar Barbbakabad. The two inscriptions which have been discovered in the ruins of Mahisantosh are dated 865 Hijri (1460-61 A. D.) and 876 Hijri (1471-72 A. D.) respectively and Mr. Moitra informs that both these inscriptions give us a clue that the mosque found in the Mahisantosh was constructed by Ulukh Iqrar Khan, the Ujir of Barbak Shah. It is also an important information that Moitra has clearly pointed out is about the existence of some forts found in the ruins of Mahisantosh which are likely to be the memorials of the capital named Barbbakabad.¹⁷

The historical evidences and the archaeological studies made by A. K. Moitra are no doubt important to reconstruct the history of North Bengal. As an archaeologist and an expert of the history of Varendra he appears to be unparalleled. His meticulous

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.* p. 93.

17 *Ibid.*p.94.

observations and statement supply us such information which are hardly penned by the historians of our time. His excellence and power of writing can also be found in a particular field of history when he picked up some personalities of Bengal who some time or other proved and showed their valour and prowess as great sons of Bengal vis-à-vis India. We will come to this discussion later on.

One of the important writings of A. K. Moitra is no doubt on 'The Ancient Monuments of Varendra' (North Bengal, here we, however, come across the spelling of his title Moitra as Maitra). We come to know that this article is a lecture delivered by him on 18th March, 1927 as a founder member and director of the Varendra Research Society.¹⁸ It was presented before a learned gathering at the Indian Museum, Calcutta. This is a long article giving detailed accounts of the land of Varendra, architectural and iconographic objects, numerous pillars, mounds, various symbols and images, shrines and so on. This article opens up with the description of the land, the name and fame of Varendri (Varendra) and also some facts about the river Sadanira which is identified by many historians as Karatoya. Here we again come across the history of Varendri (Varendra) and its connection with the Pala kings and how Sandhyakara Nandi, the author of the *Ramacharita*, has described this place as *Janakabhu* (father-land) of the Pala kings.¹⁹ Mr. Moitra has incidentally referred to the Tibetan historian Taranatha who seems to have taken Varendri (Varendra) as the birth place of Dhiman and his son, Bitpal.²⁰ About the land we find that there were large number of monuments, tanks and also inscriptions engraved on the temples. A. K. Moitra has informed about the exploration of the ruins of Varendra and how Buchanan Hamilton, Wilkins, Creighton, Ravenshaw and Westmacott took special interest to examine some of the relics and thereby discovered many unknown historical facts of Varendra. Sir Alexander Cunningham also spared time and how Varendra Research Society of Rajshahi attempted to make the finishing touch of the expected goal in this regard.²¹

18 This article has been published in the Journal of the Varendra Research Museum, vol. 5, University of Rajshahi, 1976-77 (the journal has come out in 1979, edited by Mukhlesur Rahman).

19 *Ramacharitam* 1: 38 (Edited with English commentaries by R. C. Majumdar, R. G. Basak and N. G. Banerji, Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi, 1939).

20 'The Ancient Monuments of Varendra', p. 4.

21 For all these information, 'The Ancient Monuments of Varendra', p. 5.

There are other issues relating to the monuments that Moitra has indicated there after. We find the classification of the Monuments such as architectural and iconographic both of which fall under the general head termed as 'devotional'. As to the progressive and syncretic atmosphere, it is said that Varendra represented the existence of Buddhist and Brahmanic religious edifices and establishment and that the land was famous as a centre of learning. With reference to the Chinese record of a pilgrim (7th century A. D.), A. K. Moitra has recorded that "Sakya Buddha preached his doctrine by actually residing for a while in the province of Pundravardhana at a place near which in a later age Emperor Asoka built a stupa¹⁴ but no trace has yet been found of the one or the other. The land of Varendra was also famous for academic development and there were educational institutions, Buddhist monasteries and particularly the flourishing college named Jagaddal Mahavihara."²²

This has been followed by the description of a few pillars of Varendra, a good number of mounds and burial remains which were found by Moitra and the descriptions are no doubt based on field survey. Likewise, Dargahs and mosques, fort of Mahasthan, temple, and inscriptions of the Pala kings, terracotta and also the discovery of huge images have been noted systematically by this author. Various iconographic descriptions of the Jain, Buddhist and Brahmanic images side by side by A. K. Moitra have opened a new dimension for the study of these three religions of Varendra.

Lastly, the land of Varendra has been presented as a centre which added a dignity to the tradition of art history of Bengal. Having studied the specimen of the art objects of Varendra, A. K. Moitra expressed the opinion that in the art style of Varendra there was a 'creative freedom' and that the artist displayed 'human interest in pose and action.' Not only that "the upturned head,- the distended nostrils,- the disposition of legs,- all combined to visualize a joy of motion, by creating a thing of beauty, which is a joy forever."²³

After referring to the observations and on the archaeological sites and various objects related to art history and some items which attracted A. K. Moitra, it

22 T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Vol. 2, London, 1905, pp. 184f. Also *Ancient Monuments of varendra*, p. 6.

23 'Ancient Monuments of Varendra', p. 15.

appears that he was very much meticulous in his investigations and records whatever it might be from the massive buildings, temples and down to the lakes, ponds and tanks or the *dighis*. These items are no doubt valuable assets of Varendra and the thorough studies of this scholar are no doubt helpful to re-write the history of Varendra or North Bengal in new perspectives.

This particular reference brings us to present another unpublished report on Paharpur which was submitted to the archaeological survey of India on behalf of the Varendra Research Society on 15 February, 1917. A. K. Moitra in his study shows that Paharpur was not a Brahmanical temple as was identified by Alexander Cunningham and firmly subscribed the view of Buchanan Hamilton and Westmacott who surmised the same as the ruins of a Buddhist structure. A. K. Moitra carefully read the pillar inscription from Paharpur and the *stupa* bases with a temple in the background and then concluded that Paharpur is nothing but the ruins of Buddhist architecture. The Buddhist origin has been testifying by an inscription which has been referred by MA.K. Moitra and it runs as follows:

Om

Ratnatraya-Pramadena

Satvanam hitanksaya/

Sri-Dasa(sa) balagarbhena

Stambhoyam Karito varah

The translation of the inscription as A. K. Moitra has presented is as under:

OM

‘This excellent pillar was caused to be made by Sri Dasabalagarbha to please the Three Jewels (Dharmma, Buddha, and Sangha) for the good of all created beings.’²⁴ Incidentally, on paleographic grounds this inscription has been taken to represent some Buddhist establishment and supposed to be existed in the eleventh century A. D. It thus shows that Mr. A. K. Moitra was a dedicated historian and used to give much attention to the accuracy in observations and conclusions.

²⁴ An article titled ‘Paharpur’ by Akshay Kumar Maitra published in the journal of the Varendra Research Museum ed. by Muklesur Rahman, vol. 6 (1980-81), University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, 1982, p.3.

In the light of the above we may now proceed to understand the feeling of A. K. Moitra about Indian art. By the way, he wrote a book on it and the title is *Bharat Shilper Katha*.²⁵ In this book a reader may get acquainted with ten essays incorporated and each one of them is excellent in terms of its quality and approach. Late professor D. C. Sircar in his introduction states that Mr. Moitra did not hesitate to criticize the style named *Sadangkatha* in art.²⁶ In most of the essays we find that he vehemently opposed the view points of the Western scholars like Westmacott as to the sculpture of India but at the same time appreciated the comment of Sir George Birdwood who ones admired the inspiring images of the Eastern world.²⁷ In this way, he searched the actual source and origin of Indian art and concludes that, "If there is no reference to the Indian art, there is no point to compile the history of art. The possible reason may be that the sign of Indian art has been reflected spontaneously in the style of Eastern art. Likewise, it has also influenced some way or other the artistic style of the West."²⁸ The ideals of Indian art and its excellence in Bengal art in particular have also been brought to our notice by this historian without any stake and in this respect he referred to the inscription discovered in a pond located at the city of Padum, Rajshahi.²⁹ He has concluded that this pond was excavated by Bijay Sen of the Sena dynasty of Bengal and on the bank of the pond he constructed a Deva temple. A.K. Moitra has praised this inscription (Deopara Inscription) because it not only authenticated the heroism of Bijay Sen but also reflects the behavioral side of the local people. This indicates an exceptional quality of the architect who inscribed this inscription and still deserves credit for such a temperament. A. K. Moitra has searched here the style of art and the languages used there in particular and above all the description of the God *Pradyumnesvardeva*.³⁰

The author of the book has also logically mentioned poet of Varendra named Sandhyakara Nandi in this reference and that how in the *Ramacharita*, this poet has described the beauty of the city of Ramavati and that the Bengali poets and the

25 First reprint in 1982, Introduction by D .C Sircar (Dinesh Chandra Sircar), Calcutta.

26 Akshay Kumar Moitra, *Bharat Shilper Katha*, Calcutta, 1982, p. 5 (Introduction).

27 *Bharat Shilper Katha*, pp. 2-3.

28 *Bharat Shilper Katha*, pp. 43f.

29 *Bharat Shilper Katha*, p.84.

30 *Bharat Shilper Katha*, p. 88.

artists had the credit to reflect their poetic imagination even if in their art or literature. A. K. Moitra has described it as a traditional art culture of Bengal which was not only exceptional but bears the identity of the East in particular devoid of Western influence and what not.³¹ All the more, A. K. Moitra has sought the extraordinary caliber of the artists and logically reference has been made to the great artists of Bengal named Dhiman and Bitpal.³² Very interestingly A. K. Moitra does not like to distinguish the mode of historical writing and the style of art history and he believed that there is a meeting point between the two because their concern was the same namely the motherland and the nation.³³

One of the leading titles among the works of A. K. Moitra is *Gauder Katha*³⁴ and it is a collection of articles published in the journals namely *Bangadarshan*, *Prabasi* and *Sahitya* and so on. The total number of essays incorporated is ten. Most of the caption is related to the history of Gouda. In the background of the writing and when A. K. Moitra attempted to write this history he started from *Gauda-tattva*. In his opinion once this Bengal was known as *Gauda-desha* and even he mentioned the prevalence of the term *Gaudiya Sadhubhasha* or *Gaudajana*. According to him *Gauda Mandala* is an ancient *Janapada* and that the tradition as to the spread of Aryan civilization in Gouda has been forgotten. Thus A. K. Moitra is of the opinion that like other parts of India, *Gauda Mandala* had also experienced three stages of the religious transformation namely a) Age of confrontation, b) Age of assimilation and lastly c) Age of compromise.³⁵ The essay *Gauda-tattva* has been followed by another one named *Gauda Durga* where *Dakhil-darwaja*, *Baish Gaji*, *Kadam Rasul*, *Purba Dwar*, etc. have been outlined by the author. In the *Goudiya Nagaropakantha* there are descriptions of Firozpur, Baluya Dighi, the graveyard of Shah Niyamatullah and Sona Mosque and lastly Takshal Dighi. In all these writings we come across many information based on field studies and also have been portrayed in the light of some memoirs and accounts left by Raveshaw and reports of Creighton. A. K. Moitra has located the ruins of a Hindu dynasty of Gauda situated in the left bank of the Mahananda River and also in between Malda and

31 *Bharat Shilper Katha*, pp. 91f.

32 *Bharat Shilper Katha*, p. 93.

33 *Bharat Shilper Katha*, p. 95.

34 Published by Sahityalok, Calcutta, 1390 (B. S).

35 *Gauder Katha*, pp. 2-3.

Pandua. Here the author has tried to present the meaning of *Gauda* and that the term has been derived from *Gud* (molasses). Incidentally, the author has also presented some history of Pundravardhana and some places around the present city of Malda. We come to know the ruins of Buddhist monasteries and the references and reports once notified by Yuan Chwang. In this way, A. K. Moitra has presented other issues related to Gauda and also the connection of this place with other historical events of India. With reference to Muktapida Lalitaditya and his story of world conquest the *Gauda Desha* was situated encircled by Kamarupa in the Eastern side, Utkal on the South, Kalinga and Kanyakubja in the West and accordingly A.K. Moitra concludes that the people who were living in Gauda at that point of time were the inhabitants of Vanga.³⁶ Another interesting point that Moitra has noted here is the view of Kalhana who is said to have described the people of 'Vangadesha' as green coloured men and that even it was written in a poetic style may undoubtedly be taken as a fact of history.³⁷ In other essays titled Pancha Gaudeshvar Jayanta, Gauda Kahini, Gauda Kavi Sandhyakara Nandi, Gauda Kavi Manarath, Gauda Kavi Charturbhuja etc. we see some unknown historical facts about all these poets. For example, the poet Manaratha is supposed to be a contemporary of Ramapala, the Pala king and that he was a Brahmin by birth. A. K. Moitra states that Manaratha composed the *Prashasti* of Vaidyadeva (Kamauli Copper Plate) and that there is a mention of naval battle, but unfortunately there is no reference to any king or kings who fought the battle.³⁸

Gauda Kavi Sandhyakara Nandi is a famous personality in view of his great work titled, *Ramcharitam* and the history of Ramapala. A. K. Moitra has admired the merit of Sandhyakara Nandi as a poet and has noted that the poet was not a Brahmin as suggested by Haraprasad Sastri.³⁹ Again Moitra has emphasized that although *Ramacharita* was a *Kavya* but it is a historical document because it is rare and in this light Sandhyakara Nandi can be treated as the poet Kalhana of Bengal.⁴⁰

Gauda Kavi Chaturbhuja is the last item of this book and he is said to have authored the book, *Haricharita Kavyam* and the subject therein is about

36 *Ibid.* p. 40.

37 *Ibid.* pp.40f.

38 *Ibid.* pp. 78-79.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 68.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Krishnalila. The most interesting aspect of this essay is that the date of its completion was 1493 A. D. and during the reign period of Alauddin Hossain Shah. This poet has stated that he lived in Sriramkeli Nagar and it was a part of Gauda Nagara. The name of Ramakeli is famous and has been mentioned in the Bengali literature. A. K. Moitra has referred how Sri Chaitanya passed three days at Ramakeli in course of his propaganda of *Harinama Sankirtana* and distribution of *Harinamamrita* among the people. Furthermore Rup and Sanatan, the most famous ministers of Hussain Shah left their families from this holy place and as a mark of memories the Ramakeli fair is held in the Bengali month of Jyaistha.⁴¹ Beside these, there are references to the donation of the Karanja village by Ballala Sena to the Brahmins of *Kashyapagotra*. Again it is said that in the village Karanja under Varendra *Mandala*, many Brahmins proved their merit in cultivating the *Shruti-Smriti*, *Purana Kavya* and so on.⁴² It is, however, noteworthy that the description of Chaturbhujia in his *Kavya* is based on the popular sayings and that his statements are not found in the *KulajiShastra*⁴³ and A. K. Moitra has clearly mentioned it at the end of this essay.

Lastly, it is to be noted that in the introductory section of this book, Dinesh Chandra Sircar has raised some doubts about the dates and even whether *Gauda Mandala* is to mean North Bengal. In the same way the location of Gauda and some other places have been indicated (like Pandua and Pundravardhana Nagara) and so on. However, the historical importance of these ten essays by A. K. Moitra cannot be underestimated at any point rather it is the duty of the modern scholars to avoid confusion, if any, and to draw final conclusion about the issues detailed by Akshay Kumar Moitra on Gauda.⁴⁴

Another outstanding work of A. K. Moitra is *Sagarika*.⁴⁵ In the introduction Shri Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury has stated that some of the art objects were collected and preserved in the Varendra Research Society and some of them were taken from East Indian Islands an area tracing from the sea shore of the Malay Island down to the sea shore of Australia. There are many islands in the seas and in the

41 *Ibid*, p. 83.

42 *Ibid*, p. 86.

43 *Ibid*, p. 87.

44 See the introduction of the *Gauder Katha* by Dinesh Chandra Sircar.

45 First published in 1986, Calcutta.

geographical maps these are known as East Indian Island. According to Shri Chawdhury and on the documents incorporated in various essays, Akshay Kumar Moitra seems to have attracted to the Hindu civilization of the East Indian Islands. It is said that, the essay *Sagarika* is a product which establishes the fact that the Hindu civilization that developed in the East Indian Islands was a part of the Bengali civilization.⁴⁶ The point which A. K. Moitra emphasized is a negation of the identification of the culture and civilization of East Indian Islands either of Chinese civilization or the civilization of Western India. The scholars who stick to this argument are Westmacott, Ferguson, V. A. Smith and so on.⁴⁷ It is only Akshay Kumar Moitra who emphatically proved the influence of the Bengali culture and civilization in the Islands under consideration. In order to substantiate his arguments, he presented five essays and one of them is the presence of Sanskrit books in the East Indian Islands.

First of all, we may recall here the commercial relation of India with the East Indian Island from ancient time and very likely some colonies were established in various Islands specially Bali. Although how many people of India and from which provinces had settled in those Islands is very difficult to decide upon and the main purpose of writing *Sagarika* lies there.⁴⁸ But A. K. Moitra appears to be sure about the Sanskrit book available in the Islands were taken from India and having been separated from their mother land the Indians copied then for generation.⁴⁹ In this respect, A. K. Moitra brings to us some of the *slokas* of *Amarakosha* and *Vishnunamabali*. This is just to make a comparative study between these two texts where the God Vishnu has become popularly known and other names of Vishnu like *Chakrapani Janardana*, *Gahabinda Garudadhvaja*, *Vasudeva* etc. are popular in India. A. K. Moitra has also referred many Sanskrit words popularly used in Bali and that this is not an accident. His conclusion is that most of the distorted Sanskrit words used in Bali were known nowhere than Bengal.⁵⁰ In this way, we come across other essays and their contents which are by and large connected with Gauda or Bengal and in the 'Kalinga Kahini', the author has tried to link up the history

46 Introduction of the *Sagarika* by Shri Nirmal Chandra Chawdhury, p. 4.

47 Introduction of the *Sagarika*, p.4.

48 *Sagarika*, p.36.

49 *Ibid.* p. 37.

50 *Ibid.* pp. 37f.

and the people of Anga-Vanga and Kalinga. Not only that, the conquest of Kalinga by the Gauda kings and the legendary episode of the conquest of Kalinga is known to the Bengalis from ancient time. In this way, A. K. Moitra has drawn up some historical truth where one can find the influence of Bengal or India spread far and wide and the Indian civilization could record its glory accordingly. *Sagarika* is thus an interesting contribution of A. K. Moitra so as to signify the culture and civilization in India in general and Bengal in particular. A brilliant conclusion of Akshay Kumar Moitra is about the art style of East Indian Island is nothing but an imitation that of Gaudiya style.⁵¹ Although this is controversial but Akshay Moitra did never compromise with the opposite views of the scholars.

The famous book titled *Sirajud-daulah* was published in a book form in 1304 (B. S.).⁵² The entire book is divided into 29 chapters including the conclusion. In the starting he describes the crisis period of Bengal immediately after the death of Siraj-ud-daulah and in this chaotic condition the so called *Matsyanyaya* prevailed. This history is according to A.K. Moitra is not the story of the tragic end of the life and reign of Siraj-ud-daulah, but an episode of the sufferings and troubles faced by our forefathers.⁵³ In most of the sections we come across the scholastic touch of A.K. Moitra and the issues like the childhood of Siraj-ud-daulah, the torture of the English businessmen and also the character of the English are no less interesting to us. In the beginning Akshay Moitra has sided with Siraj and has not agreed with the English historians who vilified the character of Siraj. Mr. Moitra has admitted that there is no reference as such in the documents available in the British archives certifying the immoral character of Siraj-ud-daulah.⁵⁴ Most of the issues other than the Blackhole Tragedy are the popular facts written in the History books and the

51 *Ibid.*p.77.

52 Here the reprint copy published in 1983 (Samakal Prakashani, Calcutta,) has been used.

53 Akshay Kumar Maitreya, *Siraj-ud-daula*, p.11.

54 Akshay Kumar Maitreya, *Siraj-ud-daulah*, Calcutta, 1983, p. 79. To put in the words of D.C. Sircar it appears "Akshaykumar's *Sirajuddaula*--- created the greatest sensation among Bengali historians in particular not only because the Nawab has been presented in the work as a much better man than he was in earlier writings but also because our author tried to show that the story of the 'Black Hole tragedy', attributing criminal callousness to the Nawab, was a myth fabricated by the English". See the Inaugural address by D.C. Sircar in the seminar at the Balurghat College, Dakshin Dinajpur held on 4th – 5th February, 1982, published in *Early Historical Perspective of North Bengal*, edited by B.N. Mukherjee and P.K. Bhattacharyya, published by North Bengal University, Darjeeling, 1987, p.13.

main controversial is the one we have already mentioned centering Blackhole Tragedy which has been suggested by A.K. Moitra.

Immediately after the battle of Plassey many English historians were engaged in the character assassination of Siraj-ud-daulah and it was on the cruelties that led to the death of a huge number of Englishmen and were survived 23 in numbers out of 146. Incidentally, after few years S. C. Hill wrote a history in three volumes titled *Bengal in 1756-57*. Hill also quoted the same story in his book and this led to the arrangement of an open seminar where F. J. Monahan, J. S. Little and Akshay Kumar Moitra refuted all the arguments of the British historians and in no circumstances it could be considered as a historical fact rather it was a ‘Gigantic hoax’⁵⁵ and thus a controversial face of Bengal came to an end and the affords to underestimate the Bengalis to some extent came to an end. In the section of ‘Blackhole Tragedy’, A. K. Moitra has described his mental agonies and determined to protest the false allegation and he did it opposing all oppositions and sarcastic comments against him.⁵⁶

We may refer in this series another book titled *Mir Qashim* after *Siraj-ud-daulah* and both these works are to some extent inter-connected. In the introduction Akshay Kumar Moitra has admitted that “at the time when Mir Qashim was alive and the moment was nothing but an’ age of revolution’ in the history of Bengal. The old was yielding place to the new and Mir Qashim was trying to embrace the old tradition and whether it was good or bad the book on Mir Qashim has no link. But how the old was washed out giving place to the new has been presented some way or other in the book.”⁵⁷

There may be differences in history and historical presentation. History bears perfectness in itself but historical facts are not complete because all the facts can’t be reflected in the facts.

55 ‘Bengal Past and Present’- Vol. 11, Serial No. 21, pp. 75-104. D.C. Sircar wrote about it “in the seminar held on the 24th march, 1926, at the Asiatic society of Bengal, under the auspices of the Calcutta Historical Society, Akshyakumar very forcefully defended his criticism of the story of the Black Hole tragedy.” See the Inaugural Address of D.C. Sircar in a seminar held at Balurghat College on February 4 and 5, 1982, p.13.

56 *Sirajud-daula*, pp. 137-139.

57 See the Introduction of the book *Mir Qashim* by A.K. Moitra, Kolkata, 2004 (This introduction was written in 1312B.S.).

Mir Qashim was not above any crime and offence but at the same time he had innumerable qualities of heart. He was very much concerned to protect the trade and industry of the land and this attempt brought him to his downfall.⁵⁸

As being the last independent Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Akshay Kumar Moitra has emphatically suggested that he (Mir Qasim) sacrificed his life for the welfare of his subjects and this is the main point about the career and achievements of Mir Qasim.⁵⁹

Akshay Kumar Moitra has detailed the history of the period from the emergence of Clive; accession of Mirjafar and of course the coming of Mir Qasim to power. In this light he has characterized the temperament of Mir Qasim and a personal side of the Nawab as to how he used to hate the English like Sirajuddaulah.⁶⁰ There are many historical incidents and amongst all these we come across how in the process of downfall of the Mughals led to the emergence of many provincial powers namely the Nizam of Hyderabad and almost independent Nawab of Awadh. All these incidents have been narrated by Akshay Kumar and he systematically touches the evolution about the story how Mir Qashim received the *Sanad* from the English. In one of the chapters (chapter Fifteen), Akshay Kumar opines that “The English could direct Mirjafar as they desired; but at the moment of conflict Mirjafar used to submit to them. Surprisingly Mir Qashim was not a man of that type and he could not be dictated by any means. His character was something extraordinary and so the possibility of misunderstanding in the tie of friendship was inevitable.”⁶¹

Akshay Kumar Moitra has also presented a detailed account of the three battles namely Katoya, Ghiriya and Udayanala that Mir Qashim had to fight against the English and in spite of the stories of these three battles are known to us, A.K. Moitra has tried to highlight some new information about the time, strategies taken up and the outcome of the battles.

The book has also presented some other episodes like the mental depression and hopelessness of Mir Qashim and the book has ended with some other important incidents connected with the fag end of the life of Nawab Mir Qashim and the

58 *Ibid.*

59 See the Introduction of *Mir Qashim* by Akshay Kumar Moitra, Kolkata, 2004 (This introduction was written in 1312 B. S).

60 *Ibid.* p. 27.

61 *Ibid.* p. 74.

Grant of Dewani in 1765. These historical facts have been presented with support of original sources by A.K. Moitra which help us a lot to look into the history of the period afresh. A few pages have been added in writing the last phase of the life of Mir Qashim by Sri Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay is informative and many unknown sides of the life of Mir Qashim have been highlighted by Sri Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay which may be our extra benefits to think about the last days of Nawab Mir Qashim.

As to the writing of family or dynastic history by Akshay Kumar Moitra, we may mention here a monograph titled *A Short History of Natore Raj*. It is by and large a family history that belongs to the Moitra family of Varendra Brahmins who are said to have descended from Susen Muni, one of the five learned sages migrated from Kanauj. It is said that, Kamadava Moitra of this family was an officer under the zamindars of Lashkarpur better known as Rajas of Puthia in the district of Rajshahi. This Raja had three sons namely Ramjivan, Raghunandan and Vishnuprasad. Kamadeva had taken much care about the education of his sons who were sent to Puthia, then a great centre of learning. Raghunandan was an intelligent boy and he was appointed as a Vakeel of the Puthia Raj in the darbar of the Nawab of Dacca.

With the accession of Murshid Quli Khan in Bengal in 1702 A. D. there was a change in the revenue settlement of Bengal Bihar and Orissa. This situation gave a rare opportunity to Raghunandan who became a Dewan. The defaulting zamindars were kicked out and these zamindari were conferred on his elder brother Ramjivan. A. K. Moitra has presented that the first zamindari named Bangachi made Ramjivan only a zamindar of minor importance. But the revolt and death of Uditanarayan, the zamindar of Pargana Rajshahi made Ramjivan the Maharaja of Rajshahi. The death of Raja Ramakrishna, a zamindar of Bhaturia brought the same under the custody of Ramjivan for a short time. The revolt and ultimate death of Sitaram Roy of Jessore also favoured Ramjivan to enjoy the zamindari of Jessore. Ramjivan resided at Natore where he built his Rajbari but we come to know that his last days did not pass happily. Raghunandan died in 1714 and his only son Kalikaprasad also died soon after his death and the Maharaja Ramjivan had to adopt Ramakanta by conferring on his natural father the Parganas of Chowgram in Rajshahi and Islamabad in Rangpur. Maharaja Ramjivan also breathed his last in 1730 A. D.

Thus, as the family history goes the zamindari of Rajshahi developed upon the young Maharaja Ramakanta and his wife consort Rani Bhavani for whom Dewan Dayaram acted as guardian and superintendent. Gradually, the young Maharaja maintained the prestige of the Natore Raj family as the history of the family suggest. Anyway, Raja Ramakanta who deceased in the year 1748, was succeeded by his wife Rani Bhavani whose Dewan or minister was Dayaram and the zamindari was going on with religious observances. She is said to have conferred land-free lands of pious Brahmins and also to the Muslims with saintly disposition.⁶²

The conflict between Rani Bhavani and Warren Hastings is a famous episode of the reign period of Warren Hastings. Warren Hastings had brought an allegation against the Rani she had embezzled a sum of twenty-five lakhs of rupees from the dispossessed zamindars. This was a prelude to the action which Warren Hastings took up in wresting from her the large estate of Baharbund in Rangpur and invested the same in his Banian Kantababu. A. K. Moitra says, "This was the first breakup which the Natore Raj estate suffered and it was due to no fault on the part of the Rani."⁶³ After this A. K. Moitra has noted some administrative affairs of Bengal including Natore, retirement of Rani Bhavani living her estate to her adopted son Ramakrishna.⁶⁴ Ramakrishna had to face some troubles from Bhusana in Jessore, Rani Bhavani tried for a time to tide over the difficulties by taking the charge of management on behalf of her grandson Biswanath. Maharaja Ramkrishna is said to have left to sons Biswanath and Sibnath and Sibnath had a son Anandanath Raibahadur who was a sharp and shrewd man.⁶⁵ He erected at Rampur Boalia a building for a library after his name and A. K. Moitra has noted that although he was orthodox and conservative yet he was liberal minded and was concerned with public interest. He died in 1866 leaving his four sons Chandranath, Kumudnath, Nagendranath and Jogendranath.⁶⁶ Chandranath was also a patron of learning and various types of liberal grants were given to the Sanskrit scholars and musicians during his time. Another brother Jogendranath was also a benevolent man and it is

62 *A Short History of Natore Raj*, published in 1912, Natore, Rajshahi, p. 10.

63 *Ibid.* p. 11.

64 *Ibid.* p.13.

65 *Ibid.* p. 16.

66 *Ibid.*

said that his private charity knew no bounds.⁶⁷ His only son Kumar Jitendranath died of pneumonia at Calcutta and his infant son Kumar Birendranath came forward for the management of Chhotataraf estate which was again given under a trustee by the last 'Will' of Jogendranath and his daughter-in-law Rani Hemangini as the managing executive of the estate.⁶⁸ Rani Hemangini was a lady of excellent caliber of her family and she followed the foot-steps of her father-in-law.⁶⁹

A Short History of Natore Raj by A. K. Moitra may be treated as a booklet. But the approach and the premise of the book happen to be not only for a voluminous work but also with directions to bring about an authentic research work in this field. A. K. Moitra had collected contemporary documents for this work and he prepared the entire blueprint of the book in such a way that any reader may get acquainted with so many aspects like the origin of the family-estate, conflict of Rani Bhavani and Warren Hastings, enlightened disposition of members of the family and so on. In this light whatever A. K. Moitra has produced is something as a model of research on dynastic history.

A valuable work of Akshay Kumar Moitra is *The Fall of the Pala Empire*⁷⁰ which was originally a lecture of this scholar delivered in 1915 at the Senate Hall of the University of Calcutta. It is a fresh light thrown on the interpretation of some stanzas of Sandhyakara Nandi's *Ramacharita*. The book is, however, a valuable document in order to get some fresh knowledge about the Palas and their rule in Bengal with a special focus on the end of the empire. Incidentally the lecture was presented in parts with captions like, i) The Pala Kings; ii) The Pala Kingdom; iii) The Kamboja Usurpation; iv) The Causes of Revolution; v) The Pala Kings in Exile; vi) The Struggle; vii) The Restoration; viii) The Fall of the Kingdom, and ix) The Last Days of the Pala Kings

The headlines of the chapters give us some ideas about the theme of the discussion that Mr. Moitra tried to highlight in the lectures. The uprising of the Kambojas and their usurpation of the Pala Empire is no doubt interesting because we come across

67 *Ibid.* p.17.

68 *Ibid.* p.15.

69 *Ibid.*

70 *The Fall of the Pala Empire* (with an introduction by D.C. Sircar) published by the University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, 1987.

here the reference of the study of the *Account of the District of Dinajpur* by Dr Buchanan Hamilton, some achievements of Mahipal I, the Pala ruler, including his excavation of the Mahipaldighi situated in Varendri/Varendra (now located at South Dinajpur, West Bengal) and so on.⁷¹ The overturning of the empire and the distressed position of the Pala rulers have also been detailed in the chapter v (The Pala Kings in Exile), and thereafter a turning point that we see when Ramapala took up the initiatives to restore the Pala rule and succeeded in the long run (chapter, The Struggle). Infact there is a separate chapter captioned The Restoration (Chapter vii) and the author clarified many problematic situation that came over the empire and the future of the whole empire was almost uncertain.⁷² After focusing all these incidents, the author then passes to explain the crises, the main theme of the lectures that had befallen on the Pala dynasty which led to the end of the long rule of the Palas of Bengal. First of all the long rule (42 years) of Ramapala and the absence of any figure parallel with him to tackle the situation and obviously the rule of the weak successors specially that of Kumarapala which intensified the crises of the empire and in no time there was the fall of the empire.⁷³

Lastly, A. K. Moitra has brought to us along canvass of the history of the Palas and from the beginning to the end, he has tried to clarify some of the issues raised by Sandhyakara Nandi in his *Ramacharita*. Anyway, these series of lectures may be considered as valuable source materials to enrich our knowledge about the Pala rule of Early Medieval Bengal as well as the history of the ultimate downfall of the empire.

In addition to the works we have discussed above he wrote huge number of articles. Apart from *Uttar Banger Purakirti Sangraha*, there are other types of essays written by him and these may be categorized as under:⁷⁴

- 1) 'Bangabhumi O Bangali' where some of the aspects connected with the Bengalis as a community, the ideas of the Bengali and the history of the Bengalis are incorporated. In the section, the ideas of the Bengalis, he has made a comparative study on the

71 *Ibid.* pp.30-32.

72 *Ibid.* pp.46-78.

73 A. K. Moitra has explained the story with references in the last two lectures with the titles: i) The Fall of the Kingdom, and ii) The Last Days of the Pala kings.

74 Incidentally, in 2012 one Rajnarayan Pal has compiled all these essays and writings and it has been published under the title *Akshay Kumar Maitreya- Rachana Sangraha*, Kolkata, 2012.

Bengalis in ancient time and what the Bengalis do possess in their character in modern time. Likewise, in the history of the Bengalis he has laid emphasis on a particular side that 'there is no history of the Bengalis and this cannot be written unless they take initiatives themselves to write their own history'.⁷⁵

In another section with a caption 'Desher Katha' he represents that in foreign countries there was a necessity of writing history as was felt the necessity of doing the same. As to us whether there was the same necessity to compile history of ourselves is a question till date. Secondly, whether there is a reality of the same. Thirdly, how was the nature of our written history, if any? Fourthly, even if history was written where it is, why is it out of sight? Fifthly, if it is really destroyed by any means then a question arises what might be the inevitable cause of destruction? Lastly, if the historical literature were produced at any level, what may be the probable cause it has been washed away and all the more some imprints would have been left out here and there. At this juncture a question arises whether there is any true evidence to trace whether any history was written at all in ancient time! In this way, A. K. Moitra has raised many questions and the central point is how to write history.

2) 'Bauddha Dharma'- in this head there are four sub titles namely a) Kapila Vastu; b) Sakyabudha-Bodhikram; c) Fa-hien; d) Chainik Tirtha Yatri. These are all primarily narratives centering the theme and all these aspects may be taken as how did he think about Buddhism and the popularity that attracted the foreign travelers particularly of China.

3) 'Bange Turki Akraman'- There are discussions on some of the known historical facts like the conquest of Bengal by Bakhtier Khalji, flight of Lakshan Sena and so on.

4) 'Uttar Banger Purakirti'- we have discussed above in detail.

5) 'Tamrashasan'- here one may come across discussions on five important issues namely a criticism of Copper Plate Grant; b) Newly discovered Copper Plate Grant-1; c) Newly discovered Copper Plate Grant-2; d) The Copper Plate Grant of Mahamandalik Isvara Ghosh; e) Copper Plate Grant of Isvara Ghosh and so on.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 49.

- 6) 'Bhaskarya O Chitrakala' – in this part two sub-titles have been incorporated namely, a) The Sculpture of Dhiman and b) The internal and external sides of the Indian paintings.
- 7) 'Ashtadasa Shataker Bangla'- one may experience in this section five issues which have been detailed by Moitra and these are as follows: a) Siege of Calcutta; b) Blackhole Tragedy; c) Red Arm Force; d) Famine and e) Golam Hossain
- 8) 'Bastrasilpa' (cotton industry) – we find two items have been discussed here in details namely – a) clothes made of jute and b) the knowledge of cloth-colouring.
- 9) 'Jiban-Katha O Smriticharan' (biography and memories) – there are four essays discussed here and these are a) Lalan Fakir; b) Kangal Harinath; c) Memorial Ceremony of Kanta Kavi; d) Memory of Suresh.
- 10) 'Abhibhashan' – only one topic has been incorporated here and it is on a) *Fall of the Pala Empire*.

In the appendix, numbered 1 and 2 the editor has included the letter of A. K. Moitra and a few letters of A.K. Moitra written to other personalities.

So far, we have taken in to account some of the historical writings (including books) written by Akshay Kumar Moitra. Whatever the truth that appears from his writings is that as a historian he had given much attention to the investigation and systematic study of source materials. We have seen that in order to compile his studies based on field survey, he made extensive travels in different parts of North Bengal and it was at a time when there was no modern road and communication system. In course of his presentation and academic discussions, he had also to face many opposite comments as we have seen as to his independent views on Indian art and the approach of the Western scholars like Ferguson and others. As a nationalist historian he was grateful to Havel, A. K. Coomaraswami, Stella Cramrish. Akshay Kumar seems to have given special value to the ancient art of India and to him these were not only historical documents but also reflect a complete character of the Indian art. As a historian he was equally concerned about the pre-British India and many controversial aspects including biography based historical works he produced in his life time. The colonial historian was also interested to write history of the pre-British period and in their colonial view they could find the Nawabs or the Indian kings either as debauched or exceptionally greedy for properties and other terrestrial matters. Akshay Kumar Moitra not only refuted such arguments or

opinion of the English historians and in order to establish the historical truth he challenged many popular arguments prevailed over the centuries. For example, when he took on to Siraj-ud-daulah, he appears to be sparked with the feeling of harmonious meeting point of the Hindu-Muslim unity.

In all these articles we come across the extraordinary scholarship of Akshay Kumar Moitra and how he developed his interest in different sections of the knowledge world. It is a fact that his patriotic temperament and love for the Bengali community transformed him to be a man of inquisitiveness to history and historical incidents. Undoubtedly, he developed originality and thereby could make realistic approach to any historical event. Incidentally, his knowledge on the silk industry or cotton industry is a wonder to us and at the same time his thorough investigation to present the fall of the Pala Empire fills up many gaps on the history of the Palas of Bengal. We have already mentioned his writing on biography and memories and this particular aspect shows his connection and intimacy with many contemporary intellectuals who had the privilege to dominate the academic world of the time. Akshay Kumar Moitra was a genius of multifarious creative activities and his academic exercise as well as dedication for the quest of knowledge is still example for the coming generations.

On the question of historical writings and research it is likely that Akshay Kumar Moitra may be considered as the first man to narrate history on a firm basis and having no tendency to finish any historical writing by mere patch-work. His sincerity can be found in the following works and his inquisitive mind brought to him a realization that the British or other historians were not only biased but were also deliberately interested in presenting concocted facts of Indian history. This may be the background which prompted him to be a researcher and it is said that the views about the Indian history by W. W. Hunter and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay sensitized him to dedicate himself to write history of our nation. In this respect, it may be noted that his works are voluminous and some of his writings have already been discussed above. All the more, the above-mentioned writings may be taken as his works related to archaeology and some issues of ancient Bengal which he seems to have thought to explore and enrich the knowledge of the future historians.

**THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON
EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY ON KUTUBDIA
UPAZILA OF COX'S BAZAR DISTRICT**

Arobia Khanam* and Maruf Mia**

Abstract

The Kutubdia Upazila (coastal area) is overburdened with multifarious problems due to tidal surges, erratic rainfall, coastal erosion, salinity intrusion, cyclone, etc. The objectives of this study are to find out the nature of vulnerabilities of climate change impacts on the education of children in Kutubdia Upazila and to critically analyze the policies and laws taken by the government of Bangladesh and non-government organizations in reducing climate change-induced threats appropriately and thus to uncover the gaps of effective enforcement of the prevalent laws and policies. A mixed method methods approach has been incorporated in this research to collect and analyze the data and findings. The survey, FGD, and KII methods and techniques have been applied to collect primary data from seventy respondents of purposively selected villages and primary, and secondary schools and colleges. The authors have identified main challenges to children's education such as poverty, lack of proper Medicare services, dilapidated infrastructure, inadequate shelter centers, disruptions in the supply of electricity, insufficient teachers in schools and colleges compared to the student, and superstition. The authors have also found a lack of scientific and technical knowledge due to the absence of need-based training facilities, insufficient climate resilience schools, and college buildings, absence of sports/cultural activities in educational institutions as well as a lack of enforcement of comprehensive disaster management mechanisms and absence of effective application and implementation of existing laws which create constraints on the education of children in Kutubdia Upazila.

1. Introduction

Climate change aggravates environmental and land degradation, particularly in regions with dry lands and permafrost, river deltas, and low-lying coastal areas.¹

* Assistant Judge, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

** Assistant Professor (Political Science), School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages (SSHL), Bangladesh Open University, Gazipur-1705. Email: smmaruf84@gmail.com

1 IPCC 2014, "Summary for Policymakers", In: "Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change" [Field, C.B., V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi,

Climate-induced threats, for instance, utmost cyclones, cataclysmic tidal surges, drastic floods, hazardous river erosion, unbridled rainfall, and thunderstorm, and enormous salinity intrusions taking place more often and unforeseeable in the coastal region of Bangladesh.² In Bangladesh, cyclones and floods had a lot of impacts on the educational institutions which had damaged the infrastructure of the school, disconnecting transport system and disrupting teaching and learning, school dropouts, quality of education, unsafely, trauma, and loss of education materials.³ When climate change-induced threats affect the household, parents with worse economic conditions stop sending their children to schools.⁴

Kutubdia Upazilla (coastal area) is extremely prone to natural disasters mostly cyclones. Cyclones and storm surges are frequently occurring in Kutubdia Upazilla which causes lots of sufferings in the education of the children.⁵ Most families of Kutubdia lost their dearest ones during the cyclone of 1991. In other severe cyclones, people of this area lost their property. On 29 May 2021, due to the effect of cyclone Yaas, water flowed in Kutubdia above the dam, 12 villages have been submerged by the tidal surges of the Bay of Bengal, and the one-megawatt wind power plant at Kutubdia Upazilla has been destroyed. A total of 25 villages in several unions of Kutubdia Upazilla were fully damaged and strong tides have broken only one embankment of Kutubdia Upazilla. The danger level of the unions has been ascertained based on the number of endangered characteristics and the number of diverse shelters. A large number of unguarded attributes and the insufficient number of shelters make the region riskier.

Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L.White (eds.)). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, USA, pp. 1-32. Available at https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar5_wgII_spm_en.pdf (accessed on 21 June, 2021).

- 2 Kazi Md. Barkat Ali *et al.*, "Climate change induced disasters in the southeastern coastal belt of Bangladesh", *Asian Journal of Water Environment*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2015, pp. 1-15. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316283888_CLIMATE_CHANGE_INDUCED_DISASTERS_IN_THE_SOUTHEASTERN_COASTAL_BELT_OF_BANGLADESH (accessed on 17 April, 2021).
- 3 P. K. Das, "Climate Change and Education: Bangladesh", UKAID, 2010. Available at http://www.preventionweb.net/files/16355_climatechangeedbangladesh.pdf (accessed on 26 July, 2014).
- 4 Javier Baez, Alejandro De La Fuente and Indhira Santos, "Do Natural Disasters Affect Human Capital? An Assessment Based on Existing Empirical Evidence" September 2010, p.8. Institute for the Study of Labor, Germany. Available at <https://ftp.iza.org/dp5164.pdf> (accessed on June 28, 2021).
- 5 Musfique Ahmed and Rifat Anwar, "Risk Assessment Storm of Surge of Kutubdia Island using GIS", International Association on Computer Science and Information Technology, Coimbatore conference paper, 2012, pp. 178-182, Singapore: IACSIT press.

Kutubdia Upazila, Cox's Bazar district under the Chittagong Division, consists of six unions—Ali Akbar Dail, Lameshikali, Baraghop, North Dhurung Kayerbil, and South Duing. The researchers selected two Unions—Ali Akbar Dail and Lameshikali based on the vulnerability due to climate change to conduct the study. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied in this research to collect and analyze the data and findings. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with a semi-structured questionnaire has been administered to assess the vulnerabilities of the education of the children. A total of seventy respondents were involved in this research. We have applied the Key Informant Interview (KII) technique to collect data from important stakeholder representatives like government officials, elected people's representatives at the local government level, NGO activists, environmentalists, and civil society members. No students of primary schools were interviewed on the ground of ethics as they are not mature enough to give opinions on the impacts of climate change on education.

This study intends to assess how climate change-induced vulnerabilities create challenges to children's education and to what extent existing laws and policies adopted by the government and non-government organizations can address the challenges faced by the children to their education in Ali Akbar Dail and Lameshikali Unions of Kutubdia Upazila. Finally, the authors have speculated some recommendations to overcome the problems and ensure a smooth trajectory for children's education.

2. Rationale of the Study

Education is extensively perceived as a sturdy instrument to make a change and has been the main ingredient in innumerable department revamping initiatives.⁶ It has been argued that education is an important element to enrich shared understanding of the nature and effect of climate change, which is disparaging in underpinning or to buttress national and international climate action.⁷ Globally, in every year, climate change induced threats playing havoc on the education of approximately 37.5 million students.⁸ The direct and instant effects of climate

6 Arne Duncan, "Education: The Most Powerful Weapon for Changing the World", 2013. Available at <https://blog.usaid.gov/2013/04/education-the-most-powerful-%20weapon/> (accessed on 23 March, 2021).

7 Nicholas Stern, *The economics of climate change: The Stern review*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. xxi.

8 Theirworld, "Safe schools: The hidden crisis. A framework for action to deliver safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments", 2018. Available at

change encompass destruction to infrastructure of education and it has also an impact which may be deleterious to children mental and corporeal health and that in turn can affect their educational upshots.⁹ It has impacts on ingredients of the education system which encompasses laws, policies, teachers, curriculum, learning, school governance and quality of education. Destruction of educational institutions leads children to drop out of school and the loss, as well as destruction, has prolonged implications for children because schools are touted as future human principal particulars for them.¹⁰

Due to geographical location, Kutubdia is a natural disaster-prone area. A large number of people were victims of the tidal bore, tornado, Mahapralaya (tsunami), etc. These natural disasters caused heavy damage to settlements, livestock, and crops of this Upazila. Geographical proximity to the coast suggests that the residents who could live closer to coasts or more hazard-prone areas are more vulnerable to possible climate change impacts and hence perceived high disaster risk than those who lived in areas with less possibility of natural hazards.¹¹ Frequent natural disasters and climate change adversely affect the livelihoods of individuals and make them poorer, particularly the people who live in extremely remote areas like Ali Akbar Dail and Lashmkhali. Therefore, due to the high poverty, parents prefer their children to work to earn extra money for the household, which gradually increases schoolchildren drop out.¹²

While a number of research works have been carried out on the vulnerability of women in the context of climate change, a few have been conducted on the impacts of climate change on the education of children of Ali Akbar Dail and Lameshikali Unions in Kutubdia Upazila. Moreover, very scanty research has been carried out on the vulnerability or exposure of the schools and college-going

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/safe-schools-hidden-crisis-framework-action-deliver-safe-non-violent-inclusive-and> (accessed on 19 March, 2021).

9 Carolyn Kousky, "Impacts of Natural Disasters on Children", *The Future Children*, Vol. 26, No. 01, 2016, pp. 73-92. Available at Project MUSE - Impacts of Natural Disasters on Children (jhu.edu) (accessed on 29 March, 2021).

10 Javier Baez, Alejandro De La Fuente and Indhira Santos, *op. cit.*

11 Samuel D. Brody *et al.*, "Examining the relationship between physical vulnerability and public perception of global climate change in the United States", *Environment and Behavior*, Vol. 40, No. 01, 2008, pp. 72-95. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225089543_Examining_the_Relationship_Between_Physical_Vulnerability_and_Public_Perceptions_of_Global_Climate_Change_in_the_United_States (accessed on 18 June, 2021).

12 Dhaka Tribune (January 08, 2016). "One in six Cox's Bazar kids out of school". Available at <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/uncategorized/2016/01/08/one-in-six-coxs-bazar-kids-out-of-school> (accessed on 14 July, 2022).

children of this area in the context of climate change. Therefore, I conducted this comprehensive research to analyze the climate change-induced vulnerabilities that seriously hinder children's education and put forward some recommendations that help policymakers to introduce actionable policies to ensure a smooth trajectory of children's education in coastal-remote areas like Ali Akbar Dail and Lameshikali Unions.



Source: https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Kutubdia_Upazila. Map of Kutubdia Upazila;

3. Literature Review

Bangladesh has been significantly drawing attention globally due to intense vulnerability as well as becoming a pro-adaptive country to climate change. Pender indicates that Bangladesh has experienced numerous large-scale disasters since 1970 and the frequency is increasing.¹³ Atkinson and Bruce argued that at

13 James S. Pender, "What Is Climate Change? And How It Will Affect Bangladesh?", 2008. Briefing Paper. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme.

least 200 million teenage girls living in the poorest communities' countenance intensified risk from the climate change induced threats.¹⁴ Similarly, Seballos and Tanner focused on the issue that climate change affects a varied span of soles and groups in diverse proportions through multiplex interactivity in corporeal, economic, political and cultural domains.¹⁵ Christian Aid made a report on lifestyle and vulnerabilities of the inhabitants of the Kutubdia Upazila and it pointed out as well that being aware of the impacts of climate change, the people of Kutubdia displaced to another place which costs huge. For that reason, they argued on the ground that preventive measures should be taken to protect them from coastal erosion and disaster in order to make the island economically lucrative.¹⁶ Kumar et al. made contention on the ground that as a consequence of cyclone Aila affected people adopted various adaptation to mitigate the effects of climate change, for instance; on the rooftops, embankment, highways, relief camps, mosque and houses of relatives' temporary shelters because of lack of enough cyclone center.¹⁷ Chigwanda contended that girls are disproportionately affected because of climate change induced threats and environmental degradation like access to education, class attendance and learning upshots which can have long standing fatalistic outcome.¹⁸ Muttarrak & Lutz argued that the education has a significant role to support to be resilient and adaptive against the climate change effects, though education sector and children are more vulnerable due to climate

Available at <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/contentassets/c1403acd5da84d39a120090004899173/2008/final-draft-what-is-climate-change-and-how-it-may-affect-bangladesh.pdf> (accessed on 15 April, 2021).

- 14 Holly G. Atkinson and Judith Bruce, "Adolescent girls, human rights and the expanding climate emergency", *Annals of Global Health*, Vol. 81, No. 03, 2015. Available at https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1449&context=cc_pubs (accessed on 11 February, 2021).
- 15 Fran Seballos and Thomas Tanner, "Enabling Child-Centered Agency in Disaster Risk Reduction". *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2011*, UK. Available at https://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2011/en/bgdocs/Seballos_&_Tanner_2011.pdf (accessed on 13 February, 2021).
- 16 "The climate of poverty: facts, fears and hope". A Christian Aid report published in 2006. Available at <http://elibrary.cenn.org/Report/The%20Climate%20of%20Poverty.%20Facts,%20Fears%20and%20Hopes.pdf> (accessed on 22 February, 2021).
- 17 Uthpal Kumar *et al.*, "Cyclone Aila: One Year on Natural Disaster to Human Sufferings", 2010. *Unnayan Onneshan*, Dhaka: Bangladesh. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/295862094_Cyclone_Aila_one_year_on_natural_disaster_to_human_sufferings (accessed on 11 March, 2021).
- 18 Ellen Chigwanda, "A framework for building resilience to climate change through girls' education programming", December 2016. Center for Universal Education at Brookings: Available at <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/global-20161202-climate-change.pdf> (accessed on 18 March, 2021).

change impacts and aftermath.¹⁹ On the other hand, Sellabos et al. argued that child center disaster risk reduction education and many other efficacious and relevant contexts will pave the way to reduce climate change disasters.²⁰ Doha work program on Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) postulates that children's collaboration is imperative for raising public awareness in order to mitigate impacts of climate change for a sustainable future.²¹ In the Disaster Management Committee (UDMC), there is a provision to ensure participation of grass root level in the prevalent disaster management system of Bangladesh.²² Izadkhah & Hosseini made the argument in favor of the children's education program on disaster for the preparedness of tackling climate change effects.²³

Kate Sims pointed out that in order to cope with the climate change-induced threats; disaster-prone area marries off their children at an early stage forcefully.²⁴ For this reason, girl's education and gender equality are imperative to develop their leadership capacity, political empowerment, and to work as a member of civil society to mitigate climate change impacts.²⁵ On the other hand, PK Das

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- 19 Raya Muttarak and Wolfgang Lutz, "Is education a key to reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and hence unavoidable climate change?", *Ecology and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2014, pp. 42–50. Available at <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol19/iss1/art42/> (accessed on 10 April, 2021).
- 20 Fran Seballos *et al.*, "Children and Disasters: Understanding Impact and Enabling Agency", 2011. Institute of Development Studies. Available at <https://dmsw540.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/children-and-disasters.pdf> (accessed on 13 March, 2021).
- 21 United Nations, "Doha Work Programme on Article 6 of the Convention". In: *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 2012. Available at <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2012/sbi/eng/l47.pdf> (accessed on 22 May, 2021).
- 22 "National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015", Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the Disaster Management and Relief Division (DM&RD), April, 2010. Available at <http://nda.erd.gov.bd/files/1/Publications/Sectoral%20Policies%20and%20Plans/National%20Plan%20for%20Disaster%20Management%202010%20-%202015.pdf> (accessed on 11 May, 2021).
- 23 Yasamin O. Izadkhah & Mahmood Hosseini, "Towards resilient communities in developing countries through education of children for disaster preparedness", *International Journal of Emergency Management*, Vol. 02, No. 03, 2005, pp. 138-148. DOI:10.1504/IJEM.2005.007355. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228624211_Towards_resilient_communities_in_developing_countries_through_education_of_children_for_disaster_preparedness (accessed on 16 May, 2021).
- 24 Kate Sims, "Education, Girls' Education and Climate Change". K4D Emerging Issues Report 29, published in March, 2021. Institute of Development Studies. Available at https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/16523/EIR_29_Education_Girls%27_Education_and_Climate_Change.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed on 11 August, 2021).
- 25 Zhike Lv and Chao Deng, "Does women's political empowerment matter for improving the environment? A heterogeneous dynamic panel analysis." *Sustainable Development*, Vol. 27,

pointed out that the climate change-induced threats have long-standing impacts on livelihood which paralyzed the capacity of the family to send their children to school.²⁶

After reviewing the abovementioned literature, I hardly found any study which addresses the impacts of climate change on the education of children of two unions such as Ali Akber Dail and Lemshikhali of Kutubdia Upazila, understanding the relationship between education and the climate-induced threats in line with existing laws, policies are taken by the government and non-government organizations and thus to find the gaps as well as to speculate some recommendations.

4. Methodology

The study has been conducted in two climate-vulnerable unions—Ali Akber Dail and Lemshikhali of Kutubdia Upazila in Cox’s Bazar District of Bangladesh. The government primary school, government, and non-government secondary schools, as well as government and non-government colleges, have purposively been selected to unveil the impacts of climate change on the education of children. Since there is no college in the aforesaid two Unions, we selected some students from Kutubdia College located in Kutubdia main town to collect data. The researchers have selected these areas based on the severity and magnitude of climate-induced threats, vulnerabilities, and socio-economic importance of coastal communities’ children’s education in Kutubdia Upazila.

The research is an outcome of joint efforts of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The primary data used in this research have been collected through the survey, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and the Key Informant Interview (KII) while secondary data from relevant books, journal articles, government and non-government reports, newspapers, statutory laws, policies, international organizations, relevant websites relating to the impacts of climate change-induced threats on children’s education of coastal area. A semi-structured questionnaire has been applied here to collect data through FGD and KII. The researchers have purposively selected seventy participants to collect primary data from the study area. The authors have conducted nine Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) using a checklist and taken Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with a semi-structured

No. 4, 2019, pp. 603–612. Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/sd.1926> (accessed on 23 June, 2021).

²⁶ P. K. Das, *op. cit.*

questionnaire of ten important respondents of different professions. For quantitative analysis, a field survey has been conducted of 60 respondents through a structured questionnaire.

Collected primary data through FGD and KII have been organized in different subcategories in line with research objectives and questions. The researchers have precisely transcribed the written scripts and the audio recordings collected from the respondents for the qualitative analysis. As the sample size is small, the researchers used MS-word and MS-excel to analyze the survey data.

Table: Total Number of Participants

Author's dataset.

No. of FGDs	Profession of Participants	Number of Participants (Persons)
FGD-1	Fishermen	8
FGD-2	Farmer	8
FGD-3	Fish Merchant	6
FGD-4	Guardians—Fishermen (3), Farmer (2), Fish Merchant (1)	6
FGD-5	Guardians—Job holder	6
FGD-6	Guardians—Housewives	6
FGD-7	Shopkeepers	6
FGD-8	Teachers—Primary, Secondary and College level	8
FGD-9	Students—secondary school and college level	6
KII	Government officials (Upazila Nirbahi Officer and Upazila Education Officer), Head Teachers, Principals of College, Elected peoples' representatives (Union Parishad Chairman and members), Civil Society members, and NGO activist	10
Total Participants		70

5. Ethical Issues

All respondents were free to give information on the ground of ethics. The authors took free consent orally before collecting data without any pressure and were assured that if they unveil the information based on the questionnaire, then it will not be deleterious for them. They had the option of rejecting to answer any question which they thought harmful to disclose which led the authors to maintain a professional relationship with the participants. Furthermore, in the analysis section, the identity of the respondents is anonymous. In this study, no student in primary school was interviewed because they are not mature enough to give a rational answer.

6. Findings and Analysis

The findings of the study indicate that climate change-induced threats have created some specific vulnerabilities that hinder the children's education in the study area. Given the respondents' opinions, the authors have categorized the vulnerabilities into three groups—social, economic, and institutional and analyzed the data accordingly. The authors have also explained the existing laws and policies and their gaps taken by the Bangladesh Government and the role of non-government organizations to overcome the challenges to children's education.

6.1 Social Indicators

Social Insecurity: Most students (secondary and college) expressed their sorrows by mentioning that school/college authorities could not manage boats to make our way more convenient to go to school/college. Moreover, the chairman of the Ali Akber Deil union pointed out that the embankment which was made to stop the flow of tidal surges or sea-level rise has been broken a portion of 2/3 due to high tide and surges but we could not renovate accordingly. In this connection, the chairman said that Union Parishad could not renovate the embankment due to a shortage of budget which eventually obstructs the education of the children. Besides, he said that there is no college in our village or union because of being a disaster-prone area. We must go to the main town of Upazila where there are two colleges. But the student typically cannot go to college due to long-distance, lack of transportation, and muddy/slippery roads. During disasters, most guardians are busy with their livelihood which leads them not to be more vigilant or careful, or attentive to their children. For that reason, parents are afraid of or reluctant to continue their studies with their children. Farmers opined the view that during and after the disaster, the road becomes very slippery and went underwater, which obstructs the children not to attend school regularly because they could not manage the boat by their own efforts which cost money. Seventy percent of the respondent blame climate change for social insecurity while 20% said that they feel insecure due to poverty. On the other hand, only 10% think that other reasons such as illiteracy, overpopulation, remoteness, etc. are responsible for social insecurity.

Communication: In response to the question, how climate change-induced threats create a bar for children's education, 40% of respondents opined that they could not send their children, particularly daughters, to secondary schools, or colleges due to long-distance institutions whereas 30% think that sufficient transports are not available. For that reason, they have to go to distant places either by boat or by foot

through slippery, muddy roads to attend their school, particularly to their secondary schools and colleges during the rainy season, tidal surges, etc. Similarly, 25% said that their children especially daughters may be sexually harassed while going to school/college alone due to long distance, and 5% of participants expressed their views that there is a possibility to fall into an accident while going to school/college without helping hand of school/college authority during disasters (figure 1).

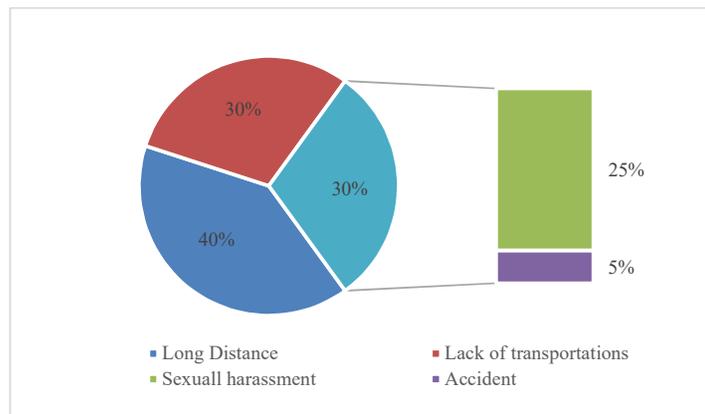


Figure 1: How climate change-induced threats create hindrances.

Disease: Farmers said that during climate change and in the aftermath, various diseases break out and children fall prey to different diseases which make them ill or weaken their physical condition due to a lack of proper medication or treatment because there is no health clinic in our villages. For that reason, we try to medicate by quacks or *kabiraj*. Due to financial constraints, they pay less heed to lead a healthy life, thus with ill health, the children of this coastal area are reluctant to continue their regular studies. Fifty-five percent of respondents said that due to sickness, children could not attend school regularly and 33.33% opined that they have financial limitations because of climate change impacts which lead them not to continue their study whereas 11.67% of respondents think that superstition of the guardians obstructs the regularity of children’s education.

Institutional Materials: Teachers of Kutubdia Model High school said that school/college buildings are used as shelter centers during coastal floods, tornados, and cyclones. Due to the shortage of government shelter centers, affected people use the classroom as their living room, and the bench, chair, and table as their furniture. Thus, they damage the furniture of the school and college which makes hindrance or creates an inconvenient environment to

continue the regular class. Besides, the concerned authority cannot renovate the damaged furniture in time due to the lack of additional budget or climate change funds.

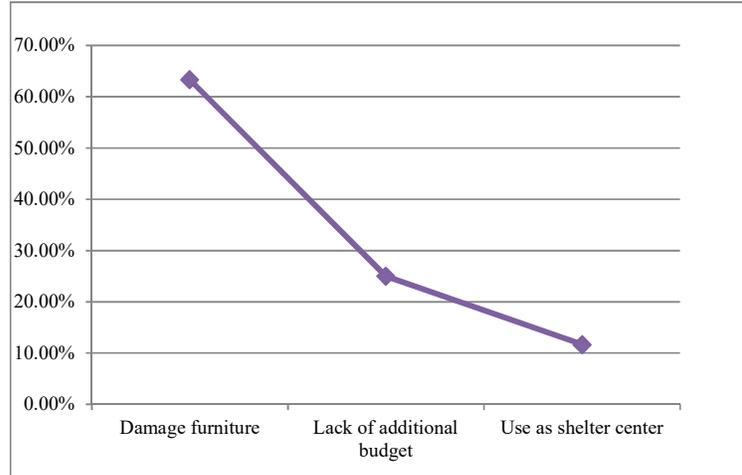


Figure 2: How institutional materials creates a bar to education

Figure 2 illustrates that 63.33% of respondents opined that children could not be present in class on time after disasters because of damaged furniture, and 25% said that the school/college has no supplementary or climate renovation budget to repair the scratched institutional materials whereas 11.67% think that their educational institutions are used as temporary shelter center during the disaster which is a great bar to open the schools/colleges.

Livelihood: Farmers said that due to coastal erosion, tidal surges, and cyclones, people of this area suffer a lot as they earn their livelihood by cultivating agricultural land. They become disappointed to lead their own families due to poverty because coastal erosion engulfs agricultural land. For that reason, they feel discouraged to continue the study of their children and to some extent their daughters' education. Besides, fisherman lives from hand to mouth by catching fish in the sea, but sometimes incessant rainfall obstructs them to go for fishing. They want their children with them in catching fish in the sea and to some extent, want their daughter to help their mother in household activities which eventually creates a barrier to educating the children of the coastal area of Kutubdia Upazila. Forty-five percent of respondents think that obstruction in catching fish in the sea is responsible for interrupting the schooling of the children and 33.33% opined that loss of agricultural land is a constraint to children's education. On the other hand,

15% and 6.67% of respondents blame the guardians respectively to engage their children in farming and catching fish or in collecting oysters/snails to sell or making garlands with oysters to sell instead of sending them to schools/colleges.

Early marriage: Fish merchants opined that continuous rainfall, flood, and cyclone make them homeless and landless, so in these circumstances, they could not send their children, particularly daughters out of pocket. Finding no other alternative way, parents create pressure on their daughters to marry off at the earliest stage while their sons remain with their parents to help them and to some extent, try to continue their studies. Since the parents could not afford to feed or educate all their children; it is usually girls who sacrifice first. Furthermore, girls are forced to get married when schooling is interrupted by climate change-induced threats and disruption continues even after the impacts have ended because schools/colleges tend to be used as shelter centers.

Thirty-five percent of respondents said that dowry is a bar to daughters' education because fewer dowries are demanded from adolescent girls whereas 45% think that parents could not bear educational expenses because of their incapacity to feed the daughters. Similarly, 11.67% of participants opined that discriminatory attitude toward the girls due to the poverty of their families is exacerbated by climate change-induced threats. Besides, 8.33% expressed their views that some families try to marry off their daughters in anticipation of migration due to seasonal calamities like coastal erosion, flood, etc. because they think that if their land and houses are destroyed or devoured by the sea, they may be displaced to another place. For that reason, they are reluctant to continue the study of their children, or they think it is needless to educate children because it will take a long time.

Toilet: About fifty-six percent of respondents opined that due to climate change-induced threats particularly coastal erosion/flood, and salinity intrusion; the toilet of the educational institution becomes fragile or broken, and goes underwater for a week or a month which leads the parents not to send their daughters in fear of being sexually harassed in the toilet or while defecation behind school-building or open place. Similarly, 13.33% of participants said that to some extent, girls must use a combined toilet which makes the guardian more anxious about the safety of their daughters. In this connection, guardians depicted that while going for defecation they may be involved in unethical relationships inside the toilets mistakenly or unconsciously, or emotionally. For that reason, they stop their daughters' schooling for fear of being sexually violent which forces them to stop their education.

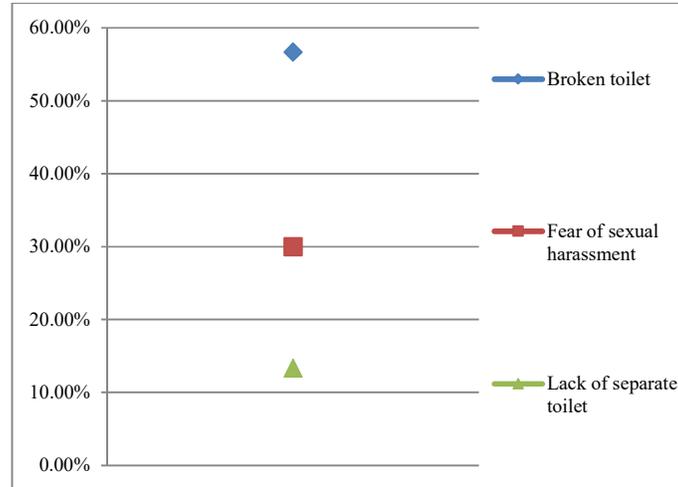


Figure 3: Condition of toilet and its impacts

6.2 Economic Indicators

Salinity: One of the schoolteachers of Jalal Uddin primary school said that saltwater intrusion during cyclones and tidal surges hampered agricultural production which makes them poor and thus unable to maintain their families. The thirty-five percent of respondents think that the presence of extreme salinity in tube well was perceived as the driving factor for going up health problems which weaken the parents and children as they are not financially solvent enough to go under treatment. Furthermore, 45% of participants opined that stationary saline after a cyclone begins to break down and pollutes the coastal environment which incites the molding of green plants. Sometimes, the salinity water intrudes into the school buildings and remains there for a week or month and thus damages the old buildings/furniture of the schools which obstruct the education of children.

Climate fund: Twenty percent of respondents said that there is no climate change fund to repair the government primary schools and non-government secondary schools/colleges. If the concerned authority of these institutions wants to repair the damaged buildings or furniture, they must expend the money of the school/college's fund from which some portion is usually used for paying the salary of teachers which obstructs the payment of salary for teachers. For that reason, the guest teachers feel discouraged to take a class because the number of permanent teachers is less than the number of students whereas 35% think that debilitated

physical condition is responsible and 45% of respondents said that salinity intrusion is the prime factor for interruption of their education. Thus, the education of the children of this coastal area is being hampered.

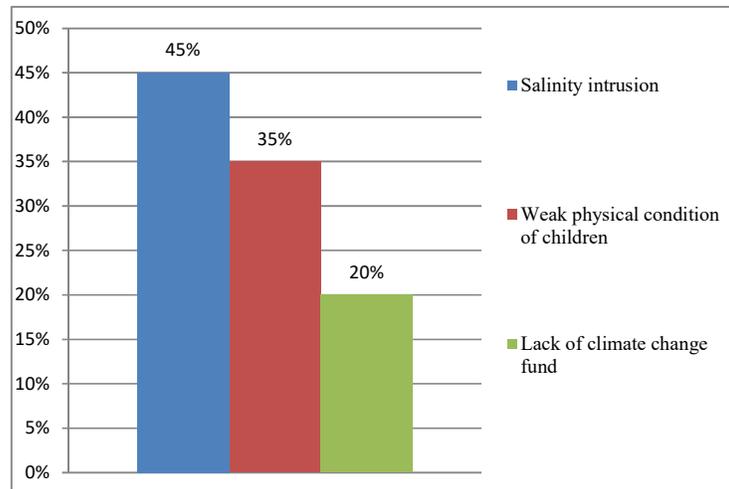


Figure 4: How salinity intrusion obstructs education

Child Labor: The fifty-five percent of respondents depicted that being affected by climate change-induced threats, we do not get any kind of support to continue the study of children from any other sources like national or international NGOs whereas 45% of participants said that finding no other alternative way to survive, we want our children to work in various factories and industries as child labor outside the area of Kutubdia Upazila. The parents encourage their daughters to work as garment workers or work as maidservants in different houses in the city area outside the Kutubdia Upazilla. For that reason, the education of the children in this area is obstructed at an earlier age.

Unemployment: About fifty-eight percent of respondents opined that when they are affected severely by climate change-induced threats, those who work in making dry fish lose their jobs which makes them unemployed. For that reason, 41.67 % of participants said that they rely on governmental and non - governmental reliefs for their feeds but do not get any kind of support to bear the educational expenses of their children during and after a disaster. Thus, they are uninterested to continue their children's education in school/college.

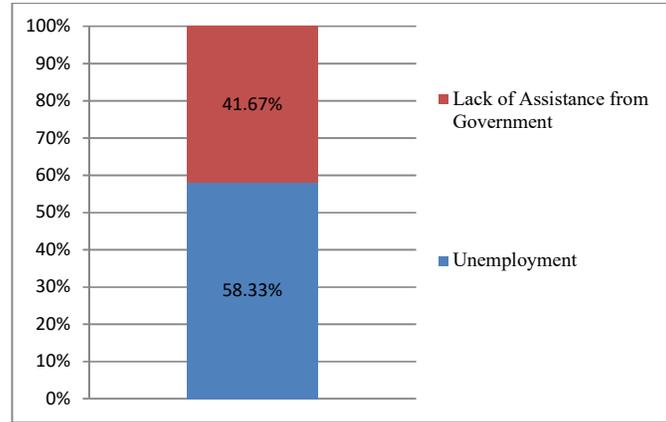


Figure 5: How unemployment affects education.

Electricity: The education of children is interrupted in Kutubdia Upazila due to the irregularity of the electricity supply. The ICT connection is very poor in Kutubdia Upazila because there is no supply of electricity from the national grid. The Chairman of Leimsikhali said that among the six unions, there is only one diesel generator in the Boroghop union and others have no regular electricity being the disaster-prone area. The Headmaster of Sadar secondary school opined that presently one generator capacity of 400 kilowatt supplies 746 subscribers for five hours a day from 6:00 pm but the generator is not reliable. One fish merchant said that some families use solar powers that are wealthier, but most students have been fighting to study by the flicker of the kerosene lamplight. In 2005, PDB supervised the establishment of a windmill with the capacity to generate 1000 kilowatts in Ali Akber Deil Union.²⁷ Although the windmill was repaired two months ago, it was out of order for almost ten years because a large part of the plant sank into the seabed by continuous erosion. Nowadays, the windmill supplies electricity to 111 subscribers to the Puratan Shanti Bazar area, but the local people said that sometimes it provides electricity for twelve hours and at other times it does not supply for a week.²⁸ Therefore, 58.33% and 6.67% of respondents opined that intermittent supply of electricity hampers the children's education directly and

²⁷ Mohammad Ali Zinnat and Andrew Eagle, "No hope for Kutubdia: Despite wind turbine power projects, most of Kutubdia residents left in darkness". *The Daily Star*, May 16, 2016. Available at <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/no-hope-kutubdia-1224655> (accessed on June 11, 2021).

²⁸ Mohammad Ali Zinnat and Andrew Eagle, *op. cit.*

indirectly. In contrast, 58.33% of participants opined that financial incapacity is responsible to create obstacles to the education of children of Kutubdia Upazila.

6.3 Institutional Indicators

Transfer: Due to climate change impacts, teachers do not want to stay in the schools and colleges here. The teachers from government primary/secondary schools transfer to other Upazila of Cox's Bazar due to a lack of facilities available, compared to other government primary and government secondary schools. A student of secondary school who is a resident of the union of Ali Akber Deil opined the view that even the teachers who are inhabitants of Kutubdia Upazila do not want to stay in the schools and colleges premises where they have been working or in their area in anticipation of better future for them and their offspring's. The headmaster of Kutubdia Sadar High school pointed out the challenge that the shortage of teachers is the main problem, and in my school, there are two thousand students whereas MPO teachers are fifteen including me and there are 13 guest teachers. He also focused on the section of each class in which case he said that in each class there are four sections where the teacher-to-student ratio is 1: 120 whereas according to the National Education Policy-2010, the teacher-to-student ratio is supposed to be 1: 30.

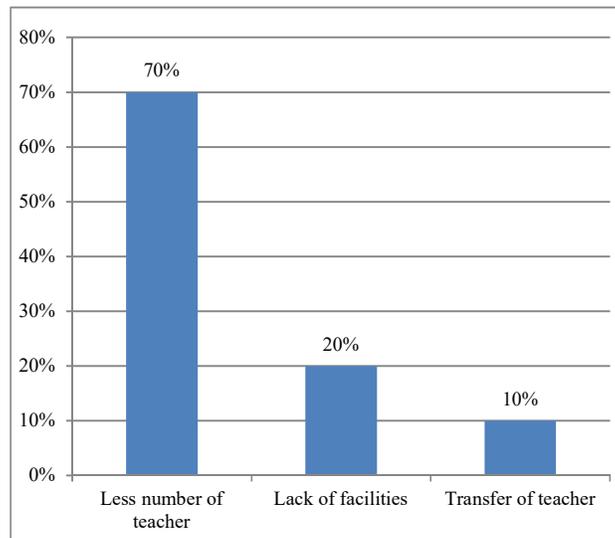


Figure 6: Circumstances of teachers that affect children's education

Figure 6 illustrates that 70% of respondents opined that there are fewer teachers against the number of students in the educational institutions of the Kutubdia Upazila, while 20% think that the existing teachers do not get enough facilities that motivate them to continue teaching at the institutions of such a remote area. On the other hand, 10% of respondents blame the frequent transfer of teachers for interrupting children's education in Kutubdia Upazila.

Facilities: The headmaster of Lemshikhali said that the students of the schools and colleges of this area do not enjoy any facilities which are provided for institutions in other areas like electricity, boarding library, and health clinic. The students cannot enjoy cultural programs in this area because no school/college arranges any kind of cultural/sports program for their flourishing or students do not get enough class or timely class due to being inhabitants of the climatic disaster-prone area. Moreover, the students do not get enough internet facilities due to the lack of electricity which leads them not to be attentive to online classes. The headmaster of the Kutubdia Model High School said that only 20% of students attend online classes because, in most families, students do not have the capacity of purchasing smart mobile phones and mobile data to participate in their online classes. In this connection, 65% of respondents opined that lack of institutional facilities is a pivotal factor for lagging behind or backwardness as a consequence of climate change whereas 28.33% and 6.67% said that children feel discouraged from attending classes regularly due to a lack of sports/cultural programs and lacking in proper medication is responsible for stopping their education.

Dropout: Teachers of Ali Akber Dail High opined that the ratio of dropped out student is high in the secondary and higher secondary due to poverty-stricken families as a consequence of climate-induced threats compare to primary schools because the number of secondary government high schools is less than the number of non-government high schools. One lecturer of the Kutubdia Government College said that there is one government college, but the number of teachers is 4 or 5 because all teachers had gone to retirement before the college became government. One of the Assistant teachers of the Zalal Uddin primary school said that almost 50% of students drop out every year. The headmaster of Kutubdia Model High school said that 70% of families are not solvent due to climate change-induced threats which are the main reason for dropping out 80% of students from secondary school.

Poor Infrastructure: One of the students of Kutubdia College said that in this disaster-prone area, no school/college building is disaster-resistant buildings which

leads the school/college building to demolish or devour in seabed due to coastal erosion which disturbs to create or continues the congenial ambiance of education of this coastal area's children. Similarly, the houses of the fishermen and farmers are swept away by the cyclone and are destroyed being gone underwater due to the lack of resilience that makes them poor, which ultimately affects the children's education. The Chairman of the union of Ali Akber Deil said that during the last thirty years ten villages of Ali Akbar Deil union in the southern end of the island have simply gone under water or faded away due to cyclonic storm surges with two to four meters which hits every year.

7. Prevalent Policies of the Government of Bangladesh

7.1. In June 2010, the government of Bangladesh officially launched the climate change unit under the Ministry of Environment and Forest and climate change that pivotal role is to manage the climate-related funds of the government. The unit consists of nine senior officers and 33 general staff and some experts to strengthen the unit and make it more effective.

7.2. The Ministry of Environment, Forest, Climate Change as well as in association with the Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council and Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies made ready the development of NAPA in response to the resolution of the seventh session of the conference of the parties of the United Nations framework convention on climate change. The NAPA pinpointed fifteen expeditious actions to adapt to floods, salinity intrusion, and drought and recommend several actions to circumvent the risks and vulnerabilities, for instance, improving water and sanitation programs for climate-vulnerable areas, improving flood forecasting and early warning system, and cyclone and storm surge warning, repair and maintain existing flood embankments, cyclone shelters, carry out preparatory studies for adaptation against sea level rise, increase institutional capacity for research on climate resilient cultivars and their dissemination, develop climate-resilient cropping systems and production technologies, etc.

7.3. The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) was the newest policy document to convey the mitigation and adaptation until 2018 which was adopted in 2009. Nowadays, it has no activity to redress the sufferings of the climate change impacts on the education of children. The government of Bangladesh presently set up a climate change resilience fund with benefaction from development donor countries to execute the projects and programs. A policy titled Climate Change Trust Fund Policy has been evolved by the cabinet to tackle the

disaster as an integrated plan. Additionally, the climate change trust fund 2010 has got approval in order to use the climate change fund prudently and transparently to benefit the affected communities.

7.4. The coastal Zone Policy has been enlarged to mitigate coastal susceptibility and to establish an enabling academic environment for all relevant ministries, agencies, private sectors, local government institutions, NGOs, and civil society to give them affords together for the expansion of the coastal zone of Bangladesh. The coastal zone policy launches a procedure that carries out the ministries, departments, and agencies to coordinate and sort out affairs in the coastal zone and explains the basis for harmonizing mechanism so far, not much has been done for the development of the coastal zone.²⁹

8. Gaps of the existing Laws and Policies

8.1. In Bangladesh, there is no comprehensive climate change policy which leads the people of this coastal area to be lagged behind the knowledge of causes, impacts of climate induced threats particularly how they will cope with the changing effects of climate induced threats. In this connection, the chairman of Ali Akber Deil union of Kutubdia Upazila has expressed his view that no union committee works out for developing disaster action, mapping and training.

8.2. The embankment of Kutubdia Upazila has not repaired yet after the cyclone Yaas wreaked havoc in May 2021. Consequently, the villages went under 3-4 feet of water following the tidal surge in sea water. A total of twelve villages of Kutubdia Upazila were inundated by tidal surge after the water level increased in sea. Five hundred houses of twelve villages, houses, shops, were swept away and arable land went under water three to four feet of water following the tidal surges by cyclone.³⁰ One teacher of Satar Uddin High School said that approximately three kilometres of embankment were destroyed by Cyclone Yaas in May 2021. In this connection, no policy has yet been taken by the government and non-government organization how the embankment can be made stronger or long-lasting or what type of embankment will be more lasted.

8.3. In Bangladesh, the children of pre-primary and grade three of primary level have no scope to know the impacts of climate change whereas the books of

29 Mohammad Rajja, "Coastal Zone Policy". *The Daily Star*, 5 April, 2009. Available at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-82707> (accessed on 19 June, 2021).

30 The Business Standard, "12 villages inundated by sea water in Cox's Bazar", 24 July, 2021. Available at <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/12-villages-inundated-sea-water-coxs-bazar-278479> (accessed on 11 August, 2021).

children of grade four to five deal with the causes, effects of climate change but nothing is mentioned about the coping and mitigation strategy. In the secondary level, grade six does not deal with the impacts of climate change whereas the grade seven specifies the causes of climate induced threats and the way of mitigation as well as the grade eight, nine and ten talk about the impacts of climate change on life, economy whereas additionally the grade eight deals with advice as well as plans.³¹ Hence, it is found that the student of pre- primary school has no scope of knowing the term climate change impacts on their livelihood and thus being trained to reduce the effects in their lives as member of union disaster management. The University of Dhaka, department of disaster management introduces various disaster management issues and the impacts of climate change and Khulna University of Engineering and Technology introduced institute of disaster management offers professional diploma, PG studies as well as PGD studies and the North South University, Independent University of Bangladesh are offering short courses and training programs on climate change. Though various institutes or departments' offer disaster management and the impacts of climate change whereas one of the lecturers of Kutubdia Model Government College said that in practice there is no implementation or no such significant/remarkable initiatives are taken by the students of these universities to mitigate the effects of climate change on their education.

8.4. There is lack of coordination amongst the relevant ministries, researchers, stakeholders, NGOs to fight against the climate change induced threats on the education of children in climate-prone areas like—Ali Akber Dail and Lemshikhali Unions.

8.5. The climate change cell coordinates awareness raising, advocacy and mechanisms to promote climate change adaptation and risk reduction in development activities, as well as strengthening existing knowledge and information accessibility on impacts and adaptation to climate change threats on the education of the children.³² Whereas there is no implementation in Ali Akber Dail and Lemshikhali to mitigate the climate induced in practice.

31 M Mahruf C Shohel *et al.*, "The climate change adaptation and sustainability in the Bangladeshi School Curriculum", in *Handbook of Research on Environmental Education Strategies for Addressing Climate Change and Sustainability*, 2021, pp. 261-285. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7512-3.ch013. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349043711_Climate_Change_Adaptation_and_Sustainability_in_the_Bangladeshi_School_Curriculum (accessed on 11 August, 2021).

32 Saleemul Haque and Golam Rabbani, "Climate Change and Bangladesh: Policy and Institutional Development to reduce vulnerability", September 2011. Available at

9. Roles of Non- Government Organizations

The assistant teacher of Uttar Leimsikhali Government Primary School said that only volunteers of the “Red Crescent Youth” help the affected people to take shelter in the cyclone shelter who were seriously affected by the cyclone Yaas and distributed various foods to them. No other NGOs have been working for the educational development resulting in climate change impacts in Kutubdia Upazila. An assistant teacher at Jalal Uddin primary school said that sometimes various NGOs like BRAC and Red Crescent give warning signals by hoisting the red flag and miking. Due to lack of continuous electricity, they could not get the benefit of modern weather forecasting technology like radio, television, mobile message, etc. because very few families have radio and television that causes them not to get every update on the weather and could not take measures accordingly. Moreover, due to the lack of mobile phone/smartphone or electricity or lack of knowledge to operate the mobile phone, most individuals of Ali Akber Deil and Leimsikhali do not know the emergency helpline number 1090 and cannot receive disaster warning in advance.

10. Recommendation

It is imperative to stipulate some recommendations to mitigate the consequences of climate change-induced threats to the children's education of Ali Akber Deil and Leimsikhali Unions in Kutubdia Upazila—

A comprehensive Climate Change Policy may be enacted to reduce the impact of climate change on the education of Kutubdia Upazila giving priority to the problems, needs, and demands of the children including physically disabled children, local guardians, teachers, and all professionals of this area.

Initiatives may be taken to implement the existing policies by forming community-based awareness committees irrespective of all sectors like guardians, teachers, children, information officers, education officers, medical officers, local government, local administration, local law enforcement agencies, members of the meteorological department. Besides, initiatives may be taken to maintain coordination amongst them and make them strong fold to play an active role in reducing the direct and immediate impacts of climate change-induced challenges on educational institutions, educational materials, erecting healthful separate toilets, medical clinics, schools, and college library, organizing various cultural programs in the schools and colleges.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251571877_Climate_Change_and_Bangladesh_Policy_and_Institutional_Development_to_reduce_vulnerability (accessed on 14 July 2022).

Multi-service shelter centers may be erected with adequate facilities for the living of guardians, teachers, and taking classes with modern technology to stop the obstacles in their way of education, and various law enforcement agencies particularly environmental disaster police forces should be beefed up in the multi-service shelter center to avoid untoward incidence like sexual harassment and thus create such ambiance where every student can live and learn safely during and aftermath climate change impacts.

A supplementary budget may be granted to initiate climate change impact scholarship/stipend in every school and college to support the continuation of the study of children/disabled children as a long-term strategy to cope with the climate-induced threats.

Local government might be strengthened with climate change impacts fund so that all communication facilities like erecting and repairing the road, renovation of previous embankment and management of boat during the flood, construction of super dike embankment to mitigate the climate change impacts. The local government must ensure the engagement of children in disaster management committees according to their ages to train them to adopt strategies to cope with the disastrous effects.

The introduction of climate change impacts adaptation and mitigation in the national curriculum is not sufficient, its application and implementation may be executed by the involvement of teachers and students through motivational training. Similarly, various branches of the existing schools and colleges may be opened up outside Kutubdia Upazila to continue the study, particularly during the rainy season to mitigate the impacts and arrange alternative livelihoods for all inhabitants of the study area.

Various national and international NGOs may expand their activities for educational development like distribution of educational materials among the students, arranging seminars in association with the government for training the teachers and students and thus pave the way of introducing the training facilities for the local people to cope with the changing effects of climate change-induced threats to make them self-dependent or economically solvent and thus feel encouraged to send their children to go to school and college.

Uninterrupted and continuous supply of electricity may be ensured in every house and school as well as a college by submarine cable for the development of ICT which will contribute to the sustainable continuation of the study of the children

and will strengthen the meteorological department to give warning about the forthcoming disaster through radio, television and mobile phone.

11. Conclusion

Kutubdia Upazila is one of the endangered areas due to climate change-induced threats where the education of children is most vulnerable. Incessant rainfall, cyclone, extreme coastal erosion, sea level rise overall continuous inundation has made the Kutubdia Upazila most jeopardized which has direct and indirect impacts on the education of children. In this study, it is found that due to lack of time befitting comprehensive climate change law and policy, lack of application and implementation of the existing laws, policies, and negligence of the authority, and lack of coordination amongst the relevant ministries, diverse research, and academic institutes and various relevant non-government organizations, poverty, poor communication, early marriage, child labor, uninterrupted electricity, the fragile infrastructure of educational institutions/houses, etc. are responsible for not ensuring sustainable education for children of the coastal community of Ali Akber Dail and Lemshikhali of Kutubdia Upazila. The recommendations mentioned above would be handy for policymakers to introduce time-befitting and actionable policies and strategies to mitigate challenges to children's education in climate-prone areas of Bangladesh like Ali Akber Dail and Lemshikhali Unions.

THE UNITED ARAB LIST IN ISRAELI POLITICS: BETWEEN IDEALISM AND PRAGMATISM

Md. Mahmud Alam*

Abstract

Israeli Arabs have been neglected and deprived of Israeli politics since independence in 1948. The Arabs are ignored mainly because of the long history in which the state of Israel was established. The Jews, who led for freedom, did not allow the Israeli Arabs to develop into any political force for a long time. However, due to the imposition of military rule over the Arab towns and areas and some other reasons, the Arabs did not get a chance to form a practical and functional political party until 1977. After that, although Israeli Arabs have developed several political parties; they have not exerted effective influence in Israeli politics. However, the United Arab List, a small Islamist political party of the Israeli Arabs, has recently made a breakthrough in Israeli politics. This article seeks to explore the evolution of the recent past situation, starting with the foundation and development of the party. The study, which took a historical research approach, discovered that the party and its mother organization, The Islamic Movement, had veered significantly from Idealism to Pragmatism in the 50 years since they were founded in 1996 and 1971 respectively. Among these, the changes in Israeli politics, divisions among Israeli Arabs, Israel's policy, changing attitude of Arab countries toward Israel, the global outlook, and the changing attitude of the United Arab List's leaders are prominent. Following the 2021 elections, the party has joined an eight-party coalition government that has been denounced by other Israeli Arab factions and the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the party's leader, Mansour Abbas, claims that he did it for the well-being of the Israeli Arabs. However, the meaning of well-being is relative here because it involves the interests and destiny of the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the concerned citizens of the world will have to wait until the next Knesset election to see how expedient, timely and pointful it is for Pragmatism to abandon idealism.

Key words: Israeli Politics, Israeli Arabs, Idealism and Pragmatism.

Introduction

Israeli politics and the formation and development of Israeli political parties are pretty different from other countries in the world. In the 73 years since independence in 1948, about 200 political parties have participated in the Knesset elections. But the more significant number of these parties sustained a short time,

*Assistant Professor, History and Civilization Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna.

and most of them are no longer in presence. At least 110 parties have attained representation in government throughout Israel's history. In a greater sense, all political parties in Israel can be divided into two categories. The first falls into Israelis, containing Right (Jewish), Far-right (Jewish), Leftist, and Centrist. The second is for 'Israeli Arab's¹ parties, including the Israeli-Arab Stream, the Communist Stream and the National Stream. The United *Arab List* (UAL) is a dominant party in the Islamic Stream, working as a political wing under the Southern Branch of the Islamic Movement. Its origins are deeply rooted in the Muslim movement, founded in Israel in the 1970s. The party entered the country's mainstream central politics in 1996 by participating in the Knesset elections, and through the 24th Knesset elections held in March 2021; it became part of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's coalition government. This study will explore how such an Islamist Arab political party was formed, developed, and evolved. The Specific objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the roots from where United Arab List was created as a political wing;
2. To sort out the basic tenets and ideology the party clings to;
3. To identify the ideologies and strategies were followed by Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish till 2017; and
4. To find out the reasons why Mansour Abbas took a shift over idealism and follows Pragmatism.

This study is moored mainly on a qualitative method. It has collected data both from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are comprised of election results, party's brochures, manifesto, banners etc. The secondary sources are included books, articles, institutional documents, including government and non-government papers. Data has been analyzed based on informative and descriptive techniques and historical methods.² In some cases, Google translate has

1 Israel found 156,000 Arabs on its territory following the Armistice Agreements with the neighbouring Arab States. The Israeli authorities commonly refer to these Arabs as Israeli Arabs. In their view, those Arabs who decided to stay in the area during the War of Independence became Israel. Among them there are Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, Druzes, and Bedouins. In Israel, they are accorded equality and full citizenship, and they take an active part in politics. Source: *Israeli Arabs*, Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of AICE, <https://www.Jewishvirtuallibrary.org/Israeli-Arabs> accessed on 12th April 2021.

2 The historical method is used as an approach to study the history or recount some aspect of past life. Among the two (Perspective and Retrospective), the perspective approach has been chosen here. Because United Arab List was deeply rooted in the Islamic Movement, which was established in 1971, it gradually moved towards the present until joining the coalition

been used very carefully to translate other languages (Hebrew & Arabic) into English.

In this paper, the writer has exasperated to discuss all issues in different five segments. The first section discusses the definitions of the key terms; the second one reviews the roots and ideological basics of the United Arab List as a political wing of the Islamic Movement, the third one presents the election process and strategies of the UAL in both local and Knesset elections, the fourth one digs into the reasons of joining UAL as Part of a Coalition Government. The final one examines the UAL leadership legacy and criticism to Mansour Abbas and the future of the Arab hope.

Key Terms Analysis

Israeli Politics: Many Jewish organizations inside the territory of the Palestine Mandate started working in the very first decade of the twentieth century. They all were working on establishing a state for the Jews with Zionist character. Just after the establishment of Israel as an independent state on 14th May 1948, many of them turned into full-fledged political parties within the State of Israel. Israel is a parliamentary democratic country based on a series of basic laws. It has no official constitution. The Basic Laws set out the structure and function of the branches of government, legislation, and the judiciary and cover the distinctive aspects of Israel's tradition such as economy, civil-military relations, and Jerusalem's status. All parties operate within the Charter of Basic Law. In the 1st Knesset election, many political parties ran for a vote, and twelve of them got a qualifying threshold in the Knesset. Mapai led the election at the time of the sponsorship of the Nazareth Democratic Party, an Arab satellite list in Israel and the only Israeli Arab party to win first Knesset seats. Because of the nature and formation of government policies, since 1949, no political party has been able to create government alone. In this connection, Dowty says that Israel's political system is characterized by the necessity of negotiation, a lack of clearly defined hierarchy, and the growth and power of organized groups rather than the dilution of the undiluted rule of the

government. In investigation and analysis, three steps (Identification and characterization of the problem; Assortment of data and Reproach of data) have been followed correspondingly. Then findings have been produced according to the research objectives chronologically. Source: Yogesh Kumar Singh, *Fundamental of Research Methodology and Statistics* (New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd, 2006), pp. 112-119.

majority.³ From 1949 to 1967, military rule was imposed upon the Arab dominant towns and an area within Israel, no Arab party could function independently, and such a situation continued till 1977 when Rakah was rewarded in the elections. Various Arab organizations were brought united for the aspiration of voting support of Mapai (and later the Labor Party), Mapam and the General Zionists from 1949 to 1977. The lists encompassed of them were called Arab lists, The Arab satellite lists, or satellite parties which essentially strained to be a party-political force. Afterwards, 'Land Day' "generated public resentment and led to the practical removal of satellite lists from the voting box."⁴ After that, Arabs began to participate actively in the electoral process of Israel, apart from the Jews. In Israel, politics are performed by Right (Jewish and Zionist), Far-right (Jew and Zionist), Leftist, Centrist and Islamist parties.

Idealism: Idealism mainly refers to any philosophy that believes fundamental reality is made of ideas or thoughts. This also indicates that reality or huge portions of it are spiritually constructed, and the corporal world is a delusion. Idealism can be classified into four parts; these are subjective, objective, absolute and transcendental Idealism. Generally, it is thought that Idealism has no practical implications. But an idealist person or an institution did his or its activities based on Idealism. In this study, the United Arab List's inception, development and evolution (started through the establishment of the Islamic Movement in Palestine and later in Israel) have been evaluated and judged based on its ideology based on Idealism. This ideology refers to the Al-Shabab al-Muslim meaning Return to Religion Movement, Usrat Al-Jihad, Islam is a solution in every sphere of life, including a Palestinian conflict in Israel, the expansion and progress of a national-political standing, the implementation of Dawah ideologies and aphorism, preservation of preservation of sites revered to Islam and the communal activities of Muslims that have been intrinsically entrusted to them.

Pragmatism: Pragmatism is a philosophical slant that assesses concepts or dogmas in terms of the success of their real-world application. Charles Sanders Peirce is considered to be the founder of this tradition. For pragmatists, thought is a guide to

3 Alan Dowty, "Jewish Political Traditions and Contemporary Israeli Politics," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3/4, (Fall 1990): pp. 59-60.

4 Ben Mendales, "A house of cards: the Arab satellite lists in Israel, 1949-77," *Israel Affairs*, 24:3, (2018): pp. 442-459, DOI: 10.1080/13537121.2018.1453999.

expectation, problem-solving and achievement. The practical values of an action or thought are the core constituents of Pragmatism. Here Pragmatism refers to the practical application of thoughts, beliefs and dogmas of Islamic Movement in a greater sense and United Arab List in a specific purpose. After the 2021 Knesset election, the United Arab List considers only the practical needs and consequences of Israeli Arabs from a very narrow sense. Mansour Abbas has viewed only civic realm related interest and his party where the drive for equal rights of the Israeli Arabs has been given emphasizes, and the two-state solution gets an only optional knock.

The Root of United Arab List

United Arab List, popularly known in Israel as Ra'am (the transliteration of the Hebrew acronym), is a trifling Islamist party representing Israel's Arab population that has far origin in the spiritual movement in Muslim Brotherhood⁵ and is directly involved in Islamic Movement in Israel. In this regard, it is imperative to mention that the moderate faction of the Islamic Movement believes in political Islam, which is called 'Islamism' initiated in Mandatory Palestine in early 1948. Muslim Brotherhood did not feel interested in engaging Palestine crisis before the Arabs revolted against the British and Jewish immigration in 1936. Muslim Brotherhood came forward with their delegation and campaigners to inspire Palestinians in their scuffle just after 1936. The first home-grown branch of the organization was set up in Jerusalem in 1946. Its volunteers enrolled in the Egyptian military and fought for the Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948.⁶

5 Hasan al-Banna (born in 1906 in the town of Mahmudiey, some 90 miles northwest of Cairo, capital of Egypt) founded the Society of Muslim Brothers (*Jam iyyat Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), popularly known as the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. It is the mother ship of Sunni revivalist Islam and was largely longer than any other Islamic group in the Arab world. It is also the 'mother organization' of the affiliates of the Brotherhood in Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, Syria, Iraq, Sudan and Bahrain and has served to encourage the revival of Sunni groups also in Arab North Africa. The Brotherhood inseminated a perception of Islam as *din wa dawla* (religion and state), that is, not only an avant-garde of individual beliefs and rituals, but an all-encompassing system of values and governance that is different and superior to the secular Western political systems. The ideas of Rasid Rida and Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib and Muhammad Abduh influenced it." Source: Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 20-45.

6 Al-Banna organized the group's armed units and sent three battalions to participate in the Palestine War in April 1948, after the United Nations approved establishing a Jewish state in Palestine in November 1947. Source: Ziyad Abu Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 2-3.

After the establishment of Israel and the defeat of the Arabs in the Arab-Israeli War 1948, Israel continued action on Arab minority areas. As a result, there was no chance of organizing any Islamic organization. However, after 1967, reintroduced interaction between the Israeli Arabs and the Palestinians, relinquishment of military force from Arab minority areas, the manifestation of religious seminaries there and the Islamic revitalization in the Arab world during the 1970s bred new settings for the growth and expansion of Islamism among the Arabs in Israel.⁷

In such a situation, a branch of young people educated in different Islamic institutes is entitled to call Sheikh. These young men started allegorical activities to promote Islam in their family and outside the home, including lectures in the mosques and get-togethers, conferences and seminars in Israel where there were concentrations of Muslims. Consequently, Islamic Movement in Israel was established in 1971. The first nucleus of activists in Kufr Qasim was recognized and established by Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish (1948-2017) in that year. Kufr Bara, Jaljuliyah, and Taybeh branches were founded and got recognition in 1974. The chapters in Umm el-Fahm, Negev and Nazareth were started functioning in 1976, 1979 and 1980 respectively. Among other famous and yeomanly faces, Sheikh Ra'id Salah, Hashim' Abd al-Rahman, Khalid Ahmad Muhanna, and Kamal Khatib fervently devoted themselves for the progression and promotion of the organization. At the point when the Islamic Movement entered the city arena, these pioneers were joined by prominent and influential persons who were chosen for places of force in neighborhood governments as Movement agents. During its early stages, the Movement kept an ill-defined hierarchical design, and very little is thought about the authority establishments that worked during the 1970s and 1980s. The Movement became regulated, synchronized and structured distinctly in the last part of the 1980s and mid-1990s. It then, at that point became realized that the Movement was going by an incomparable and unparalleled body alluded to as the Advisory Council (majlis shura), chose by the wide-ranging gathering (mu'tamar 'aam), which involved a few dozen persons who were elected as delegates of towns where the Movement was dynamic.⁸ From 1972 to 1996 were the formative years for Islamic Movement.

7 As'ad Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000: A Political Study* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 123.

8 Elie Rekhess, "Islamization of Arab Identity in Israel: The Islamic Movement, 1972-1996," in *Muslim Minorities in Non-Muslim Majority Countries: The Islamic Movement in Israel as a Test Case*, eds., Elie Rekhess and Arik Rudnitzky (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, 2013), p. 58.

Ideological Basis of Islamic Movement

To understand the ideological basis of the United Arab List, first we must understand the Islamic Movement's undertakings during the formative period. In that time, it initiated and followed several techniques, strategies and tenets.

The "Return to Religion" Movement (Al-Shabab al-Muslim): This policy was adopted from Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt and subsequently in West Bank and Gaza. Islamic Movement mentioned the adolescent to get back to the "unadulterated" and "complete" Islam of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. The organization emphasized on return to the "pure" and "true" Islam taught by the last prophet.

The violent phase (Usrat al-Jihad): To establish an Arab Islamic State in Israel, the Islamic Movement anchored an underground framework named *Usrat al-Jihad* (The Families of Jihad) in the initial days. But due to stern actions like arrest and trial of the Israeli authorities, its leader Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish became a peace proponent and decided to follow lawful activities and accepted the then political framework prevalent in Israel.

Consolidation of a religious Islamic ideology: The Movement's ideological and philosophical worldview is "Islam is the solution", which is based on three sources: "1. Classical, orthodox Sunni Islam; 2. The modernist-reformist trend; and 3. The tenets of the Muslim Brotherhood."⁹ The organization completely depends on Qur'an and Hadith (Basically depends on Sihah Sitta-The Six Authentic Hadith Books). Their books, newsletters, pamphlets, posters, and banners contain Quranic verses and classical hadith citations. The modernist-reformist trend was born out of Islamist thinkers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, who affirmed that their return to true Islam would remedy the disorder in society. According to them, scientific progress does not oppose Islamic ritual; instead, it is part of it.¹⁰

Development of a national-political platform: In 1983, the Islamic Movement raced for capturing office in local municipal elections as a platform for accession to a national political gallery. Afterwards, in 1996, its political wing United Arab List

9 Ibid., p. 55.

10 Ibid.

(Ra'am) contested for seats in the 14th Knesset election for the first time. In the question of participation in the Knesset election, it split into two factions, till today the parliamentary faction sees its triumphant march.

Implementation of the principles of da'wah: The term da'wah is an Arabic word that implies a call or greeting to join Islam, follow its way, and see it as genuine confidence. This term was politicised in the cutting edge time and became code for strict converting and lecturing. Da'wah is the cornerstone of the Islamic Movement. Activities in Da'wah include religious studies, sermons, educational camps, public rallies, distribution of books, manifestos and newsletters, and holy books. From its foundation to now, the Islamic Movement anchored all channels and passages in this regard.¹¹

Protection of sites sacred to Islam: Sacred sites of Islam are significant to Muslims. Mosques and graveyards or tombs are the most common holy sites in Islam. Other than Macca and Medina, there are lots of mosques and graveyards in Palestine and Israel. After establishing the State of Israel, most of these sites were in a state of danger. The Islamic Movement therefore began a drive and movement aimed at protecting and conserving Islamic spots in Israel. The Al-Aqsa Association for Awaqf Custody and Muslim Holy Sites was established in May 1991 and has been focused on two primary areas of activity. The first was the battle to free Waqf property of the custodians of absentee property and to reestablish their management by Muslims (in other words, the Islamic Movement). These activities were not restricted to prevailing places in Arab cities: endeavor included sites in Israel containing remains of Mosques or Muslim mausoleums and tombs.¹²

Community Activities: Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish, founder of the Islamic Movement, was well aware that the key to success depends in large part on the knowledge and activities that can be done in all areas of the public. The movement has therefore been offering real-world and useful solutions to societal matters and problems since the 1980s when the government had neglected or for which government action failed. In such a situation, Sheikh Darwish articulated the following principle of guidance, "We will help ourselves if the state does not wish to help us."¹³ It encompasses all areas such as education, infrastructure, health care, charity and welfare, culture and arts, sports and so on. The integrated result of these

11 Ibid., pp. 56-60.

12 Ibid, p. 60.

13 *Ha'aretz*, June 17, 1988, cited in Elie Rekhess, *The Arab Minority in Israel: Between Communism and Arab Nationalism 1965-1991* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1993), p. 154 [in Hebrew].

efforts combined to provide the Arab population of Israel with a unique Islamic identification and has transformed Israel's political climate significantly.¹⁴

Election of Islamic Movement as an Islamic Party

Islamic Movement's activists, volunteers and workers dedicated sincerely to progress its image, and with every time it gained popularity on many scales, which was manifested in the local Arab government elections since 1983. In 1983, the movement ran for the first time in municipal elections, winning the majority of two municipal councils. It won the races in 6 municipalities during the 1989 elections, including the town of Um el-Fahm. In 1993 and 1998 the triumph and victory was recurrent, together with the victories in Nazareth and other places.¹⁵

In the 1990s, the Islamic Movement was marked by intense political activism. Political Islam in Israel gradually became the focus of the political showground and stage for the Arab people of Israel. Although it was a negligible band in the eighties, the Islamic Movement grew into a leading band in the nineties. The politicization of the Islamic Movement came together at a major juncture on the eve of the 14th Knesset elections in 1996. The movement had divided itself into two factions that year because of dispute over whether the movement should participate in the elections.¹⁶ The first faction was led by Sheikh Ra'id Salah¹⁷ and the second one was led by Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish.

14 Elie Rekhess, "Islamization of Arab Identity in Israel," p. 65.

15 Nachman Tal, "The Islamic Movement in Israel," *Strategic Assessment*, Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel-Aviv University, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2000): pp. 10-11.

16 Aburaiya, "Concrete versus abstract religiosity: The case of the split within the Islamic Movement in Israel," *Megamot* 43, 4, (2005): pp. 682-698. Cited in Mohanad Mustafa, "Political Participation by the Islamic Movement in Israel," in *Muslim Minorities in Non-Muslim Majority Countries*. P. 96.

17 Sheikh Ra'id Salah Abu Shakra was born in Umm al-Fahm, Israel's Haifa District, 20 kilometers (12 miles) northwest Jenin. Islamic Movement achieved victory in Israeli local politics mainly because of his prudent knowledge. He occupied the mayoral office of Umm al-Fahm in 1989, but resigned in 2001 to devote more time to his religious commitments. He is thought to be a Muslim Brotherhood splinter group. He says that participating in the Knesset election can be construed as an acknowledgment of Israel's legitimacy. The Islamic Movement broke into two sections on Knesset's election participation, the Northern and Southern branches. He is the head and leader of the outlawed Northern Branch who advocates for not joining the Knesset and works devotedly to create a self-sufficient Arab community in Israel. Source: Shaul Bartal, "Sheikh Ra'id Salah and His Endless Struggle against Israel," *The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*, <https://besacenter.org/sheikh-raed-salah-and-his-endless-struggle-against-israel/>, accessed on 22nd June 2021. For details, please see: Raphael Israeli, *Islamic Radicalism and Political Violence: The Templars of Islam and Sheikh Ra'id Salah* (Elstree: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

The faction headed by Sheikh Ra'id Salah is popularly known as the Northern branch that is generally introduced as 'Extremist Faction', 'Radical Faction', 'Separatist Faction', 'non-parliamentary Faction', 'Dogmatic Faction', etc. On the other hand, the faction headed by Sheikh 'Abdullah Nimr Darwish is popularly known as the Southern branch that is generally introduced as 'Moderate Faction', 'Parliamentary Faction', 'Liberal Faction', 'Pragmatic Faction', etc.

Firstly, Sheikh Ra'id Salah is afraid that elections would threaten the Muslim Movement's religious values and lead to the Israelization of Muslim society. Against that, Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish hoped that participation in the elections could improve the situation of Arab parliamentary politics and political affairs.¹⁸ Secondly, Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur¹⁹ acknowledged that it was unable to embrace this multiplicity of ideas by the movement united until 1996: the division was mandatory in order to remove divergence of thoughts. At that time Sheikh Ra'id Salah said that there were strong differing attitudes among the currents of the united Islamic Movement, and as these differences could not be resolved, it would be preferable to separate them into two commitments to preserve the genuine ideologies of the Islamic Movement. He also argued that the split was not the result of the single episode, but the zenith over several years of numerous occasions. Israeli claims, this will not make any fundamental differences, as all political Islam streams share identical objectives and objectives with only minor differences. He thinks that Israel's two Islamic sections are employed towards the similar and

18 A. Ghanem and M. Mustafa, *Palestinians in Israel: Indigenous group politics in the Jewishstate*. (in Arabic). (Ramallah: Madar, 2009), p. 123. cited in Mohamad Mustafa, "Political Participation by the Islamic Movement in Israel," in *Muslim Minorities in Non-Muslim Majority Countries*, p. 96.

19 Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur (officially Ibrahim Sarsour) was born on 2nd February 1959 at Kfar Kassem in Israel. In 1981, he graduated from Bar-Ilan University with a degree in English literature and linguistics. From 1981 to 1998, he was the mayor of Kafr Qasim before becoming the Islamic Movement's southern wing leader in 1998. He was elected Knesset Member consecutively from 17th (17-04-2006) to 19th (31-03-2015) Knesset. During the time, he worked as a member of different committees and Knesset Caucuses. He primarily followed Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish's doctrine, but when it came to the Arab-Israeli conflict, he disagreed with him. Sarsur is stricter than Darwish. He believes the intifada should go on until Israel acknowledges Palestine as a sovereign state. He implied that he preferred the 1947 partition plan's borders when it came to border issues. Sarsur, in contrast to Darwish, is more idealistic and less pragmatic. Source: Knesset Members, https://knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=800, accessed on 14th July 2021; *Kol Ha'ir*, (Jerusalem), 19 January 1990; Yoav Stern, "Sarsur, Moderately, Heading a Devout List," *Haaretz*, February 21, 2006, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.4893429>.

identical goal– the State of Israel’s destruction, but each one uses a variety of tools, policies, schemes and procedures.²⁰

United Arab List in the 14th Knesset Election

In theory, the two factions of the Islamic Movement represent two kinds of political practice: the ‘Legislatorial Faction’ believes in ‘politics of recognition’ while the ‘Non-parliamentary Faction’ believes in ‘politics of difference.’²¹ The politics of recognition seeks to improve the status and situations of Israel’s Arabs by means of dialog, discussions and pressure on the State and the majority. This is premeditated for motivating them to act, to adopt a parity policy, positive actions and recognition that Arabs are unique and minority. In contrast, politics of difference opts for community action and wants to isolate itself from every support from the State; it does not seek assimilation by the majority or the State. The actions of different policies launched by the non-parliamentary faction are designed to make an independent, self-sustaining society that is self-sufficient in its own business. Sheikh Salah named it the *al-mujtama‘ al-‘isami* project (‘A Self-Sustained, Independent Society’).²² In such a situation, Sheikh Yusef el-Kardawi, who issued a religious rule banning integration into Israeli political life, was advised to by the Radical Faction.²³ Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish, on the other hand, argued in favour of participating in the Knesset election. As a result, the election to boycott the Northern Branch, and the United Arab List, in particular, began to function as the political wing of the Islamic Movement.

On 29 May 1996, the election to the 14th Knesset was held, which characterized a most important revolution in the Israel’s party-political arrangement in the Arab parties. This election manifested a concentrated and passionate effort in the Arab minority to establish new groups and deals. The Arab Union for Progress and Change headed by Arafat’s advisor, Ahmed Tibi, the Democratic National Alliance (DNA) or Balad headed by Azmi Bishara, the Progressive Alliance headed by

20 Raphael Israeli, *Arabs in Israel: Friends or foes?* (Jerusalem: Ariel Center for Policy Research, 2002), pp. 231-276.

21 Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition*, Amy Gutmann (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press., 1992), pp. 58-102.

22 Ra’id Salah, “Towards a self-sustained society,” *Sawt al-Haqq wal-Huriyyah*, July 13, 2001, p. 5 [in Arabic].

23 Nachman Tal, “The Islamic Movement in Israel,” *Strategic Assessment*, Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel-Aviv University, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2000): p. 15.

Mohammed Zidan, the Arab Islamic Bloc led by Atef Khatib were formed and registered. There was also a new Jewish-Arab Party, the Organization for Democratic Action, which was led by Assaf Adiv. These Arab parties were not able to participate in the elections because of the personal interests, profit and loss and the various party accounts. However, they tried to form an alliance of their choice and achieved the greatest success. In the end, however, the Democratic National Alliance formed a joint list with the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE) or Hadash on one side. The Arab Islamic Bloc joined the Democratic Arab Party's (DAP) alliance with the United Arab List (UAL), which was a wing of the Islamic Movement that decided to participate in the elections. Tibi finally left the race without failing to deal satisfactorily with one of the other groups. The Democratic Alliance and the Jewish-Arab Democratic Action Organization were also separate. These five lists contested for the 4, 50,000 potential Arab votes with the Jewish parties.²⁴

In this voting, among the participant Arab parties, two alliances got 9 Member of Knesset (MK), including Jewish one. Among them, United Arab List (UAL) got 4 seats and the alliance of Democratic National Alliance moulded a joint list with the DFPE got another 5 seats. None of the Arab parties got an electoral threshold (44,604), which means 1.5% of total casting votes. Among the total votes (number of eligible Voters was 39, 33,250 and valid votes were 30, 52,130), United Arab List (UAL) got 89,514 votes, and the DFPE alliance got 129,455 votes. On the other hand, among the Arab ballots, the first got 25.4%, and the second got 37% votes.²⁵

United Arab List in 15th to 24th Knesset Election

From the 15th to 24th Knesset elections, every time United Arab List (UAL) attended either alone or assembled an alliance along with other Israeli Arab parties. In the 15th Knesset election, United Arab List (UAL) ran in the race alone and got an even more impressive five Knesset seats. But, after the election, internal disagreements reached at the acme, and as a result, three top of its member left the party and formed two new parties. Hashem Mahameed left United Arab List and

24 A. Ghanem, "The Limits of Parliamentary Politics: The Arab Minority in Israel and the 1992 and 1996 Elections," *Israel Affairs*, Vol.4, No.2 (Winter 1997): pp. 84-85.

25 "Fourteenth Knesset Election Result," Knesset, https://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res14.htm, accessed on 13th July 2021.

founded a full-pledged new political party in December 2002 and named it National Unity–National Progressive Alliance. He aimed at participating in the 2003 Knesset elections. On the other hand, the Party only obtained 20,571 votes (0.7%), not exactly a large portion of the number expected to pass the 1.5% discretionary limit. The Israeli Arab political parties won 6.3 per cent of the vote, essentially all in the old district of Mahmeed’s birthplace, Umm al-Fahm. After the local elections in Umm el-Fahm, in October 2003, the Party has not been active in politics and appears to have disappeared in the past as part of an alliance with Hadash, Balad and the Sons of the Village Movement. Mahameed was primarily a contestant in the 2006 elections for a seat on Hadash’s list but was eliminated from the final list.²⁶ On 19 February 2001, the other two prominent leaders, Muhamad Kanan and Tawfik Khatib set up the Arab National Party. Its primary aim was to participate in the 16th Knesset election though it finally failed to participate. It was expected that, in the run-up to the 2006 elections, Kanan would connect Hadash. The Party, however, then entered into the political decision to race before drawing out and articulating its support for Balad. However, by then, the name of the Party was not included in the ballot paper. On the day of the election, the Arab National Party only received 738 (0.02%) votes, the second-lowest total and much lower than the discretionary 2%. The Arab National Party challenged the 2015 races as one of the Arab lists, a union-led by Kanan with the Arab Democratic Party. The coalition received only 4,301 votes (0.11 percent) and finally failed to win any seat in the Knesset.²⁷

In such a broken and distressed situation, United Arab List (Ra’am) ran alone in the race for the 16th Knesset election. But, due to internal disagreements, feuds, discord and controversy, it gained only 65,551 votes. This result made the party

26 Hashem Mahameed was born on 18th February 1945 at Umm al-Fahm. Afterwards, he was elected member in 12th to 15th Knesset from Hadash, Hadash-Balad, National Democratic Assembly, United Arab List, National Unity - National Progressive Alliance. He performed as a successful member of different committees from 10.01.1990 to 17.02.2003. However, after 2003, he became inactive in politics and died on 03.04.2018. Source: “Hashem Mahameed,” Knesset, https://knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mkeng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=83, accessed on 12th July 2021.

27 “Elections in Israel March 2006,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/aboutisrael/history/pages/elections%20in%20israel%20march%202006.aspx>; “Final Results of the Elections for the Twentieth Knesset,” Central Elections Committee, https://www.bechiro20.gov.il/election/english/kneset20/pages/Results20_eng.aspx, accessed on 21st July 2021.

passive towards the election. However, overcoming frustration, the party resumed preparations for the next election. The leadership at the time believed that even if the opportunist leaders left the party, there would be a significant number of supporters and well-wishers of the Islamic Movement in the country. Then the United Arab List (Ra'am) decided to ally with the Arab Movement for Renewal (Ta'al), led by Ahmed Tibi, to uphold its support base. In the 2006 election, this coalition obtained four seats, of which three were employed by the United Arab List and one by the Arab Movement for Renewal. Before the 18th Knesset election, Ra'am, Ta'al, and Balad were prohibited from participation in the election by the Israeli Election Committee. The charges against them were incitement, support for terrorist groups and a refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist. Afterwards, The Supreme Court annulled the prohibition of the Party's election contest. Ensuring their petition, Ra'am-Ta'al were kept back for the 2009 election, and they received 3.4% of total votes with 4 MKs, splitting three for Ra'am and one for Ta'al. In the next 19th Knesset election, in the same way, Ra'am-Ta'al contested jointly and secured 3.65% of the total vote with 4Mks.²⁸

For the Arab parties in Israel, the twentieth Knesset election could be considered a milestone because a significant change was made in the electoral law, raising the 'Electoral Threshold' from 2% to 3.25 percent. The Arab parties considered it difficult for the Arab minor parties to gain seats in such a situation. Such a harsh decision compelled the fractious Arab parties to make a unity. Consequently, on 21 January 2015, the Arab political leadership Ayman Odeh signed a settlement with the Democratic Front of Peace and Equality (Hadash), the National Democratic Assembly (Balad), United Arab List (Ra'am), and the Arab Movement for Renewal (Ta'al) to run a single ballot at the forthcoming election. The Joint List pocketed 13 seats in the election, which made the third most significant force in the Knesset behind Likud and the Zionist Union ticket. However, the outcome of the elections did not bring good things to Israel's Arabs in October and November because of post-election violence against Israelis. The terrorist attacks in Paris added fuel to the fire on 13 November 2015. The Israeli government then blamed the Islamic Movement and outlawed it in Israel. A member of the Joint List accused United

28 "Final official results of the Elections for the Nineteenth Knesset," Central Elections Committee, https://www.gov.il/apps/elections/elections-knesset-19/eng/list/Results_eng.html, accessed on 21st July 2021.

Arab List members of expanding their hands-on violence. On the other hand, the Israeli administration accused them of propaganda, like the Israeli authorities were planning to take over 'the Al-Aqsa Mosque' and not permitted Muslim priests on the 'Temple Mount.'²⁹ Strong actions were taken by the Israeli authorities against the Islamic Movement (mother organization of the United Arab List-Ra'am). The Israeli police raided a dozen different institutions or organizations affiliated with the Islamic Movement; files and computers were seized, and their respective bank accounts were frozen. Thousands of its workers were harassed in different forms by the Israeli authority. The party was annoyed at the Hadash and decided to run with Balad on a joint list. However, the newly formed alliance was barred by the Central Election Committee. After a short time of obstruction, the duo finally joined the election after Supreme Court's overruling on the sanction. In that 21st Knesset election, they gained four seats in the Knesset with 3.33 per cent of total voter turnout. On the other hand, another Arab alliance Hadash-Ta'al got six seats in the Knesset with 4.49 per cent of total voter turnout.³⁰

In analyzing the poor total turnout of Arab voters, both Arabs decided to join in a joint list. They hoped to get more Arab voters as a unique Arab slate, which declined from 63% to 50%. In the 22nd Knesset election, the four-party alliance named Joint List (Hadash, Ra'am, Ta'al, Balad) ran for the race and won 13 seats

29 Al-Aqsa is the silver-domed mosque inside a compound of 35 acre known by Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif or the Noble Hill and Jews as the Temple Mount. It is located in Jerusalem's Old City and is significant to all three Abrahamic religions. Since Israel occupied East Jerusalem, including the Old City, in 1967, the website has been the most contested territory in the Holy Land. Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad has ascended to heaven from here. Jews believe that the whole is where the biblical Jewish temples once stood, but Jewish law and the Israel Rabbinate prohibit the Jews from entering the compound and praying because the compound is thought too holy to be treated. The Western Wall of the Complex is thought to be the last remnant of the Second Temple, known as the Weeping Wall for Jews. Muslims call this wall al-Buraq and believe it was where Prophet Muhammad bonded al-Buraq, the animal he ascended in heaven and talked with God. Source: Al-Aqsa Mosque: Five things you need to know, AlJazeera, 6 Dec. 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/12/6/al-aqsa-mosque-five-things-you-need-to-know>, accessed on 14th July 2021; WHC/16/40.COM/7A.Add.2 Paris, 27June 2016, World Heritage Committee, Fortieth session, Istanbul, Turkey 10-20 July 2016.

30 "The truthful results of the 21st Knesset elections," Central Election Commission for the 21st Knesset, <https://votes21.bechirov.gov.il/nationalresults>, accessed on 21st July 2021.

in the Knesset with 10.60 per cent of total voter turnout. The Joint List turned into the third-largest party in the Knesset. This time, on behalf of Arab parties, Ayman Odeh advocated the idea of backing up Kahol Lavan (a new daily formed in 2019) to overthrow Prime Minister Netanyahu.³¹ But that attempt did not bring in the light because most of the joint list members opposed the idea seriously and abruptly. In such a situation, when Netanyahu became incapable of making up a government, a new poll was called for March 2020. In that 23rd Knesset election, the same Joint List contested the election and earned a better position by captivating 15 seats in the Knesset. For the second time consecutively, the Joint List continued the third most significant role in the Knesset. In that time, no party or coalition became able to form a government. As a result, the 24th Knesset election was called on March 23, 2021. But, just before the election, Joint List could not agree on a common platform, and finally, it was broken up. The United Arab List (Ra'am) split from Joint List and ran for election on its own.³² A picture of the participation of the United Arab List in the 15th to 24th Knesset election is given in the table.

United Arab List as Part of a Coalition Government

In chronicled terms, the Arab parties in the Knesset-the ICP/DFPE, the PLP, and the DAP - took on a position of 'extremely durable resistance'. They were also treated as addressing the 'conniving' and 'threatening' Arab minority and unsuitable as an alliance feature. These groups had no hypothetical or practical shot at joining an Israeli decision alliance throughout the long term.³³ Such a situation continued till 2021 and finally dismissing the fears Mansur Abbas decided to join a coalition government.

31 Mitchell Bard, "Israeli Electoral History: 2019 Elections to the 21st and 22nd Knesset," *Jewish Virtual Library*, accessed on 21st July 2021.

32 There had many reasons for the breakup of the Joint List. Firstly, the Islamic Movement's fall towards Bibi (nickname of Netanyahu) and the Likud is not accepted by the other Joint List leaders. Secondly, Abbas' attitude to give priority to advancing the Arab sector by playing a political game that is not considered logical to other leaders. Finally, Hadash and Balad's voting for the Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights in the Israel community is regarded as disrespectful and a violation of religious values by the Islamic Movement and its political wing, United Arab List. Source: Honaida Ghanim, "Israel's 2021 Elections: Background, Scenarios, and Expectations," Arab Center Washington DC, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/israels-2021-elections-background-scenarios-and-expectations/>, accessed on 21st July 2021.

33 A. Ghanem, "The Limits of Parliamentary Politics: The Arab Minority in Israel and the 1992 and 1996 Elections," *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 4, No.2 (Winter 1997), p. 76.

Participation of the United Arab List (Ra'am) in 15th to 24th Knesset Election

Knesset Election, Date & Total Valid Votes	Alone or as a Part of an Alliance	Number of Valid Votes and Qualifying threshold	% of Total Votes	Number of Seats
15 th Knesset May 17, 1999; 33,09,416	United Arab List (Ra'am)	1, 14,810 (1.5%, 47,672)	3.4	5
16 th Knesset January 28, 2003; 31,48,364	United Arab List (Ra'am)	65,551 (1.5%, 47,226)	2.08	2
17 th Knesset March 28, 2006; 31,37,064	United Arab List- Arab Movement for Renewal (Ta'al)	94,786 (2%, 62,742)	3.00	4
18 th Knesset February 10, 2009; 33,73,490	Ra'am-Ta'al	1,13,954 (2%, 67,470)	3.4	4
19 th Knesset January 22, 2013; 37,92,742	United Arab List (Ra'am)- Ta'al	1, 38,450 (2%, 75,855)	3.65	4
20 th Knesset March 17, 2015; 42,10,884	Joint List (Hadash, National Democratic Assembly, Arab Movement for Renewal, United Arab List)	4,,46,583 (3.25%, 1,36,854)	10.61	13
21 st Knesset April 9, 2019; 43,09,270	Ra'am-Balad	1,43,666 (3.25%, 1,40,005)	3.33	4
22 nd Knesset Sep. 17, 2019; 44,36,806	Joint List (Hadash, Ra'am, Ta'al, Balad)	4,70,211 (3.25%, 1,44,197)	10.60	13
23 rd Knesset March 2, 2020; 45,53,161	Joint List (Hadash, Ra'am, Ta'al, Balad)	5,81,507 (3.25%, 1,47,978)	12.67	15
24 th Knesset March 23, 2021; 44,10,052	United Arab List (Ra'am)	1,67,064 (3.25%, 1,43,327)	3.79	4

Source: Knesset Election Result from 15th to 24th Knesset, Knesset, <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/mk/Pages/Elections.aspx>, accessed on 13th July 2021; The Israel Democracy Institute, <https://en.idi.org.il/israeli-elections-and-parties/elections/2021/>, accessed on 13th July 2021.

The 12-year reign of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israeli Prime Minister had reached a conclusion when Knesset, supported another alliance government on twelfth June 2021, drove by far-right orthodox patriot Naftali Bennett. Bennett began moving a far-fetched union of left-wing, moderate and centrist, alongside a party addressing Palestinian residents of Israel, who represent 21% of the nation's populace. The groups share slight separation from a longing to overthrow Netanyahu. In a two-year revolving settlement, Bennett serves as prime minister to replace the centralist leader Yair Lapid, the new administration's chief planner.³⁴ The eight-party alliance incorporates Yesh Adit, Blue and White, Yisrael Beiteinu, Labor, Yamina, New Hope, Maretz and United Arab List (UAL). The United Arab List (Ra'am) is the first party drawn from the Palestinian Israelis in the Israeli Government.

Reasons behind Joining a Coalition Government of the United Arab List

Most of the Palestinians and Israeli Arab party's supporters and workers harshly criticize the decision of Mansour Abbas of being part of the coalition. He has been branded a traitor or hypocrite and accused him of abandoning his ideology in order to join ultra-Orthodox Jewish, leftists and centrist. On the other hand, there are some reasons that entice Abbas to ponder over of taking such kind of very pragmatic decision. Jafar Farah, Director of the Mossawa Center, an advocacy group for Israeli Arab Citizens, supported the Abbas' decision and said that, "I do not think that the two-state solution or reconciliation with the Palestinians will be achieved in the coming year or two. But I do think that it is an opportunity for the Palestinian community in Israel to become a game changer."³⁵ Here are some points that favor Abbas' position.

Antipathy to Benjamin Netanyahu and Blocked Likud from Power

Generally as a far-right Jewish political party, Likud always has a tendency to deprive Israeli Arabs in every aspects of life. But, when Yitzhak Rabin of the Labor Party formed the twenty-fifth government of Israel on 13 July 1992, he appointed Nawaf Massalha (a MK of Labour Party) as Deputy Minister of Health. Massalha is

34 "Israel swears in new government, ending Netanyahu's 12-year rule," *Aljazeera*, June 13, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/13/israeli-parliament-votes-to-end-netanyahus-12-year-rule>.

35 Roger Cohen, "An Arab party makes history in Israel," *The New York Times*, June 21, 2021, <https://www.Nytimes.com/live/2021/06/13/world/israel-knesset-bennett-lapid-netanyahu#netanyahus-rise-rule-and-fall-a-quarter-century-in-the-spotlight>, accessed on 7th July 2021.

an Israeli Arab politician, who became the first Muslim Arab to hold a ministerial position in the Israeli government. In that regime, municipal budgets were adjusted upward; industrial zones were established in Israeli-Arab centres. Small changes appeared to have improved, and a better deal than the Israeli-Arabs probably gained during the reign of the Likud.³⁶

Afterwards, Benjamin Netanyahu served as Israeli Prime Minister for two times. One from 1996 to 1999 and then 2009 to 2021. During his second regime, the Palestinians had to endure ‘War on Gaza’ three times, first one was in 2012, second one was in 2014 and the last one was in 2021. Judging his initiatives and activities against the Arabs, most of the Israeli-Arab leaders thought that, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hated the Arab citizens of Israel. He is one of the most provocative Israeli prime ministers for Arab voters and Arab leaders.³⁷ Israel’s colonial settler project, which began a century ago, has a clear objective: minimum land with Palestine’s maximum population. In order to achieve this objective, in 280 settlements, Israel settled 441,000 settlers on over 2 million dunams—one dunam is 1000 square meters of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.³⁸ For implementing this project, Israeli government had passed a series of discriminatory laws, like Absentee Property Law, draconian interpretation of the Ottoman law etc. In the past decade, Netanyahu led the authority in this regard. So, when the Israeli Arabs get the chance to unseat Netanyahu and block Likud to grab the state power, United Arab List has used its ‘Trump Card.’

Changes on the Natural Place on Opposition

Israelis always criticize and blame the Israeli-Arab political parties saying, that they are really interested to assimilate in Israeli politics. For this reason they always tend to be an opposition. Fakhira Halloun, a conflict resolution expert, said the mainstream speech is usually one that views the Palestinians as an internal enemy within Israel. This perception needs to be changed by not always being in

36 Don Peretz and Gideon Doron, “Israel’s 1996 Elections: A Second Political Earthquake?” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (1996): p. 540.

37 Mustafa Deveci, “Ahmed Tibi (an Arab member of Knesset) with an interview with Anadolu Agency,” *Anadolu Agency*, February 24, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/netanyahu-hates-arab-israelis-member-of-knesset/2155581>, accessed on 7th July 2021.

38 Anchal Vohra, “The draconian law used by Israel to steal Palestinian land,” *AlJazeera*, July 8, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/8/how-israel-backs-settlers-to-confiscate-palestinian-lands>, accessed on 8th July 2021.

opposition.³⁹ So, when the Israeli political parties fail to form a viable government, Mansour Abbas really wanted to be creative and tented to be a real kingmaker. In an interview with Israeli TV, Abbas said, for the children of the three faiths and the two peoples, the Arab public has chosen us to jointly build an opportunity in this holy and lovely land. Who, in contrast to all other politicians, ran an anti-qualification campaign on the left and the right? I haven't ruled anything out, but I tend to focus more on what's feasible than on what isn't.⁴⁰ His bold decision could have a wide-reaching impression on Israeli Arabs. In the political arena, which was the limited terrain of the Zionist and religious Jewish Israelis for a long time, the Palestinian people of Israel are now being viewed as reliable political forces. Whether cooperation with or refusing to Israelis is better for Arabs is crucial for Israel's visions.

Realization: Pragmatism over Idealism

No Arab party has ever joined a ruling Israeli coalition or been invited to do so. Since, such an opportunity created a critical situation for the aspirant power holders and invited United Arab List to join a government, as a pragmatist leader Abbas grabbed the deal and decided to join a coalition. He seeks to improve the lives of Israel's victimized Arab minority, Abbas has not ruled out joining the hardline prime minister if it brings him influence. Because, Marwan Bishara, a senior political analyst of Al-Jazeera explains how Netanyahu's Netanyahus are here to stay (in the Knesset). He indicates that, most of the coalition leaders were the right hands or ministers in his cabinet in the past. Mostly all of them either chooses to follow the policy of Netanyahu or interested far right than Netanyahu.⁴¹ The policy adopted by Abbas is not totally dependent on pragmatism. Yehuda Ben Meir, senior research assistant at Tel Aviv University's Institute of National Safety Studies, argues that, "I realize that Abbas is very interested in being part of the coalition... It's part of his ideology that Arabs should become involved in Israeli political life, [and] being able to

39 Roger Cohen, "An Arab party makes history in Israel," *The New York Times*, June 21, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/06/13/world/israel-knesset-bennett-lapid-netanyahu#netanyahus-rise-rule-and-fall-a-quarter-century-in-the-spotlight>, accessed on 7th July 2021.

40 In an interview with ILTV Israel on 4 April 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q0jRv0b4>.

41 Marwan Bishara, "Netanyahu's Netanyahus take charge in Israel," *AlJazeera*, Jun 3, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/6/3/netanyahus-netanyahus-take-charge-in-israel>, accessed on 7th July 2021.

show his electorate that he achieved many important things for the Arab citizens of Israel.”⁴² But Bishara termed his initiative ‘overly pragmatic.’ He argues that, there is nothing positive in Bennett that makes good for Abbas. However, if we look at the opposing alliance’s assessment, they see Bennett as simply a pragmatist, less ideological than he seems, and with the lack of Netanyahu’s divinizing adversaries. If this assessment turns out to be accurate, Abbas would be optimistic that he was correct in his decision. However, debate is unavoidable when the Ra’am represents an orthodox ideology. In that regard, Yechiel Shabiy, an Islamist movement expert at the Begin-Sadat Strategic Studies Center of the University of Bar-Ilan, points out that the branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, North or South, does not consider Israel to be the rightful sovereign. However, to advance its agenda, the Southern Branch opted to enter the political arena, and Ra’am is represented in the Knesset.⁴³ He indicates that to materialize its ideology, Ra’am does everything to implement ideologies as a political wing of Islamic Movement.

As a Tool to Bring the Government Down

Benjamin Netanyahu remains the largest political party, Likud, and is expected to resist the new government vigorously in the next few days. If only a faction pin could lose its majority and risk collapse, opening Netanyahu up to power. It is hazardous to lead a government with a razor-thin 60-59 majority in the parliament. Instinctively, Mansour Abbas would like to use his support as a tool to bring the government if he would not get the promised and expected outcome from the government. So whether Naftali Bennett accepts it or not, the government will try to prevent the United Arab List or Mansour Abbas from being disgusted. In reality, Mansour would have the chance to put pressure on the government when Netanyahu reassured his staff, supporters and followers that “Do not let your spirits fall. I will lead you in a daily battle against this bad and dangerous left-wing government, and bring it down. And with the help of God, this will happen faster

42 Tara Kavalier, “If We Have a Major Conflagration, Then All Bets Are Off,” *The Media Line*, May 11, 2021, <https://themedialine.org/by-region/if-we-have-a-major-conflagration-then-all-bets-are-off/>, accessed on 9th July 2021.

43 Daniel Sonnenfeld, “Muslim Brotherhood: We Have ‘No Ideological or Organizational Connection with Islamist Movement in Israel,” *The Media Line*, June 8, 2021, <https://themedialine.org/by-region/muslim-brotherhood-we-have-no-ideological-or-organizational-connection-with-the-islamist-movement-in-israel/>, accessed on 12th July 2021.

than you think.”⁴⁴ Waiting for such opportunities and receiving its best advantage can be rightly termed as ‘Pragmatism’.

For Gaining Bargaining power for the Arabs

Abbas believes that, without joining a government, there is no opportunity to bargain. He denoted that he decided on choosing pragmatism over the ideology of being outside the Israeli government. As part of the government, he could support his constituents in developing their public and seminaries, reasonably inexpensive housing and law enforcement to collect illegal weapons and reduce Arab people’s high crime. Abbas, Bennett and Lapid, have committed more than \$15 billion in infrastructure, education, and crime reduction initiative projects within the Arab community in Israel. For this purpose, the partners chose Abbas as the right person to chair coalition, the Arab Society Special Committee.⁴⁵

Looking Back: Leadership (Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish) Legacy

Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish was brought into the world in Kafr Qasem, an Arab city east of Tel Aviv, in 1948. After his studies at an Islamic college at Nablus, he went home to promote a return to Islam and Islamic tradition, and in 1971 founded the Islamic Movement in Israel. He subsequently coordinated several religious repentant in a clandestine framework called Usrat al-Jihad (The Families of Jihad). Its members amassed weapons, burned fields and committed killings. In 1981, the group’s activity was exposed, and its members were arrested, tried, and imprisoned in various terms. Darwish was released from jail in 1985, under the Jibril Agreement⁴⁶ along with his colleagues. Since then he became openly active and

44 Patrick Kingsley, “Netanyahu angrily vows to his supporters, ‘I will lead you in a daily battle,’” *The New York Times*, June 13, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/13/world/middleeast/netanyahu-israel-parliament-speech.html>, accessed on 27th July 2021.

45 Marcy Oster, “Who Is Mansour Abbas and Why Does He Make Jewish and Arab Lawmakers Uncomfortable?” *The Media Line*, July 7, 2021, <https://themedialine.org/news/who-is-mansour-abbas-and-why-does-he-make-jewish-and-arab-lawmakers-uncomfortable/>, accessed on 11th July 2021.

46 The Jibril Deal was a prisoner swap agreement signed on May 21, 1985, between Israel’s government, led by Shimon Peres, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, often referred to as simply ‘PFLP-GC.’ In return for three Israeli detainees (Yosef Grof, Nissim Salem, and Hezi Shai) kidnapped during the First Lebanon War, Israel released 1,150 security prisoners from Israeli prisons. The agreement’s nickname is a nod to PFLP-GC founder and Palestinian militant leader Ahmed Jibril. For details, please see, Jesse Russell, Ronald Cohn, *Jibril Agreement* (McFarland: Book on Demand Limited, 2012).

immediately disapproved of the violent behaviour of Israel's Arabs. In 1992, he explicitly condemned the killing by the Israeli Arab group of three Israeli soldiers.⁴⁷ In turn, Nachman Tal argues that Darwish had calculated the lesson from the past and found that, by the slight chance of victory in a fight when he was potholed over Israel's military competence, a subversive was formed to make the jihad against Israel an ill-considerate decision. He concluded that in the future, the Islamic Movement would only take up legitimate business with a particular emphasis in the field of Islamic proselytizing, education, and health development for the Arab industry as a whole, as well as expanding its facilities, building mosques and increasing proselytization and study the Qur'an.⁴⁸

The ideological standing of Darwish is significant because Abbas always claims that he is a fervent worker of his 'Spiritual Guru' Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish. After deciding to join the coalition, he said, "Everything I do today I absorbed from the legacy of Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish. He started in jail and ended with a religious peace initiative. I don't have to pass the same trajectory. I took his teachings and I continued from where he ended."⁴⁹ Now, the question what the legacy did Darwish left for his followers. In answer, Ghanem pointed out four key points of Darwish's legacy. The first concern is equality between Jews and Arabs. Like most Israelis, Darwish acknowledged the state and that in a country with a Jewish majority, the Arabs are a minority. He said in a meeting, "There is some level of restriction and discomfort. It is tough to have concurrence among slaves and bosses, among solid and frail. A scaffold must be worked between rises to."⁵⁰ Every Israeli Arab believes that, he must fight for equal rights. But the way of fighting is somewhat diverse and dissimilar to Darwish. According to him,

If the state is not prepared to give me my due, we will help ourselves. The Islamic Movement has set up not only a soccer league; it has also founded self-help associations in the villages. The public sees the results and donates generously. . . . We supplement the public schools with courses in religion, repair roads in the villages, build mosques, and invest heavily in religious services. . . . From time to time we

47 Clyde Haberman, "4 Israeli Arabs Are Held in Ax Killing of 3 Soldiers," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/05/world/4-israeli-arabs-are-held-in-ax-killing-of-3-soldiers.html>, accessed on 12th July 2021.

48 Nachman Tal, "The Islamic Movement in Israel," *Strategic Assessment*, Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel-Aviv University, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2000): p. 10.

49 Orly Halpern, "'It's Possible to Do Things Differently.' The Arab Kingmaker Who Joined Israel's Far-Right to Oust Netanyahu", *Time*, <https://time.com/6073019/MANSOUR-ABBAS-ARAB-ISRAEL-COALITION-GOVERNMENT/>, accessed on 12th July 2021.

50 Yediot Maariv, 29 July 1988 (Hebrew), cited in A. Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, p. 126.

organize volunteer labor camps, which assemble a large wedding that lasts for a week or ten days.⁵¹

The subsequent imperative concern is the Arab identity in Israel. In a state with a Jewish majority, Darwish believes that the Arabs are a minority and have four identity circles: Islamic, Arab, Palestinian, and Israeli.⁵² The third topic relates to the struggle between Arabs and Israel. The Islamic Movement recognizes the existence of the State of Israel as a matter of principle and its right to exist. Darwish has adopted a judicious position and expressed his recognition of the State of Israel and its right to exist on numerous occasions. In exchange for their recognition of the right to create their state, he even proposed that the Palestinians recognize Israel.⁵³ The last important point is the method of fighting. As the leader of the Islamic Movement, Darwish advocates law-based action that is not limited. He assumed that the law would protect the minority against the majority's repression. He said in an interview, "I know that we are a minority in the state of Israel. Every citizen must obey the law, and in addition minorities have no better defense than the law."⁵⁴ In 1998, Darwish announced that he was leaving public political life, after remaining a figure a stature as well as a spiritual and religious authority he passed away on 14 May 2017. He never served as Knesset Member but directed the Knesset members of United Arab List unofficially.

In 2019 Mansour Abbas was elected Head of the United Arab List, and for the first time, he was elected as the 21st Knesset Member. But prior to 21st Knessetheld on April 9, 2019 election, the party led in the Knesset by Abdulmalik Dehamshe from 1996 to 2006, Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur from 2006 to 2015 and Masd Ghnaim from 2015 to 2019. Sarsur played a very important role on several occasions on different sensitive issues related to Palestinians and Israeli Arabs in the Knesset. At last when Mansour Abbas got the leadership, he always drew attention of the Israeli Arab political leaders. Though he claims of following Darwish's legacy, he actually moves away to some extent and becomes more pragmatic than Darwish. As far as the equality of Jews and Arabs is concerned, he is fully following Darwish or even

51 Ha'aretz, 17 June 1988, cited in A. Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, p. 127.

52 Koteret Rashit, 23 August 1988 (Hebrew), cited in A. Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, p. 128.

53 A. Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, p. 129.

54 The Jerusalem Post, 16 October 1987, cited in A. Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel*, pp. 132-133.

more than Darwish. Indicating issues such as crime, violence, economic distress, severe housing shortages, unrecognized villages in the Negev, he focuses on healing problems within the Green Line for the Arab citizens of Israel. On the issue of Israel's Arab identity, he points to three rather than Darwish's four identity circles. He asserts firstly Arab Palestinians then Arab citizens of Israel.⁵⁵ He consciously and intentionally deducted the word 'Muslim'. Because he tactically, strategically wants to convince the whole Israeli Arabs that he is the leader of all not only for Muslims. At the same time, he wants to establish his identity as a moderate leader to the far right Jewish, Leftist and Centrist leaders of the coalition partners. About the Arab-Israeli dispute, he tries to avoid this question, although he is hopeful that the conflict will end. By expressing his concern to improve his people's well-being, Abbas said, "I was chosen for first to serve the Arab residents and to attempt to carry answers for the issues. That is numbers one, two, and three in needs. However, in the event that I have the chance to propel the harmony I will do as such."⁵⁶ Such kind of expectance indicates that he is not serious regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. Question of the method of struggle, Abbas is very passive. He unequivocally advocates for setting up harmony among Israelis and the Arabs or explicitly Palestinians. He proclaims that "by nature I'm a person of peace. We need to conduct ourselves in this issue in a smart way and not black and white...There are many things that need to be taken into account and need to be considered before taking a decision."⁵⁷

Criticism to Abbas and Future of the Arab Hope

Though Mansour Abbas or his party gave the arguments mentioned above in favor of joining the government, many of his counterparts criticized Abbas sharply. Among them, the Palestinian politicians and their fellow Arab parties are mentionable. Hamas spokesperson Fawzi Barhoum asserted that Israel continues a colonial entity regardless of the color of the new administration. Whatever the form of a government in Israel, the way we see the Zionist entity will be no different, he

55 Orly Halpern, "It's Possible to Do Things Differently.' The Arab Kingmaker Who Joined Israel's Far-Right to Oust Netanyahu," *Time*, 11 June 2021, <https://time.com/6073019/mansour-abbas-arab-israel-coalition-government/>, accessed on 13th July 2021.

56 *Ibid.*

57 *Ibid.*

added. It is an occupation and colonial entity, which we should confront by power and strength to regain our rights.⁵⁸

It is generally assumed that the purposes of making a coalition with the right-wingers like Naftali Bennett would be primarily unfulfilled. Marwan Bishara characterizes this event as a ‘family feud.’ He specifies that former associates leave Netanyahu and claims that the old and the new Prime Ministers have no ideological differences. If we get a close look at Netanyahu and Bennett, we can quickly realize that basically, they are all belonging to the same right-wing Zionist family. The differences between them have been personal political vendettas. Bishara forecasts that, when Netanyahu is abrogated and unable to re-establish its return, the ‘change government’ will lose its *raison d’être* for all practical purposes. It is certainly open for the right-wing and far-right parties, the majority in the Knesset, to various and more coherent coalition possibilities. The first thing that these parties will do then is to put the overly pragmatic United Arab List under the bus, which is too pragmatic.⁵⁹ If this projection will be proved true, then there will be no possibility of fulfilling the aspirations of Abbas in the coming days.

Palestinians of Gaza are blaming Abbas for being pioneering Islamists. He often thinks about himself. The ‘Change Block’ government put forward a couple of elusive objectives before Abbas, and he swallows the lure. Abbas doesn’t know precisely which changes will happen and when they will happen. During the time of allying, Abbas doesn’t plainly say anything regarding the real worry of the Israeli Arabs. Bennett’s representative Ayelet Shaked has completely dismissed Abbas’any type of manipulation and impact on the Interior Ministry. Because she “considers it an interference in Israeli features of the state built only for Jews, where no Palestinians or Arab can have any influence.”⁶⁰ She actually talks about Israel’s policy towards the Palestinians. And for this reason, a Gazan mother, Suhair Amer, rightly expresses her resentment, “It’s shameful that one Palestinian prefers to join the Israeli

58 “World reacts to new government in Israel, end of Netanyahu era,” *Aljazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/13/world-react-to-new-government-in-israel-end-of-netanyahu-era>, 13 June 2021.

59 Marwan Bishara, Op. cit.

60 Sanaa Alswerky, “Palestinians in Gaza Outraged as Islamist Party Head Mansour Abbas Agrees to Israeli Government,” 2 June, 2021, <https://themedialine.org/top-stories/palestinians-in-gaza-outraged-as-islamist-party-head-mansour-abbas-agrees-to-israeli-government/>, accessed on 15th July 2021.

government in killing his own people. He knows that any decision coming from their side will be against our existence. Anyway, it won't make a difference on the ground because they will not give him what he wants."⁶¹ The critics' fear about Abbas' success could be considered logical because no other dogmatic person like Bennett became Prime Minister of Israel before. He becomes the country's first Prime Minister who wears a kippah.⁶²

Forthcoming days for Abbas

Abbas thinks about the risk, dangers, and traps of joining a precarious alliance quite well. He even makes a step forward by asserting that we removed a barrier that Arab citizens faced.⁶³ The fate of Abbas relies upon many 'If' and 'However.' Abbas underlined the Arab sector's interest in the civic realm during the accord discussion. This deal includes fiscal guarantees and a commitment to address the sector's crime and violence problems. However, he skirted the primary issues of Israeli Arabs, such as calls for equal rights, a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the establishment of East Jerusalem as the Palestinian state's capital, and the complete departure of Israeli occupation forces from Palestine. Firstly, if Abbas raises these issues before the Naftali Bennett government, there will be a deterioration of the relationship among the coalition parties. Hassan Lafi, a political investigator and expert on Israeli problems residing in Gaza, estimates that,

The chaotic unrest surrounding the Israeli political scene now will force the [lawmakers in the new government] not to move forward with any strategic decision regarding the Palestinian cause. They will not go on with the two-state solution, nor with a satisfying prisoner swap deal. The leaked political program of Bennett's government shows a focus on the internal economic and social issues only. Nothing is addressing the core Palestinian issues.⁶⁴

Secondly, if Netanyahu is convicted for a corruption charge or taken down from the party's post, there would create such a situation that United Arab List would be thrown out from the coalition, and Likud could enter the government. If it happens,

61 Ibid.

62 Kippah or kipa are Hebrew words in singular forms, and Yiddish or Yarmulke are plural forms. It is usually worn at all times by Jewish men in orthodox communities. Those who wear them only do so during prayer, in synagogue, or other rituals among non-Orthodox communities.

63 Orly Halpern, "It's Possible to Do Things Differently".

64 Ibid.

then Mansour can achieve nothing just as a tool for ousting Netanyahu. Thirdly, if the Gaza war occurs, what side will be taken by Abbas? Definitely for Israel! In such a situation, he will be tagged as a hypocrite and traitor by Israeli Arabs and the Palestinians.

On the other hand, if Abbas tactically refrained from the Israeli authorities to direct war on Gaza, then he could achieve a lot. However, history proves that Israel did never compromise its security issues. Fourthly, if Abbas emphasizes the Bedouins or Negev issue, he will be detached from the Israeli Arab and endangers himself his political future.

If Abbas fails to achieve anything visible, he could be stepped aside as party leader, let alone reelected as MK. However, his mother organization, Islamic Movement, will remain as strong as it is now. If Abbas is harmed personally, it will affect Arab-Israeli relations and jeopardize the interest of Israeli Arabs. Now, it is a matter to see how far the Israelis will be able to trust the Arabs in the coming days. However, Abbas has made a significant concession that we will have to wait for months to see if that goal will be met. However, it can be said that Abbas' decision to advance the Israeli Arabs as a community based on pragmatism rather than ideology is a gamble. If he wins, he will be a hero, and if he loses, he will be treated as a traitor and hypocrite by both the Israeli Arabs and the Palestinians.

Conclusion

The rights of Arabs who thankfully or regrettably became residents of the State of Israel were rarely considered after Israel's declaration of independence on 14 May 1948. The perplexity of these Israeli Arabs is less than the plight of the Palestinians, so they never come to the center of the discussion. However, after the 24th Knesset election, the United Arab List, a small Islamist party among the few political Arab parties in Israel, became the focus of interest for politicians worldwide. Interested people keep trying to find out, what is the identity of this group? Where are their sources, how did they become part of a fragile coalition government? According to a contextual study, the United Arab List is a political wing of Israel's Southern Branch of the Islamic Movement, which first entered the Knesset in 1996 and has since been successful. However, most of the time, the party has participated as an alliance member with the other Arab party or parties. Through this process, the party has entered mainstream Israeli politics, but the

divisions between the leaders of their mother organization (i.e. The Islamic Movement) have also come to light. In this way, the United Arab List moves away from the original ideology it adopted during its formative years. Although this deviation started from Darwish at that time, it was not visible on a large scale. Afterward, Ibrahim Sarsour was elected leader who is a bit more rigid than Darwish in an ideological application. Nevertheless, after Sarsur's retirement from politics in 2015, the party's leaders strayed far from the original ideology and sought to succeed in politics based on pragmatism. When Mansour Abbas was elected chairman of the party, he became overly pragmatic, and just before the 24th Knesset election, he split into the Arab list and was elected on its own, suddenly becoming a kingmaker. Eventually, he joined the coalition government and became a partner in state power. Nevertheless, we will have to wait a few more years to get the results of the game that Abbas played dramatically. The Israeli Arabs have nothing to lose, but Mansour Abbas should take step carefully so that Israel cannot use him to block the Israeli-Palestinian bipartisan solution. Though Mansour Abbas adopted pragmatism considering the interests of Israeli Arabs in the milieu of Israeli politics, he should find a way out to apply idealism of his party with pragmatism simultaneously.

TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES: THE CASE OF ROHINGYA WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH

Tazrin-A-Zakea*

Abstract

A large number of Rohingya people from Northern Myanmar are living in the southeastern part of Bangladesh. Except the residents of two official camps, recently approximately 914,000 Rohingyas are living without registration and legal status in Bangladesh. Before August 2017 and after, displacement of women and girl children have been characterized with human rights violation in the forms of expulsion, rape, physical violence, sexual exploitation and so on. It was estimated that at least 18,000 Rohingya women and girls were raped, 116,000 were beaten, and 36,000 were burnt to death deliberately. This study finds several factors to understand their traumatic experiences. These are traumatized memories in Myanmar (rape), forced labour and displacement, armed violence and physical torture, and statelessness. This study has been initiated to understand their traumatic experiences before and after their displacement.

Key words: Trauma, Memory, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Sexual violence, Displacement, Refugee

1. Introduction

The Rohingyas are an ethnic, linguistic and religious minority group in the Northern Arakan (presently Rakhaine) state of Myanmar. They are of South Asian origin and have linguistic similarity with the Chattogram people of Bangladesh. After the independence of Burma, they were systematically excluded from the nation-building process. The Muslim Rohingya is different from the majority Burmese population who are of East Asian stock and mostly Buddhists.¹ Rohingya people experienced persecution in Burma since the independence but it was institutionalized with the 1982 Citizenship Law which created three categories of citizens, namely: full, associated and naturalized citizens. Most of the Rohingyas did not fall in any category.

In Myanmar, Rohingyas are recognized neither as citizens nor as foreigners. Officially they are called 'Myanmar residents' or 'illegal immigrants from

* Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Chittagong.

1 Chris. Lewa, "North Arakan: an open prison for the Rohingya in Burma", *Forced Migration Review*, 2009, Vol. 32, pp. 11-13.

Bangladesh'.² Consequently, as Imtiaz Ahmed puts it 'No love relationship can exist between the stateless Rohingyas and the state of Myanmar. Domination, exploitation, persecution, deportation, forced labour and the like are some of the terms that have come to mark the relationship'.³

Facing severe human rights abuses and massive ill-treatment by the military governments, Rohingya people sought to take refuge out of Arakan in large numbers on four major occasions: 1784, 1942, 1978 and 1992. In 1978, after the Operation Nagamin, a huge number of Rohingyas, totaling around 250,000 were forcibly pushed to Bangladesh. Except 10,000 or so 'residual refugees', all returned to Myanmar under international supervision by the end of 1979. But then, 12 years later in 1991, another big push took place. Of course, minor pushes went on intermittently, at times with little knowledge of the authorities in Yangon and Dhaka.⁴ After the major exodus in 1991-92, about 250,000 Rohingya Muslims were registered by the Government of Bangladesh as refugees. The vast majorities were repatriated by the Government of Bangladesh to Myanmar in the following years, leaving only two of the 20 refugee camps in existence.⁵

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 723,000 fled to Bangladesh in August 2017. By September 2019, around 914,000 Rohingya were estimated to be in need of assistance. It was also estimated that from them women and children carried more attention, at least 18,000 Rohingya Muslim women and girls were raped, 116,000 were beaten, and 36,000 were burnt to death.^{6 7} During field surveys, Rohingyas arriving in Bangladesh—mostly women and children—were seen traumatized, some have arrived with injuries caused by gunshots, shrapnel and fire. These people found shelter

2 Azim Ibrahim, "The Rohingyas: inside Myanmar's genocide", *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*, 2017, Vol. 11 (1).

3 Imtiaz Ahmed, *Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations and the Stateless Rohingyas*, 2001. Web: <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs/Imtiaz-Ahmed.html> (accessed on 30.5.2019)

4 Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.), *The Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas: Response of the State & the International Community*, Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2010.

5 Syeda Naushin Parnini, "Non-traditional Security and Problems of Rohingya across the Bangladesh –Myanmar Borders", *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol. 5(2), 2012, p. 34. https://www.bjournal.co.uk/paper/BJASS_5_2/BJASS_05_02_11.pdf (accessed on 30.05.2019)

6 Amnesty International, 'Women in the Front Line: Human Rights Violations Against Women', New York: John D. Lucas Printing, 2015, p. 8. <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/myanmar-refugee-crisis-facts#living-conditions> (accessed on 12.10.2019)

7 Ibid, p. 9. <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/myanmar-refugee-crisis-facts#living-conditions> (accessed on 12.10.2019)

in refugee camps around Cox's Bazar which is now home to the world's largest refugee camp. Now they are enduring severe traumatic experiences. It has a long-term pernicious psychological after-effect. Many Rohingya survivors are experiencing 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD) symptoms: nightmares, insomnia, somatic disturbances, difficulty with intimate relationship, fear, anxiety, anger, aggression, and loss of trust. Witnessing brutality in early age, some have hysterical type of emotional outbreaks. Unfortunately, the international community has remained mostly 'muted', unwilling to play a role in helping to resolve the problem. More than 35 years after it began, the Rohingya crisis is long overdue for a solution.⁸ It remains a major challenge for Bangladesh in terms of economy, security and international relations.

Although there are little comprehensive research on the Rohingya problems, some recent studies of Wade (2017), Ibrahim (2016), Herman (2015), Ahmed (2010), Ragland (1994), Mathieson, Scott (2009) have focused on the Rohingya problems pertaining to their human rights violations, statelessness, critical repatriation and other related crisis in the border areas.

No research work was found which is solely dedicated to the stress/trauma, especially of Rohingya women and children. This study aims to fill the gap. Therefore, the core objective of this study is to map a general picture of the traumatic experiences of the Rohingyas women and children living in Cox's Bazar. We may also find what their coping strategies to overcome their plight are.

In the following discussion, this article will at first provide an overview of the methodologies used. Then a literature review and theoretical argument will find the link between trauma and memory with Rohingya displacement. Existing international and national legal instruments related to Rohingya have been cited which will help to understand the state intervention. Finally, the primary and secondary data have been interpreted. Several case studies on stress and traumatized experiences have been presented to uncover the scenario in the field.

2. Methodology

This article is written about traumatic experiences, based on the techniques of participation and observation, use of key informant, case study and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The Rohingyas are interviewed in the Kutupalong Modhur

⁸ Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, "Understanding integration: a conceptual framework", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 21(2), 2008, pp. 166-191.

chora Camp-1, Camp-2, Camp-3 and Camp-4 (Block G-1, G-2) makeshift new settlement site (Ukhiya) under Cox's Bazar. This study is mainly based on 100 interviews and 5 focus group discussions (FGD). Among the interviewees, 91 were Rohingya women and 9 were girl children who were below 18. Random sampling has been maintained for data collection from different age groups and different marital statuses. We selected interviewees randomly but tried to include the women and children who are physically tortured, raped, harassed, and traumatized. A few case studies have been studied at this stage. The interviews are conducted in Chattogram/ Rohingya dialects as I am fluent in this dialect. Two FGDs were conducted with some local Bengali people in Kutupalong primary school, Kutupalong high school, Kutupalong Child Friendly Space (CFS) and the other were in Camp 1, Camp 4 (Block G-1, G-2).

In addition to field research, books, articles, paper clippings, journals, reports published by UNHCR, MSF, Human Rights Watch and Arakan Project have been studied. Previous research and publications on Rohingyas have been reviewed.

3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

To have a preliminary notion about the research problem, we have gone through a number of literary works among which some important composition are reviewed below-

3.1 Operational Definition

- **Rape** is “physically forced on otherwise coerced penetration- even if slightly on the vagina, anus, on the mouth with a penis or other body part. Rape of a person by two or more perpetrators is known as gang rape.”⁹
- **Sexual abuse** refers to “the actual or force threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.”¹⁰
- **Sexual violence** “sexual violence takes many forms, including rape, sexual slavery and/ or trafficking, forced pregnancy, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/ or abuse and forced abortion.”¹¹
- **Trauma**
In the conventional sense, trauma means shock, upset, disturbance, pain, distress etc. The main symptoms of a traumatized person are repetition of disturbing

9 Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, “Intersectionality: Key concepts”, Cambridge: Polity, 2016, pp. 1-5. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Rohingya-Report-Final-Screen-.pdf>

10 Ibid, pp. 15. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Rohingya-Report-Final-Screen-.pdf>

11 Francis Wade, “Myanmar's enemy within: Buddhist violence and the making of a Muslim to Other”, London: Zed Book, 2017.

memories, thoughts, dreams or images of the stressful events, feeling upset when something reminds the stressful events; avoiding activities or situations which remind the stressful events (psychologists call them trigger); feeling helpless, hopeless or powerless during or after the stressful events, flashbacks, which haunt the person and therefore nightmares, insomnia may occur.¹²

- **Majhi** refers to Rohingya community focal points appointed by the government of Bangladesh.

3.2 Theoretical orientation: Traumatic experience, Memory and PTSD

We watched glimpses of memories of trauma and survival in an array of discursive formations in Rohingya narratives which is related with their ethnic identity. What are the factors that help them to overcome? Let us dig into theories:

Joshua Breslau (2004) identified a theoretical framework to outline the key indicators of traumatic experiences, memory and PTSD. The study was based on Cultures of Trauma. It was published in the Journal of Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry.¹³ Joshua Breslau (2004) regards the framework to provide a coherent relationship in traumatic experience, memory and PTSD.¹⁴ The framework is focused on what makes PTSD. Why is this disorder of particular interest in situations of violence and displacement? The PTSD is defined by two major criteria: exposure to a traumatic event and a set of psychiatric symptoms that occur (or recur) after the event. The Traumatic event/experience is defined in the most recent edition of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder) as an event involving “actual or threatened death or serious injury or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others”.¹⁵

A person meets the criteria for the DSM if symptoms from each of three general categories are present:

- 1) Experiencing of the traumatic event in disturbing nightmares, flashbacks, and/or intrusive thoughts and images relating to the event;
- 2) Symptoms of hyper arousal startle response; such as difficulty falling on staying asleep, difficulty concentrating, and exaggerated startle response; and

12 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (Geneva: Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2007), p.1

13 Joshua Breaslau, “Culture of Trauma: Anthropological Views of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in International Health”, *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 2004, vol. 28, pp. 113-126.

14 Marc Galater and Herbert Kleber, “The American Psychiatric Press Textbook of Substance Abuse Treatment”, American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p, 427.

15 Jose Maria Arraiza and Olivier Vonk, “Report on Citizenship Law: Myanmar”, European University Institute, Italy, 2017, p.44.

- 3) Symptoms of withdrawal such as avoidance of reminders of the event, emotional numbing, or feelings of detachment from others;

These are said to be not only markers of PTSD but also relationship in traumatic experience, memory and PTSD. There are social connections which include social bridges, social bonds and social links. Fitting the theory of Joshua Breslau (2004) in the Bangladeshi context present study tries to understand the traumatic experiences of Rohingya women and children in new extended Camps. For instance, most of them are living in slums or slum-like situation. Due to lack of economic and educational capability they are totally vulnerable. Moreover, in the new places most of them are totally out of social connections. Before and during displacement their crisis made them physically and mentally shocked. If we see them the distinguishing features of PTSD lie in the connection between the traumatic experience and the psychiatric symptoms.

The nature of this connection, however, is more complex than it appears. The claim is often made that PTSD is the only diagnosis in the DSM system that has a specified cause or, more especially, a socially grounded cause. The connection between event and symptom is embedded in the concept of PTSD which is directly related to memory and traumatic experience.

4. Findings of the Study

Traumatic experiences of Rohingya women and children

The history of world refugees shows that four factors are prominent in creating traumas among refugees. These are: rape; forced labour and displacement; armed violence and physical torture; and statelessness. So this article gives an empirical understanding of the traumatic experiences of Rohingya women and children in relation to trauma with memory.

4.1 Traumatized memories in Myanmar (Rape)

Rape constitutes the leading source of trauma particularly for women. In terms of law, if a man forcibly subjects a woman to sexual intercourse against her will, he has committed the crime of rape.¹⁶

In a war or ethnic cleansing, rape has been used as a weapon and usually, women are the target group of this physical torture. On the other hand, generally, memory is recalling, remembering, knowing, recollecting and having the knowledge. In specific, memory is not simply a personal and subjective experience. It is socially

16 Shamima Akhter and Kyoko Kusakabe, "Gender-Based Violence Among Documented Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 2014, pp. 225–246. <http://www.hrw.org/women/docs/rapeinwar.htm> (accessed on 30.05. 2019)

constructed and present-oriented, and thus reconfigures experience.¹⁷ So, memory is embodied. It emanates from bodily experience that enacts the past, present and future. The cultural, political and socio-economic construction of the Rohingya community is deeply influenced and connected with the memories of the past, especially before and during displacement when they were in their hometown or home country Myanmar. Memories of their home drive them to flashback and hopelessness, helplessness which are the symptoms of trauma. As a result, they have vivid experiences of trauma in their lives in Myanmar. According to field experiences rape was a regular process and weapon which was systematically used against Rohingya women and girls. Muslim Rohingya women, in particular, often face specific persecutions in Myanmar because they are both Muslim and women.¹⁸ Some of them were stigmatized.

Case Study: 1

Name: Mubina (32) (pseudo name) previous residence: Alisong, Buthidaung

Present residence: Kutupalang Camp: 2

'I (32) have five children: Yasmin (07), Karim (10), Javed (12), Halima (13) and Romian (15). My family came here from Alisong, Buthidaung. I got married with Abdul Hamid, but at present he is living with his another family. There was no conflict between us. From that period I have been maintaining my family alone.

I had four brothers. Two years before coming to Bangladesh one died. In my maternal family they had 30/40 *bigha* land and different types of fruits and vegetable gardens. In their everyday life, they need to cultivate in the land of the Burmese people and they would have to give 60% of their cultivation. They did not get any money for their hard work. Burmese people discriminated against us for many decades. Even in our marriage ceremony, we had to get permission from Burmese people as well as to pay about 30/40 lack taka and had to keep a picture of the new couple. Many times they treated us as unknown people in our own country. When Rakhaine armies started to kill and repress, I decided to flee from there. With a group, I fled with my two sons, three daughters and son-in-law. We walked on hills and stayed in some empty houses. We took three days to come to Bangladesh. At night we got to the empty houses inside the mountains. One night we were surrounded by about 100/150 Burmese soldiers. And all women were raped

17 G De Becker, 'Memory, Trauma, and Embodied Distress: The Management of Disruption in the Stories of Cambodians in Exile', 2000, Vol. 28, No.3, pp. 320-345.

18 Khadija Elmadmad, "The Human Rights of Refugee with Special Reference to Muslim Refugee Women" in Doreen Indra (ed.), *Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice*, UK: Barghann Books, 1999, pp. 261-271.

separately in those empty houses. My two daughters were raped on that night. The next morning we were raped by another group of soldiers and no one could help us. *My daughters' dresses were full of blood and I washed it in the river.* I had one pair of earrings and we got up in the boat by selling it. We remained hungry during our journey. My son-in-law was caught by Burmese armies and taken away. A few days after coming to Bangladesh, I got the news that my two sons, as well as son-in-law, are behind bars and it has been for twenty years. *She cried when talked to me and said, 'would I see them after twenty years?'* Now I can't sleep for my sons and son-in-law. Sometimes I forget everything, even can't remember my name. Now I am very worried about my daughter and grandchildren.'

Here, if we observe **case study (1)**, it appears that before and during displacement she faced a lot of pain and suffering. In addition to massive socio-political losses they have experienced personal sufferings which affected inner feelings, status and individual selfhood. After coming to Bangladesh, surviving in the new area led to many psychological difficulties. Moreover, young women who live alone or have lost their mothers or other older female are at higher risk of abuse. In front of a mother, her two daughters were raped by two groups of soldiers. She was not to be blamed for anything, or that situation. Though she told me, 'being a mother, I could not save my child from those evil eyes. At that time they were suffering from various ailments and needed healthcare assistance. Without any service, they stood up again. This is the aspiration to remain alive. I felt that she had a strong will to survive and live. But when I saw her daughter, I was a little stunned. In my mind I was asking myself, could they ever be able to forget that situation? Will they ever get justice?

4.2 Forced labour and displacement

Forced labour means working without any kind of wages or making somebody bound to do the job which he or she does not want to do. Myanmar is a country where forced labour is widely used. According to the report of Amnesty International 2017/18, people are forced to maintain camps, build and repair roads, build the gas pipeline, work on plantations belonging to NaSaKa, provide firewood in the military camps, fetch water, bake bricks and perform sentry duties at night in their own village. They have to do all these free of payment. Even if they are paid, the payment of their labour is very low from the usual market rate. As the government thinks that it has the right to extract labour, it is an obligation of all persons in Myanmar to provide such labour. International Labour Organization

(ILO) is against the forced labour and always endeavours to stop such labour.¹⁹ The government of Myanmar thinks that as the Rohingyas are not citizens of the country, they must work as forced labour. In case of refusal to work they were subjected to torture and suppression by the NaSaKa.

Case study: 2

Name: Nusrat (15), previous residence: Angdang, Present residence: Kutupalang camp: 2

‘In my family I had parents and two sisters. Since my childhood I saw that no one could go out for being scared by local people, basically, they were Burmese Mughhs. My father was a farmer in the agricultural field. Our family had a pool and that time we used to catch fish from there. Though my father had to cultivate in the land of Mughhs and we had to do what was asked by the Mughhs, like- guarding whole night, carrying goods from truck to truck and we had no rights to say anything. Again, my father did not get any money or rice for work. In our village there were no school for learning and we had to go to school in far away, so we did not get any facilities for study. From starting of repression by the Burmese armies, we could not sleep, every time we were being scared and ran away when seeing fire in other places.

One day the military got into our house and they killed my parents in front of my eyes. My sisters were in my father-in-law's house at that time I was alone and ran away in neighbour's house. I fled from my village and never saw my parents. After walking in the hills as well as the jungle about 10 days we arrived on the boat. During the whole journey, we could not get any food, sometimes we took spinach from jungle. According to her statement, *I saw many died and burnt people here and there.*

Now she lives with her neighbouring sister who took her to Bangladesh from their village. Nusrat called her 'Bu'. This woman did not marry and nurtures a girl, who is eight years old. She does not want to get married for looking after Nusrat and the girl. Nusrat gets news of her sisters but they do not take her. Now she has only her 'bu' and she wants to live with her. She does not know what will be happening in her future. She does not like to play with anyone and always stays at home. She is indifferent about her health and hygiene, especially during her menstruation. She is totally mentally imbalanced. Her facial expression is of a dumb person.

19 Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.), “The Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas: Response of the State and the International Community”, Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2010, p. 49. www.burmalibrary.org/docs/HRDU2003-04/Forced%20Labours.htm (accessed on 30.05.2019)

According to the UN Guiding Principles, the person or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee their homes or place of habitual residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situation of general violence, violation of human rights or natural or man made disasters, and who have not crossed the internationally recognized state border, are displaced person.²⁰ The Myanmar government never counts the Rohingya community as an ethnic group in their country. The torture of the government and Rakhaine people made the Rohingyas displaced. Displacement from their own home and country made them expatriate in their own countries. Memories of the home drive them to flashback and hopelessness which are the symptoms of trauma.

4.3 Armed violence and physical torture

Armed violence can be defined as the use of armed force (usually with weapons) to achieve specific political, social and economic goals,²¹ forced to witness their loved ones being tortured.²² In Myanmar, the Rohingya people faced both armed and physical violence by the government and NaSaKa. That is why in all most all cases; physical security is one of the major concerns for Rohingya women and children.²³ It has been found that most of the women and children were vulnerable and traumatized due to social and political insecurity; physical attack, verbal abuse, mass killing, rape, arsons were daily and occasional doing of Myanmar citizens as well as law enforcement team and police of Myanmar.

On the other hand, in some cases they were going through psychological stress, as the military used to take their husbands away for forced labour. Because forced labour was accompanied by physical torture and death.²⁴

Case Study: 3

Name: Dildar Begum (35) (pseudo name), previous residence: Angdan (Boro Para)
Present residence: Kutupalang, Camp: 1

20 Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.), "The Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas: Response of the State & the International Community", Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2010, pp. 50. www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/44b5021d2.pdf (accessed on 30.0f.2019)

21 Sayeda Rozana Rashid, "A Comperative Study on Vulnerability and Coping Mechanism Between Rohingya Refugee and Chakma IDP Women", Dhaka: BFF, 2005. http://www.undp.org/cpr/we_do/armed_violence.shtml-21k (accessed on 30.05.2019)

22 Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.), Ibid.

23 *Human Rights Watch (Organization)*, (2000), 'Burma/Bangladesh: Burmese refugees in Bangladesh: still no durable solution', *Human Rights Watch*. p.6. Retrieved 12 April 2011

24 'Women in Detention, The Vietnamese in Hongkong: A Women's Perspective on Detention' in Refugee Participation Network, Issue 15, Oxford, 1993.

'I saw that Burmese Mughs would not like Rohingya Community since my childhood. We could not go outside from here and there. When Burmese Rakhaine would give command, we had to do it. If we were working on our own land for 5 days, also we had to do work on the land of local people without money for 2 days. A few days ago, after the incident began, suddenly one day military came to our house. They hit my husband with a chopper and he fell down. Then the military hit me too. My palm was cut due to this. They hit me again. After that the military left my house. My children were hiding at that time. Later we left our house together. However, I could not find my husband. We took one week to arrive in Bangladesh with different groups. Sometimes we got food to survive but most of the time did not take any food. We saw a lot of dead bodies lying on our route to Bangladesh. I also watched that many children were born on the street.' Also in her language," those terrible days will not vanish from my memory ever." Now she cannot do heavy work with her right hand. After months of coming to Bangladesh, she found her husband in the camp, now she is very happy (smiling). She wants her children to study and does not want to go back to Myanmar.

We are ready to die in Muslim's hands. At least we would get Zanaza, a grave. We are not ready to die by Bidayat's (addressing the Rakhains, who are non-muslims) bullet.'

These case studies revealed from the field visits gave us a vivid picture of armed violence and physical torture. Physical and mental violence against women and children had destroyed their dignity, honour and prestige.

4.4 Statelessness

Under the military regime of General Ne Win, beginning in 1962, the Muslim residents of Arakan were labeled illegal immigrants who had settled in Burma during British rule.²⁵ The 1974 Emergency Immigration Act took away Burmese nationality from the Rohingyas, making them foreigners in their own country. Then came the Burma Citizenship law of 1982 violating several fundamental principles of international law and effectively reducing them to the status of Stateless. Although their ancestor lived in Burma, but after the Citizenship Law of 1982 the Rohingyas became stateless.²⁶ It does not recognize the Rohingyas as citizens, though their forefathers lived there for long. This identity crisis is the key factor for generating trauma in their minds. It was a big trauma to experience that half of their

25 Kathleen Valtonen, 'From the margin to the mainstream: conceptualizing refugee settlement processes', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2004, Vol. 17(1), pp. 70-96.

26 'A Long History of Injustice Ignored: Rohingya: The Forgotten People of our time' by Habib Siddiqui. http://islamawareness.net/Asia/Burma/ro_article003.html (accessed on 30.05.2019)

people were forced to take asylum or refugee status in a registered camp. But some are unregistered and recently, they are the next in line to seek a way out of their living.

Case study: 4

Name: Fatema Khatun (45), previous residence: Angdang, present residence: Kutupalang, Camp: 4

‘I was poor in Angdang too. My husband died a long ago. I used to work in other’s farm, collect peanuts; sometimes collected vegetables in bazar; I used to do every sort of work whenever I get some and lived on what I got from there. I didn’t let my daughters work; I kept them in luxury even in my crisis. My son used to work in a shop as a daily laborer. ... Even after all these, I could not save my elder daughter. Rakhaine people were destroying Rohingya households with the help of NaSaKa and police. Using curfew, government forces surrounded the Rohingya villages and Rakhine Buddhists burned down the houses in the evening. It was dark when they set fire. With my daughters, I came outside sliding under the fence of my house and saw everybody rushing towards the hills and I also started running with them grabbing my two daughters. Suddenly they (BGF) started shooting and we lost each other. Other the flashes of bullets, it was dark like pitch. The world seemed like hell with screaming, crying, and the sound of bullets. I was lying down to earth. ... After some time, everything stopped. I started searching for my daughters and found my son and younger daughter. But when I found my elder daughter, she was no more (Fatema started weeping). *They raped my daughter and killed her like an animal! They did not spare her!* I left my daughter in that place and started walking with my mother, daughter and son. I could not even give my dead daughter a proper funeral.... After walking for 14 days, I came to Bangladesh through Naikhangchari. After bearing all these, *I am sick now. Sometimes I suffer from mental distress, cannot sleep at night. ... I miss my daughter so much.*’

She explained to me that her forefather were from that place. They are not outsiders. This country (Bangladesh) is not her own motherland. Now the person who are exercising power, they are outsiders. During the field work, it is noted that they did not want to share this memory and narratives with anyone. It is really traumatic for women to recall such experiences, particularly in front of strangers, whether they may be family members or females. But they wanted to narrate another life history or another memory and narratives as a story.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Torturing the Rohingya community in Northern Rakhaine State of Myanmar is nothing new. According to the Law of Citizenship (1982) there are now 135

recognised ethnic groups in Myanmar when the Rohingyas are not on the list. This had a very adverse effect on individual, interpersonal and societal level and properties of Rohingya Community. This identity crisis is the coupon for all kinds of horrifying memory and torture which are called traumatic experiences. If we compare the reminiscence of their memory before, during and after displacement it is almost the same, but all kinds of memory were not traumatic experiences. Sometimes good memory, sometimes bad memory is the key factor for trauma. Because the causes of trauma may be the threat of death or serious injury, feeling of intense fear, helplessness or horror, threat to the physical integrity, forced labour, war, civil unrest, hunger, domestic abuse, rape, both natural and human made disaster and others alike.²⁷

In Myanmar they are called 'Bangali' and in Bangladesh they are called 'illegal intruders'. From them some fortunate succeed to get refugee status others were not. From here, the trauma has begun for them. So, not only personal occurrences but also some commonalities are the causes for trauma.

The cultural, social, economic and political construction of the Rohingya especially women and children are deeply influenced by memories of the past before their displacement.³⁰ In the field studies we observe that in case studies memory is not only the definition but also recalling, remembering, recollecting and having the knowledge or experience of the past before and during displacement. So, displaced persons are deeply affected not only by violence, deprivation and personal traumas (loss of family members, physical torture, concern about future life), but also by memories of their past life. So, there is a correlation between trauma and memory.

As noted, communal trauma can already “damage the connectivity between group members and/or contribute to a new communal mood, discourse, and ethos” at the moment of impact—narrative nevertheless offers survivors the opportunity to both process, trauma and construct newly integrated self-states (or newly constructed versions of a communal Self).²⁸ So, it is important to note that there should be a more humanistic approach to understand their memories or trauma.

It is very common that psychological stress emanates from the absence of family members. Some of the interviewees said that they were going through psychological stress; spend their days in constant agony. In almost every interview time and again we were informed that before displacement they could not go out

27 Kazi Fahmida Farzana, “Memories of Burmese Rohingya Refugees—Contested Identity and Belonging”, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 59-86.

28 Amnesty International, ‘Women in the Front Line: Human Rights Violations Against Women’, New York: John D. Lucas Printing, 1990, p.8.

from one place to another. They had to do cultivation in the land of Burmese Rakhine without money. They had to work as watchmen for the whole night. Even on *Ramadan* days, they used to complete their *Sehri* in darkness as it was prohibited by local law to light any torch. Even they faced restrictions in practicing their religion; they could not call Azan, go to mosques for prayer, learning Quran. If they were found to practicing their religion, they were harassed by the police, law enforcement team and even by their neighbours. Moreover, if any girl tries to study or is studying in school, she would be abducted and later found dead after being raped. If there were any light or children were found crying, next morning they were beaten up by the military. They were forced to leave their home in the fear of persecution and arrest by security forces. Sometimes they had to hear an indecent word from local people. It was increasing day by day. The Burmese military started to come to their village and burnt all Rohingya houses as well as beat them.

From the query about their mental state in the transitional period during displacement, almost all the interviewees told that the time when they just arrived in Bangladesh as homeless and penniless, a scenario of terribly distressed and depressing experience came up where some women were suffering from severe trauma, some were anxious about the future.

A lot of women lost their husbands in these troubles, some were raped by the military, and most of the men were caught by the military as well as they were kept behind bars. In their journey to Bangladesh they saw lots of dead bodies and children were born on the road. Thus, they arrived in the river. For getting into the boat, they needed to pay 200/300 taka. Rohingyas who had no money had to sell their earrings and other valuable things. Some men exchanged money. At that time one group of brokers was doing business with money.

The Rohingya women do not want to recall those stress or memories. The majority of women and children have faced problem for their physical and mental health. Now they are happy in the Refugee camp getting food and shelter. Some of them are working in their camp. Dilder, a 34-year-old Rohingya woman, said that there is no fear in the camps. Some women and men are working in the camp as supervisors. Monira, a 29-year-old pregnant woman, said that her husband is a school teacher who teaches in a nearby school around the camp. Most of the women are interested to work but they are disappointed that there is no arrangement for work. Many people found their family members after coming to Bangladesh.

However, most of the Rohingya people are pleased; feel blessed with Bangladeshi ordinary people and the government. The findings of the coping mechanisms for a

better life and better situations are to match existing situations. Many of them were satisfied with the basic material support for survival.

After getting shelter in the camps the nature of stress changed. Now in Bangladesh there was no fear of persecution at the hands of the military. They are anxious about their children's future, 'what will happen to them? How would they live their life without work? Will they always have to live a life of misery? Or the Bangladeshi government will force them to go back to Myanmar?' Moreover, in all cases, they were homesick, but with some exception, all of them were willing to return to their home if the Myanmar government accepts them as citizens of the country. But a few women and girl children stated that, *in absence of husband or male family members, sometimes Majhi or other influential persons try to exploit them or their daughter*. That is why sometimes they feel suffocated and feared. There are also cases where some women are involved emotionally with other men in the prolonged absence of their husbands. This study found more families with women head of the household due to separation, divorce or estrangement which are threats for their family and children's security, economic support etc.

-Short Communication

ROQUIAH SAKHAWAT HOSSEIN: OF PURDAH AND EDUCATION

Niaz Zaman*

Abstract

The paper focuses on Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein's attitude to purdah, her role as an educationist, and how she attempted to combine a rational form of purdah with schooling. Though she was critical of the extremes of seclusion, she accepted the Islamic attitude to modesty. She believed that purdah did not stand in the way of women's development. However, she noted that the extreme restrictions that conventions imposed were detrimental to the mental and physical health of women. She believed that it was not seclusion that harmed Muslim women but lack of education. If women could be educated and a rational form of purdah maintained, women would benefit. This is what she attempted in the school she founded in her husband's name: Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School.

Key words: Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein, purdah, seclusion, modesty, women's development, education, Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School.

Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein (1880-1932)¹ was born and brought up in a conservative Muslim family of Pairaband, Rangpur. Forbidden to read and write Bangla or English as a child, she managed to learn both so well that she could write fluently in both. For women of her generation she was a beacon of light, extolling the importance of education in improving the lives of women. The one oft-repeated photograph of hers that most of us are familiar with show a pleasant-faced woman, modestly clad in a long-sleeved blouse, socks and closed shoes, her head neatly covered by her sari anchal. In her right hand she holds a voluminous tome. Perhaps this is the register of the school which she built after her husband's death in his name and with his money. There are at least two other known pictures of Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein: seated with two other women at a niece's wedding in Dhaka and an earlier one, of a younger Roquiah, her head uncovered, standing on one side behind her husband with a hand on his shoulder. This picture was printed in a local

* Former Professor of English, University of Dhaka.

1 There is a confusion as to the spelling of Roquiah's name. On the University of Dhaka webpage, the name is spelled "Rokeya Hall" as well as "Ruqayyah Hall." However, from an extant letter of hers, it is clear that she herself spelled her name "Roquiah."

newspaper a few years ago by Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein's grandniece, Majeda Saber. Afterwards, Majeda Saber told me how upset people had been when she had seemingly dishonoured Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein by publishing this picture. If, after her death, people could have been angry at her non-observance of purdah, one must try to imagine what it was like in her lifetime when she tried to rationalize about purdah. While she herself was always modestly dressed and while she promised the families of her pupils that purdah would be observed in her school, she was not blind to the problems of this system.

My paper will focus on Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein's attitude to purdah and her role as an educationist. In the accepted eastern tradition of referring to people, I will refer to Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein by her first name, without the honorific prefixed to it. However, I do not mean any disrespect, but am following an accepted convention.

However, I would like to start with two stories, both true accounts, one published, the other narrated to me personally, one about a man, the other about a woman, one taking place in the United States in the 19th century, the other in India in the early 20th century. I would like to begin with the later story first.

The eldest son of a respectable Muslim family came back home for a short vacation. It was Eid time, and he wanted to give his mother a new sari. The women of his family were used to the men of the family buying clothes for them. However, he was an enlightened young man and thought that instead of choosing a sari for his mother, he would take her to the shop and give her the pleasure of choosing for herself. However, unused to going out to shops, unused to choosing saris for herself, the mother chose the first sari that was placed before her. Seclusion was so much part of her life that it had become internalized.

My second story is earlier and takes place in the United States, where slavery was legal till the end of the American Civil War in 1864. The majority of slaves were in the South, on the plantations. Apart from physical hardships, slaves also suffered emotionally and mentally. In order to keep slaves subservient, recalcitrant slaves were beaten and whipped. Women slaves of a child-bearing age were also subject to sexual abuse. One way of keeping slaves subservient and little better than animals was to deny them the knowledge of reading and writing. Many slaves attempted to flee the hard life in the South. One of them not only fled but also realized the importance of reading and writing and, thanks partly to a kind mistress, began to learn to read. The anger when his master found out that he was learning to read, only strengthened in Fredrick Douglass the realization of the importance of reading and writing if slaves wanted to be free.

In Chapter 6 of *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*, Frederick Douglass describes how he learned to read and how he learned the importance of reading for liberty.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master – to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty – to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn.²

Douglass' desire to read was fuelled as much as by his mistress' initial kindness in teaching him as later by his master's opposition to his learning. He realized that the white man's power to enslave the black man lay in the black man's illiteracy. It was literacy that would free the slave. Literacy was, as Douglass realized, "the pathway from slavery to freedom."

While we do not hear Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein proclaiming a similar defiance – in fact, she was greatly helped by her brother and later by her husband – she too realized like Douglass the importance of reading and writing for women to be free. And unlike the mother in the story, she did not internalize the restrictions placed upon her by society. In an age when all respectable Muslim women from the age of seven were expected to be in purdah, Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein enunciated the

² Douglass, Frederick, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, 1845. Accessed Nov. 27, 2011. <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Douglass/Autobiography>>

importance of education outside the home – in school and later, if it ever happened, in a university for women. Purdah hampered progress, not in itself, but in what had happened to it.

In the twenty-fourth *surah*, *Surah Al-Noor*, modesty is prescribed for both men and women in verse 31. In Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall's translation, the verse reads,

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! Allah is aware of what they do.

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their brothers' sons or sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah together, O believers, in order that ye may succeed.³

A. Yusuf Ali elaborates a little on Pickthall and perhaps his translation of verse 31 could also be considered here.

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain Bliss.⁴

Both Pickthall and Yusuf Ali agree that both men and women should be modest. What Yusuf Ali adds is that ornaments that ordinarily appear may be displayed. He also makes the idea of not making the hidden ornament obvious. Here one may imagine necklaces and chains round a woman's neck which would ordinarily be hidden under the veil, or bracelets and bangles that would jingle and jangle on physical movement.

In public the Quran enjoins an outer covering as is clear in *Surah Al Ahzab*, verses 58-59:

3 Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*. 1938. Accessed Nov. 27, 2011. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/pick/index.htm>>

4 A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*. 1934. Accessed Nov. 27, 2011. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/index.htm>>

O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so that they may be recognised and not annoyed. Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.⁵

Outer garments in public have not only been enjoined on Muslim women, they were also customary with European women. In Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, for example, the cousins Rosalind and Celia hesitate when planning to flee the court of Rosalind's uncle and Celia's father together. It is permissible for women of the lower classes to walk about freely, but women of the upper class were in danger. Rosalind therefore disguises herself as a man, and Celia smears a dark stain on her face to pretend that she is not a pampered woman of an aristocratic family who had never ventured abroad in the sun as poor women forced to earn a living had to. However, what happened to what became known as purdah – veil – in the Indian subcontinent was a whole set of rules that put women in seclusion, relegated them to the inner quarters – in manner very different from that in Arabia at the time of the Prophet. Of course, seclusion in India was, in all cases, for respectable women, women who belonged to aristocratic, land owning or wealthy families. Hindu women too observed this form of purdah; even today in Rajasthan, non-Muslim women walk several yards behind their husbands, with their veils lowered down to their waists.

Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein's earliest pieces of writing on purdah, "Borka," included in *Motichur* (1904) stresses that purdah does not stand in the way of women's development. If purdah alone were the barrier to development then she says that women outside the purdah should be developed. But they aren't.

আমি অনেক বার শুনিয়াছি যে আমাদের "জঘন্য অবরোধ প্রথা"ই নাকি আমাদের উন্নতির অস্ফুটায়। উচ্চশিক্ষা প্রাপ্ত ভগ্নীদের সহিত দেখা সাক্ষাৎ হইলে তাঁহারা প্রায়ই আমাকে "বোরকা" ছাড়িতে বলেন। বলি, উন্নতি জিনিষটা কি? তাহা কি কেবল বোরকার বাহিরেই থাকে? যদি তাই হয় তবে কি বুঝিব যে জেলেনী, চামারনী, ডুমুনী প্রভৃতি স্ত্রীলোকেরা আমাদের অপেক্ষা অধিক উন্নতি লাভ করিয়াছে?⁶

Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein was born at a time when class differences existed, but the point that she was making is clear. It is not purdah alone that hinders women's progress. This is where education enters. What we need is higher education. However, she realized that in a world where there were no institutions for higher education for women, women would have to be satisfied with informal education.

5 Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*. 1938. Accessed Nov. 27, 2011. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/pick/index.htm>>

6 Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein, "Borka", Abdul Mannan Syed *et al.* (ed.), *Rokeya Rachnabali*, second edition (Dhaka, 1999), p. 43

It is true, she goes on to say, that purdah is not natural. Animals do not observe purdah. But it is moral. Using logical arguments she goes on to say that there are many things that are not natural but which have improved the lives of human beings. One can walk, but human beings have invented modes of transport. Similarly one can swim across water bodies, but human beings have invented forms of water transport.

She goes on to provide several arguments in support of purdah: uncivilized people wear fewer clothes, therefore more civilized people wear more clothes; it is better to be well-covered in public than to walk around half-naked at home in front of male servants. It is true that Europeans do not have the purdah system, but they have notions of privacy that Indians lack. Europeans do not invite guests into their bedrooms but Indians do not have the separation of private space and public space inside their homes. It is true that the burqa is an ugly dress, but women who need to be in public would rather wear this all-enveloping garb than be happy to be ogled by passersby. The young Muslim woman of today who dons the *hijab* willingly wears an all-enveloping garb but has made it fashionable – doing what Roquiah had suggested: improved upon the coarse garment.

Despite her arguments in support of purdah in this essay, Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein decried the extremes of the system. She pointed out that the extreme restriction that purdah imposed was detrimental to the mental and physical health of women. Unmarried girls had to observe purdah from outside women as well. They could not emerge out into the courtyard for fear of unknown women. Furthermore, as most women among their permitted acquaintances were not highly educated, they were deprived of education as well. The lives of newly married women were no better. For the first few months of their married life they had to live like dolls. She gives the example of a newly married woman who was bitten by a scorpion but bore the pain silently until the bite was discovered three days later by women who came in to give her a ritual bath.

Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein disapproved of the restrictions placed on women's meeting people of different classes and religions. She pointed out that men were free to meet people of different religions. However, women were not free to do so. She believed that this must be changed so that Muslim women could meet people of different religions: Jews, Christians, Buddhists, whatever. It was the freedom with which men could interact with different types of people that made them enlightened and broadminded.

আমরা অন্যায় পর্দা ছাড়িয়া আবশ্যকীয় পর্দা রাখিব। প্রয়োজন হইলে অবগুষ্ঠন (ওরফে বোরকা) সহ মাঠে বেড়াইতে আমাদের আপত্তি নাই। স্বাস্থ্যের উন্নতির জন্য শৈলবিহারে বাহির হইলেও বোরকা সঙ্গে থাকিতে পারে। বোরকা পরিয়া চলাফেরায় কোন অসুবিধা হয় না। তবে সে জন্য সামান্য রকমের একটু অভ্যাস (practice) চাই; বিনা অভ্যাসে কোন কাজটা হয়? ⁷

We will discard wrongful purdah for the right or essential one. Women can go out to parks to walk around or to hill resorts for health reasons wearing burqa. Perhaps it's a little difficult to walk about freely wearing a burqa but a little practice would enable one to overcome this difficulty. Of course, she suggests, the coarse burqa should be modified. Just as clothes and shoes are being improved day by day, the burqa too must see change.

It is not seclusion, says Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein, that has made Muslim women lifeless, narrow-minded, and timid but lack of education.

সম্প্রতি আমরা যে এমন নিস্তেজ, সন্ধীর্ণমনা ও ভীর্ণ হইয়া পড়িয়াছি। ইহা অবরোধে তাকির জন্য হয় নাই – শিক্ষার অভাবে হইয়াছে। সুশিক্ষার অভাবেই আমাদের হৃদয়বৃত্তিগুলি এমন সংকুচিত হইয়াছে। ⁸

If educational institutions could be set up where purdah was observed, women would benefit from them. Like many feminists, Roquiah was an activist. She was not satisfied just wishing that change would happen, that women would be educated, she did something to ensure that some women at least would be educated.

Sakhawat Hossein passed away on May 3, 1909. On October 1, four months after the death of her husband, Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein started a school in his name at Bhagalpur where she was residing at the time. She had only five students. The name of one student is not known, the others were Syeda Kaneez Fatema, Syeda Amtoz Zohra, Syeda Hasina Khatun and Syeda Ahsana Khatun. ⁹

However, Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein was unable to remain in Bhagalpur and moved to Kolkata, where, two years later, on March 16, 1911, she re-started Sakhawat Memorial School at 13 Wellesley Lane. At the time of her death on December 9, 1932, there were more than 100 girls studying at the school. Apart from teaching, the school encouraged girls to take part in sports and cultural activities as testified by former students of the school, many of whom became well-known educationists in their turn, carrying the beacon that Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein had lit and passing it on to a younger generation in turn. In recognition of

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Abdul Mannan Syed *et al* (ed.), *Rokeya Rachnabali*, second ed. (Dhaka, 1999), p. 532

her contribution to women's education, the first women's hall of the University of Dhaka was renamed Rokeya Hall in 1964.¹⁰

Though Roquiah observed purdah in her school – with many former students revealing how claustrophobic they felt going to school with the windows of the carriage closed so that strangers might not look upon them¹¹ – in *Sultana's Dream* (1905) and *Aborodhbashini* (1931) she expounded the absurdity of purdah and decried its excesses.

Sultana's Dream was written in English and published in Indian Ladies Magazine (Madras) in 1905. Three years later, her Bangla translation of this story came out in book form from S. K. Lahiri and Co., Kolkata. The narrator, whom we later learn is Sultana, wakes from a nap to find a woman whom she at first thinks to be her friend Sister Sara beside her. Later she realizes that the woman is not Sister Sara, but she continues to call her Sister Sara throughout the narrative. The land they are in, Sister Sara tells Sultana, is "Ladyland," a world where women rule and men are locked away in the *murdana* – by analogy with *zenana*, the women's quarters. Sultana is surprised that men who are stronger than women would allow themselves to be locked up. Sara explains that it happened as a result of their failure in battle. A prolonged battle which had killed off their strong soldiers had left the country weak and exhausted.

While the men of the country had been busy increasing their military power and fighting, the women had been engaged in scientific research. The women realized that something had to be done to save the country and preserve the Queen's honour. The lady Principal of one of the two women's universities in the country offered to do something, but, before she did anything, she asked that the men retire into the *zenana*. The men were wounded and tired and agreed to do so. After the enemy was vanquished, some of the men tried to protest and come out of seclusion, but by the time Sultana visits Ladyland they are quite happy to be in seclusion. The *zenana* has accordingly been renamed *murdana*. With the men in the *murdana* – doing the things that women were supposed to – Ladyland is a much better place than Calcutta. Thanks to the research undertaken by the two women's universities, cooking is done through solar heat, the climate is controlled, and the entire place is

10 On the University of Dhaka webpage, the name is spelled "Rokeya Hall" as well as "Ruqayyah Hall."

11 Nurunnahar Fyzenessa, later Provost of Rokeya Hall, University of Dhaka, described how claustrophobic she felt in a closed horse carriage which had the curtains drawn so that the girls could neither look out nor be seen from outside. Private conversation.

a garden. Towards the end of her visit, Sultana is taken by an air-car to see the Queen whom she sees strolling in the garden with her daughter. Shortly afterwards, as Sultana gets into the air-car again, the dream comes to an abrupt end and Sultana finds herself in her bedroom once more.

The thesis of the story – the point that is discussed by most critics – is Roquiah’s critique of *pardah*. During the course of the story, the reader is exposed to the absurdity of *pardah*, of keeping women in seclusion. As Sultana walks through the streets of Ladyland, she realizes that there are no men around. She asks where they are and learns that they are kept locked up in the *murdana*.

I became very curious to know where the men were. I met more than a hundred women while walking there, but not a single man.

“Where are the men?” I asked her.

“In their proper places, where they ought to be”

“Pray let me know what you mean by ‘their proper places’.”

“O, I see my mistake, you cannot know our customs, as you were never here before. We shut our men indoors.”

“Just as we are kept in the *zenana*?”

“Exactly so.”

“How funny,” I burst into a laugh. Sister Sara laughed too.

“But dear Sultana, how unfair it is to shut in the harmless women and let loose the men.”

“Why? It is not safe for us to come out of the *zenana*, as we are naturally weak.”

“Yes, it is not safe so long as there are men about the streets, nor is it so when a wild animal enters a marketplace.”

“Of course not.”

“Suppose, some lunatics escape from the asylum and begin to do all sorts of mischief to men, horses and other creatures; in that case what will your countrymen do?”

“They will try to capture them and put them back into their asylum.”

“Thank you! And you do not think it wise to keep sane people inside an asylum and let loose the insane?”

“Of course not!” said I laughing lightly.

“As a matter of fact, in your country this very thing is done! Men, who do or at least are capable of doing no end of mischief, are let loose and the innocent women, shut up in the *zenana*! How can you trust those untrained men out of doors?”¹²

In *Sultana’s Dream*, apart from showing the absurdity of *pardah*, Roquiah also stresses the importance of education that was so dear to her. There are two

12 Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein, “Sultana’s Dream”, Abdul Mannan Syed *et al.* (ed.), *Rokeya Rachnabali*, second ed. (Dhaka, 1999), pp. 464-465

women's universities where women students conduct scientific research. The two universities compete with one another to invent things which would better the lives of people. Thus while one university invents a means for harvesting rain and using it when required, the other invents "an instrument by which they could collect as much sun-heat as possible."¹³ It is the women who save the country when the men fail. There were no women's universities in India at the time. In her earlier essay "Borka," Roquiah had expressed the hope that one day there would be women's universities where Muslim women could study under female teachers. In *Sultana's Dream* she suggests that given the opportunity for higher studies women would not only conduct practical research but also get rid of enemies. Was Roquiah hinting here of the failure of Indian men to get rid of foreign invaders?

While in *Sultana's Dream* Roquiah uses humour to tackle the question of purdah, showing how ridiculous it is to have men, the perpetrators of evil, roaming about freely while innocent women are locked up, in *Aborodhbashini* (The Secluded Ones), translated as *Inside Seclusion* by Roushan Jahan, Roquiah provides a scathing account of how purdah not only deprives but also endangers women. While some of the stories in *Aborodhbashini* are humorous, many are tragic. Among the humorous accounts is that of some women accompanying their husbands on Haj. The women have to wait on the platform, huddled in their burqas and under a rug. A passing Englishman takes the bundles to be baggage and asks them to be removed. When his command is not complied with, he kicks the bundles and realizes that these are not baggage but women.

Nor was seclusion restricted only to Muslim women in India. Roquiah narrates the anecdote of a newly married Hindu woman who follows the wrong man because he is wearing an outfit similar to her husband's. The reason? With her low veil obscuring her vision, she had never seen her husband properly. Other stories, such as one about a woman who emerged from a burning house only to go back inside because strange men were outside putting out the fire, are tragic, stressing the extreme measures conservative society took to keep women hidden. An often quoted story is that of Roquiah's aunt who fell on the railway tracks but could not be saved because having strange men touch her would violate her purdah.

The following incident happened about twenty-two years ago. An aunt, twice removed of my husband, was going to Patna from Bhagalpor; she was accompanied by her maid only. At Kiul railway junction, they had to change trains. While boarding the train, my aunt-in-law stumbled against her voluminous burqa and fell on the railway track.

13 Op. cit., p. 468.

Except her maid, there was no woman at the station. The railway porters rushed to help her up but the maid immediately stopped them by imploring in God's name not to touch her mistress. She tried to drag her mistress up by herself but was unable to do so. The train waited for only half an hour but no more.

The Begum's body was smashed – her burqa torn. A whole stationful of men witnessed this horrible accident – yet none of them was permitted to assist her. Finally, her mangled body was taken to a luggage shed. Her maid waited piteously. After eleven hours of unspeakable agony she died. What a gruesome way to die!¹⁴

Roquiah, however, was obliged to abide by the dictates of conservative Muslim society. She wore a long-sleeved blouse and socks with a body-enveloping sari; she promised the parents of the pupils she coaxed to come to the school that she would observe purdah in the school; she did not allow her photograph to be used by Mohammad Nasiruddin for *Saogat*, telling him that she had no objection to her picture being printed, but that the parents of her pupils would stop sending their children to school.¹⁵ Above all, Roquiah wanted woman to be educated – but not at the price of discarding the institution of modesty as laid down in the Quran.

In her letters and essays, she continued to propound the importance of education for women. In an essay titled “God Gives, Man Robs,” she notes that while Islam had given a lot of freedom to women – even the freedom not to marry if she did not wish to – crimes were committed against women, forcing them to marry old men and depriving them of education.

The worst crime which our brothers commit against us is to deprive us of education. There is always some grandfather or elderly uncle who stands on the way of any poor girl who might wish to be educated. From experience, we find that mothers are generally willing to educate their girls, but they are quite helpless when their husbands and other male relations will not hear of girls attending school. May we challenge such grandfathers, fathers or uncles to show the authority on which they prevent their girls from acquiring education? Can they quote from the holy Quran or Hadis any injunction prohibiting women from obtaining knowledge?¹⁶

In “Educational Ideals for the Modern Indian Girl,” she expounds on the ancient traditions of Indian education and stresses the necessity of education for girls. However, she discourages a blind aping of western education. Instead, she stresses

14 *Inside Seclusion: The Avarodhasini of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*, Roushan Jahan (ed. and trans.), (Dhaka 1981). Accessed Nov. 28, 2011. <<http://www.adhunika.org/ heroes/ Selected RokeyShossain.html>>

15 This picture was printed in the first issue of *Begum*, in 1947. But this was after Roquiah had passed away. This journal for women was founded by Mohammad Nasiruddin in Calcutta. It is still being published, though irregularly, from Dhaka.

16 Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein, “God Gives, Man Robs”, Abdul Mannan Syed et al. (ed.), *Rokeya Rachnabali*, second ed. (Dhaka, 1999), pp. 477-478

that India must retain what is best about its traditions. Acquiring education, however, did not mean that Indian women should discard their familial roles. In fact, she emphasized that better education would make women better wives and mothers.

The future of India lies in its girls. The development of its education system on proper lines is therefore a question of permanent importance. Although India must learn many lessons from the West, to impose on it the western system without modifications to make it suitable to us is a huge mistake. India must retain the elements of good in her age-old traditions of thought and methods. It [sic] must retain her social inheritance of ideals and emotions, while at the same time incorporating that which is useful from the West [. A] new educational practice and tradition may be evolved which will transcend both that of [the] East and the West.

In short, our girls would not only obtain University degrees, but must be ideal daughters, wives and mothers – or I may say obedient daughters, loving sisters, dutiful wives and instructive mothers.¹⁷

Though in this essay Roquiah emphasizes the traditional roles for women, in a letter to the *Mussulman*, dated December 6, 1921, she noted that four of the Muslim girls' schools in Calcutta had headmistresses who had studied at Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School.

Roquiah has been an icon for both the generation of early feminists in East Pakistan/Bangladesh, many of whom had studied at Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School, and who, in their turn became associated with schools and colleges in East Pakistan, as well as the generation of the 1970's who recognized in her work the call for gender equality that became their rallying cry. Women for Women, a research and study group, has a poster which quotes lines from Roquiah's essay, "*Subeh Sadek*": *Buk thukiya bolo ma! Amra poshu noi. Bolo bhogini! Amra Asbab noi Shokole shomobeshe bolo, amra manush.*¹⁸ (Proclaim confidently, daughter, we are not animals. Say, sister, we are not inanimate objects Say it together, we are human beings.)

Though Roquiah was a feminist, she was not what we would call a radical feminist. She was an Islamic feminist, as Mahmud Hasan has suggested, seeing the positive side of Islam and decrying the absurdity of extremes created by society.¹⁹ Though

17 Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein, "Educational Ideals for the Modern Indian Girl", Abdul Mannan Syed *et al.* (ed.), *Rokeya Rachnabali*, second ed. (Dhaka, 1999), p. 483

18 Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein, "*Subeh Sadek*.", *Rokeya Rachnabali*, Abdul Mannan Syed *et al.* (ed.), second ed. (Dhaka 1999), p. 239

19 M. Mahmudul Hasan, "Introducing Rokeya's Plural Feminism: A Comparative Study of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's Feminist Writings with Those of Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Attia Hosain and Monica Ali." Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Portsmouth, 2007.

Roquiah would not have gone to the lengths of the contemporary woman, though she would not have radically changed gender-relationships, in *Sultana's Dream*, as in *Padmarag* (1924), she does suggest that women have identities without relationship to men. However, she does not stress the lone woman. She looks upon the community of women who share – or can be taught to share – the same values. Woman, as sister, mother, daughter, is a positive figure.

The world of women that is Ladyland reveals Roquiah's belief that women are intelligent and that they can work both inside and outside the home – something that was denied them in early twentieth-century India. After the death of her husband, Roquiah herself would work outside the home, setting up a school for girls and joining the Anjuman-i-Khawateen Islam, and as an educationist and a writer persistently advocate the right to education for women and their right to earn a livelihood if need be. But, for change, women needed to be educated.

The importance of women's education has been recognized in Bangladesh where over the last few decades encouragement has been given to girls' education by providing free education and stipends. Today we do not think about education as preparing a girl for her familial roles, but to prepare her to be a better citizen of the country. However, we should not forget the importance of familial roles for women. It is wrong, as Roquiah reminds us, to blindly ape the west. At the same time, perhaps we should suggest that men too should be made aware of their familial roles to create a more harmonious society. Above all, the discrimination against young boys – by denying them the free education that is offered to girls – should be reconsidered. In a developing country where disadvantaged parents would rather send a boy to work than pay for his education, is it rational to deny half the population the enlightenment that proper education brings? Perhaps we could do no worse than think of Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein who encouraged education but stressed that we must be rational in everything we do. Though Roquiah could not discard some of the mindset of her times, in her stories, essays and letters, she continually suggested a rational approach to life, whether it is in the observance of purdah or in the imparting of education.