THE EMERGENCE & DEVELOPMENT OF DOBHĀṢĪ LITERATURE IN BENGAL

(Upto 1855 A. D.)

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The Emergence and Development
Of
Dobhāsī Literature in Bengal
(Upto 1855 A. D.)

To
The vice-Chancellor, Teachers and Students of
The University of The Panjab, Lahore
Q. Mannan
24-9-1967 (Author)

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FOREWORD

When Dr. Q. A. Mannan presented his thesis on Dobhāsi Literature for adjudication in the University of London, it was immediately obvious that he had done much more than prepare a dissertation on the work of a few writers, important though that was. He had opened up a subject of far wider scope and interest, namely, the development and co-existence in medieval Bengal of two communities professing different religions but achieving a large measure of cultural harmony through the possession of a common language. Whether Muslim or Hindu, the poets of the medieval period were Bengalis, who, though they took their subjects from diverse traditions, adopted the same verse forms and drew upon the same treasury of word and phrase. It was because his adjudicators reccgnised in Dr. Mannan's thesis this deeper purpose and pioneering originality that they received it so warmly and will be glad to know that it is to be published.

Dr. Mannan brought to his researches not only a thorough and unremitting industry and a critical acumen but also a capacity for objective and impartial assessment. It is often difficult to resist partisan pressure, with all that they mean by way of special pleading ; but if literary studies are to be of abiding value they must be guided by literary criteria only and rigidly avoid conclusions based on other factors. It was his ability to weigh issues justly that was to me the most gratifying feature of Dr. Mannan's approach to his subject. A poet, as he so clearly implies, is a great poet, not because he belongs to this race or that, or because he is a member of one community or another, but solely because his poetry has qualities of greatness.

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The task Dr. Mannan has undertaken is not yet complete, as I know he will admit, and I hope that other scholars will be induced by the publication of his work to follow the lead he has so ably given, and study the works of other authors against the cultural background to which they belong and see through them and their writings the ancient and complex literary tradition they have inherited. It is in this hope particularly that I am gratified to write a short foreword to this publication, and commend it not only to scholars in Pakistan and India but also to men and women in other countries who find in Bengali literature a subject of increasing satisfaction.

School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London
30 August 1966

T. W. CLARK

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PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to trace the emergence of a mixed diction in Bengali and its development as a vehicle of literature. The mixed diction, which was much later known as "Dobhāsī Bāṅglā" sprang up from the mixture of two cultures — Muslim and Hindu.

It is a fact that Dobhāsī works constitute a considerable part of Bengali literature. A good variety of subjects have been written in that diction. But no proper critical study of this diction and literature has yet been made. Critics and historians of Bengali language and literature have from time to time made references to Dobhāsī literature, but none has made an exhaustive study of it. We, however, come across a few passing comments on this literature in the course of general reviews, which are principally concerned with other aspects of our literature. Besides, we meet with some despising remarks about it which are not always due to this diction.

The book has been divided into two parts. First seven chapters constitute the first part of the book. These chapters are concerned with political and social changes in Bengal in the Middle ages after the arrival of the Muslim conquerors. New literary themes, many of them drawn from the literatures of Arabia and Persia, were introduced in Bengal by Muslim poets from the 14th century onward. It has been pointed out that these themes are quite different from the themes followed by Hindu poets. Reference is made to the first appearance in Bengali literature of a mixed diction which derived part of its vocabulary from Bengali, Hindustani and Sanskrit and part from Arabic

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and Persian. This mixed diction is first observed in the compositions of Hindu poets. Contemporary Muslim writers used Bengali exclusively except a few passages in Brajabuli employed by them in their compositions on occasions.

Then follow the outline of adoption of mixed diction by Muslim poets in the 18th century and a brief summary of the works which were written in it. In the last three chapters of the first part of the book, a detailed examination has been made of principal poets who employed Dobhāsī as their new diction in the 18th and 19th centuries and of the language and subject-matter of their major works.

The remaining portion of the book constitutes its second part. This part is mainly devoted to the critical analysis of Dobhāsī literature and the probable causes of development of this peculiar diction. Problems of the origin of the name Dobhāsī have been examined along with the influence of Arabic, Persian and Hindustani on Bengali language. The attitude of Muslim society towards Bengali language both of speech and literature has also been reviewed. Incidentally, the socio-cultural environment under which the Dobhāsī literature flourished in the hands of Muslim writers of Bengal has also been examined. Then follows the survey of the tradition of literary diction in India from the Vedic period down to the Brajabuli diction, which flourished in Bengal during the Medieval period, and the place of Dobhāsī in that tradition has been determined. The last chapter is a summary of the history of the growth of Dobhāsī from its inception in the 14th century to its acceptance as a literary language in the 18th.

The thesis on which the book is mainly based was prepared under the guidance of my teacher, Mr. T. W. Clark of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He supervised my work with patience, wisdom and keen personal interest. I, as his student, owe a deep debt of gratitude to him. I should also like to take this opportunity of thanking the authorities of the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the British Museum,

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the India Office and Cambridge University Libraries for their help and co-operation.

I am also sincerely grateful to my former teachers, Dr. M. Shahidullah, Dr. A. R. Mallick, Dr. S. Sajjad Husain, Mr. Syed Ali Ahsan and Mr. Mohammad Idris Ali and to my colleagues Dr. A. F. Salahuddin, Dr. M. A. Bari, Dr. F. H. Chowdhury and Mr. Badruddin Umar who have always shown a keen interest in my work and encouraged me in many ways.

Qazi Abdul Mannan

Department of Bengali
University of Rajshahi
7th September 1966

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Transliteration

a (অ)	ā (আ)	i (ই)	ī (ঈ)	u (উ)	ū (ঊ)
ṛ (ঋ)	e (এ)	ai (ঐ)	o (ও)	au (ঔ)	

k (ক)	kh (খ)	g (গ)	gh (ঘ)	ṅ (ঙ)
c (চ)	ch (ছ)	j (জ)	jh (ঝ)	ñ (ঞ)
ṭ (ট)	ṭh (ঠ)	ḍ (ড)	ḍh (ঢ)	ṇ (ণ)
t (ত)	th (থ)	d (দ)	dh (ধ)	n (ন)
p (প)	ph (ফ)*	v (ব)	bh (ভ)	m (ম)
y (য)	r (র)	l (ল)	b (ব)	
ś (শ)	ṣ (ষ)	s (স)	h (হ)	y´ (য়)
ṛ (ড়)	ṛh (ঢ়)	ṁ (ং)	ḥ (ঃ)	~ (ঁ)

kṣ (ক্ষ)

* 'f' is also used for this character in certain Perso-Arabic words.

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CHAPTER I

Medieval Bengali Literature and Political Change

The growth of vernacular literature in the Aryan North of India has always been impeded by Sanskrit, as is evidenced by its comparatively late commencement in the Aryan North of India, where Sanskrit predominated and its comparatively early commencement in the Dravidian South, where the influence of Sanskrit was not so powerful initially. Tripathi confirms the view as follows: "Tamil, Canarese and Telegu are comparatively rich in epigraphic materials dating from an early period. Unlike the North Indian languages they were relatively free from the dominating iufluence of Sanskrit and as such, they developed literatures at a comparatively early period."[1] Sanskrit is no mere language; it is the symbol and vehicle of Hindu religion and culture, which rest on and foster a rigid hierarchy of exclusive social classes. Sanskrit was the key to the sacred texts and its study was permitted to one class alone, the Brahmins. Thus, in a narrow sense,

1. Tripathi, K. B., *Evolution of Oriya Language and Script*, Utkal University, 1962, p. 5.

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Sanskrit was the symbol of the prestige and power of this one class ; they valued it accordingly, and resisted vehemently any threat to the source of their power and privilege.

On the other hand, the other creeds which made inroads into Northern India ; Buddhism, Islam and Christianity were egalitarian. They held that their sacred trusts were for the edification of the whole of society not just its uppermost stratum. Consequently, it is hardly surprising to find that the impulses to propagate vernacular literature in the Aryan North came from the followers of these egalitarian creeds in their respective periods. The first vernacular literature in North India, for instance, was Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures. There are strong reasons to believe that the Muslims played a large part in initiating medieval varnacular literature in North India. "There are almost no compositions of the early period (11th-13th century) in the New Indo-Aryan (i.e. vernacular) languages other than Bengali. The one or two songs and distiches, that have reached us preserved in a more or less altered form in later collections, are predominantly the works of Muslim poets. Consequently, one might conjecture with some certainty that in Sind and the Punjab literary composition in the vernaculars was first undertaken by Muslims."[1] As in the macrocosm of North India, so in the microcosm of Bengal. The Tantrik Buddhists composed the

1. Sen, S., *Islāmi Bāiglā Sāhitya*, Burdwan, 1951, p. 1

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first songs in the early vernacular of Bengal i. e. the *Caryāścaryabiniścay´*; the Muslims commissioned the first translations from Sanskrit and the Christians at a later period created the first grammar and prose.[1]

But to view the beginning of vernacular literature merely within this context of religion is to limit one's vision too narrowly; politics had important bearings on this question, for there was a strong relationship between political power, religion and literature in Bengal. The Pala Kings favoured the Buddhists who, as was stated above, first cultivated vernacular literature in Bengal. The Sena Kings patronised the Brahmin *pandits*, who, in turn cultivated Sanskrit literature. The Pathans and Moghals, who were Muslims, patronised both Hindu and Muslim poets, who cultivated vernacular literature a century or two later. The British were Christians and under British rule, the missionaries in their efforts to propagate Christianity helped to create the first prose. Since it is rare for rulers to do anything that does not actively encourage the continuance of their rule, it may be assumed that this relationship between politics, religion and literature either benefited the ruling classes or at least did not militate against their interests. After any major change in that political context, drastic changes also are liable to occur in the contexts of religion and literature and this is

1. Sen, D. C., *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, Calcutta University, 1911, pp. 5–15.

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borne out by what evidence is available in medieval India.

The evidence indicates that after any major change in political power, religious persecutions tended to follow presumably to stamp out allegiance to the old regime and to establish allegiance to the new. In some instances the old literature was suppressed and actively discouraged for the same reason. Scholars believe, for example, that when the Sena dynasty succeeded the Pala Kings, Buddhists were put to the sword. The following extract from *S'aṁkara-vijay'a* regarding King Sudhanvā will show the ruthless manner in which the Buddhists were sometimes persecuted — "many of the chief princes, professing the wicked doctrines of the Buddhist and the Jaina religions, were vanquished in various scholarly controversies. Their heads were then cut off with axes, thrown into mortars and broken to pieces (reduced to powder) by means of pestles. So these wicked doctrines were thoroughly annihilated, and the country made free from danger."[1] It is likely that the Senas also suppressed the vernacular literature cultivated by the Buddhists. Sen refers to this subject—"Several works written in the tenth and the eleventh centuries of the Christian era in a very old form of Bengali have lately been discovered by Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasād S'āstrī in Nepal .... They appear to be but poor fragments of a literature

1. Sen, D. C., *op. cit.*, p. 6.

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which owes its origin chiefly to the earnestness of the Tantrik Buddhists for popularizing their creed."[1] From this one can infer that these texts were carried to Nepal as a result of the suppression of Buddhism in Bengal.

The Senas, beginning with Vikramaditya, patronised Sanskrit.[2] Sena Kings were "very devoted to Brahminism and before the Muslim conquest the Court of Bengal was dominated by the Brahmins and their religion."[3] Brahmin *pandits* resided at the Court and composed, recited and expounded their poetry to their princely patrons. The skill of these poets in manipulating grammar, poetry and logic was great but their "contempt for Bengali was as great as was their scholarship in Sanskrit."[4] However, the next major change in the political sphere altered all this.

Muslim rule commenced in Bengal in 1204 A.D.[5] The last Hindu King, Lakṣmaṇa Sena of the Sena dynasty fled and presumably a period of Brahmin persecution followed. However, by the fourteenth century, Muslim rule was well established. Moreover, the ties of Delhi's suzerainty over Bengal were being severed and Bengal's Muslim rulers were beginning to identify themselves with their subjects ; the rulers and the ruled were being drawn together by the ties

1. Sen, D. C., *op. cit.*, p. 5.
2. Sen, D. C. *Ibid.*, p.9.
3. Sen, S., *Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Ithihās*, Vol. I (2nd edition), Calcutta. 1948, p.58
4. Sen, D. C., *ibid.*, p. 9.
5. Stewart, C., *The History of Bnegal*, London 1813, pp. 43-44.

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of a common birth place and a common tonge, Bengali.[1]

It was within this political context that writing in Bengali began to be encouraged. Translations from Sanskrit were commissioned by royal patrons and poets were most generously patronised in their cultivation of the various indigenous themes that were becoming popular in Bengali literature. Possibly the motivation behind the patronage of literature was political. The Muslim rulers may have wished to destroy the dominance of Sanskrit and thereby the hold of the Brahmins over the people, thus with one well-aimed stone disposing of two political birds of prey, Brahminism and the Brahmins. There is evidence in certain texts of this period which suggests that the people of the lower order were not unhappy to see the Muslims turn' against the Brahmins. In

1. Sen, D. C. *op. cit.* p. 10. As regards Muslim rulers becoming Bengali by birth and tongue it is interesting to note the suggestion put forward by M. E. Haq that the first Muslim infiltration into Bengal dates from a considerably earlier Period. "From the 8th century A. D. the blood of a new race began to be mixed up with the Bengali blood ; the people of the Semitic race began to enter Bengal from that date. The discovery of a coin of calip Hurun-al-Rashid (786—809) in Paharpur, Rajshahi has established the fact that the Semitic Arab Muslims were preachig their religion as well as carrying on business in this country ; they had also established a small pricipality in Chittagong district under an Amir. Several. saints, Shah Sultan Bayazid Bistami (874 A. D.), Mir Saiyed Sultan Mahmud Mahi-soar (1047 A.D.), Shah Mohammad Sultan Rumi (1053 A.D.), Baba Adam Sahid (1119 A.D.), Shah Niamat Ullah Butsikan and many others were preaching Islam in Bengal during the period of early Muslim Settlement there."
Muslim Bāṅgālā Sāhitya Dacca, 1957, pp. 3-4

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some instances they saw in the destruction of Brahmin temples and in the killing of the Brahmins the actions of their own deities, even to the extent of regarding Muslim warriors as Hindu gods appearing in different guises to kill the Brahmins who were oppressing the people. In a song connected with the Dharma Cult, *Jālāli, Kālimā*, which commemorates the conquest of Jājpur, a city in Orissa in the middle of the fourteenth century[1] the following statement is found. I translate as follows: "There are 1600 Brahmin families in the City of Jājpur. The Brahmins read the Vedas but are evil men. They beg alms and if any householder refuses them, they curse him and cause his house to be burnt down. They collect taxes in Malda and they make no concession to any one. There is no end to the mischief they cause. They band together in groups of ten and twenty and subvert the good. They chant the Vedas vociferously, carry flaming torches and they terrify every one. O Dhamma, the Brahmins are destroying your creation. This is great injustice. None but you can save us. Knowing this in his heart, Dhamma forsook Kailās (heaven) and came to earth, disguised as Khandakār, in the form of a Muslim wearing a black cap, carrying a bow and arrow and mounted on a fine horse and uttering the name of 'Khodā'.

1. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, pp. 495-96. The City of Jajpur in Orissa was a great centre of the Hindu upper castes and the Sultan of Bengal, Shamsuddin Iliyas Shah (1342-57 A. D.) established his authority there in the middle of the 14th century. See Sarkar, J. N., The *History of Bengal.*, Vol.II, Dacca University, 1948. pp. 103-5.

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His appearance was terrifying ..... All the Hindu gods were delighted and dressed as Muslims. Brahmā became Mohammad, Viṣṇu became the Prophet, S'iva became Ādam, Gaṇeśa became Kāji, Kārtika became Gāji, the Hindu ascetics became Fakirs." It is also possible that the Muslim rulers were seeking to acknowledge and strengthen their ties of kinship with their subjects and to gain political support against Delhi, or possibly because of human considerations which inevitably grow when people live together.

It is noteworthy, however, that the first poets patronised by the Muslim rulers were, as their names imply, mostly Hindu. It is equally noteworthy that they commissioned works not only from Persian but also from Sanskrit sources including the *Purāṇas* the *Mahābhārata* the *Rāmāy'aṇa* and the legends of Kṛṣṇa, which together form the greater part of the corpus of Hindu literature. Writing on these subjects D.C. Sen states that the Muslim Kings of Bengal and their officers not only cultivated writing in Bengali but were interested in Bengali literature "which they spoke and understood"[1] for its own sake. The following list shows how extensive Muslim patronage was during the period of their dominance ; (a) Nāsir Shāh (1285—1325 A.D.) commissioned a translation of the *Mahābhārata* by a poet whose name is not known but who is supposed to be a Hindu[2] ;

1. Sen, D. C., *op. cit.*, p. 11.
2. Sen, D. C. *ibid.*, p. 11.

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(b) Giyāsuddin (1389-1409 A.D.) patronised Vidyāpati to compose short lyrics on Vaisṇava themes[1] ; (c) Giyāsuddin also patronised Shāh Mohāmmad Sagir to compose a narrative poem *Yusuf Julekhā* from a Persian source[2] : (d) Husain Shāh (1493-1519 A.D.) was a great patron of Bengali and patronised many poets for the cultivation of literature. He conferred the title of 'Yaśorāj Khān' on Dāmodar Sen who composed lyric songs on Vaisṇava themes and first employed Brajabulī diction in Bengali literature[3] : (e) Husain Shāh patronised Bipradās Piplāi who wrote *Manasāvijaya*, a poem on the deity of snakes, in 1495-96[4] : (f) Parameśvaradāsa who was a court poet of Parāgal Khān, a general and governor of Husain Shāh, translated the *Mahābhārata* and got the title of 'Kabīndra' from his master[5] : (g) Parāgal Khān's son, Nasrat Khān, was also a governor of the King of Bengal. He commissioned his court poet, S'rīkara Nandī, to translate the *Mahābhārata*[6] : (h) Husain Shāh's grandson, Firuz Shāh, commissioned his court poet, S'rīdhara, to write *Vidyāsundara*, a narrative poem[7] : (i) Ruknuddin Barbak Shāh "conferred the sobriquet of 'Guṇarāj Khān' on Mālādhara Basu who composed *S'rikṛṣṇavijaya*, a narrative poem on the

1. Sen, D. C., *Ibid*.. p. 11.
2. Haq, M.E., *Muslim Bangla Sahitya*, Dacca, 1957, p. 57.
3. Sen, S., *A History of Brajabuli Literature*, Calcutta University, 1935, p.2.
4. Sen, S,, *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, 2nd. ed., Calcutta, 1848, p. 118.
5. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 80.
6. Sen, S., *Ibid*., pp. 80–81.
7. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I. 2nd. ed. Calcutta, 1948, p. 564.

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Kṛsṇa legend in 1480"[1] : (j) a number of poets wrote lyric poetry on Vaiṣṇava themes who were "serving in various capacities at the Court of Gauḍ" i. e., the Court of the Muslim King of Bengal.[2] Indeed, the Muslim rulers, at this period, seem to have exercised considerable religious tolerance. They even accepted without demur compliments comparing them to Hindu gods. Parāgal Khān was called the incarnation of Hari in Kaliyuga (Kali kāle habu yena Kṛsṇa avatār') by his protégé, Kabīndra Parameśvara who translated the *Mahābhārata*.

This patronage can of course be interpreted as part of the rulers' overriding political motives, namely, to create a sense of political unity in Bengal undisturbed by religious antagonism ; but in the view of the writer this would seem to be a cynical interpretation ; for, though ulterior motives are difficult always to exclude, there are strong reasons to believe that the Muslim patrons were genuinely interested in the poetry they patronised and also in the wider well-being of their subjects as a whole. The literary critic however, must go beyond establishing the political and social background against which this literature was written. He is concerned with the quality of this literature. He has to determine whether it was good of its kind. Much of this writing was, in one sense of the term, translation. We find versions of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* for instance, but the

1. Sen, S , *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 69.
2. Sen, S., *Ibid.*, p. 103.

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Bengali works are by no means literal or even near literal translations. They are re-creations based on the same myths as the original Sanskrit or Persian. The plane of events in the Sanskrit versions, for instance, is very different from that in Bengali. In the former, the interest centres on the deities who are ideal beings breathing a moral atmosphere; in the latter, the interest centres on human beings treading the soil of Bengal, who, though they are gods in name, can only be recognised as such by the divine trappings they wore or the occasional supernatural power they displayed. This enhancement of human interest is the predominant characteristic of the period. Possibly it got infused into the literature by the interests of the Muslim patrons[1]

1. Scholars believe that Islam as a religion played an important part in Bengal in the period of Muslim rule. Before the establishment of Muslim authority the people, belonging to both the upper and lower strata, were greatly degenerated. "Superstitious beliefs and derogatory practices", S. Sen observes, "were slowly destroying the initiative spirit of the people both high and low...The gulf between the upper and lower classes was widening. The Muslim impact struck a stunning blow to the self-complacency of the ruling classes and of the priesthood." *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 39. The impact of Islam which came not only through the rulers but also through the missionaries led to a loosening of the bonds of caste and religious rituals which was not unwelcome to the people of Bengal. "There are many evidences to prove", D. C. Sen observes, "that in the earlier days of Mohamedan conquest, the Hindus tried to assimilate the best elements of Islam in their religion. Some of the Mohammedan pirs and fakirs, especially a band of Aulias who came from Arabia, lent their powerful support in bringing about this happy union in the 15th and 16th centuries." — *Eastern Bengal Ballads*, Calcutta University, 1923, Vol. IV., part I, pp. xxxii—iii.

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or possibly it was the inevitable result of the translation from the conservative Sanskrit to the homeliness of Bengali ; but whatever the reason it constitutes the one unifying characteristic, which marks the productions of both Hindus and Muslims in this early period of Muslim rule and patronage.

Another point of interest in this period is the status of Bengali as a language. Hitherto the Brahmin *paṇḍits* despised all vernacular languages and condemned translation from Sanskrit into them.[1] They predicted damnation not only for all who heard Sanskrit works in translation but also in the language into which they were translated. The Bengali language was derived from a Prākṛt known as Gauḍa Prākṛit. The Brahmin *paṇḍits* labelled it contemptuously 'Paiśācī Prākṛt', or the Prākṛt spoken by the evil spirits. It was Kṛṣṇa Paṇḍit who, for one, so described it in his celebrated grammar, '*Prākṛita-Chandrkā*'[2] in the twelfth century. So successful indeed was the *paṇḍit's* indoctrination' and 'propaganda machine' in these respects that the vernacular poets themselves were induced to confess the unworthiness of their medium. "We frequently come across such lines in old Bengali works as 'naturally Bengali poems are faulty' (sahaje

1. The following well-known Sanskrit couplet bears testimony to this ill-will : "If a person hears the stories of eighteen Puranas or of the Ramayana recited in Bengali he will be thrown into the hell called the Raurava." — *History of the Bengali Language and Literature'* D. C. Sen,, C. U,, 1911, p. 7.
2. Sen, D. C., *op. cit.*, p. 4.

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pācālī gita nānā dosamaya') or 'not fit to be discussed in a vernacular poem' ('pācālīte nahe yogyabād).''[1]

No one would be so rash as to claim that these attitudes of the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin as regards vernacular literature changed overnight, with the commencement of Muslim patronage. On the contrary, they persisted in more or less acute form for centuries. For instance, Rāiā Rāmmohan Rāy provoked storms of abuse and criticism from orthodox Brahmins, when he started translating Hindu scriptures in the early 19th century. But, on the other hand, there is no great evidence that the Brahmins were totally indifferent to their own best interests. Undoubtedly, they missed the courtly patronage of the Hindu Senas and were not slow to accept that offered by the Muslims, even though it might involve writing in the despised vernaculars. This fashion of patronising vernacular literature inaugurated by the Muslim Courts was undoubtedly continued later in Hindu principalities. In conclusion, a statement by D. C. Sen may be quoted ; "We now confidently presume that the above proofs will be held sufficient to support the view that the patronage and favour of the Mahomedan Emperors and Chiefs gave the first start towards recognition of Bengali in the courts of the Hindu Rajas and to establish its claims on the attention of scholars."[2]

1. Sen, D. C., *ibid.*, p. 8.
2. Sen., D. C., *op cit.* pp. 14–15.

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CHAPTER II

Contributions of Muslim Poets to Middle Bengali Literature.

There are reasons to believe that the language we now know as Bengali began to emerge early in the second millennium A. D., though the earliest extant texts in that language are probably not as early as that. Bengali literature, that is to say, literature in the Bengali language, is broadly divisible into three periods: Old Bengali which can be assigned to the 11th and 12th centuries A. D.; Medieval Bengali, which runs continuously from the 14th to the 18th century; and Modern Bengali, which is usually dated from 1800 A. D. Nothing which can be assigned to the 13th century has survived, so it is not possible to say with certainty whether that century belongs to the Old or the Medieval period.

The literature of the first two periods was exclusively verse. Prose writing of a literary quality was not developed in Bengal until the 19th century.

Medieval Bengali literature flourished under Muslim rule. Bengal remained under Muslim rule till the middle of the 18th century.[1] So far as

1. The political authority of Bengal was gradually transferred to the East India Company after the battle of Plassey (1757).

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the literary products are concerned this period is prosperous and quite a number of literary streams were cultivated by Hindu and Muslim poets which have enriched the volume of Bengali literature and added variety and beauty to it.

In this chapter a short account of the principal streams and themes introduced and developed by Muslim poets during the Medieval period will be attempted together with some references to their style and language. We shall also examine the similarities, and differences, if any, between their language and that of contemporary Hindu poets.

The Old Bengali period was pre-Muslim, and for that reason lies outside the scope of this work. Nevertheless, as certain literary features of the work of that period are continued in the next, it is necessary to comment briefly on them. The only work in Bengali which can with certainty be assigned to the pre-Muslim period is a collection of 47 religious lyrics composed by some 24 poets.[1] The

1. Some ballads like *Maynamatirgan* or *Gopicandrergan*, certain distiches and short poems containing agricultural maxims and comments on life and on things are believed to be composed by *Dak* and *Khana* during the Old Bengali period (Sen, D. C. - *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, Calcutta University, 1911, Chapter II). But these were collected in the early part of the 20th century from the mouths of the people and their language and form are not very old. "It is impossible", observes Suniti Kumar Chatterji, "on both philological and literary grounds to relegate them to any period before 1400, although their lost prototypes, models or originals might quite reasonably be regarded as having belonged to the 14th or even the 13th century". — (Chatterji, S. K., *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* Vol. I Calcutta University, 1926, p. 132)

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famous *Gītagovinda* by Jayadeva must be excluded because it is written in Sanskrit and not Bengali. The manuscript containing these poems was discovered by Haraprasāda Śāstrī in Nepal at the beginning of the present century. The poems are short: 40 have 10 lines, 2 have 12 lines, 3 have 14 lines 1 has 8 lines and 1 has 6. One couplet usually the final one, known as the *bhaṇitā*, contains the name of the author. The use of the *bhaṇitā* continued throughout the Medieval period. The metres used are early forms of the *payār* and *tripadi*, which are the standard metrical forms of much of the composition of the later period. That they were composed to be sung is proved by the attachment to each of the name of the *rāga* in which it was to be sung. The language used is proto-Bengali, which, according to Sukumar Sen, marks the transition period when "the language was just evolving out of Laukika (or Avahaṭṭha)".[1]

The history of these lyrics is little known, but it is usually held that they were "mystic practice" songs, composed by the Siddhas, or Tāntrik Buddhists, whose names appear in the *bhaṇitās*, to teach their religious philosophy to their disciples. The commentator, Munidatta, whose commentary is contained in Śāstrī's manuscript, describes the language as *Śandhyābhāṣā*, i. e., twilight language. It is certainly a kind of code language with meanings at two levels. The outward meaning was for non-initiate, the inner

1. Sen, S. - *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 27.

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meaning only for genuine students of the cult. The purpose of this linguistic device was "to disguise the inner meaning which recorded the mystic practice, experience and emotion of the masters in their process of self-realization".[1]

It is important for the student of literary history to note that the form and content of the *caryā* songs, as they are now called, continued to influence the literature of the later period. As S. Sen observes, "The form as well as the subject-matter of the *caryā* songs did not die out with the disappearance of Buddhist Tantricism. They re-appear with the necessary changes in the 16th century and later in the 'rāgātmikā' (belonging to mystic lore) songs of Vaiṣṇava Tantrists generally known as *Bāuls* (mad men)".[2] What is important from our point of view is that the *caryā* songs belong to that branch of literature which can be called religious literature.

As has been stated above, Middle Bengali literature covers a period of about 500 years and comprises a large volume of poetical literature. So great were the volume and the quality of this literature that a European critic was moved to say of Bengali that it was "one of the great expressive languages of the world capable of being the vehicle of as great things as of any speech of men".[3] Within this literature a variety of subjects was treated;

1. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, p. 31
2. Sen. S., *Ibid.*, p. 36
3. Anderson, J. D., quoted by Ronaldshay in the 'Foreward' in *East Bengal Ballads* Vol. I, part I, Calcutta University, 1923

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some of them were treated exclusively by Hindu poets, others by Muslim poets ; but some were cultivated by poets from both the communities. This chapter is concerned principally with the writings of Muslim poets but in order to see these writings in their full perspective it is necessary to give a brief survey of the works of Hindu poets during this period.

The works of Hindu poets during the Medieval period fall into two main categories : Narrative and Lyric. The narrative poems are popularly called *pācālī*, a term which it is difficult to define precisely. According to S. Sen, it originally meant 'doll' or 'puppet'. The same writer argues that the use of the name indicates that in the early stages songs were sung and poems chanted with the support of a puppet show which enacted the story.[1] It is clear that the narrative poems were from the beginning accompanied by some form of acting or gesturing on the part of the singer and probably by the beating of drums and cymbals. Hindu narrative poetry falls into three streams : (a) *Mahākāvya* (b) *Maṅgal Kāvya*, (c) Biography. The *Mahākāvya* poems are based on the legends of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. They are not in any sense translations from the Sanskrit works on the same subject but original versions drawn from the same sources and presented against a background of Bengali life and landscape. Rāma and Sītā of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, for example, are Bengalis. They marry

1. Sen, S , *op. cit.*, p. 24

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according to Bengali rites and their domestic relationship is governed by rules well-known in Bengali society. These poems were composed in the *payar* and *tripadi* metre which was foreshadowed in the *caryā* songs mentioned above.[1]

The poems, known as *Maṅgal Kāvya*, are greater in number and draw upon a wider range of subjects than the *Mahākāvyas*. The term *Maṅgal Kāvya* has never been convincingly defined but it would seem that part of the literal meaning of the word (*maṅgal*) is retained in that the poems are clearly written to propitiate certain deities and win favour for their devotees. Among the deities represented are Caṇḍi, the wife of the god Śiva; Manasā, an indigenous snake goddess; Dharmathākur, an early deity; Sītalā, the goddess of smallpox; Daksiṇ Rāy, the god of tigers, and many others. Most of these poems, we are told, were written under the direct order of the deity concerned, who appeared to the author either in a dream or in disguise. Many of the poems are similar in structure. The deity selected an agent or agents and having convinced him or them of the truth and power of his or her cult instructed and empowered him or them to win converts to the new cult. Where wealth was required, it was provided; where fighting was involved, the heroes had divine support and protection and in the end, succeeded in establishing the cult to the satisfaction of the deity.

1. See page No. 17 of the present book.

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The biographical poems which form the third stream of narrative poetry are concerned with the life and teachings of the saint Caitanya, who, in the course of his lifetime, came to be regarded as divine. These poems contain, in addition to the narrative material, lengthy expositions of the Vaiṣṇava cult preached by Caitanya.

It is important to note that both the *Mahākāvya* and the *Maṅgal Kāvya* are in one sense religious poems. Their recitation was, from the beginning, associated with certain religious festivals and it was generally believed that merit accrued to both the singer and the audience. The religious intention of the Bengali poems is not strongly or consistently maintained as it is done in poems on comparable subjects in other North Indian languages. Rāma is certainly a god in Kṛttibāsa's famous version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*; but his godhood is not so consistently emphasised in Tulsidāsa's version of the poem in Hindi or Bhānubhakta's version in Nepali. It is the human aspect of Rāma and Sītā which appeals most strongly to a Bengali audience. Similarly in the *Maṅgal Kāvya*, where, though the principal characters are often incarnated deities, the interest of the audience is in their humanity. Behulā, for instance, is the model of Hindu wifehood. Nevertheless, though the use of the term "religious" in connection with these poems has to be accepted with very real qualifications, the conclusion that they are fundamentally religious poems, written with a religious intention, cannot be avoided.

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A great many of the lyric poems, which form the second part of the main category, have as their subject the *lilā* or divine play between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In one very famous work, *Śrikṛṣṇakirtana*, the lyrics are composed in sequence and involve a tenuous narrative. The majority of the poems are, however, single compositions which present a single mood in the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. After the advent of Caitanya Deva and his ultimate apotheosis he began to be associated with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā as a unified incarnation of both. The Vaiṣṇava lyrics or *padāvalis*, as they came to be called[1], which were composed after his death, form a very large proportion of Medievel Bengali literature. It must be pointed out that though many of these poems were composed in an artificial literary dialect known *Brajabuli* they are regarded as falling within the *corpus* of Bengali literature. These poems too, whether in Bengali or *Brajabuli* are unquestionably religious poems. Although it is true that in *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana* the human aspect of the relation between the two lovers is more in evidence than the divine, the work as a whole has a religious significance.

1. Vaisnava lyric songs are called *pada* and the composers are called *Mahajanas*. The word *pada* actually means a couplet. But from the 18th century the collection of Vaisnava songs are called *padavali* or collection of songs, Thus it changed the older meaning of *pada* and created a new meaning—Vaisnava poetry or song. The poets of these songs are generally called *Mahajanas* or pious men. Thus the Vaisnava songs acquired a new name — *Mahajana padavalis* or songs composed by pious men. Sen, S. – *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I (second edition) Calcutta, 1948, p. 278

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Obviously during the Middle Bengali period Hindu poets introduced a large number of themes and created a large volume of literature. But all of them composed on subjects directly related to gods or goddesses. The main object of their writing was the glorification of their deities and the propagation of their religious doctrines and they did not deviate from this tendency. It wil be shown in subsequent pages that the introduction of secular subjects in Bengali literature was a Muslim innovation. S. N. Ghosal presents this argument as follows : "The first deviation from this tendency in Bengali literature to compose poems either about *paurāṇic*, devotional stories, or centred round the concepts of religion or based on the glorification of gods and goddesses occurred in the composition of Muslim poets. There is no doubt, it is to the Muslim poets that the credit for breaking away from the monotony which had pervaded Bengali literature for so long, and for introducing poems composed on unadulterated love stories of a new type belongs. But these Muslim poets were not content merely to break away from the tendency to compose purely religious poems ; they created a new era in Bengali literature by the introduction of fresh, new stories from Persian and ancient Hindi literature. It is not in the least wrong to call Muslim poets the creator of a new literary age in Bengali literature."[1]

1. Ghosal, S. N., (Edited) *Sati Mayna O Lor Candrani*, Visvabharati, Santiniketan, 1955, Introduction, p. 1.

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It also appears from the history of the vernacular literature of India and Pakistan that Muslim writers had a more secular outlook than either Buddhists or Hindus. They, however, composed poems on their religious themes; but the main difference of their outlook from that of the Buddhists or the Hindus is that they did not confine their literary efforts to religion. Even in the formative stage of vernaculars they cultivated secular literature. S. Sen observes: "In the Apabhramśa period, romantic narrative poems and love ballads were very fashionable. This stream was introduced by the Muslim poets. Hindu poets were predominantly preoccupied with devotional stories for the glorification of their deities; they paid no attention to secular love poems. Vernacular literature was a mere off-shoot of religious literature as far as Hindu poets were concerned. But to the Muslims religion was not necessarily related to literature; consequently they were absolutely free to compose non-devotional narratives. Thus in the composition of romances in both Bengali and Hindu literature, it was the Muslim poets who were foremost and supreme".[1]

The bulk of the poems written in Bengali by Muslim poets during the Medieval period is much larger than is suggested by existing histories of Bengali literature. It covers many types of poetic creation and was contributed by a large number of authors. It is convenient for the purposes of the short summary which is

1. Sen, S. *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, Burdwan, 1951, p. 5.

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the subject of this chapter to analyse these poems in the following categories :

(a) Narrative poems,
(b) Lyric poems,
(c) Instructive, or Didactic poems,
(d) Elegiac poems.

Narrative poetry can be further sub-divided into the following classes according to subject-matter and the intention of the poets. These classes embrace (a) Romances, which are based on Perso-Arabic and Indian source material ; (b) Narrative poems, which bear considerable resemblance to the Hindu *pāñcālī* or *maṅgal* poems in respect of both content and manner of presentation ; (c) Stories which have some right to be regarded as historical ; (d) Poems, now known as Ballads, which are based on local legends and incidents.

Narrative Poems.

So far as can be traced, the first narrative poem to be written by a Muslim poet is the work of Sāh Mahammad Sagīr, who lived during the reign of Ghyās-ud-Din (1389-1409), to whom he dedicated his work.[1] The poem is a romance on the subject of Yusuf and Julekhā. The introductory portion of the poem contains the information that the story was

1. The poet says in the *bandana* (introduction) of the poem — 'Mohammad Sagir tan anjaka adhin' (tr. Mahammad Saglr is a subordinate of his). It is, however, not clear whether the poet was an officer or a court poet of the king.

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derived from the Koran and the Ketāb.[1] The latter word in Bengali is used of books which are written in Arabic or Persian. The author's purpose, also conveyed in the introduction, was to give his readers or his audience an opportunity to hear a love-story which would give them pleasure.[2] In other words, his object was to compose a purely secular poem. The author's debt to the Koran, and through the Koran to the Old Testament, is slight, for in neither of these versions can the story be regarded as a romance. The credit for its development into a long and popular romance belongs to a number of Persian and Turkish poets, who must, therefore, be regarded as the primary source.[3]

Though Sagīr's sources were Perso-Arabic, the atmosphere of his poem is Bengali. His characters are Bengali, apart from the names used, and the customs and natural descriptions are also Bengali.

The second important poem on this subject is *Ichuf-Jalikhā* by Ābdul Hākim. The poet did not mention the date of the composition of his poem; but from internal evidence in the manuscript it, may be

1. The word *Ketab* comes from the Arabic word *Ketabun* which means a book.
2. The poet says in the introduction of his poems : 'Ketāb Korān madhye dekhilu bis'eṣ/ Ichuf Jalikhā kathā amiyā as'eṣ// Kahiba Ketāb cāhi sudhā ras puri/ S'unaha bhakatjan s'rutighaṭ bhaḍi// (Tr. In the Korān and the Persian book I found the sweet tale of Ichuf and Jalikhā. Following the Persian book I shall tell (the story) and fill it with poetic qualities. O devotees (of poetry), listen to it and fill your ears — (i. e. have pleasure from my poem).
3. This story was in vogue in mixed diction and we shall discuss its origin in a subsequent chapter.

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assumed that he "belonged probably to the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century".[1] The poet says in his poem that he follows some Persian work but he does not mention the name of either the book or the author. The colouring of his poem also is entirely Bengali.

The love-story of Lāilā and Majnu, the second important theme in Bengali romantic literature, was introduced into Bengali by Daulat Ujir Bāhrām Khān. whose poem, entitled *Lāilāmajnu*, was composed between 1545 and 1553.[2] The title 'Daulat Ujir' means Finance Minister, and, from references to himself in the poem, it seems clear that the poet served under Nijām Sāh Sūr, governor of Chittagong and brother of Sher Shah, emperor of Delhi.

The story originated in Arabic and became very popular throughout the Muslim world. "In Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature the epithet *al Madjuūn* i. e., the man possessed by a djinnī, 'the mad man', is pre-eminently associated with Kai b. al-Mulawwah, the story of whose passion for Lāilā, daughter of Sa'd, a woman of the same tribe, is celebrated throughout the Muhammadan world". In the original story in Arabic, "Kai meets Lāilā amongst a party of women, falls in love at first sight and slaughters his camel to make a feast for her. His love is returned, but her father refuses to give her to him in

1. Husain, S. S. (Edited), *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts*, Dacca, 1960, p. 268
2. Sharif, A. (Edited), *Lailamajnu*, Dacca, 1957, Introduction, p. 27.

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marriage ; and soon afterwards, she becomes the wife of Ward b Muhammad al 'Ukaili. Kai, crazed with despair, passes the rest of his days in solitude, wandering half-naked in the hills and valleys of Nadjd, making verses on the subject of his unhappy love, and only seeing Lāilā at rare intervals until his death".[1]

This love-tale of the desert of Arabia was developed into a popular theme in Persian literature by Nijām Ganjā who, as a result of the reputation of his lengthy poem, *Lāilā and Majnu*, which was written in 1188-89, is regarded as "the acknowledged master of romantic Mathnawi".[2] After his time, the theme became "one of the most popular, if not the most popular, of all love-stories in the East".[3] Many Persian poets cultivated it, the most celebrated of them being Amir Khusru (1253-1324), Mullā Nurud-Din, Ābdur Rahmān Jāmī (1414-1492) and Ābdullāh Hātifi of the 16th century.[4] Jāmi's work on Lāilā and Majnu "has been translated into French by Chésy (Paris, 1805) and into German by Hartman (Leipzig, 1807)".[5] Hātifi's poem was "published at Calcutta by Sir W. Jones in 1788".[6]

In Turkish literature, Hamd Ullāh Chelebi, whose pen name was Hamdī, completed his poem on Lāilā

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. III, London, 136, p. 96
2. Browne , E. G., *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge University, 1928, Vol. II, pp. 400-1
3. Browne, E. G., *op.clt.*, p. 406
4. Browne, E. G., *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 108–9, 507, Vol. IV. p.229
5. Browne, E. G., *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 516
6. Browne, E. G., *Ibid.*, Vol, IV, p. 229

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Majnu in 1499-1500.[1] In this language also the theme became a popular subject of poems. The most important work in Turkish is that of Fazuli, in 1556.[2]

The story has since become very popular in Bengal, especially among the Muslim community, to whom Lāilā and Majnu symbolise the noblest ideals of human love. Bāhrām Khān's poem, however, is the only work on the theme which is known to belong to the Medieval period. It is extremely popular but it is impossible to be sure whether it was the only poem written on the subject, or the only one which has survived. During the early Modern period, quite a number of works were composed on this theme, both in prose and in verse.

Saiyad Ālāol, the most famous poet at the court of Arakan during the 17th, century, introduced two romantic themes based on Persian originals. The first, *Sapta Paikar* (*Seven Portraits*), is an adaptation of a work of the same title by Nijāmi Ganjā, the Persian poet of the century and author of a poem on Lāilā and Majnu who had been mentioned above. The poem is a collection of seven romantic stories told by seven queens, and in structure it bears some resemblance to the *Arabian Nights*. The explanation of the title gives an interesting introduction to the whole work : "The Seven Portraits in question, discovered by Bahram one day in secret chamber in his castle of Khawarnaq, represented seven princesses

1. Gibb, E. J.W., *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, London, 1902, Vol. II, p. 172
2. Gibb, E. J. W., *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 85

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of incomparable beauty, these being respectively the daughters of the Raja of India, the Khaqan of China, the Shah of Khwarazm, the King of the Slavs, the Shah of Persia, the Emperor of Byzantine and the King of the West or 'Sun-set-land'. Bahrām falls in love with these portraits and succeeding almost immediately afterwards to the throne vacated by the death of his father Yazdigrid, he demands and obtains these seven princesses in marriage from their respective fathers. Each one of them, representing one of the seven climes into which the habitable world is divided, is lodged in a separate palace symbolically coloured, and Bāhrām visits each of them on seven successive days, beginning on Saturday with the Black Palace assigned to the princess of India, and ending on Friday with the White Palace in which the princess of the seventh clime is housed. Each of the seven princesses entertains him in turn with stories, somewhat after the scheme of the Arabian Nights".[1]

Ālāol's second poem on a romantic theme is *Saifulmuluk-badiujjāmāl*. He composed it in 1653-59. The story of it goes: Saifulmuluk was the son of Sifun, King of Egypt. He fell violently in love with the portrait of Badiujjāmāl, daughter of the King of the Fairies in Iran-Bostan. Saifulmuluk's friend, Saiyad who was the son of one of the King's courtiers told the King of his love. Thereupon emissaries were sent to different lands for information about Badiujjāmāl but they came back disappointed. After-

1. Browne, E. G., *op.cit.*, Vol, II. p. 409

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wards Saifulmuluk met Badiujjāmāl in a dream, and set out for Iran-Bostan accompanied by Saiyad. Many adventures followed. Eventually, Saifulmuluk and Badiujjāmāl were united. Saiyad married Badiujjāmāl's companion, Mallikā, princess of Sarandwip".[1] This story was derived from the *Arabian Nights*. It was first introduced into Bengali by Donāgāji in the middle of the 16th century[2] and many poets other than Ālāol made use of it. Of them the following are remarkable, who under different titles, composed their poems on the same theme of romantic love as Ālāol's *Saifulmuluk-badiujjāmāl* : Ābdul Hākim, who lived in the 17th century, was the author of *Ichuf-Jalikhā*, and composed *Lālmati-Saiful muluk* ; Saiad Mohāmmad Akbar, who composed a poem, named *Jebulmuluk Sāmārukh* in 1673 ; Naoy'ājeś Khān, who composed *Gulebākāolī* in the 17th century.

Another theme which is popular in Bengal is connected with the story of a Roman Princess named Mallikā. She had promised to marry any man who could give correct answers to a thousand questions based on riddles and religious and social problems. The earliest known work on this theme is by Serbāj who named his poem *Mallikār Hājār Saoāl*. The poet gave the poem a sub-title, "Fakkarnāmā" because, to quote a couplet from the poem, "there is a book in Persian called Fakkarnāmā and with the help of my spiritual guide I have made this story popular in

1. Husain, S. S. (Edited), *Ibid.*, p. 507
2. Haq, M. E., *Muslim Bangla Sahitya*, Dacca, 1957, p. 86

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Bengal".[1] According to M.E. Haq, Serbāj's poem was written in the second half of the 17th century.[2]

Another important work on the same subject is *Gadāmallikā* by Sekh Sīdi who named his poem after the hero and the heroine. The date given for his poem is 1715.

In the 16th century, two romantic themes, based on Indian originals, were introduced into Bengali literature by Muslim poets. The first is the story of Prince Sundar and Princess Bidyā, and the earliest known poem by a Muslim poet on the subject is that of Sībirid Khān. Khān's poem, *Vidyāsundara*, does not record any date of composition; but S. Sen has concluded from internal evidence that it was composed in the 16th century.[3]

The adventurous love between a Prince called Sundar and a Princess called Bidyā ending in their happy union and marriage is the main subject of the story. The origin of this theme is not known with certainty. According to S. Sen, it was known in North-West India at an early date and was brought to Bengal by the Muslim conquerors with whom it was a popular subject. It was made popular in the courts of Muslim kings and chieftains by certain Sufi poets.[4] The story of *Vidyāsundara* became generally popular

1. The poet says in the introduction of his poem—"*Fakkarnāmā name ek kitāb āchila/ Pīrer prabhābe kichu pracār karila/*"
2. Haq, M.E., *op. cit.*, p. 258
3. Sen, S., *Bangla Sahityer Itihas* Vol. I (Second edition), Calcutta, 1948, p. 545
4. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, p. 81

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in Medieval Bengali literature and was adapted by a number of Hindu poets, the most famous of whom is Bhārat Candra Rāy whose poem on this subject was completed in 1753. At the hands of Hindu poets, however, the theme received a different treatment. The story, which to Muslim poets, was and still is a secular love-story was changed into a *Maṅgal Kāvya* relating to the goddess Kālikā. It was "transformed", S. Sen observes, "into a religious poem and a story of the glorification of a goddess".[1]

Sābirid's work which is not a religious poem has certain dramatic qualities. He calls his poem a *nāṭgī* i. e., lyric drama. The poem itself is not constructed as a play but its division into *pālās* has some functional purpose like the division of a play into acts and scenes. It is not difficult to imagine that some of the *pālās* could have been acted, as they probably were, by *yātrā* parties.

Madhumālatī poems embody the second Indian love-story which was introduced into Bengali by Muslim poets during the 16th century. The first poet was Mohāmmad Kabir. The introduction to his poem contains the following couplet : "This beautiful story was in Hindi and I have made ot it a pāñcāli in Bengali,"[2] He does not, however, give details of his source, beyond the statement that he came across it first in a Hindi version.

1. Sen, S., *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, Burdwan, 1951, p. 14
2. Text : "Ehi se Sundar kicchā Hinditē āchila/Des'ī bhāṣāy mui pāñcāli banila//"

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According to M. E. Haq, Kabir's poem was written between 1578 and 1583.[1]

It is the love-story of Manohar, Prince of the Kaṅgirā kingdom, who was brought to Madhumālatī, the Princess of Mahārā, the kingdom of the fairies. After a short meeting with the Princess, the Prince was carried back to his kingdom by the fairies while he was asleep. After many adventures and sufferings, the Prince found his beloved and married her.

The origin of this story is not known. It is believed to have originated in the court of Bhoja, an ancient King of India.[2] Works on this theme in Hindi are still extant, the best known being the 17th century compositions of Sekh Jumman and Sekh Manjhan. Mir Askari, a court poet of Aurangjeb, composed *Mihr o-Māā* in Persian on the same theme in 1655.[3] The story seems to have spread as far as Arakan, for mention is made of it by Daulat Kāji in his poem, *Satimaynālorcandrāni* ; and its popularity continued into the 18th and 19th centuries.[4]

The court of Arakan, which, according to S. Sen, spoke "a Tibeto-Burman language" came into close cultural contact with Bengal "early in the fifteenth century, when Narameikhla, the King of Arakan,

1. Haq, M. E., *op. cit.*, p. 97
2. Sharif, A. (Edited), *Muhammad Kabirbiracita Madhumalati*, 1960, Introduction, p. 'ca'
3. Sharif, A., *Ibid.*, pp. 'ja' and 'jha'
4. The most remarkable poets of the 18th century are Saker Mahmud and Saiad Hamja and those of the 19th century are Muhammad Cuhar and Gopinathdas.

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dispossessed by the King of Burma, came to Bengal and took refuge in the court of Gauḍ (1404). After a sojourn of many years he was helped by Jalaluddin, the Sultan of Bengal, to regain his throne (1430)."[1] It is possible that the King developed a liking for Bengali literature during his stay in Bengal and introduced it in his court when he went back to his kingdom. Gradually Bengali became the chief cultural language of Arakan and many poets cultivated Bengali literature in that court. The most distinguished of them are Daulat Kāji and Saiyad Ālāol both of whom wrote romances derived from Indian originals.

Daulat Kāji composed his only work, *Satīmaynālorcandrānī* some time between 1622 and 1638.[2] It was unfinished. He composed two-thirds of it and the rest was completed by Ālāol in 1659.[3] It is a story of Lor, a King of Gohārī, who was married happily to Maynā. After sometime he saw a portrait of Candrānī, the Princess of Moharā, and was attracted by her beauty. He went to Moharā and after facing many difficulties succeeded in securing the Princess as his wife. During Lor's absence, a rich young man, Chātan, had fallen in love with Maynā and engaged an old woman to seduce her. But, inspite of persistent efforts on the part of the old woman, Maynā remained faithful to her husband, and, ultimately, after a long

1. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 149
2. Ghosal, S. N., *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. 7.
3. Ghosal, S. N., *op. cit.*, p. 11.

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time of separation became re-united with him and the two wives lived happily together.

This romantic tale was current in the Maithili language and was popular in North and South Bihar as early as the 14th century. It was also current in Rājasthān. Daulat Kāji makes the following statement at the end of a eulogy to the King of Arakan.[1] "Sādhan composed poems in the Hindi *caupāi*. A number of people do not understand the gohāri dialect (*gohāri bhāṣā* is the language of the poet). Compose in the vernacular in *pāñcāli* metre, so that everyone will hear and understand and be glad. Then Kāji Daulat understood what he had been asked to do and composed the story of Maynā in *pāñcāli* metre." The work by Sādhan referred to was a Rājasthān poem the "manuscripts of which have come to light recently."[2]

Padmāvati is one of the many works of Ālāol. It was composed sometime between 1645 and 1652.[3] It is a long story of Nāg Sen, the King of Chitor, and of Padmāvatī, the Princess of Ceylon. The extraordinary beauty of Padmāvatī attracted Nāg Sen, who went to Ceylon as a *yogi* and by showing his prowess and skill won her hand in marriage. After sometime, a Tāntric scholar of the court of Nāg Sen was disgraced and

1. "Theta caupāiya doha kahila Sādhane/ Na bujhe gohāri bhāsā kona kona jane// Des'ībhāṣe kaha tāke pāñcālīr chande/ Sakale s'uniyā yena bujhaye sānande// Tabe Kāji-daulat bujhiya se ārati/ Pāñcālīr chande kahe Maynār bhāratī//"
2. Sen, S., *op.cit.*, pp. 150—51
3. Haq, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 247

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banished by him. He went to Delhi where he extolled the ravishing beauty of Padmāvatī to Ālauddin, the emperor, who asked Nāg Sen to send her to Delhi. This demand being refused, the emperor attacked Chitor, defeated Nāg Sen and took him to Delhi as a captive. But he escaped and got back to Chitor. During his absence, the King of Kumbhalaner attempted to seduce Padmāvatī. When Nāg Sen heard of it, he challenged him to a duel as a result of which Nāg Sen was mortally wounded and killed. Padmāvatī died a *satī* and was cremated with her husband on the same pyre. When Ālauddin entered Chitor with his army, the pyre was still burning and, hearing the news of the tragic end of Padmāvatī, he paid his homage before the pyre and returned to Delhi.

Ālāol adopted the story from a Hindi work, named *Padumāvat*, written in 1521 by Malik Muhammad Jaisī.[1]

The *Maṅgal Kāvya* type of poem has been described briefly in earlier pages.[2] It is true that the Muslim poets did not glorify gods and goddesses in quite the same way as the Hindu poets did. Differences of faith made this impossible. Nevertheless, they did endow Prophet Muhammad and his principal followers and certain saints with miraculous powers similar to those which characterise the various deities in the *Maṅgal Kāvyas*. The same intention to convert non-believers was also present.

1. Sen, D.C., *op. cit.*, p. 622
2. See pp. 19 and 20

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There is no doubt that this type of narrative poetry is a natural outgrowth of a mixed culture, born out of an environment in which the Hindus and the Muslims live side by side and in close relationship with one another. It is clear also that Muslim poets recognized the popularity and effectiveness of the *Maṅgal Kāvyas* and attempted to adapt them to their own purposes. M. E. Haq comments as follows : "It comprises popular stories of a mythical or semi-historical nature. Following a tradition of their own these were the Muslim answers to the Hindu myths. Inspired as they were by Hindu mythology, it must be said in fairness to these tales that they helped a great deal in the dissemination of Muslim culture in Bengal, carrying it almost to every home".[1] Like their Hindu counterparts, these religious narratives are very lengthy, and like them they became popular among the common people to whom they were sung. Some of them enjoy an importance among Bengali Muslims similar to that enjoyed among Hindus by the Bengali versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*.

The first poem which can be assigned to this category is the *Rasulvijaya* of Jainuddin, who lived at the court of Yusuf Shāh. The poem does not include the date of composition, but as the *bhaṇitās* make references to the poet's patron who ruled Bengal from 1474 to 1482, it is reasonable to assume that the poem was composed roughly during that period.

1. Haq, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 262

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The subject of *Rasulvijaya* is the heroism and often miraculous exploits of the Prophet of Islam. He wages war against the non-believers, defeats them and finally converts them to Islam. Many later poets composed *Rasulvijaya*, the most important of whom were Saiyad Sultān and Sābirid Khān in the 16th century, and Nasrullāh Khān and Shekh Cānd in the 17th century.

Two other poems by Saiyad Sultān, *Sabe Merāj* and *Nabībaṁśa*, introduced new themes into this type of poem—themes whose parallels can be found in the Hindu *Maṅgal Kāvyas*. The main story in *Sabe Merāj* concerns the ascent of the Prophet into the heavenly places. It contains a description of heaven and hell, and a number of dialogues between him and other prophets and the angels. The poem *Nabībaṁśa*, which some regard as the poet's greatest work, begins with a creation myth and ends with the birth of the Prophet of Islam. It is interesting to note that the Hindu gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, S'iva and Kṛṣṇa are presented as prophets of Allah. They receive their various scriptures from Allah and preach His religion. According to the poet, all the preachers of the great religions were prophets of Allah, but when in the course of time the religion they taught became corrupt Muhammad was sent with the Koran to preach the true religion. This theme was followed by Hāyāt Māmood, a poet of North Bengal, in *Ambiyā bāṇī* which was composed in 1758.

Many comparatively small works were written by Muslim poets on the legends of their religion. The following are worth mentioning : *Iblisnāmā* by Sultān

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is a story of Satan, his disobedience of Allah and his efforts to mislead human beings from the path of religion. *Nurnāma* by Sekh Parān and Mir Muhammad of the 17th century is a cosmogony, and *Kyāmatnāmā* of Shekh Cānd of the 17th century is an account of the doomsday. *Fatimāsuratnāmā* by Sekh Saboj, a poet of the late 17th century, is written on the model of the *Caṇḍīmaṅgal*. The principal character is Fātimā, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad who in character and action is reminiscent of the deity *Caṇḍī*.

Another type of religious legend is introduced in *Hānifā O Kayrā Parī*, a work attributed to Sābirid Khān of the 16th century, who was also the author of a *Vidyāsundar* poem. The hero of the poem, *Hanifa O Kayrā Pari*, is the son of Ali and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad. He is depicted as a great warrior and the poem consists mainly of a series of warlike exploits, many of them being campaigns against infidel Kings whom he defeated and converted to Islam. One important episode in this poem is Hanifā's campaign against a Princess named Jaigun whom he defeated, converted to Islam and finally married. Another episode is of the nature of a fairy story. Hānitā was carried away, one night, by a fairy, named Kayrā and transported to her Kingdom. Hānifā's father, Āli was informed of his son's abduction in a dream and went to his rescue. The Hānifā stories also form the subject of a work named *Hānifār Laḍāi* by Muhammad Khān, a 17th century poet. It was popular also with Muslim poets of the 18th century whose works are examined later.

Another legend, which also was destined to

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become popular, was introduced to a poem entitled *Āmirhāmjā*, which was composed by Ābdun Nabi in 1684. This is an excessively lengthy poem running into 80 cantos. The poet was proud of the length of his poem of which he boasts somewhat naively : "Not to speak of writing such a big work, people would even fear to read it".[1] The poem has many stories of adventures and battles, all of which are concerned with imaginary exploits of Hāmjā, the uncle of Prophet Muhammad. It is believed to be an adaptation of a Persian work, *Dāstān-i-Āmir Hāmjā*[2].

The mythological stories by Muslim poets are in most cases associated with historical names, though the stories themselves are by no means historical. This is, perhaps, due to the fact that the Muslims had contact with Persian, Arabic and Turkish literatures where the stories of the exploits of the great historical figures of their faith were recorded. Moreover, under the influence of the mythological works of the Hindus to which they were attracted, and which formed the cultural inheritance of many of their converts, the Muslim poets attempted to create new forms of art— narrative poems in which their historical heroes performed exploits similar to those of the mythological characters in the *Maṅgal Kāvyas*. Some of their great leaders took part in warlike exploits which were undoubtedly based on incidents in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Maṅgal Kāvyas*. In the mythological stories of the Muslim

1. Text : "Thākuk lekhibe keha paḍte lāge ḍar"
2. Haq, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 217

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poets we find that some characters are great warriors like Rāma of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or Bhīma and Arjuna of the *Mahābhārata*. They destroy their opponents ruthlessly as Rāma destroyed Rāvaṇa or the Pāṇḍavas destroyed the Kauravas. The main object of Rāma and the Pāṇḍavas was to suppress the evil-doers and to establish the reign of the true followers of the gods. The gods themselves appeared in the field of action and destroyed the wrong-doers. Rāma was himself a god and the Pāṇḍavas were the faithful followers of the god Kṛṣṇa who helped them actively to defeat their opponents who were considered evil, because they did not follow the doctrines of Kṛṣṇa. In the Hindu *Mahākāvyas* the intention of conversion is absent. The opponents of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa or the Pāṇḍavas were not converted after their defeat; rather they were treated as demons and sinners and were totally destroyed. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the religion of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* is *sanātana* or perennial and as such there was no scope for conversion.

In the *Maṅgal Kāvyas*, connected with local cults like those of Manasā or S'ītalā the followers of deities were also favoured by their respective deities to subjugate the non-believers. These deities were eager to establish their worship and they selected some agents who fought with their help and converted unbelievers to their faith. In *Manasāvijaya* of Bipradās Piplāi of the 15th century, we find that the deity, Manasā, even subjugated two Muslim Princes, Hāsān and Hosen, and compelled them to worship her.

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In the legends of Muslim poets we find the combination of both types of Hindu religious poems—*Mahākāvya* and *Maṅgal Kāvya*. In their poems the heroes were painted like the vigorous warriors of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* and they were helped directly or indirectly either by Allah or by His Prophet to establish His religion. The heroes were as zealous preachers as the heroes of *Maṅgal Kāvya*. They were eager to convert the people who did not follow their faith. In the poems of Muslim poets, it is, however, not clear whether the rivals of these heroes were Hindus or whether their place of action was India. The poets always mentioned the opponents of Muslim heroes as infidels or non-believers and for their place of residence or kingdom they used imaginary names without any relation to geography.

Historical Poems.

The next sub-category of narrative poems comprises works which have some claims to be historical; that is to say, they contain elements which can be shown to be historically true. The poets drew their materials from different sources, principally from India, the Islamic world as a whole and from Greece.

Some of the Indian materials drawn upon seem to have been taken from local memories and family chronicles. Noyājis Khān, a poet of the 17th century, whose descendants are still said to be living in the district of Chittagong[1], composed a work entitled

1. Husain, S. S. (Edited), *op.cit.*, p. 91

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Pāṭhānprasaṁsā. The poem, as the title suggests, attempts to detail the history of a certain Pathan who settled in the Chittagong district of Bengal where his descendants are still living, and whose family name is Adhu Khā.[1] The same poet wrote another work of the same type named *Joroyār Simha Kirti*. It sets forth the history of the family of a certain Joroyar Simha who lived in Dohājāri in the district of Chittagong. His family, now known as Hājāri *vaṁśa* is said to be still represented in Chittagong.[2] Though these works cannot with complete accuracy be described as *vaṁśāvalī* they do bear some resemblance to that type of literature.

Saiyad Sultān of the 16th century of whom mention has been made before[3] introduced a new subject into Bengali literature in a work, entitled, *Ofāt-i-Rasul*. This poem which is a small work of only 25 folios is a historical work. It records the last days of the life of Prophet Muhammad and the incidents connected with his death together with a short account of the three Caliphs who ruled after the death of the Prophet. The title suggests that this work may have been derived from an Arabic or Persian source of the same name. But as far as is known, no such work has yet been discovered. Sultān's poem is important in the history of Bengali literature because it was the first poem in Bengali on the theme of the death of the Prophet, a subject which

1. Haq, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 213
2. Haq, M. E., *Ibid.*, p. 214
3. See p. 38

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was developed by later poets in that branch of literature, known as *Maulud śarīf*. In the early decades of the 18th century Muhammad Ujir Āli composed a bulky work, named *Nasle Osmān Islāmābād* which has *Sāhnāmā* as its sub-title. This work has not yet been published but a study of the manuscript has been made by scholars who discount any claim for the poem to be truly historical. One of the scholars, S. S. Husain describes it as a "strange amalgamation of truths, half-truths and falsehoods".[1] The principal theme of the poem is an account of the descendants of Hajrat Osmān, the third Caliph of Islam. The poet alleges that Osmān's descendants came ultimately to settle in Chittagong, and that he himself was a member of that family. Such a claim has no sanction in history. His use of the term *Sāhnāmā* as the sub-title is interesting. It would seem to suggest that the poet felt that his own history, that is the settling of the Osmān family in Chittagong, was a work of importance comparable to that of the famous poem of the same name by the Persian poet, Firdausi. Ujir Āli started his work in 1714 and completed it in 1720.[2]

The history of the conquest of Alexander the Great and the stories about his wisdom were popular in Persian literature. Nijāmī Ganjā composed a poem, named *Iskandarnāmā* in Persian in 1191.[3] Another

1. Husain, S. S., *op. cit.*, p. 260
2. Husain, S. S., *Ibid.*, p. 262
3. Browne, E. G., *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol. II, Cambridge University, 1928, p. 401

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celebrated work on this subject in Persian literature is *Khirad-Nāmā-i-Sikāndar* (the book of wisdom of Alexander) by Mullā Nuruddin Abdur Rahmān Jāmī (1414-1492).[1] The former of these two works was translated into Bengali by the famous poet, Alaol. His poem, *Dārā Sekandarnāmā*, is a fairly literal translation of the Persian original. Compared to the poet's other works, it has less poetic quality and is of a descriptive type.[2] But it is important in Bengali literature as being the first work to introduce this subject. The stories of Alexander were popular in the courts of Arakan and Bengal. Alāol composed *Dārā Sekandarnāmā* at the request of Majlish Nabarāj, who was a Prince of Arakan.[3] In the middle of the 19th century, the King of Burdwan also commissioned the translation of *Iskandarnama* into Bengali.[4]

Ballads

The term, 'ballad', as the descriptive title of a particular branch of narrative literature in Bengali, was first applied by Dinesh Chandra Sen who collected a number of narrative poems from East Bengal, now East Pakistan. These poems he edited in both

1. Browne, E. G., *op,cit.*, Vol. III, p. 516
2. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I (2nd edition), Calcutta, 1948, p. 592
3. Sen, S., *Ibid.*, p. 590
4. Sen, S., *Ibid.*, p. 942

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Bengali and English between the years 1922 to 1932.[1] The term under which they were published in Bengali is *gītikā*. According to Sen, stories in verse, which he names ballads, were composed by both Hindu and Muslim poets. They seem, however, to have been lost from the Hindu tradition and preserved only in the Muslim tradition of Bengali literature. Sen comments as follows: "As the purists of Brahminic renaissance gradually imposed more and more stringent rules in regard to social morals, some of the finest of ballads breathing a refreshing air of freedom were condemned as unholy, and *Mahua, Kamala, Kajal, Rekha, Bhelua* and many other ballads of great poetic beauty and charm bore the ban of Brahminic canons and were expelled from Hindu homes. We owe their existence to Mohamedan "Gayans" who did not set a pin's fee at the angry look of the Brahmins".[2]

The ballads which were current in the area from which Sen obtained them contain many beautiful stories in verse. These stories are local and describe the joys and sorrows of ordinary people. The poets whose names are preserved in the *bhaṇitās* of the various poems, themselves belonged to the area where their works have been preserved and the

1. In English Dr. D. C. Sen edited *Eastern Bengal Ballads* in four volumes each having two parts. They were published by the University of Calcutta between 1923 and 1932. In Bengali he edited four volumes of *Purba-Banga Gitika* and two volumes of *Maimansingha Gitika* and they were published by the University of Calcutta between 1922 and 1932.
2. Sen, D. C., *Eastern Bengal Ballads*. Vol. IV, part I, University of Calcutta, 1932. p. XXVII,

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language in which they wrote was their own mother tongue and its use imparts to the poems a natural simplicity which is their chief charm. Nothing is known of the origin or the age of these ballads. Sen recorded them from the lips of local bards. It has been suggested, however, that they cover 'a period of about 300 years from the 16th century onwards".[1]

The heroes and heroines of the stories include both Hindus and Muslims and the social background that the stories describe is clearly one which rests upon a mixed culture. Many of these stories are not known from any other source; neither is it known whether the bards of East Pakistan have in their repertory other poems of a similar quality which Sen was unable to record.[2] They represent an important element in Bengali literature but being of local provenance and interest they stand apart from the main themes of Bengali literature. It is important, however, to make mention of them in this work which is concerned principally with literature in mixed diction, because they do not reflect in their vocabulary, grammar or syntax, any influence of the mixed diction which passed later under the title of Dobhāsī.

Lyrics.

No survey of the contribution of Muslim poets to Medieval Bengali literature would be complete

1, Sen, D. C., *op.cit.*, Vol. I, Calcutta University, 1923, 'Foreword' by Ronaldshay.

2. Recently, Bangla Ekademi, Dacca, has published a few volumes of collection of folk literature.

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without a mention of lyric poetry. But as lyric poetry contributes little to the subject of this work, its mention here will be brief. Lyric poetry by Muslim poets embraces Vaisnava songs, Sufi mystic songs, songs on *yoga* and Bāul songs.

It is important to notice that the Muslim poets entered so closely into the literary fashion of their day that many of them wrote songs on the *Rādhā-Krsna* theme and they wrote them in both Bengali and Brajabuli. Sukumar Sen, in his work, *A History of Brajabuli Literature*, mentions the names of a number of Muslim poets.[1] A fuller list is included in *Madhyayuger Bāiglā Kabitā*, a work by M. A. Hai and A. Sharif, published by the Univeristy of Dacca in 1961.[2] The Muslim contribution to the history of this theme goes back to the 16th century with such poets as Saikh Kabir, Murtajā and Saiyad Sultān, and according to M. E. Haq, possibly to Chānd Kāji in the 15th century.[3]

The earliest lyrics on Sufi themes appear to have been written by a poet, named Mujammil. His work *Sāyalināmā* is believed by M. E. Haq to have been

1. Sen, S., A *History of Brajabuli Literature*, Calcutta University, 1935, Chapter XXI.
2. In the foilowing works collection of Vaisnava songs composed by Muslim poets may be found : (a) Mallik, R. M. —*Musalman Vaisnava Kabi* (b) Sannyal, B. S. — *Musalman Vaisnava Kabi*, in 4 vols. Rajshahi, 1904-6 (c) Hai, M. A. (Edited), *Sahitya Patrika* Vol. IV, No. I, Dacca, 1961. In this *Patrika* Mr. A. Sharif has edited 402 songs composed by 82 Mulim poets.
3. Haq, M. E., op.cit., p. 70.

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composed in the middle of the 15th century.[1] It is apparently based upon an Arabic work, named *Ilmus Sāyāt*. The evidence for this is to be found in one of Mujammil's poems which contains the following couplet : "Everybody cannot understand Arabic. So I have written in Bengali *payār* so that all can understand".[2] Saiyed Sultān also composed a number of Sufi songs collected under two titles, *Jñānacautisā* and *Jñānapradipa* and there is a well-known collection named *Tālibnāmā* which is credited to a 17th century poet, named Saikh Cānd.

The only *yoga* poet of note seems to be Saiyad Murtaja, whose work, *Yoga Kalandar* is a lyric expression of *yoga* practice.

Muslim contributions to Bāul literature are considerable. The best known of the Bāul poets is Lālan Sāh, a Muslim who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries. The poet Tagore "had a high regard for him" and some of his songs "gave him great inspiration".[3] Lālan's songs have been collected and published by the University of Calcutta.[4] The big Bāul centre founded by Lālan Sāh is in Kustia, only a few miles from Silāidaha where Tagore spent an important part of his life.

1. Haq, M. E., *op.cit.*, p. 69
2. Text : "Ārbi bhāṣāy sabe nā bujhe kāraṇ/ Sabhāne bujhite kailu payār racan//".
3. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 992–93,
4. Das, M. and Mahapatra P. K. (edited), *Lalan Gitika*, Calcutta University, 1958. (462 songs have been collected in this work.)

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Instructive or Didactic Poems

The religion of the faithful Muslim is guided by many rules, some of which derived from the Koran itself, and others from later authorities. These rules which are systematically codified contain not only doctrinal teachings but also guidance for day-to-day living. They are obligatory on every orthodox believer.

Islam being a missionary religion spread over many countries where it came into contact with different social systems and different cultures. In Bengal, many Hindus and Buddhists were converted to Islam and, as could be expected in such circumstances, they imported some of their own customs and certain aspects of their own religion into the new faith. Orthodox teachers of Islam regarded these accretions as wrong and did their utmost to eradicate them. The Instructive poems embody the codified rules of Islam and were used in an attempt to purify the Islamic faith of extraneous pollution. This accounts for the very large number of so-called Instructive poems which were written, and it accounts also for their great and continuing currency. This category of writing must, therefore, be treated as a separate stream in Bengali literature. It may be divided, according to subject-matter, into two sections : (a) Poems based on the Islamic code of law ; (b) Poems based on non-Islamic and secular subjects.

The instruction contained in the first of the two sections embraces religion and the behaviour of

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men and women both as individuals and as members of society. The following subjects are commonly treated in the rules set forth. The birth of a child, the rules for providing it with a name, the method of education, marriage and divorce, daily prayers, the rules for washing different parts of the body, the manner in which prayer should be offered, rules governing fasting etc.. The rule book also teaches the benefit which accrues from reading the Koran and the dangers which follow from neglect of prayer. They range from statements on the futility of riches to advice against keeping dogs as pets. They lay down the whole range of moral and social duties together with the punishments to be awarded when any of them is violated. Extensive and socially important as these poems are undoubtedly considered to be, they have, however, little poetic quality and literary merit.

A number of Instructive poems have been issued under the title of *Nasihatnāmā* which can be translated as *Instructive poem*. The earliest extant work in this branch of literature is that of Afjāl Āli of the early 16th century.[1] A verse compilation of rules under the same title was issued by Sekh Parān in the 16th century. The poet himself states that his work is adapted from Persian : "This story was written in the Persian language. So I have written it in the Bengali language so that it could be understood".[2]

1. Haq, M. E., *op. cit.*, pp. 73-4
1. Text : Phārsi bhāṣe sei kathā āchila likhan/ Bāṅgla bhāṣāy kailum bujhite kāran//"

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Parāṇ's son, Sekh Muttâlib composed a large work within this branch of literature under the title of *Kifāvātul Musāllīn*. It is dated 1551-52. The popularity of this particular work may be gauged from the large number of manuscripts which are now extant, many of them being in the Dacca Univeristy library.[1] Ālāol contributed a work, named *Tohfā*, to this branch of literature in 1664. Ālāol states that his work is a translation from a Persian work of the same name which was composed by Yusuf Gadā in 1392.[2] A very long list of later poets could be drawn up but it is sufficient for our purpose to mention Ābdul Hākim and Hāyāt Mamud who wrote in the 17th and 18th centuries respectively.

Instructive poems on non-Islamic subjects cover a very wide range. The earliest known work is *Nīti-śāstra-vārtā* written by Mujammil in the 15th century. It covers subjects as diverse as earthquakes, lunar and solar eclipses, dreams, burning of houses, omens and auspicious signs and also the rules of *yoga* and the marks of a *yoginī*. Later works developing the subjects of *yoga* have been discovered, notably Sekh Cānd's *Hara-Gaurī-saṁvād* in the 17th century. In form this poem is a discourse delivered by the god S'iva to his spouse Gaurī. Translations from the Sanskrit *Hitopadeśa* have also been found. The earliest, that of Hāyāt Mamud in 1732-33, was, according to S. Sen, translated not from Sanskrit direct but from a Persian version of the Sanskrit

1, Husain, S. S., *op. cit.*, pp. 49-60, 62, 65, 193
2. Haq, M, E., *Ibid.*, p. 247

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poem.[1] *Satya-Kali-vivād-saṁvād* by Muhammad Khan is a symbolic poem with a moral purpose. Satya and Kali symbolise right and wrong. The theme of the poem which was composed in 1635 is the struggle between these two forces resulting in the victory of the former and the defeat of the latter.

It is interesting to note that from the 16th century onwards several poems were composed on *Rāgas* and *Tālas*. These works are little more than music manuals. They explain the different notes and comments on tunes and some of them quote from Sanskrit works on musicology. Perhaps the most important of these manuals are *Rāgnāmā* by Sekh Faijulla and *Rāgmāla* of Fajil Nāsir Muhammad which are assigned respectively to the 16th and 18th centuries.

Elegiac poems.

The final stream of literature which requires mention at this stage is that which passed under the popular title of *Marisiyā Sāhitya*, a term which may be translated as *elegiac*. Compositions of this type are almost exclusively confined to Muslim poets.[2] The principal theme of elegiac literature is of foreign origin. It is based on an historical event, namely

1. Sen, S, *op, cit.*, p. 860
2. So far only one Hindu poet is available who wrote poems on *Marisiya Sahitya* in the latter part of the 18th century. The poem is called *Imamayner Keccha* and its author is Radha Charan Gop. (See—*Islami Bangla Sahitya* by S. Sen, p. 49)

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the battle of Kārbālā which was fought in 683 A. D. between Imām Hosen and the army of Ejid, the second Caliph of the Umayyad dynasty.

The first elegiac poem known to us is *Jaynāler Cautisā* which was written by Sekh Faijullāh in the 16th century. It is a short poem and, as the title implies, records the lamentation of Jainal, the son of Imam Hosen who was killed in the battle of Karbala. The poem was named after a style of writing called *Cautisā* which is derived from the word *cautriś* which means thirtyfour. It is a kind of Middle Bengali poetry composed in praise of some deity or expressing personal feeling of grief or admiration of a hero or heroine, ordinarily made up of *payār* or *tripadī* metres, consisting of stanzas of 4 to 6 lines each. It consists of 34 stazas — each stanza commencing with a letter of Bengali alphabet reduced to 34 letters only in exclusion of those which cannot be used as an initial letter of a word. Another elegiac poem was written in the 16th century. It is the work of Daulat Ujir Bahrām Khān who has been mentioned above as the author of *Lāilā Majnu*. The title of his poem is *Karbāla Kāhini*. Muhammad Khān wrote a very lengthy elegiac poem, *Maktul Hosen* in 1645—46.[1] It has been suggested that Khān planned his work on the model of the Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata*. He divided it into cantos and the titles of two of his cantos, namely, *ādi* and *strī* are also to be found in the *Mahābhārata*. *Jaiganāma* or *Maharramparba* of Hāyāt Māmud is dated 1723.

1. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I (Second edition), Calcutta, 1948, p. 598

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Form and Style

The above summary makes it clear that there was a marked difference in the themes adopted by Hindu writers on the one hand and Muslim writers on the other. The form and language of the works of Muslim writers were not however appreciably different from those of their Hindu contemporaries. The Muslim poets unquestionably were influenced by the style and form of literature established in the Medieval period by the Hindu poets. Many of the poems bear descriptive titles which are clearly taken over from Hindu poetry. The use of the words *Vijaya* and *Pāñcālī* which are common among Hindu writers of *Mahākāvya* and *Maingal Kāvya* are found frequently in the titles of Muslim works.[1] At the same time they introduced a large number of titles from Persian. Others were based on the names of the hero and heroine, or on the name of the theme. Thus the titles, *Kecchā*[2] and *Nāmā*[3] in *Sikāndarnāmā* or *Nasihatnāmā* are after the Persian style. The title, *Lāilā Majnu* contains the name of the hero and hero-

1. Obviously Muslim poets named their poems *Rasulvijaya* after the names of Hindu poems, *Pandavavijaya* or *SriKrisnavijaya* : *Nabivamsa* after the Hindu poem, *Harivamsa* ; *Padmavatipancali* after the name of Hindu poems, *Bharatpancali* or *SriRamapancali*.
2. The word *kecchа* is a corrupted form of the Persian word qissa which means a thing, affair, business, history, tale, fable, narration etc., (*A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* by F. Steingass, Second impression, London, 1930, S. V. P. 924)
3. The word Nama is a corrupted form of the Persian word Namah, which means 'writing, letter, epistle, a history .....model, type 'etc., (F. Steingass, *Ibid.*, S. V.P. 1380)

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ine and a title like *Hapta Paykar* is based on the name of the theme.

There is evidence of the influence of Sanskrit literature in the works of Muslim poets. Perhaps the most striking of these is the inclusion in longer narrative poems of a type of composition known as *Bāramāsī*. This type of poems usually describes the sorrows of a lover from month to month throughout the twelve months of the year. The origin of the style is definitely Sanskrit and, according to S. Sen, such a poem "describes the joys or sorrows of a lady in company or in separation fron her lover during the twelve months of the year" and such compositions "are in reality a continuation of the tradition established by Kalidas's *Rtu-saṁhār*".[1] In Hindu poetry the *Baramāsī* is usally restricted to the lamentations of women. Muslim poets extended its scope to include the joys and sorrows of both men and women.

Both Hindu and Muslim poets employ the same metres in their narrative poetry, namely, *payār* and *tripadī*. The *payār* metre consists of rhymed couplets, each line of which consists of fourteen syllables. The cacsura normally falls at the end of the 8th syllable though positional variation is common. The two sections of the *payār* line are felt by Bengali critics to be quantitatively equal. The *tripadī* metre is a variation of *payār*. It too consists of rhyming couplets but each line is divided into three sections

1. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 18

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with a caesura after each. The first two sections in each line are linked by end rhyme. The greater part of narrative poetry was written in *payār* metre, *tripadī* being introduced as an occasional variation. One further feature of this type of literature is that each line is a complete unit and there is no run on from line to line or from couplet to couplet. An examination of metre alone would be insufficient to determine whether the poet was a Hindu or a Muslim.

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CHAPTER III

The First Occurrences of Mixed Diction In Middle Bengali Works.

It is clear from the previous chapter that the influence of Arabic and specially of Persian literature on the writers mentioned therein, was considerable. Many of the works of Muslim writers during the Medieval period were either translations or adaptations from Arabic or Persian works. In view of the use made of Perso-Arabic sources, it might be expected that the language used would reveal indebtedness to the languages of the originals. This, in fact, is not the case. The language employed by Muslim writers, in the Medieval Bengali period, is the traditional literary language of Bengal. The language of Muslim poets, in respect of both grammar and vocabulary, cannot be distinguished from that of contemporary Hindu poets. To express this fact in another way, it is impossible, from a study of language alone, to determine whether a writer was a Hindu or a Muslim. To such an extent did Muslim poets carry their adoption of the vocabulary and language forms which were current in Bengal in the Medieval period, that a number of poems by Muslim poets, written in the Brajabuli language, are still extant. This latter fact is the more surprising in view of the association of Brajabuli with the Vaiṣṇava cult in Hinduism.

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The influence of the spoken and literary languages of the Muslim rulers of Bengal did, however, make itself felt during the Medieval period. Though no work written by a Muslim poet reveals the influence of the ruler's language, the works of Hindu poets unquestionably do, and that from a comparatively early period. Though the dates of Medieval works cannot always be fixed with accuracy, and although existing manuscripts are frequently two to three hundred years later than the date of original composition, there is reason to believe that the influence of the new Muslim language was beginning to be reflected in Bengali literature not later than the end of the fifteenth century.

As far as is known at present, the first work which has preserved evidence of the influence of the language of Muslim rulers is the *Manasāvijaya* of Bipradās Piplāi which is generally accepted as belonging to the end of the 15th century. S. Sen gives the date 1495/96 for it.[1] Bipradās was a Hindu poet and a member of the Brahmin caste. He belonged to the district of 24-Pargannas in West Bengal.[2] The greater part of his long work is composed in the standard Bengali of the period, but, in *pālās* four and five, which contain descriptions of the court of a Muslim prince, Hasan, we find for the first time, a mixed diction consisting of Bengali and Perso-Arabic elements. The following short example is sufficient to illustrate the type of language used :

1. Sen, S. (Edited), *Vipradāsa's Manasā-vijaya*, Calcutta, 1953, Introduction, p. IV.
2. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal—Proceedings*, 1692, pp 193—97.

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Kāji majlis kari *Ketāb Korān* dhari
Khātāgulā tajbij kare/
soār peyādā kata *majudāt* śata śata
sadā pāe *hātiyar* dhare//
keha bā *julum* kare keha *gunā śire* dhare
ruju kari karaye *nechāb/*
jatek *chaiyad mollā* japayeta *bismillā*
sadā mukhe *kalimā Ketāb//*[A]

This passage contains a total of 40 words, 20 of which are Perso-Arabic. All 20 are loan-words and are nouns. There is one hybrid word, *khātāgulā*. It consists of two components : *khātā* and *gulā*. *Khātā* is a Persian word meaning 'crime' and *gulā* is a Bengali plural suffix. Another Persian word *śir*, meaning 'head' is inflected with the Bengali locative case inflection, *e*.

Kabikaṅkan Mukundarām, thd famous poet from Burdwan, West Bengal, composed his *Candimaṅgal* in 1589.[1] The poet was a Brahmin.[2] The passage quoted below is taken from a descriptive passage in which the poet is writing of the Muslim inhabitants in the kingdom of Kālaketu, the hero of the poem's first section.

A. Transiation = The Kaji declares the court in session, takes up the Koran and sacred books and begins to pass sentences. Hosts of soldiers, both cavalry and foot, and hundreds of attendants, all well-armed, stand by constantly. Some of the criminals had committed crimes of violence, others moral offences. He caused them to bow and passed sentence. Throughout the proceedings, all the Saiyads and Mollas repeated the name of Allah and recited from His scriptures.

1. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 126.
2. Sen, S., *Ibid.*, p. 123.

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āila caḍiyā *tāji* *saiyad maulana kāji*
khayrāte bir dey bāri/
puber paścim pāṭi bolaye *Hāsanhaṭi*
baise Kaliṅga deś chaḍi /
Phajar samaye uṭhi bichaye lohit paṭi
pāe beri karaye *nāmaj* /
solemāni mālā kare jape *pir pegambare*
pīrer mokāme dey sāj //
daś biś *berādare* basiya bicār kare
anudin *Ketāb Korān*
kehabā basiyā hāṭe *pīrer sirini* bāṭe
sāje bāje dagaḍ bis'ān //
baḍai *dānishanda* nājāne kapaṭ chanda
prāṇ gele *rojā* nāhi chāḍe /[B]

This passage contains a total of 68 words, 20 of which are Perso-Arabic loan-words. All 20 are nouns with the exception of *danishanda*, which is an adjective but is used here as a noun. There is one proper noun which is a hybrid, *Hāsanhāṭi*; *Hāsan* being an Arabic proper noun and *hāṭi* being the Bengali word for market-place. A number of loan-words bear Bengali case inflections, e. g. *khairāte*, *pirer* etc.

B. Translation = Saiyads, Maulanas and Kajis arrive on horse-back and are presented with houses by the prince (hero) who names the western part of the eastern zone of the city, Hasanhati. Tney settle there in preference to the Kingdom of Kalinga. They arise early each morning, spread the red mats and pray five times. They take 'solemani' rosary in their hands and repeat the names of saints and prophets, and they light candles at the tomb of the saint. Ten or twenty Muslims sit together all day long, discussing the scriptures and the Koran. Some sit in the market place and hand out sweetmeats from the shrine. At evening they play the pipes and drum. They are very wise and innocent of all deceit and will not break their fasts even on threat of death.

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The above two poets belong to the 15th-16th centuries and the examples quoted illustrate the nature of a mixed diction which consists of Perso-Arabic and Bengali elements. This mixed diction later came to be known as Dobhāsī, a term which will be employed hereafter. The condition of Dobhāsī, as found in the works of Bipradās and Mukundarām, marks the stage to which it has advanced by the end of the 16th century. The Perso-Arabic element is restricted to nouns only. Verbs, pronouns, and other vocabulary elements are those of standard Bengali. It will be noted also that the passages relate to social contacts in which Muslim characters play a prominent part. Dobhāsī was not used in contexts which were exclusively Hindu.

In 1663, a poem called *Satyapīrer pācālī* was composed by Dvija Giridhar of the district of Burdwan, West Bengal. He uses mixed diction in his dialogues between Satyapir, a Muslim[1] saint, and his disciple :—

prabandha kariyā *pīr* dvije kay *bāt*
tei baḍā dātā *kuch* karata *khayrāt*
tin *rojkā bhukhā mei khelāo kuch mujhe*
hām bahut doyā kariṅge s'una dātā *tujhe*
duniyākā bic me koi dātā *hyāy nāi*
ihā *khātir hogā terā* s'unaha gosāi//[c]

1. *Sahitya Parisat Patrika*, Part IV, Calcutta, 1320 B. S. (1913 A. D.).

C- Translation : The saint accosts the brahmin, saying courteously, "You are very generous. Please give me alms. I have eaten nothing for three days. Give me something to eat, I shall bless you, listen to me, generous man. You will be respected as the most generous man in the world, listen to me, respected sir."

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Out of a total of 39 words in this passage, 24 are of Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. Nouns include Perso-Arabic loans as well as Hindustani loans e.g. *duniyā* (Perso-Arabic), and *bāt* (Hindustani). An innovation in Dobhāsi can be found in this passage ; verbal and pronominal forms of Hindustani-origin are used side by side with verbs and pronouns of Bengali origin. These Hindustani verbs and pronouns are used deliberately, instead of their Bengali counterparts, which were available for the author's use, had he so desired. For example, Hindustani verbs, *karega hogā*, are used instead of their Bengali equivalents, *kariba*, *habe* ; and the Hindustani pronouns, *mei. mujhe*, *tujhe* are preferred to their Bengali forms, *ami*, *āmāke*, *toke*.

Kṛṣṇarām Dās, an inhabitant of Calcutta, wrote a poem called *Rāyamaṅgal* in the year 1686.[1] This poem is sprinkled with verses in mixed diction, especially in dialogues involving a Muslim saint :—

bemān kāpher tom besor kamjāt /
s'unare *āhāmak gidhī merī* ek *bāt //*
khāoke jāṅguli huyāke mātālā /
etabaḍā kadurāt deoe gāli gālā *//*
abhi nāi jānteho Baḍa Khā Gāji pīr /
khodāy mādār diyā duniyāku jāhir //[D]

1. Bhattacharya, S. N., *Kabi Krsnaramdaser Granthavali*, Calcutta University, 1958, p. 15

D. Translation : You are an irreligious infidel and a shameless bastard. Listen to me, you stupid vulgar man. You are intoxicated with opium and imagine yourself to be sufficiently important to abuse me. You do not realise yet, the Bada Kha Gaji is a saint. The whole world acknowledges that God has made him so.

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Out of a total of 31 words in this quotation, 26 are Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words, including the Hindustani verbal and pronominal forms, *khāoke* (Bengali — *khāiyā*), *huyāke* (Bengali — *haiyā*), *tom* (Bengali — *tumi*), *merī* (Bengali — *āmār*) etc.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century[1], Rāmeśvara Bhaṭṭācārya of the district of Midnapur, West Bengal, wrote a poem, called, *Satyapīrer Pācālī*. In the speech of a Muslim saint, he used a mixed diction :

jānā *geyā bāt bāoyā* jānā *geyā bāt* |
kāprāta leo bhālā āo merā sāt ||
jeota *Satyapīr merā* jeota *Satyapir* |
terā dukh dūr karo *tāo hām phakir* ||
esā kuch hunar bātāy diu toy |
kiyā piche sitāb khāyer khub *hoy* ||
Satyapīr pāo me ekidā karo *dil* |
saheb karegā terā niyat hāsil ||
āpse cālāy deo sirnikā mad |
kohi terā hukum karegā nāhi rad ||[E]

Out of a total of 60 words in this passage, 51 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. They include nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs and

1. *Bangla Ekademi Patrika*, Vol.I, No.I, Dacca, January, 1957.

E. Translation : I know about you, my son, I know about you. Be a good man, pack your things and come with me. My saint, Satyapir is a living saint. Satyapir is a living saint. I am a real ascetic if I can put an end to your sorrows. I shall teach you such things as will soon put you right, provided you use them. Focus your mind on the feet of Satyapir. He will give you your heart's desire. Institute the custom of *sirni* (distributing sweetmeats.) No one will dare oppose your order.

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adjectives. The title of the poem is itself a hybrid combination of three words : *satya*, a Bengali word, meaning *true* ; *pir*, a Persian word, meaning a *saint* ; and *pācāli*, another Bengali word, meaning a *narrative poem*, the whole being inflected by means of the Bengali genitive case suffix *-er*.

The date of Rāmāi Paṇḍit's *Śūnyapurāṇa* is uncertain. One of its sections, entitled, *Jālāli Kalimā*, describes an attack on Orissa by the Muslims. The Muslim King of Bengal, Shamsuddin Ilias Shah, established his authority in Orissa in the middle of the fourteenth century.[1] It is most likely that part of the poem was composed in the fourteenth century. However, the language of the extant text does not strike one as very old. It might have been changed in subsequent ages by the scribes. It contains some mixed diction of the type which was common in the 17th century, a fact which has not yet been taken into account when attempting to fix the date of the extant manuscripts.

kāhā jāteho Khonkār āṅgrākhā lāgāye gāy
śirme ṭopī terā
hātme churi terā
pāuṣ deke pāyl
hārām ki *ur*
kāhā hāllāl karegā
eta Bābu Rāmai gāy //[F]

1. Sarkar, J. N. (Sir), *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Dacca University, 1948, pp. 103–5.

F. Translation : Where are you going, Khonkar, all dressed up in your long shirt with a hat on your head, a knife in your hand and shoes on your feet ? He is going to slaughter some unlawful (animal) to make it lawful. Thus sings Babu Ramai.

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Out of a total of 25 words in this passage, 17 are either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani. These words include nouns, some bearing Hindustani inflections, such as *hātme* ; verbs, both finite and non-finite, such as *jāteho, deke* ; and adverbs, such as *kāhā*. It appears that in the 17th century the scope of the vocabulary of mixed diction had been enlarged by the use of Hindustani verbs, pronouns and nominal inflections.

Ghanarām Cakrabartī of the district of Burdwan, West Bengal, wrote *Dharmamaṅgal* in 1710.[1] He employs mixed diction in the description of Muslims :

mīr miyā mogal mahale dila *dāgā* /
bādī bale *Phatnābibi phupāy* khele bāghā//
ai ni *kharāpe* pāche āse anthapure /
dekhata bhāyā *Gāji Miā* bāghṭī kata dūre/
balite balite bāghā *dāgā* dila giyā /
lejṭā nācāye lamphe nāk sāṭ diyā //
bhaye *miyāganā* kata huṭāre hutāśe /
bobā hala *tobā tobā* keha keha trāśe /
hāmām ādam bā *khodāy kadam* /
hutāśe *ekidā* hārā haila *bedam* //[G]

1. Chattopadhyay, G. D. (Edited) *Sridharmamangal*, Calcutta, 1888. Introduction, p. 2.

G Translation : Mir, Miya and Mogal dashed into the house. Badi said, "Phatnabibi, a tiger has eaten uncle. Oh, the wicked creature is coming after me into the inner house. Have a look, brother Gaji Mia, and see how far away the tiger is." Even as she spoke, the tiger rushed into the room. It swished its tail and sprang about, breathing heavily. In fear and terror they all huddled together ; some, to their shame, lost their voice from sheer panic. Their excessive fear robbed them of their senses and they even forgot to turn to God who gave man birth.

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Out of a total of 60 words in this passage, 22 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. They include some nouns of which a few bear Bengali inflections, such as *mahale* and *phupāy*, one a plural suffix *miyāgaṇ*, an adverb, *bedam*, interjections, *tobā* *tobā* and a few adjectives.

In his book *Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās*, S. Sen, refers to Vidyāpati, a poet of the early 18th century and author of *Satya-Nārāyaṇer Pācāli* which contains frequent use of mixed diction.[1]

haiyā *bāndār bāndā* nuāiyā śir /
bandiba *Baḍa Khā Gāji pīr dastagīr* //
ekdile bandiba *Dardasta pīr* /
Baḍa Khā Gājire yei karila *jāhir* //[H]

Out of a total of 19 words in this quotation, 13 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. There are nouns, some of which bear Bengali inflections, such as *dile*, *Gājire* ; adverbs, *ekdil*, *jāhir*.

S´rīkaviballabha of the 24-Pargannas of West Bengal wrote *Satya-Nārāyaṇer Puthi* in 1715.[1] He uses mixed diction in the dialogues involving Satya-Nārāyaṇa, who is usually a Hindu deity but is here endowed with certain Muslim characteristics :

1. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 809-10

H. Translation : I, the slave of a slave, bow my head and salute Bada Kha Gaji who is a great saint. With sincerity I salute the saint Dardasta who revealed Bada Kha Gaji.

1. Karim, Munshi Abdul (Edited), *Satya Narayaner Puthi*, Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, Calcutta, 1915, Introduction, p. 2.

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sunaha *bemān* rājā *bāt* kāhu tore /
rākhyācha *golām merā* kiser *khātire* //
sāt hājārer *mārta* liyācha bhāḍāyā /
mahal bhitare nāce sāt śata nādyā //
hān hān kāṭ kāṭ kariyā *phukāre* /
rudhirer nadī bahe *mahal* bhitare //
tāmām sahare āg lāgāiyā dila /
jaru jāti māl mārtā jvalite lāgila //1

Out of a total of 44 words in this passage, 16 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. These include nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs.

Bhārat Candra Rāy, an important poet of the late Middle Bengali period, who lived in the pargana of Bhurśut in West Bengal, wrote his most important work, *Annadāmaṅgal* in 1752.[1] In this poem he makes frequent use of mixed diction :

Mānsiṁha yoḍhāte añjalī bandiyā māthe
kahe *jāhāpanā selāmat* /
Rāmjir kudrate mahim haila *phate*
kebal tomāri *kerāmat* //
hukum śāhānśāhi ār kichu nāhi cāhi
jer haila *nimakhārām* /

1. Translation : Listen, faithless King, to what I have to say to you. On what charge are you detaining my slave (?) You misappropriated seven thousand (rupees) from him. Seven hundred dancing girls dance in your palace. Slay ! Slay ! Kill ! Kill ! He shouts and a river of blood flows through the palace. He sets fire to the whole city. Women, property and wealth are caught in the flames.

1. Bandyopadhyay, B. N. and Das, S. K. (Edited), *Bharat Chandra Granthavali* (Second edition), Banglya Sahitya Parisat, Calcutta, 1950.

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golām golāmī kaila *jalim kayed* haila
bahāduri sāheber nām // [J]

Out of a total of 33 words in this passage, 17 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. These include nouns and adjectives. Some of them bear Bengali inflections, such as *kudrate*, *saheber*.

In his poem, *Annadāmaṅgal*, Bhārat Candra makes an important reference to the mixed diction which in this chapter has been designated as Dobhāṣi. The passage concerned is quoted in full :

Mānsimha Pādsār haila ye bāṇī /
ucit ye Phārsi Ārbi Hindustānī //
pariāchi ye mata barṇibāre pāri /
kintu se sakal loke bujhibāre bhāri //
nā rabe prasād guṇ nā habe rasāl /
ataeb a kahi bhāṣā yābani misāl //
prācīn paṇḍitgaṇ giyāchen kaye /
ye hok se hok bhāṣā kāvya ras laye /

Translation : The appropriate languages for a conversation between Mānsimha and the emperor (of Delhi) are Persian, Arabic and Hindustāni. Since I studied these languages, I could use them ; but they are difficult for people to understand. They lack grace and poetic quality. I have chosen, therefore, the mixed language of the Muslims.

J. Translation : Mansimha joining his hands together and raising them above his head said, "Accept my salute, O emperor ! By the grace of Rama, the battle has ended in victory. Yours alone is the glory. I desire nothing but Your Majesty's orders. The disloyal enemy has been destroyed. Your servants have done their duty, your enemy is imprisoned. Great is the name of the saheb.

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The ancient sages have declared : 'Any language may be used. The important thing is poetic quality'.

There is much information in this short passage. It may be analysed as follows. The court languages in vogue at the time were Persian and Arabic, the language of Islamic religion and culture and 'Hindustāni',[1] had gained considerable currency at the colloquial level as a popular town language. Bhārat Candra was proficient in all these three languages. His claim to proficiency can be substantiated from other sources. He deliberately avoided the use of any of these three languages though it would seem that they would have been appropriate in the context of his poem, because 'they are difficult for people to understand'. He therefore used a language which he describes as 'bhāsā yābani misāl'. The implication of his statement is that this language was easy for people to understand, and by people in this respect it is reasonable to presume that he meant both Hindus and Muslims. Bhārat Candra himself was a Hindu. His poem *Annadāmaṅgal* deals with a subject well-known in the context of Hindu culture. It is unlikely, therefore, that he would have used a language even to the limited extent to which, in fact, he used the mixed diction, if his Hindu readers

1. It is possible that by 'Hindustani' Bharat Candra means the language we now know as Urdu. This language was designated as "Moors" by N. B. Halhed who wrote some 20 years after the death of Bharat Candra. See Halhed, N. B., *A Grammar of the Bengal Language*, Hoogly, Bengal, 1778, Preface, p. XIII.

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could not have understood it. This subject is treated at greater length in a later chapter. But it is necessary at this stage to draw a limited conclusion.

The situation so far may, therefore, be summarised as follows. Mixed diction, or Dobhāṣi is found first in the works of Hindu poets, many of them Brahmins and all of them belonging to the western part of Bengal. It seems to have been developed in its literary aspects by them only. Contemporary Muslim poets, though they wrote on themes which belong to the culture of Islam and which are consequently quite different from the themes developed by Hindu poets, made no use of Dobhāṣi. Their works are written in the standard Bengali of the period except for a few excursions into Brajabuli. Bhārat Candra's statement has a further importance in its implication that Dobhāṣi had sufficient affinity to the language of current speech in the circle of his listeners—it has to be understood that his poem would be more frequently listened to than read from—to enable them to understand his narrative. When, therefore, the Muslim poets began to write in Dobhāṣi in the 18th century they were employing a form of language which had been established as a literary diction by Hindu poets over a period of some three hundred years, and which had also, in the century in which they began to adopt it, sufficiently strong affinities with the spoken language for at least a section of the people to understand it.

It is not irrelevant to note that Bhārat Candra's second reason for adopting Dobhāṣi was its literary

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potentiality. Dobhāṣī was to him a language which had 'poetic quality'.

The following chart contains a statistical analysis of the nature of Dobhāṣī from its earliest period as illustrated in the passages quoted above.

Statistical analysis of the words in the passages A to J

Date	Passage	Total no. of words	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani	Word Analysis			
				Noun	Pronoun	Verb	Adjective Adverb etc.
Before 1600	A	40	20	20			
	B	68	20	19			1
1600-1700	C	39	24	8	8	5	3
	D	31	26	12	2	5	7
	E	60	51	23	10	12	6
	F	25	17	9	4	3	1
After 1700	G	60	22	15			7
	H	19	13	10			3
	I	44	16	12	1	1	2
	J	33	17	15			2

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The chart makes it clear that, before 1600, the vocabulary of Dobhāṣī consisted, with the exception of a single adjective, of nouns. After 1600, words other than nouns begin to be represented. These include pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs etc. for which, as has been stated above, Bengali equivalents were available. The widest scatter of vocabulary element is to be found in *E* where, out of a total of 50 Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words, 28 are pronouns, verbs, adjectives etc. The process of utilising non-nominal elements does not, however, continue to increase after 1700. Three of the examples quoted contain only one instance of pronoun and verb, the others comparatively few. The reason for this apparent reversal of the trend of development is not easy to find. It may, however, be hazarded that it was not unaffected by political changes, changes in the relative status of the languages current in Bengal and the fact that in the 18th century Muslim poets themselves had begun to adopt Dobhāṣī as their own peculiar language and that, therefore, as a literary diction, it was slowly being accepted as the preserve of Muslim writers.

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CHAPTER IV

The Adoption of Dobhasi by Muslim Poets

It has been noted in the previous chapter that Dobhāṣī diction was first applied to literary composition by Hindu poets and that, before 1700, there was no evidence of its use by Muslim poets. In the 18th century, however, Muslim poets adopted Dobhāṣī diction as the language of a large number of poetical works and the practice continued through the 19th century. It would not be true, however, to infer that Dobhāṣī diction was from this time employed by all Muslim poets in all their writings. Many of them continued to write in the standard Bengali of the age and still do.

The first poet to use Dobhāṣī diction in his poetical writings was Fakir Garibullāh. He has to his credit five completed works and one incomplete, the latter being completed by another poet after his death. Because Garibullāh was the first Muslim poet to write in Dobhāṣī it is necessary to fix, as far as evidence permits, the main dates of his life and work.

Some of his works contain autobiographical references from which the following facts emerge: He was the eldest son of Sāh Dundi. His Father was a mendicant, 'Āllār phakir'. Perhaps the poet inherited his title 'phakir' from his father. It is not uncommon among the Muslims of Bengal for

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such titles to be passed down from generation to generation. Garibullāh was an inhabitant of Hāfijpur in Baliyā parganā in the district of Burdwan[1] in West Bengal. The poet did not mention the date of composition in any of his books, nor did he give the date of any incident in his life. Sukumar Sen has examined this problem variously at different times. His first conclusion was that Garibullah was still alive some 20 to 25 years before 1792 i. e., between 1767 and 1772.[2] He seems to base this conclusion on the fact that Saiyad Hāmjā completed Garibullāh's unfinished work in 1794-95, and that, therefore, Saiyad Hāmjā, who was still a young man at the time, could hardly have met Garibullāh earlier than some 20 to 25 years before. The second argument put forward by Sen is to the effect that certain references made to the political authorities in India indicate that British rule, at the time of writing, had not been firmly established in the country.[3] In another place, Sen states that Garibullāh "in all probability belonged to the early part of the eighteenth century."[4] It is unfortunate that Sen was not able to substantiate his contention that Garibullāh should be assigned to the early part of the eighteenth century.

1. This part of the district of Burdwan is now in the district of Hugli.
2. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, Second edition, Calcutta, 1948, p. 919
3. Sen, S., *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, Burdwan, 1951, p. 607
4. Sen. S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 157

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Muhammad Shahidullah says that one of Garibullāh's works, *Iūchaf Jelekhā*, was composed sometime after 1765 and that the poet was born in the early part of the 18th century.[1] Muhammad Enamul Haq says that the poet was possibly alive in the first part of the 17th century,[2] a suggestion which conflicts not only with the opinions of Sukumar Sen and Muhammad Shahidullah but also with the evidence cited below.

There is a passage in one of Garibullāh's works which helps us to establish his dates within broad limits. In *Iūchaf Jelekhā*, the poet refers to the political authorities in the country at the time: "May Allah grant peace and prosperity to the Emperor and his ministers. Grant that the faithful remain steadfast in their faith in thee, O Allah; preserve them from the torments of hell. Grant that the Rājā, his Deoān, Sikdār, Copdār and Ijārādār continue their rule and reign".[3]

The word *bādsā* refers to the emperor of Delhi. It is reasonable to assume that the word *deoān*, which means chief revenue officer, refers to an officer of the King of Burdwan. The poet himself was an inhabitant of Burdwan and could, therefore have been

1. *Masik Mohammadi*, Dacca, Kartik, 1361 B. S. (1954 A. D.)
2. Haq, M. E., *Muslim Bangla Sahitya*, Dacca, 1857, p. 224
3. Text: "Ãllātālā chālāmate rākhen bāds'āre/
cher chālāmate rākhe bādsār ujire //
dojakh ājāb haite tvarāo karatār /
imān bajāy rākha mamin sabāre //
bajāy chālāmat rākha rājār deoāne /
sikdār copdār ijārādār jane //"

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a tenant of the ruler. The *deoān* is described in the text as *rājār deoān* or the *deoān* of rājā. This description seems significant as the title, "Mahārāj Adhirāj Bāhādur", was bestowed on the ruler of Burdwan by the Emperor Shāh Alam a few years after 1753.[1] From that time the ruler of Burdwan was known locally as the 'rāiā'. As at the time of writing Garibullāh knew that the ruler's title was rājā, it may with reason be argued that he was alive and actually writing *Iūchaf-Jelekhā* some time after 1753. The passage quoted in the footnote cannot be assigned to a date earlier than that.

Another important evidence of date is found in another work by Garibullāh, *Āmirhāmjā*. The poet left this book incomplete and it may, therefore, be regarded as his last work, though complete evidence on this point is lacking. At the end of his composition Garibullāh pays respect to the ruler of the country in the following words : "Garib pays his deepest respects to his sovereign lord, Sāhā Nejām and says, 'thus far I write in accordance with the ketāb' (book)".[2] *Nejām* is the Bengali form of Najmud and refers to Najmud Daula, son of 'Mir Jafar' who succeeded his father as titular ruler of Bengal in 1765.[3] He reigned for about a year and died in 1766.[4] From this evidence it appears that Garibu-

1. Peterson, J. C. K., *Bengal District Gazetteers* – Burdwan, Calcutta, 1910, p, 31
2. Text : "Garib kahen Sāhā Nej āmer pāy /
   Ketāb māfik ettā dūre haila sāy //"
3. Smith, V. A., *The Oxford History of India*, Oxford, 1923, p. 500
4. Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. IX, London, 1876, p. 192

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llāh was alive in 1765-66, and was probably writing *Amirhāmjā* at that time. This argument is further strengthened by the fact that the couplet quoted is the final couplet in the part of the book written by Garibullāh, the rest of the work being completed by Saiyad Hāmjā who stated that he began his composition in 1793 and completed it in 1794.

Recently Golām Sāklāyen says in an article[1] that he has found a date of composition for one of Garibullāh's books, *Sonābhāner Puthi*, in the following words : "Fakir wrote in the afternoon of Monday in the Bengali month of Māgha in the year 1127".[2] The Bengali year 1127 in the month of Māgha corresponds to 1721 A. D. I am doubtful about the authenticity of this couplet. I have examined 15 printed copies of *Sonābhāner Puthi* in the British Museum, India Office Library and Cambridge University Library.[3] The dates of publication of these copies

1. *Bangla Ekademi Patrika*, Vol. V, No. 3, Dacca, 1962
2. 1127 sāler Bāṅglā Māgh māse /
   Sombār bād āchar Phakirete bhāṣe //"
3. There are two copies of *Sonabhaner Puthi* in the British Museum. Both of them are wrongly catalogued. The first one has been catalogued under the authorship of 'Fakir Al-Din' but in the title page of the book I found 'Adhin Fakir Kartrik biracita' i. e. composed by 'Adhin Fakir' which is used as a short name of Fakir Garibullah in *bhanitas* of his works, The second copy is also wrongly catalogued under the authorship of — Abd Al-wasi but in the title page I found the name of 'Sri Abdul Oyachen Munsi' recorded as the corrector and publisher of the book. I compared these two copies with other copies of *Sonabhaner Puthi*. I have no doubt that they were composed by Fakir Garibullah though published by different institutions. It is, however, not clear how the authorship of the book was wrongly catalogued.

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range between 1847 and 1924. All were published in Calcutta except the two latest copies which were published in Dacca in the years 1919 and 1924 respectively. The couplet quoted by Sukliyen in his article does not occur in any of these copies. The publication which contains the date quoted is stated by him to be dated Dacca, 1911. I have not been able to examine this text. It seems strange, however, that Sīklāyen's text should contain a date whereas none of the other fifteen does. It must also be taken into consideration that none of Garibullāh's other texts contains the date of composition. This uncorroborated statement cannot be ignored ; but, it would be dangerous to accept it, until we can be sure that the words quoted are not interpolations. It would also be necessary to enquire why Garibullāh, whose practice was not to date his works, should have done so in this single case, and that the date given should have been preserved in only one edition.

Though the evidence is scarce and difficult to interpret with certainty, it does seem to have been established that Garibullāh lived and wrote in the eighteenth century. If the dates cited above can be accepted the lower limit of his literary career is the early 18th century and the upper limit is 1765 and in view of the possibility that he left his work, *Āmirhāmjā*, incomplete in 1765, it is also possible that he died in that year or shortly after. Saiyad Hāmjā, the only other Dobhāṣī poet in the 18th century, wrote with respect of Garibullāh when he started work on the unfinished text of Garibullāh, as his predecessor and 'guru' or master. Thus there is every reason

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to believe that Garibullāh is the first poet in Dobhāṣī literature.

Garibullāh, therefore, is an innovator to the extent that he was the first Muslim poet to write in Dobhāṣī. The themes he wrote about, however, were those which had been developed by the earlier Muslim poets who wrote in Bengali. It is important to note that Garibullāh wrote entirely in Dobhāṣī. The only other 18th century Muslim poet who made use of Dobhāṣī 'wrote in standard Bengali.[1] His second work was the completion of the poem, *Āmir-hāmjā*, which had been left incomplete by Garibullāh. This is Saiyad Hāmjā's first compostion in Dobhāṣī. His two later works were both written in Dobhāṣi. It appears, therefore, that the Dobhāṣī literature of the 18th century belongs, entirely to Garibullāh and Saiyad Hāmjā.

The literary vogue, thus initiated, by these two poets, developed rapidly in the 19th century. In 1855 the Rev. J. Long, famous for his association with the translation of *Nīldarpaṇ*, published a catalogue of Dobhāṣī works written before that date.[2] He uses the title "Musalman Bengali Literature" to describe the catalogue he compiled. In the introduction to the catalogue he explains that the works listed were composed by Muslim

1. The first book of Hamja is *Madhumalatir Katha*, popularly called *Madhumalati*. A manuscript of the book has been preserved in the library of the India Office, London. It is a story of Prince Manohar and Princess Madhumalati. The theme of the work is romantic love.
2. Long, J., *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works*, Calcutta, 1855

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writers and published from "Musalman presses in Calcutta". He also stated that they had a "wide circulation", especially among the Musalman population. His list comprises a total of 41 works which he called "the principal books in this dialect". Unfortunately he gives neither the dates of composition nor the dates of publication of the works in his catalogue. His only statement on the subject of date is that the works listed consist of "books and pamphlets which have been issued from the press during the last sixty years", i. e., between 1795 and 1855. It is fair to assume that the majority of the works in Long's catalogue belong to the first half of the 19th century. That so many works were published within so short a time bears testimony to the strength of the vogue initiated by Garibullāh and Hāmjā.

The 41 works listed by Long in his catalogue can be classified in terms of the scheme set out in Chapter II, as follows :

(a)	Narrative poems	— 22
(b)	Lyric poems	— 1
(c)	Instructive or Didactic poems	— 17
(d)	Elegiac poem	— 1
	Total	— 41

Of the 41 works listed by Long, 24 are available in Libraries in England. In all, 290 such works are held in the British Museum, the India Office Library, the Library of the University of Cambridge and the Library of the School of Oriental and

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African Studies, University of London. The dates of publication range from 1846 to 1924 and the places of publication include principally Calcutta and Dacca.

The 290 works fall into the following categories :

(a)	Narrative poems —	132
(b)	Lyric poems —	9
(c)	Instructive or Didactic poems —	148
(d)	Elegiac poem —	1
	Total —	290

All these works have been examined but it has not been considered necessary to make detailed references to all of them. The best known and most representative specimens alone have been used as the basis of the detailed examination of subject-matter, style and language contained in later chapters. These representative specimens are the twenty-four works from the Rev. J. Long's catalogue which are available in England.

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CHAPTER V

Dobhasi Literature : Narrative Poetry.

The eighteenth century, so far as Dobhāṣi literature written by Muslim poets is concerned, belongs to two poets, Garibullāh aud Saiyad Hāmjā. It has been stated that they were not the first poet to write in Dobhāṣi, but they were the first Muslim poets to use that language. They were also the first poets to use Dobhāṣi as their principal language. Poets of the earlier centuries had made only occasional use of Dobhāṣi. Garibullāh and Hāmjā made only occasional use of standard Bengali, except that Hāmjā's first work was in standard Bengali.

Garibullāh has five completed and one incomplete work to his credit. The five completed works are :

(1) *Iuchaf-Jelekhā*	}	Narrative poems
(2) *Sonābhāner Puthi*		
(3) *Satyapirer Puthi*		
(4) *Iblichnāmā*	}	Didactic poem
(5) *Jaiganāmā, Moktāl-hochen.*	}	Elegiac poem

The incomplete work was *Āmirhāmjā*. To the credit of Saiyad Hāmjā are two individual works, i. e., works which are wholly his, and a partial work, namely, the completed portion of *Āmirhāmjā* commenced by Garibullāh. Garibullāh wrote in Dobhāṣi

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and only very occasionally in standard Bengali, but Saiyad Hāmjā wrote one work, *Madhumālatī*, in standard Bengali.

Saiyad Hāmjā's two Dobhāṣī works are :

(*1*) *Jaīguner Puthi*
(*2*) *Hātemtāi* } Narrative poems

All the Dobhāṣī writings of Garibullāh and Hāmjā fall within the category of narrative poems with the exception of *Jaṅganāmā* which is to be classified as an ęlegiac poem, and *Iblichnāmā* which is didactic. The themes adopted by these two poets, however, are not new. All of them had been worked over to a greater or lesser degree by earlier Muslim poets.

Iuchaf-Jelekhā

Garibullāh's *Iuchaf-Jelekhā* is a poetical romance. It was very popular and it is usually regarded as the finest example of the treatment of its themes in Dobhāṣī.[1] It is composed in the Bengali metres

1. There are eight copies of *Iuchaf-Jelekha* in the British Museum and India Office Library. The dates of publication of these copies range between 1867 and 1880 and they were published in Calcutta by different institutions. Two copies of *Iuchaf-Jelekha* published in Calcutta in 1876 and now held in the India Office Library have been wrongly catalogued under the authorship of 'Fakir Muhammad'. I compared them with other copies and found the *bhanita* of Fakir Garibullah ; the story, language and style are also the same as in the others. In the library of the University of Dacca there is a manuscript of *Iuchaf-Jelekha*. The date of the scribe of this manuscript is 1219 Hijra or 1800 A. D. [Husain, S. S. (Edited), *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts*, Dacca, p. 17]

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payār and *tripadi*. The whole work consists of approximately two thousand couplets. The edition of *Iuchaf-Jelekhā* summarised here is that printed and published by the Kamala Kanta Press in Calcutta in the Bengali era 1286—1879 A. D.

At the begining of his poem, *Iuchaf-Jelekha*, the poet pays his respects to Allah, Prophet Muhammad and his chief associates and also to his spiritual guide Baḍa Khā Gāji. In different parts of this poem Garibullāh states that he met Gāji who ordered him to compose the poem.[1] How the order was communicated to him is not clear. It may be that Gāji appeared to him in a dream but this information is not given to us. All that we know is that Gāji was a Muslim saint and the spiritual guide of Garibullāh.

In *Iuchaf-Jelekhā* the poet does not narrate the story as from himself, but through the mouth of Badar who himself was venerated as a saint.[2] Badar tells the love story of Iuchaf and Jelekhā to Gāji in order to prove the glory of asceticism, and to encourage him to be free from worldly illusions, and to accept the life of a 'fakir' or ascetic. Gāji is eager to hear the story and enthusiastically requests Badar to narrate it. Then Badar bows

1. *Iuchaf-Jelekha* = pp. 52, 56 and 59

2, In Bengal, especially in the East, Badar is still a very popular saint of rivers. Boatmen when sailing their boats invoke the name of Badar along with those of Allah and His Prophet. The formula of invocation is : "Allah nabī pāc pīr badar badar."

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his head to Allah and tells the story, the gist of which is as follows.

Hajrat Iyākub was a rich man who lived in the land of Kenān. He was a Prophet of Allah. He was a pious man and used to pray to Allah and read the Koran regularly. He had two wives and ten sons. His youngest wife, Rāhelā, had no child and was naturally very eager to have one. Her husband advised her to lead a pious life and pray to Allah for a child. She followed his advice, led a very restrained life and even gave up the habit of 'pān-guā', i.e., eating betel nut, and observed 'rojā' (fasting) and 'nāmāj' (prayer). Allah became very pleased with her and decided to award a very beautiful son to her. His name was Iuchaf.

Allah took the beauty from his own body and asked the angel Jibril to call all the creatures of the world so that he might bestow his beauty on them. Birds, beasts, fishes, crocodiles, serpents and all other creatures of the world rushed to Allah to receive his gift. The demons and angels began fighting over their share of the beauty to be bestowed by Allah. Allah divided his beauty into six parts of which he gave four parts to Iuchaf alone and two parts to the rest of the creatures of the world.

When Iuchaf was born he appeared so beautiful that even the sun and the moon became ashamed before him. Five years after his birth, Rāhelā gave birth to another son, who was named Emāni.

Iuchaf was very dearly loved by his father. One night, Iūchaf saw in a dream that eleven stars together with the sun and the moon were prostra-

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ting themselves before him. Hearing his dream his father told him that in future he would become a King and his eleven brothers would be his servants. He also asked him not to disclose his dream to his brothers. But a servant who heard Iyakub explain the dream told it to the brothers of Iuchaf. They became very jealous and one day took him from his father into a forest. They beat him cruelly and cast him into a dark pit and subsequently sold him to a merchant. When they returned home they reported to their father that a tiger had devoured him. Iyākub did not believe his sons and asked them to bring the tiger to him. They brought an old tiger from the forest, and when Iyākub accused the tiger of cruelty it spoke to him and proved its innocence. Then the angel Jibril came to Iyākub and told him that Iuchaf was alive and safe, but because Iyākub had failed to invoke the name of Ailah when he allowed his sons to take Iuchaf with them, he could not inform him where his son was.

Jelekhā was a young and very beautiful daughter of the King of Taimuch. She saw Iuchaf in a dream and fell in love with him. She became mad for him and refused to marry any person except him. When her father wanted to give her in marriage to Ājij, the Prime Minister of the King of Egypt, she refused. But Iuchaf asked her in a dream to marry Ājij and assured her that he would meet her through him. The angel Jibril also appeared before her in a dream and told her that Allah desired that she should marry Ājij, and that Allah would make him a eunuch so that they could never live together

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as man and wife. Jelekhā married him but when he went in to her he suddenly became a eunuch. So he built a new palace for his wife and allowed her to live separately.

The merchant in the meantime had taken Iuchaf to Egypt. When he was on his way he saw his face in a mirror and was charmed by his own beauty. Allah became angry with him and decided to punish him for his pride. When the merchant reached Egypt he took Iuchaf to a market place to be sold as a slave. His wonderful beauty created a sensation in the city. Men and women of every age rushed to see him. Jelekhā came on an elephant to see him. She recognised him as her lover whom she had met in her dreams. She persuaded her husband to buy him, and with the help of the angel Jibril, he was able to buy him at less than the highest price that was bid and gave him to his wife as a gift.

Jelekha's love for Iuchaf was one-sided. She tried to seduce him and attract him to her in various ways. But as she was the wife of his master, be would not respond. After long and persistent efforts Jelekhā became angry with Iuchaf, and accused him to her husband of attempting to violate her. Iuchaf proved his innocence through the agency of a child, who was only six months old. Ājij realised that his wife was trying to deceive him. So he took Iuchaf from her and kept him in his own palace. Jelekhā found no peace of mind without Iuchaf. She got him back from her husband and tried again to provoke him to love-making. In the city women were

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saying that Jelekhā had sought to seduce her slave and was a sinful woman. When Jelekhā heard of the rumours they were circulating about her, she invited them to a banquet at her palace. To each she gave a knife and a lemon and asked them to cut the fruit into pieces. When they were about to do so she ordered Iuchaf to present himself before them, and they were so amazed at his beauty that they cut their hands instead of the fruit.

Iuchaf's repeated refusals made Jelekhā furious and at last she had him sent to prison. Two young men, called Chīki and Bīki, were also in gaol with Iuchaf. They saw dreams which he interpreted for them. He explained to them that idol worship was wrong and advised them to accept the religion of Islam. They were convinced and converted. Iuchaf's interpretations of their dreams came true. Bīki was hanged, as Iuchaf said he would be, and Chīki was released and rewarded by the King. Seven years after this incident the King of Egypt also had a dream. He asked his wise people to explain its meaning, but they were unable to do so. Chīki then told the King about Iuchaf and his power to interpret dreams. The King called Iuchaf to his court and he explained the King's dream satisfactorily. Iuchaf was released and appointed Prime Minister of the Kingdom.

In the course of time Jelekhā's husband died and she spent all her great wealth in an attempt to win Iuchaf, but in vain. As she grew old she lost her health and with it her beauty and later became blind and insane. One day while Iuchaf

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was going hunting wild beasts, he met the unhappy Jelekhā in the street. He was moved at the sight of her condition. He converted her to Islam, took her from the street, prayed to Allah for her and all of a sudden she got back her health, beauty and youth. Now Iuchaf fell in love with her, but the more he was attracted the more Jelekhā feigned indifference. Finally, however, they were married and lived happily.

Now there was a severe famine in the country of Kenān and the brothers of Iuchaf came to buy grain from Egypt. Iuchaf recognised them. He first played a trick on them and imprisoned them but subsequently he disclosed his identity to them and persuaded them to bring his father to Egypt where he later settled. After some time Iuchaf became the King of Egypt. For forty long years he lived with Jelekhā as her husband and then died. She followed him very shortly afterwards.

Garibullāh repeatedly says in his poem that he derived his narrative from 'ketāb' i. e., a Persian work.[1] But he does not mention the name of the work he followed.

The basis of the story of Iuchaf-Jelekhā can be traced to the legends of the Jews in pre-Christian ages.[2] It finds distinct form in the Bible whence it was taken up in the Koran in the episode of 'Surātul Yusuf' which in the language of the Koran, is 'the most beautiful of stories'. In the Old Testament of

1. *Iuchaf-Jelekha*, pp. 1, 2, 11, 31, etc.
2. *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1953, pp. 646–48

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the Bible, in the first book of Moses commonly called Genesis, we find a more detailed and systematic history of Joseph and his predecessors. Joseph's father Jacob was a very wealthy man in Kenān. His youngest wife Rachel bore two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph saw dreams which were of such a nature as to make his ten step-brothers jealous of him. They took him to a forest, cast him into a dark empty pit and later sold him to a merchant. The merchant took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, 'an Officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guards'. Joseph was 'handsome and good looking' and his master's wife attempted to seduce him, but he refused her and in consequence he was thrown into gaol. The butler and the baker of the Pharaoh were also in the same prison. They each dreamt a dream and Joseph gave them a true interpretation of their dreams. The baker was hanged and the butler was restored to his previous post. The butler had promised to help Joseph to obtain his release from gaol, but he forgot his promise, and Joseph remained a prisoner. Two years later Pharaoh, the King of Egypt also saw a dream which none of his wise men could explain. Now the butler remembered Joseph and told the Pharaoh about his ability to interpret dreams. Joseph was summoned to the court, where he interpreted the dream of the Pharaoh, and he was, as a reward, appointed to a high post. After some time Joseph was reunited with his father and brothers and lived with them happily.

The story of Joseph's power in Egypt and the famine which resulted in his bringing his father and

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his brothers to live in Egypt is narrated in detail in the Bible. In the Koran and the poems based on the romance of Iuchaf-Jelekhā this part of the story is of comparatively minor importance. In the Bible Potiphar's wife finds no mention in the later part of the history of Joseph; whereas in the romances she is the heroine of the story and has as full a place in the whole treatment of the subject as has Joseph himself. It is significant of the difference between the Biblical and romantic accounts that the woman who attempts to seduce Joseph is given no personal name in the Bible. She is referred to only as Potiphar's wife. The story in the Koran is the shortest of the three accounts. It is worked out in far less detail than in the Bible and treatment of it differs essentially from that in the later romantic poems.

In the Bible Joseph is painted as a handsome man. In the Koran greater stress is placed on his physical beauty. There is in the Koran a story not found in the Bible to the effect that the women of Egypt were critical of the wife's passion for a slave. Hearing this rumour the prince's wife invited them to her house and gave a knife to each of them and ordered Iyusuf to appear before them. When they saw him they were amazed at his beauty and cut their hands instead of the fruit and exclaimed "Allah preserve us! This is no mortal but a gracious angel!" This episode appears in the romantic poems.

The names of the *dramatis personae* in the Bible, the Koran and Garibullāh's poem are, subject to linguistic changes, the same in all three versions with

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one exception. In the Bible the name of the captain of the guard is Potiphar, the name which occurs in the Koran is Ajij Meser. Garibullah follows the Koran and uses the name Ajij whom he makes Prime Minister of Egypt. The linguistic affinity between the following sets of names is obvious : Josep, Isuf, Iuchaf, Jacob, Iyākub ; Rachel, Rāhelā ; Benjamin, Emāni.

It appears that the story of Joseph in the Bible and of Iusuf in the Koran were developed as a romantic love-story first in Persian literature. "This legend" observed E.G. Browne, "greatly expanded and idealised from its original basis, has always been a favourite subject with the romantic poets of Persia and Turkey nor was Firdausi (as Dr. Ethe has pointed out) the first Persian poet to handle it, Abul Mu'ayyad of Balkh and Bakhtiāri of Ahwāz having both, according to one manuscript authority, already made it the subject of a poem."[1] Firdausi, the famous poet of the Persian epic, '*Sāhnāmā*', wrote a Masnavi on Iusaf-Jelekhā. The date of his poem is not recorded, "but the poem is the work of the author's old age. He died in 411 (1020-1 A.D.) or, according to others in 416 (1025-6 A.D.)".[2] After Firdausi the story was taken up by many Persian poets. "But of these renderings of the well-known tale Jami's deservedly holds the highest place, and on it his reputation largely rests."[3] This story was also very

1. Browne, E.G., *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge University, 1928, Vol. II, P. 146
2. Gibb, E.J.W., *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, London, 1902, Vol, II. P.146
3. Browne, E.G., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 522

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popular in the Turkish literature and many poets composed poems on the subject.[1] Like Jami's work on Iusaf-Jelekhā in the Persian language, the work of Hamd-Ullāh Chelebi was very popular in the Turkish language. He composed his poem "nine years later than Jami"[2] i.e., in 1491-92 A.D.

It has already been stated[3] that the story of Iuchaf and Jelekhā was introduced into Bengali literature some time between 1389 and 1409 by Sāh Mahammad Sagir. His work on this subject is a romantic love-story. The second poet who worked on this theme in Bengali literature was Abdul Hākim of the seventeenth century. Both of these poets wrote principally in the traditional Middle Bengali language. Garibullāh is, as far as can be traced, the third poet to take up this theme. After him many writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries wrote works on the same theme both in prose and poetry.[4] These later works are composed

1. Gibb, E.J.W., *Ibid.*, p.148-50
2. *Ibid.*, p.146
3. See chapter II, p. 25
4. The following principal works are avaiiable in the British Museum and India Office Library : (a) *Isaf-Jelekha* by Harimohan Karmaker, published in Calcutta in 1855. This is a prose work of 148 pages. In the preface of the work the author has said that he followed some Persian poem. (b) *Jelekha* by Abdul Latif, published in Calcutta in 1876. This is a prose work of 232 pages. In the preface the author says that he followed the Persian poem of Jami. (c) *Iusaf-Jelekha* by Dhirendra Nath Mitra, published in Calcutta in 1912. This is a three-act drama of 190 pages. In the introduction the author says that he followed the Persian poem of Jami. (d) *Prem-Sindhu* by Munshi Hafejullah Pandit, published in Rangpur in 1914. This is a poem of 263 pages. The poet says in an introduction that he followed the Persian poem of Jami. The Christian missionaries also wrote tracts with this story, but they followed the Bible. One such tract in prose is noteworthy. It is called *Josepher Itihas*, published by the Bible Translation Society, Calcutta in 1875.

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in standard Bengali of the time. Garibullāh's work therefore, is unique in that it is the only one known to have been written in Dobhāṣi, though, as is pointed out in another place[1], he made occasional use of standard Bengali in certain contexts.

Though Garibullāh's principal aim, as stated in the beginning of the poem, was to narrate the glory of religious philosophy and to propagate the idea of asceticism, his work is certainly not one of religious philosophy, nor can it be held that the reading is likely to promote thoughts of asceticism. It is also noteworthy that nothing is said in the poem proper about asceticism, and none of the characters is an ascetic.

As a work of literature Garibullāh's poem has a number of artistic features and literay merits which call for consideration in some detail.

The fatherly affection of Iyākub and his ever trembling heart for his tiny beloved son Iuchaf have been expressed with a fine delicacy. Though the step-brothers are presented as a group and are not individually differentiated, they are well presented. Their jealousy and passion for revenge are handled dramatically and the arguments they hold with the merchants at the time of selling their small brother are lively and convincing. The love of Jelekhā, her single-minded devotion to her lover and her agony at his refusal to consent to her advances are always moving. The poet, however, is objective in his depiction of her character. He does not raise the moral

1. See page 83.

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issue which is involved in her attitude towards Iuchaf, and at no point does he condemn her. He leaves the moral issue to be considered and decided by Jelekhā herself. At first Jelekhā appears in the poem as a beautiful and charming young girl of a rich and aristocratic family. She is very passionate by nature and is eager to satisfy her desires. Her husband being a eunuch had no charm for her. The beauty of Iuchaf attracted her and she wanted to gratify her youthful desires with him. She employed her wit, wealth and feminine charm in her many attempts to capture the heart of her lover. The repeated refusal of Iuchaf created anger and heart-burning in her, and she had him sent to prison on false charges. But when he was in prison she sent food and clothing for him and tried in every possible way to give him comfort there. The struggle between her desires and her moral sense is depicted with dramatic quality. She was unhappy when she was with Iuchaf because he would not gratify her desires, and more unhappy when he was separated from her and was sent to prison because she knew in her heart that he was innocent, and that she herself was responsible for his sufferings. The point is that though much that she did may be considered reprehensible she was genuinely in love with Iuchaf, and any suffering which he had to undergo was an even greater suffering to her. She had to suffer greatly and for a very long time, and one feels that at the end of her life her love for Iuchaf has been purged of the sensuality which marked her youthful attitude towards him.

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The character of Iuchaf is realistic and beautifully depicted. His natural sense of morality, his patience and the expression of his sympathy towards a devoted woman are convincingly expressed. Iuchaf, however, is not presented as a mortal without human weakness. Particularly dramatic is the scene in which the human in Iuchaf was on the point of surrendering to the seductive appeals of Jelekhā. He could resist no longer and would almost certainly have succumbed, had not he been sustained at the last minute, by that busy *deus ex machina*, Jibril. Iuchaf in the event did not yield to Jelekhā's entreaties, but the author was able to avoid presenting him as a prig or, in any way, as a self-righteous individual. It is not, therefore, a question of a conflict between a sensual female and a male who is above temptation. The story requires that Iuchaf be preserved from sin and it is to the credit of the poet that he was able to accommodate the demands of his material without presenting Iuchaf as something less than human. Throughout the poem, love is presented as a noble emotion, and though the interference of divine power is needed at various stages, one is left with the feeling that, sinful though Jelekhā might have been, love in her was much more than mere sensuality.

The real beauty of this poem is expressed where the poet conjures up the atmosphere of Bengal, his own country. It is interesting to note that, though the story is of Egyptian origin and has come into Bengal through Persian and Turkish sources, the Bengali poet naturalises it in his own locality, and

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gives it a local colour. The country-side is Bengal and his characters are Bengalis in their beliefs, customs, sense of values and dress. He has described the beauty of Jelekhā in a traditional Bengali manner. Her face is like the moon, her hair is like a peacock's feather, her eyes flutter like those of the 'Khañjan' bird, her lips are like the petals of lotus flower, her voice is as sweet as 'amṛta'. Her ornaments are Bengali. She toilets like Bengali girls. She uses 'añjan' (collyrium) in her eyes and rubs her face with the end of her 'sāḍī' and eats 'pānguā' (betelnut).

Jelekhā's emotional expressions are like those of traditional Bengali heroines. She expresses her feelings, whether of love or resentment, that undefinable mental condition the poets call either 'mān' or 'abhimān', in language which might have been used by Rādhā herself. The passage quoted below might easily have found a place in the Vaiṣṇava padāvalī :

e rūp mohan beśe chile tumi kon deśe
e rūp gaḍila kon janā /
hāsiyā pāgal kara bhuvan bhulāte pāra
varṇa jiniyā kācā sonā //
e rūp dekhite mati se ye keman yubatī
saṅge laha kariyā cheheli /
citta corā nām tor citta curi kaile mor
kul śīl sakali majāli //[1]

1. This beauty (of yours) in a charming guise, who created it and what country have you been living in ? Your smile drives me mad. You can charm the whole universe. Your colour surpasses that of fine gold. The sight of your beauty allures her and the young maid is overwrought (and she asks you) to accept her as your companion. You should be called thief of the heart because you have stolen my heart and destroyed all that I hold dear, my obedience to my family and my maidenly innocence.

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Jelekhā's intuitions are also like Bengali women's. When her husband proved to be a eunuch, he requested her to go back to her father's house, but she did not agree. Like a Bengali woman she thought people would blame her and that neighbours, friends and relatives would speak ill of her. She says to her husband :

āmi yāba bāper bāḍi śona diyā man/
sethāy āmāke loke karibe gañjan//
kutumba sākṣāte doṣ dibeka tāmām/
egānā begānā sab karibe badnām//[1]

Though she had no love for her husband still she preferred to live in his house.

The physical beauty of Iuchaf has also been described in the traditional Bengali way :

mukh niramal yena purṇimār śaśī/
bhomar guñjare yena dui cakṣe basi/
bhuru dui yoḍā yena kāmer kāmān/
sthala padma yena terā duṭi kān
ati kṣīṇ mājā yena sekāri bāghinī/
calan khañjan here bhole sab muni//
sugaṭhan matir mālā śarīr nirmal/
yubatī nā bāndhe man dite cāhe kol//[2]

1. Translation : Listen to me carefully. If I go to my father's house, people there will criticise me. They will all blame me in the presence of my family and relatives and strangers alike will all give me a bad name.
2. Translation : Your face is as bright as the full moon and your eyes are black as if bees are buzzing round them. Your eye-brows are like the bow of Kama and your ears like lotuses which grow on shore. Your waist is as slim as that of a prowling tigress. Your step is as light as a bird's and when they see it even sages forget all else. Your body is as perfect as a well-made string of pearls. A maid, therefore, cannot control herself and longs for your embrace.

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When Iuchaf was brought to Egypt by the merchant, the women of the city rushed to see him. They came out in the street in such a hurry that they omitted to complete their toilets. Some came with combs in their hands, some had darkened only one eye with collyrium and their 'sindur' (vermilion) decorations were incomplete ; some had a 'śaṅkha' in one hand and were holding golden bracelets in the other ; some had put 'nūpur' on one leg and were holding the other in their haṇd. This description is very similar to that of the women who rushed to see the beautiful hero, Sundar of Bhārat Candra's *Vidyāsundar* poem composed in 1752-53.[1] The date of composition of Garibullāh's *Iuchaf-Jelekhā* is not known with certainty. So it is not possible to say who followed whom. In this connection it should be remembered that both the poets belonged to the same district and were probably men of the same age.

When Jelekhā failed to attract Iuchaf to her, an old woman came to her and proposed to help her in her love-making with Iuchaf. She is an old and clever woman. She eats 'pānguā' (betelnut). She is well dressed and ornamented with the clothing and jewelry of medieval Bengal, like 'pāṭer sāḍī' (silken sāḍī), 'tārbālā' (golden bangle), 'bājubanda' (golden armlet), 'kācercuḍi' (glass bangle). She is toileted with 'sindur' (vermilion) and 'kājal' (collyrium). The poet has painted the old woman in

1. The greatest work of Bharat Candra is called *Annadamangal Kavya* which is divided into three parts. The second part is called *Vidya-sundar-upakhyan* or the story of Vidya and Sundar.

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a lively manner. Throughout Middle Bengali literature this type of character plays an important part in the sports of love. The earliest one 'Baṛāi, is found in *S'rikṛṣṇakirtana*, and the most popular one is 'Hirā', a character in Bharat Candra's *Vidyāsundar* poem.

In the story of Iuchaf-Jelekhā, women travel in palanquins. At the time of marriage, the bride Jelekhā was beautified like a Bengali bride. During the marriage ceremony 'sāringi', 'sitār', 'mṛdaṅga' and 'mandirā' were played. These musical instruments are peculiar to India. The peculiar Bengali food 'ḍālbhāt' were cooked in a pan called 'hāṛi' which is also a peculiar pan of Bengal. In the marriage festival cannon and guns were fired for pleasure. The story of the poem is based on pre-historic legends before gun-powder was invented.[1] The poet belonged to the eighteenth century when the custom of firing guns and cannon in social ceremonies was perhaps popular. Thus he has committed an anachronism in his poem. He committed a sim-

1. There is no solid and sufficient evidence on which one can pin down the invention of gunpowder to one man. It is generally believed that Berthold Schwartz, a German monk invented it some time in the early 14th century. "The first trustworthy document relative to the use of gunpowder in Europe" belongs to February 11, 1326. In India firearms were first used in 1526 in the "decisive battle of Panipat in which Ibrahim, Sultan of Delhi was killed and his army routed by Baber the Mogul, who possessed both great and small firearms." *The Encyclopaedia Brittanica*, Vol. XII, 11th edition, Cambridge, 1910, pp. 723—24,

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ilar mistake when he made Iuchaf convert his co-prisoners 'Chāki' and 'Baki' to Islam.[1]

The natural atmosphere painted in this poem is also Bengali. When Jelekhā went to the forest she saw peacocks dancing, heard 'kokils' singing and bees humming on the flowers. Like Rādhā her desire for union with her lover increased tremendously in this environment.

The similes and analogies in this poem are peculiar to the Bengali literature. The proverbs used in this poem give it a distinct local colouring. Some examples may be cited here - (a) 'vidyāy paṇḍit yena sarasvatī pār' (b) 'bhuru duṭi joḍa yena kāmer kāman' (c) 'mānuṣ balaha kibā paśu pakṣī ādi/ yauban nā rahe bāndhā janam abadhi//' (d) 'yeman karibe bhāi pābe āpnāy/ ropile bāblāgāch bel kothā pāy//' (e) 'jalahīn pukur paraśe kon jan// dhanahīn puruṣer nāhi thāke man//' etc.

There are certain features of the poem which are surprising and difficult to account for. The role of supernatural agents, their interference in the action of men and women of the story and the exaggeration of the poet are likely to strain the imagination of even a sympathetic reader. The angel Jibril appears frequently to Iyākub, Iuchaf and even to Jelekhā whenever they face difficult situations. When the step-brothers of Iuchaf sold him to a mer-

1. The religion of Islam was introduced and preached by Prophet Muhammad (570—632 A. D.) Iuchaf is a character of pre-Islamic age, and long before the birth of Prophet Muhammad and his religion.

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chant and gave a false statement to their father that a tiger had devoured him, Jibril came to Iyākub and told him that Iuchaf was alive and safe. Iyakub asked his sons to bring the tiger who had eaten Iuchaf. They brought it as if it were a sheep and more surprising still, the tiger spoke to Iyakub and proved his innocence. Jelekhā agreed to marry Ajiz, only when Jibril communciated to her the wish of Allah. Jelekhī's husband Ajiz became a eunuch because Allah did not want his union with Jelekhī. When the step-brothers of Iuchaf were beating him severely in the forest, the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, angels and fairies wept for his suffering. Iuchaf's price, as a very beautiful slave-boy, was high in the market of the city of Egypt, but Ajiz succeeded in buying him at a cheaper price with the help of Jibril though the angel did not show himself at the time. One day due to Jelekhī's persistent inducement, Iuchaf was almost going to submit to her desire. At that moment Jibril appeared and made Iuchaf cautious ; but Jelekhā neither saw him nor heard his voice. Iuchaf met old and blind Jelekhā in the street and within a moment she got back her youth, beauty and sight when he prayed to Allah for her.

The role of Allah is not insignificant in the development of the plot of *Iuchaf-Jelekhā*. Though he does not appear as do the deities of *Maṅgal Kāvyas*, he is in places depicted by the poet as spiteful and ready to wreak his own temper on human beings. The manner in which he is brought into the story is far from orthodox Muslim belief. Allah became displea-

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sed because Iyākub forgot to utter his name while he was allowing Iuchaf to go to the forest with his step-brothers, and for that fault he lost his beloved son. Iuchaf was proud of his beauty and for that reason Allah got displeased with him, and he had to suffer a lot for that. Thus Allah in this poem is malevolent even to his devout worshippers. The sufferings of Iyākub and Iuchaf are severe no doubt, but they are pre-arranged by Allah and for this reason, perhaps, they fail to draw the full sympathy of the reader. The poet imagined that Allah had a body and he took away beauty from his body to distribute it among his creatures. This can offend Muslims, because, according to the conceptions of Islam, Allah has no form, no shape or colour, and to imagine such qualities of Allah is utterly irreligious.

The story of the poem is pre-Islamic, but the characters of the story observe the religious duties of Islam. They read the Koran regularly, though historically, it did not come into being until the time of Prophet Muhammad who lived many centuries later than the historical counterparts of Iyākub and Iuchaf. They perform 'nāmāj' (ritual kneeling in prayer) and 'rojī' (ritual fasting) which are part of the religious duties prescribed for Muslims. This is a natural anachronism. The poet identified pre-Islamic pious people with pious Muslims.

One striking point of the attitude of the poet is that he is eager to convert people into Islam and to prove the falsehood of idol worship. This attitude of the poet has been expressed through the characters of his poem. The hero of the poem, Iuchaf

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convinces people of the wrongness of their idolatry and converts them to Islam whenever he gets the chance. While he was in prison 'Baki' and 'Chaki' requested him to explain their dreams. Before doing so Iuchaf convinced them of the falsehood of their idol worship, and converted them to Islam. Iuchaf also converted the old and wretched Jelekhā to Islam before he prayed to Allah for the restoration of her health and beauty.

Āmirhāmjār Puthi

The story of Āmir Hāmja is the second important traditional theme which was handled in Dobhāṣī in the 18th century. The *Āmirhāmjār Puthi*, which is a voluminous work of some 12,500 couplets, is the work of Fakir Garibullāh, who wrote the first 4,500 couplets approximately, and of Saiyad Hāmjā who completed the poem after the death of Fakir Garibullāh. The version of the poem on which this examination is based is that published in 1878.[1] by the Bidyaratna Press in Calcutta. Garibullāh,

1. There are eleven printed copies of *Amirhamjar Puthi* in the British Museum and in the India Office library. The dates of publication of these copies range from 1867 to 1886. They were published in Calcutta by different Institutions. There are two manuscripts of this work in the library of the University of Dacca, East Pakistan (See *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts*, translated by S. S. Husain, Dacca, 1960, pp. 4 and 10). The second manuscript is written in Arabic characters. Another manuscript of *Amirhamjar*

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as was his custom, recorded no date for his part of composition, but Hāmjā's part is precisely dated. He states in the poem that he had almost completed work in 1793 (Māgh 1199 B.S.), but was held up for want of an original work which he needed to refer to, and that in consequence he was unable to finish writing until 1794 (1201 B.S.). The work consists of a series of episodes setting forth the warlike exploits of the hero, Āmir Hāmjā ; and the gist of it is as follows.

Abdul Matleb, a pious man of Makkā in the country of Arabia was the predecessor of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. He prayed to the Lord for a son, and eventually his prayer was granted. The son, who was named Āmir Hāmjā, was the uncle of Muhammad, being born before him and in the same branch of the family. He became a great warrior and destroyed many infidels (*kafer*). In the beginning of the work, after describing the birth of Hāmjā, the poet gave a catalogue of the wars he fought : Hāmjā, fought, defeated and converted to Islam the infidel Kings, Makbel Halabi, Manjer Sāh of Emen, Hossām and Ommar Mādi. Hearing of his heroism Naoserā, the King of Madinā sent him an invitation which Hāmjā accepted. The daughter of

Puthi copied in Persian characters was exhibited at the monthly general meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal on 2nd November, 1925, by Khan Sahib Abdul Wali who wrote an article under 'the title, '*A Bengali Book written in Persian Script*', which was published in the Journal of the Society in the same year. In this article he said that the manuscript was probably copied 'some time before the Indian Mutiny of 1857'. (See *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, Vol.XXI, Caicutta, 1925).

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Naoserā fell in love with him and one day a royal guard saw him meeting secretly with the princess. Hāmjā fled to his home but his conduct made Naoserā his enemy and he was subsequently involved in many battles with him. At this point the poet presents the history of the family of Naoserā.

There was a King in the city of Madinā called Kobād. His minister, Baktajāmāl, killed his friend Ālkas. In course of time Bojarce Meher, the posthumous son of Ālkas became a great and learned man. He could describe the secret thoughts of the human mind, reveal the unknown past and predict the future. He developed this capacity by studying a book, called Jāmāsā, composed by Fālātun, a physician. Once the King had a dream. All the wise men of his Kingdom failed to interpret it. Bojarce Meher promised to give a satisfactory explanation to it if the King punished the assassin of his father. The King agreed and he pointed out Baktajāmāl as his father's assassin. The King sentenced him to death and appointed Bojarce Meher as minister in his stead. After some time a son was born to the King and named Naoserā. By the order of the King, Bojarce Meher drew up a *tālenāmā*, a sort of horoscope of the child, in which he predicted that Naoserā would be a great warrior and King of seven countries. He also prophesied that a great warrior, named Hāmjā, would be born in a city of Arabia who would conquer Naoserā's Kingdom and would destroy his prestige. Hearing this, the King ordered him to kill Hāmjā as soon as he was born. Bojarce Meher saw in his secret

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book that Hāmjā would live for 198 years and would destroy many infidels. He had great respect for him; so he did not kill him but helped his parents financially so that the child could grow in health and comfort.

After the death of Kobād, his son, Naoserā, became the King of Madinā. His daughter, Mehernegār, who was very beautiful, fell in love with Hāmjā from the accounts of his fame which she had been told.

One day, while Hāmjā was playing with his friend and classmate, Ommar Ummaiyā, who knew jugglery, they suddenly came across a horse 'as big as a mountain' which had previously belonged to the prophet Ishāk. Hāmjā also found two swords, called 'Cham Chām' and 'Kam Kām' respectively, in a magic house in the garden. From then on, he used this horse and the two swords in his many battles. He defeated many kings and warriors and converted them to his faith, Islam. Hearing the fame of his heroism, Ommar Mādi of Karob city, who ruled over half of Arabia, invited him to join his army. Hāmjā, in reply, asked him to accept Islam and to 'give-up idol worship'. Ommar refused, whereupon Hāmjā attacked him, defeated him and converted him to Islam 'along with his 44 brothers'.

By this time King Naoserā had become thoroughly alarmed by the stories he had heard of the heroism of Hāmjā. So he deemed it politic to invite him to his palace. Hāmjā accepted the invitation and went, but his visit did not open propitiously, for he was insulted by the King's son, Kobād, and one of his friends. In the meantime, however, he had met

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Mehernegār, Naoserā's daughter, with whom he exchanged rings, though not until he had converted her to Islam. One of the royal guards saw the exchange of rings and immediately informed the King. Hāmjā was obliged to flee. He was pursued by Kobād and the army of the King ; and in the battle that followed, he was entirely successful. We are told that fifty-two thousand soldiers of Naoserā's army were slain. Naoserā renewed his invitation to Hāmjā, and promised him the hand of his daughter in marriage on condition that he first killed Landor, the nephew of the King of Sarandip, who was a great warrior and who was threatening his Kingdom. Hāmjā agreed, but before he left for Sarandip he met the sage Bojarce Meher who asked him into his house. While he was there, the hero was drugged by Bojarce Meher, who, while he was still unconscious, injected some substance known a *Jahar mahrā* into his arm. The effect of the injection was to render the hero immune to poison. This was fortunate, for, after passing through many hazards and dangers on the way to Sarandip, King Gostahām administered poison to him in his food. Thus the timely intervention of Bojarce Meher saved Hāmjā's life, who after he had recovered from the shock proceeded to defeat Prince Landor and converted him to Islam. Naoserā did not honour his promise as he had in the meanwhile invited Ādich, King of Eunan, to marry his daughter.

The princess, however, was not left resourseless. The prophet Ibrahim appeared to her in a dream and advised her to write to Hāmjā and suggest to

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him that he should dig a tunnel into her apartments in the palace. To ensure that the tunnel was built Allah ordered his angels to go to the assistance of Hāmjā and dig the tunnel for him. It was completed just in time, for Hāmjā emerged in the princess's apartments on the very night fixed for her marriage to Ādich. The couple eloped together and fled to Hāmjī's home where they were married.

Ādich drew out his army and pursued Hāmjā, but he was defeated and forcibly converted to Islam. On his way back from the field of battle, Hāmjā met a cowherd who was in love with the daughter of the headman of his village. She returned his affection but the father had forbidden the marriage. Hāmjā hearing the story had pity on the young man ; whereupon he converted the cowherd, the headman and his family and all the village to Islam, and gave the girl to the cowherd in marriage.

Naoserā, now feeling that discretion was the better part of valour, proceeded to Makkā where he paid his respects to Hāmjī. Once he had made his peace, Naoserā invited Hāmjī to attack the King of Rome. Accordingly, Hāmjā went to Rome, overthrew the King and converted him to Islam. On his return Hāmjā went by way of Egypt in order to collect certain revenues which were due to him. There, however, he was captured by the Egyptian monarch who ordered him to be poisoned. The report that Hāmjā was dead soon spread to Madinā to the great joy of Naoserā and his ministers, and

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Naoserā immediately asked Jepin Bādśāh to marry his daughter.

The prophet Ibrahim asked Johra, the daughter of the King of Egypt in a dream to help Hāmjā and to accept Islam. She embraced Islam and helped Hāmjā to be free. Hāmjā defeated the King and asked him to accept Islam. He refused and was killed by his daughter, Johra. Hāmjā gave the Kingdom to Nachir, younger brother of the King, and at his earnest request married his daughter.

Hāmjā returned home and fought Jepin. He was wounded in the battle-field and after his recovery he received help from a fairy King, Arjāk, of the fairy land, called Sāhārasthān. Arjak had been suckled by the mother of Hāmjā in his child-hood. With the help of Ārjak he defeated Jepin who fled from the battlefield. Soon after this battle, the King Ārjāk was dethroned by a demon called Āfrit. Hāmjā went to fight the demon. He was carried by the fairies through the air to Sāhārasthān. He said to his friends that he would return home after 18 days, but he did not take the name of Allah and for this fault of his he had to face many difficulties, and to stay there for 18 years instead of 18 days.

Hāmjā's people at home were worried at his long absence. Bojarce Meher came to know 'from his secret book' the secret of his delay in Sāhārasthān. He advised the people to go to a fort called Tanjā and live there till Hāmjā returned.

Hāmjā at last defeated the demon, recovered the Kingdom for Ārjāk who rewarded him with a cap and a whip. The King had received the cap 'from pro-

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phet Cholemān'. It had the wonderful property of making anybody who wore it invisible. Hāmjā married Tārā, daughter of the King of the fairy land and lived with her. She bore him a daughter named Kurchi. One day he remembered Meher-negār and spoke about her to Tārā. She became jealous and rebuked him for allowing separation from a human being to cause him pain. Hāmjā got angry with her and left the place for home.

On his way home Hāmjā met Khoaj Khejer, a saint, who became his spiritual guide. The saint told him the story of the Prophet Muhammad's birth and described his glory. He then asked him to go to the country of the demons to fight them and to convert them to Islam. Hāmjā fought with them for a long time. In course of his fight he was captured by a demon chief who kept him on the top of a hill. A giant bird called 'chimorg' rescued him from there. Hāmjā permitted one of the defeated demons to marry a fairy who bore a horse to him called Āskar. The horse-son of the demon killed his father when he heard him conspiring to kill Hāmjā. Āskar then went to Hāmjā to offer his service. Khoaj shod the horse and told Hāmjā that he would die the day the horse lost a shoe. On his way home Hāmjā met Chāfā bibi, sister of Khoaj Khejer and a woman saint who helped him to cross seven very dangerous rivers. After 18 long years he at last came back to his country and met his family and people in the fort of Tanjā.

When Naoserā heard that Hāmjā had come back he became afraid, because during his absence

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he had acted with enmity against his people. His clever minister, Baktāk, advised him to make friendship with the King of the city of Damask, whose name was Hamum and whom he declared to be as dangerous as the angel of death. He also commanded a large and powerful army.

This marks the end of the part of the poem which was written by Fakir Garibullāh.

' Saiyad Hāmjī took up the poem where Garibullāh had left off. At the beginning of his composition he paid respect and tribute to his predecessor in the following words : "He is the friend of Allah ; his name is Garibullāh. His home is in Bāliyā Hāfejpur. His heart was enlightened and his tongue was mellifluous in his verses. Bara Khā Gāji helped him. He wrote the book *Āmir hāmjā* in verse. The book he was following was incomplete. If he had had the complete book, he would have strung a garland of poetry like a string of pearls. When people read or hear how far he has strung the garland of poetry, they are enchanted. Those who have heard the first part of the story, are eager to hear the end of it. They say that they do not know what happened in the end. Where and with whom did Amir Hāmjā fight ? People enquire here and there, but no one has attempted to complete the tale. There are plenty of learned, capable and artistic people but none of them has tried to complete it. When I saw how eager people were for it, I, too, wondered how the book could be completed. Their request became insistent. I could not disappoint them. A desire to write poetry came upon me. I am

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extremely ignorant. I do not know anything. How am I to complete the story in verse ? I could not, however, disappoint people. That is why I started to write verse. I crave your indulgence for my clumsiness, O my predecessor. Your forgiveness lends life to my lines. Sāhā Garibullāh is the master of verses and my 'pīr' (admitted superior) ; his poetry is much acclaimed. My poetry is inferior to his ; it conveys only the outline of the tale. On his part, Sāhā Garibullāh has presented the battles of Āmir, henceforward Hāmjā, the slave of Hāmjā, relates the battles of that high-born man".

Saiyad Hāmjā began his story with the description of the physical size and strength of the giant King Hamum. His body was 252 feet tall, and he wielded a club 56,000 pounds in weight. Once he stood on two bricks of gold and 40 great warriors caught hold of one of his legs. Then he shook his leg and hurled them off. Hāmjā invited Hamum to accept the religion of prophet Ibrāhim, but he refused. A furious battle followed. Ommar Eunāni, a son of Hāmjā, whom the daughter of the King of Egypt bore to him, came to help his father and ultimately Hamum was defeated. Returning from his victory over Hamum, Hāmjā attacked the capital of Jepin, who fled from the field. His palace was plundered by the men of Hāmjā, who captured the women they found there and married them.

Hāmjā's campaigns continued for ages. He defeated the infidel Kings one after another and either converted them to his faith or killed them if they refused to accept it. Once while his men were

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engaged in a battle, Jepin tried to capture his beloved wife, Mehernegār. She resisted him and was wounded and killed. Hāmjā became mad with grief. Life lost all charm for him. The prophet Ibrāhim appeared to him in a dream, and tried to convince him that it was shameful to refuse the call of life for a woman, but he did not agree and devoted himself to the service of her grave, and became a mendicant ('fakir'). His people were very distressed to see his condition, but Bojarche Meher assured them that Hāmjā would recover from his grief and become normal again after 40 days. And so did he become.

Forty days after the death of Mehernegār, Hāmjā returned to his normal state of mind and resumed his fights with the infidel Kings. In some of the battles he was captured by the infidel Kings but he was always set free by their daughters or sisters who loved him and whom he married mostly after winning the battles. He suffered most when he was captured by Kaych, King of the city of Ujānī, because he did not agree to commit adultery with princess Auraṅgi who tried to seduce him.

One of his remarkable campaigns was against a woman warrior, called Gilsoār. She was the daughter of Ganjā, King of the city of Gilāl. After a furious battle she was defeated and married him. Hāmjā fought another remarkable battle against a 'firingī' chief, called Marjuk. He was 270 feet tall and had 70 sons and grandsons, each of them being 120 to 150 feet tall. Hāmjā defeated them and converted them all to his faith.

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King Naoserā, however, had not forsaken his enmity against Hāmjā. He took refuge in the courts of the infidel Kings, one after another, and when Hāmjā defeated them he fled to yet another. At last he became so distressed that he had to earn his bread by his own physical labour. Once Hāmjā found him working in a forest. He took pity on him, brought him to his tent, treated him with respect, and sent him back to his capital. The King gave Hāmjā his younger daughter, Meher Afjun, in marriage.

Naoserā's cunning minister, Baktāk, died and Bojarce Meher was held responsible for his death and sentenced to lose his sight. With the help of Hāmjā, Bojarce Meher went to 'Makkā' to get a blessing from Muhammad, who at the time was only 40 days old. Bojarce Meher took the dust from his feet and and rubbed it on his eyes and prayed to Allah for his sight. Allah spoke to the sage 'in secret' and told him that the boon he had asked for was trivial, and suggested that if he had asked for it all the dead would be raised to life again. Nevertheless, his request for the restoration of his sight was granted to him.

Hāmjā, however, still continued his wars of conquest and conversion. His next adversary was the man-eating King of Rokhān, who attacked the hero with his army of tigers. The result was inevitable. The King was defeated and converted. Thus Hāmjā fought on till he came to the very ends of the earth to that dark place which no human could enter, and which the poet names Kokāf. So Hāmjā being human had perforce to return home. When he got there he

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found that his old enemy, Naosera and his old friend Bojarce Meher were both of them dead. But by now the Prophet was preaching Islam, and, surprising though it may seem, in view of all that had gone before, Hāmjā himself was converted and entered the service of the Prophet.

In one of the battles which he fought with the enemies of Islam on behalf of the Prophet, he killed an infidel, named Borhān, who was the son of Henda, the daughter of the King of Rome. In order to take revenge Henda attacked Madina with a large army. The battle which ensued was to prove something of a disaster for Muhammad and fatal for Hamja. Such was the admiration of the Prophet for the prowess of his uncle, Hāmjā, that he boasted to his followers that however great the strength of their enemies, the valour and strength of Hāmjā would ensure victory. This boast enraged Allah. Hāmjā's miraculous horse lost a shoe and, in accordance with an earlier prophecy, Hāmjā had to die. He fell from the horse into a ditch when Hendā herself was lying in wait. She struck and killed him, and then proceeded to cut his body into pieces. The enemy then commenced to throw stones at the Prophet and broke his teeth, the beauty of which had apparently also been the subject of an ill-considered boast. The poem ends here with a pointing of the moral that all power rests with Allah, and that to boast of human attributes, even of those of the Prophet himself, is a sin which must be punished. So Hāmjā died and the Prophet was taught the lesson of humility.

The long narrative of *Āmirhāmjār Puthi* has very

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little foundation in historical fact, but it is not altogether without it. There are some historical persons and events in the poem but they are very much exaggerated and magnified by the poets. The historical Hāmjā was the son of Ābdul Muttālib and the uncle and foster brother of Prophet Muhammad. He is very little known in history but "tradition adds in the effort to glorify this hero of the earliest days of Islam ...At first, like the other Hashimis, he adopted a hostile attitude to the new creed. But revolting against the extravagant attitude of Abu Djahl, he is said to have attached himself to the Prophet, two (according to others, six) years after the first revelation. He migrated with him to Medīnā and at first led an obscure and miserable existence there." He was a valiant soldier. "This quality won him the title of 'Lion of God and his Prophet', which soon found a place in poetry. ..... His fame as a soldier is particularly associated with the battle of Badar, where he and 'Ali shared the honours. ..... He met his fate at the battle of Uhud where he wrought wonders of valour. The negro Wahshī pierced him with a javelin, tore his breast open and brought his still beating heart to Hind, the Mother of Mu'āwiya who buried her teeth in it."[1]

The battle of Uhud occurred in the 3rd Hijra i. e., 625 A. D. and was disastrous for the Prophet Muhammad and his followers. The Prophet's teeth were broken and a rumour spread that he had fallen. Fortunately, he was "saved from the worst but he

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. II, London, 1927, pp. 254-55

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had to lament the loss of many of his followers including his uncle Hamza, a loss which he felt particularly".[1]

The battlefield of Uhud where Hāmjā and other martyrs were buried became a holy place and the death of Hāmjā lingered on in tradition. Every year after the battle "the Prophet went to Uhud to visit his and the other graves and the early caliphs did so also. Muhammad is said to have ordered that women in lamenting the death of every Ansāri should begin with a lament for Hāmzā. In this way Uhud became one of the most prominent places of pilgrimage of the Muhammadans. A mosque was built over Hāmzā's tomb".[2] The people of Medinā in particular visited Uhud regularly and it became a custom to vow to slaughter a sheep in honour of Hāmjā if they recovered from illness. They still hold a fair in Uhud once a year. "The inhabitants flock thither in crowds and remain for three days, as if they were the feast days of the saint".[3]

Both the poets of *Āmirhāmjār Puthi* say that they composed it according to 'Ketāb' i. e. a Persian book. Saiyad Hāmjā says at the beginning of his composition that his predecessor, Garibullāh, was unable to procure the whole book and for that reason could not complete his composition. At the end of his own portion he says that he had to stop his writing for about a year for want of the book he

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. III. p. 971
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. III. p. 971
3. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. III, P. 971

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was following, and after a hard effort he procured it and then was able to complete his task. It is, therefore, certain that their source was some Persian text but neither of them recorded the name of it.

The adventures of Āmir Hāmjá were a popular subject in Persian literature but, curiously enough, the authorship of them in that language is a matter of controversy. "There exists in Persian a voluminous work, called Qissa-i-Amir Hāmjā, written by whom, cannot definitely be said. Popularly it is supposed that it was written by Faizi for Akbar. But its authorship is otherwise ascribed to Mulla Jalal Balkhi. The romance exists in various forms and recensions, some bulky, some small in size. It is called Qissa, Dastan or Janganama of Amir Hāmjā. Manuscripts of the story are very rare. It was printed many years ago, I understand, in Tehran Bombay and Lucknow, but now these editions are unobtainable. Munshi Newal Keshore's Urdu translation is available now".[1]

In the earlier period of Middle Bengali literature a Muslim poet introduced the story of Āmir Hāmjā into the language by composing a bulky poem of 80 cantos.[2] The poet said in his poem tha he was following a Persian work : "The story of Āmir Hāmjā is in Persian and people are distressed because

1. *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, Vol. XXI. Calcutta, 1925, p. 193, The article on the works of Amir Hamja was written by Khan Sahib M, A. Wali under the title '*A Bengali Book written in Persian Script*'.
2. See Chapter II, p. 40

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they cannot understand it. That is why I decided to adapt it in Bengali so that they can understand it".[1] This earlier writer did not name his source either.

Āmirhāmjār Puthi is a curious mixture of legends and some history. It presents, in a typical form, many of the mythological stories cultivated by Muslim poets. It narrates the glory of spiritual leaders and gives an account of their religious preachings together with descriptions of their heroism and romances. It is a large volume like other ancient epics of the East, *the Mahābhārata* or *the Sāhnāmā* and is crowded by so many events that at times it is difficult to follow. There are almost innumerable characters, men, women, fairies and demons. Some of them are not alive during the time of action but they play a considerable part in the story and their spiritual presence is frequently felt. Here we shall first discuss the features of main characters and then the attitudes of the poets as reflected in the way they tell the story.

The hero of the poem is Hāmjā whose title is Āmir. He is the central figure of the long story. He is a great warrior who does not appear to age with the passage of time. In his young age he fought king Bāhrām who brandished a club weighing 40, 000 pounds and shouted like a mad elephant. Hāmjā hurled him from his horse and defeated him completely. Some of his other rivals

1. Nabi, A., Amirhamja (a manuscript of 1684) quoted in M. E. Haq's *Muslim Bangla Sahitya*, p.217

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were also incredibly powerful physically. King Ālkum threw his club of 59,000 pounds at him but when it struck his shield it broke into pieces. Hāmjā struck the elephant of his rival with his club and broke its back. He shouted like thunder and fire used to come out of his mouth. He fought demons with giant trees. He killed thousands of his enemies single-handed—'ek cote chepāi māre hājāre hājār', and created rivers of blood in the field of action—'Iahu nadī bahāiyā calila dui kul'. On one occasion he fought twelve days and nights continuously withoutt aking food—'bāra din bāra rāt Āmir Hāmjāy/ laḍen Kufar sāthe kichu nāhi khāy//' Not to speak of his rivals who were demons, and moved like mountains, those who were human possessed giant bodies of 270 feet, One possible source of Hāmjā's might is his dress and arms which previously had belonged to the prophets of Allah. When he prepared for action he put on the shirt ('pirhān') of the prophet Ismāil, the hat ('tāj') of the prophet Hud, the belt ('komarband') of the prophet Echhāk and carried the club ('gorja') of the prophet Sām Nurmān.

Hāmjā was capable of kindness and affection. He did not kill the brother of his beloved Meher-negār in spite of his bitter enmity towards him. He liberated the demons who had harassed him so much. He loved his sons and grandsons very dearly, and wept like a child when they were killed by the enemy. He became mad with grief, when his beloved wife Mehernegār was killed, and devoted himself to the service of her grave. The prophet Ibrāhim

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asked him not to be weak on account of a woman but he did not heed his advice, though he was always a devoted follower of the prophets of Allah. This was the first time that he disobeyed the prophet Ibrāhim, perhaps because he valued his love more than his faith. He was a dangerous enemy to the infidels but he honoured and loved them when they accepted his faith.

Hāmjā's morals and behaviour generally were conditioned by his faith. He did not accept a sweet drink from Mehernegār till she had embraced his faith. He loved her very dearly but did not seek physical union with her, nor did he touch her till they were married. He was a polygamist but did not commit adultery even when his life was in danger. When princess Āuraṅgi of the Kingdom of Ujāni came to him in the prison-house and suggested that he should commit adultery with her he said — "I would rather be killed than agree to your proposal". He was a proud and at times cruel warrior but very humble towards his religious leaders and spiritual guide. He bowed at the feet of Khoāj Khejer and took the dust of his feet. He had great respect for learning and honoured Bojarce Meher for his learning. He was a pious man and was guarded by Allah and the saint Khoāj Khejer who helped him whenever he faced any difficulty. He is depicted as a zealous Muslim and one of the principal aims of his wars was to convert the infidels to his faith. He did not think it immoral to kill the enemy who refused to accept his faith. He was a faithful follower of the ritual practices of Islam

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but at the same time he drank wine frequently and enjoyed music, song and dancing. He was a passionate lover and married a number of beautiful wives. He was prepared to ignore low social status in a woman when he was attracted by her beauty. When Gostahām arranged a party of music and wine in his honour, two slave girls were playing sweet music and Hāmjā was attracted by them — 'āsak haila dekhe sei dui āorat'.

Naoserā, the King of Madinā was the main rival of Hāmjā. He was alarmed by the fame of Hāmjā as a warrior but his enmity began when he was informed of his daughter Mehernegār's love for him ; and to the end of his life he tried to destroy Hāmjā. His two ministers, Bojarce Meher, the old, wise and faithful follower of Hāmjā, and Baktāk, the clever, cunning and bitter enemy of Hāmjā, advised him in diverse ways. He was always hesitant to take action against Hāmjā. He realised his power and sometimes he was moved by his greatness and nobleness and attempted to make peace with him. But his vanity, as a great King, his sense of family prestige and unbelief in the faith of his rival continually urged him to hostile action. Bojarce Meher advised him to be friendly with Hāmjā, but Baktāk incited him to seek help from the infidel kings of different kingdoms and fight him. His personality was weak in the sense that whenever he was defeated he realised he was wrong, and blamed Baktāk for his bad advice.

Hāmjā's intimate friend and associate, Ummar Ummiyā, is a character of an entirely different type.

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He was shrewd and always helpful to his friend, but he was also a magician and possessed supernatural powers. His principal role, however, was to provide some measure of comic relief. He dressed like a jester, and frequently played the part of one. When he visited the courts of the infidel kings as Hāmjā's messenger he responded to their insults with teasing, kicks, blows, in the manner of somewhat coarse comedy. He played a comparatively small part in the story as a whole, but it was a welcome diversion from the long tale of battles and improbable deeds of violence.

The poets were more successful in the creation of minor characters. Their role is short but they are made to lighten the whole, like sparks of reality in the monotonous description of miraculous wars. When Hāmjā was planning the tunnel from his house to the palace of Naoserā, in order to meet his beloved, Allah sent a group of angels to help him. They appeared before him like ordinary labourers. Their leader was Kābel Chardār, a very common name among Bengali Muslims. He stated his intention and the nature of the profession of his party : "There is no employment for us in our country, so we have come here to find work. We do earthworks, dig tunnels, ponds, prepare dams and various ground works. We do what we are ordered to do by our employers. My name is Kābel Chardār".[1] We

1. Text : "Des'ete rojgār nāi, ekhātere hetā bhāi, āsiyāchi rojgār khātere // Suḍaṅga pukhur khundi, pānite jāṅgāl bāndi, māṭir jatek kārbār / Jeychāi hukum jār, teychā bhāte kārbār, nām merā Kābel Chardār" //

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can meet this Kābel Chardār and his party with axe and spade in their hand ('kuḍāl kodāli hāte') in any village in Bengal.

Once in a grazing field Hāmjā met a shepherd boy who told him about his disappointment in love. His beloved was a beautiful daughter of Sirupāl, the Chief ('Maṇḍal') of a village called Chirupur. Hāmjā took him to that village and gave the girl in marriage to him. The Bengali poet created the typical Bengali village of Chirupur and met the 'Maṇḍal' of the villge, Chirupāl, in the deserts of Arabia. The atmosphere, setting and characters breathe an air of reality, and are a welcome change from the improbabilities of most of the story.

Hāmjā's rival kings are almost all type characters. They appear in the battlefield like roaring giants, fight vigorously, and when defeated submit to Hāmjā, accept his faith and preach Islam, perhaps more zealously than Hāmjā. Only a few of them have peculiarities of their own. Jepin, King of the city of Torāk, was treacherous. He accepted Islam when defeated but was not faithful to his creed, and struck at Hāmjā from behind with his sword. Ālkum, a tribal chief, had the courage to remain faithful to his own faith. Hāmjā asked him to accept Islam but he refused and said, "I will not be a Muslim even if I lose my life".[1]

The portrayal of the spiritual leaders also lacks reality and individual differentiation. They helped

1. Text ; "Jiu jāy tabu nāi mochalmān habo/"

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Hāmjā and his followers whenever they faced difficulty. All of them possessed miraculous powers and could do impossible things. In fact, nothing was impossible to them. The prophet Ibrāhim himself converted many infidels to Islam.

The principal woman character is Mehernegār. She was shy and amiable like a Bengali woman. When her father asked her opinion about her marriage with Hāmjā she bowed her head and remained silent. She was brought to Makkā but Hāmjā did not approach her till he married her. During that time she suffered greatly on account of her separation from her lover. She expressed her mental agony to herself but concealed it from others. But she was also a warrior. She held a sword when her husband required help or to protect her own honour. She was jealous of her co-wife. In fact, she could not tolerate the idea of a co-wife. When she came to know that Hāmjā had a wife and a son, she rebuked him for breaking his promise to her : "When I first fell in love with you, you promised that you would not marry any other woman. Therefore, association with another woman is forbidden to you. But you lied to me and now none can trust you".[1]

The other women characters have no individuality of their own. All of them are very beautiful and some of them are great warriors. The daughter of the King of Fairyland, Tārā, is one of the many

1. Text : "Jakhan tomār sāthe pahelā pirit / Karār karile tumi āmār sahit // Tomā binā behā nekā nā kariba kām / Dochrā rārer kol āmāke hārām // Jhut mut kaile jata kaol kārār / Tomār kathāy ār ke kare etbār //"

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wives of Hāmjā, but she is different from the others only in her contempt for her human co-wives and her anger that Hāmjā could continue to love them after marrying her.

The attitudes of the two poets, in their respective parts of the *Āmirhāmjār Puthi*, are identical. Both described their work of composition as a holy task. Garibullāh's introduction bore resemblances to the works of the poets of the *Maṅgal Kāvyas*. He said that he composed his poem on the orders of his spiritual guide, Gāji and said that whoever read his poem would go to heaven when he died, as did the martyrs, and whoever heard it would destroy his enemies—"Āmirer bāt yei śune ek dele/ Sahid haiyā yāy maoter kāle//" and "Jaṅganāmā Āmirer yei jan śune/ Duṣman khārāb tār haibe jāhāne//." The poet Saiyad Hāmjā requested his readers and those who heard his poem, to bless him so that he might not face any difficulty on the day of judgement—"Ye keha āmār kabi paḍibe śunibe/Ākbate bhāle hay ei doā dibe//". Hāmjā, however, did not pay tribute to Gāji but he stated that his predecessor was favoured by him. Unlike Garibullāh he was inspired by the people who were eager to know the story of Āmirhāmjā and not by any spiritual guide. Hāmjā had deep feeling for the hero in his poem — *Āmirhāmjār Puthi*. Like the Bengali epic poet Michael Madhusudan Datta, who said in connection with the death of the hero of his poem, *Meghanāda-badha Kāvya*, "It cost me many a tear to kill Indrajit",[1] Saiyad

1. Letter to a friend by Michael Madhusudan Dutta, quoted *in 'Kabi Sri Madhusudan*, by M. L. Majumdar, Howra, 1947, p. 90

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Hāmjā expressed deep emotion at the beginning of the passage in which he described the fate of his hero. "Saiyad Hāmjā begs forgiveness of the Prophet. How am I to write the martyrdom of Amir".[1]

Both the poets committed themselves without reservation or restraint to the fantastic and miraculous elements in the stories they told. At no point do they raise the question of improbability. They painted, with every semblance of complete acceptance, warriors like giants of unbelievable size, fairies, angels, and a variety of demons. A fairy girl gave birth to a horse; the giant bird Chimorg carried Hāmjā down from the summit of a mountain to the earth below; one of Hāmjā's wives conceived without intercourse, merely through the miraculous power of Hāmjā's turban; Hāmjā could become invisible whenever he put on a certain cap; the shoe, which the Prophet gave him, made it possible for him to jump any distance or upto any height; and the whole future was known to the sage, Bojarce Meher. This is fairy-tale stuff, but there is no apparent embarrassment that it has to be mingled with other materials of historical quality or religious significance.

Both Fakir Garibullāh and Saiyad Hāmjā being Muslims identified themselves entirely with all the deeds performed by the hero in the name of Islam. They spoke of what he did with sympathy and approval and referred to his enemies as *kāfer*

1. "Saiyad Hāmjā kahe pānā Rachuler/Ki rūpe likhiba āmi Sahid Āmirer//"

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(infidel), *kamjāt* (low-born), *lānati* (cursed by Allah), *hārāmjāt* (bastard) etc., all terms of contempt for people who do not believe in Hāmjā's faith. When any defeated foe refused conversion Hāmjā slew him, and the poets commented that he would go to hell where fire would burn him. Religious faith was presented as the highest of all considerations. Even acts of parricide committed in its name, as for instance, when the princess Johrā and the horse Āsker killed their fathers because, in the one case, he would not accept Islam, or because, in the other, he was plotting against its hero, carried no disapproval. The hero's main objective throughout the poem was shown by both the poets to be the destruction of idols and idolaters and the conversion of the infidels to Islam : "Yatek mūrati çhila debmūrti tuḍila muchalmān Bāmane kariyā/" They endowed him also with two other characteristics, a passion for beauty and the satisfaction of physical desire. In the course of his campaigns, Hāmjā married many wives, as did his adherents. Women were considered to be a form of chattel, and when a place was plundered, they were taken over as part of its wealth.

In handling their historical material, the poets are involved in anachronism. Hāmjā preached and made converts to Islam, long before the birth of Prophet Muhammad. Indeed, as has been pointed out earlier, he was initially hostile to the Prophet and became attached to him only some few years after the firstre velation. One takes note here of the discrepancy in the length of the hero's life ; the

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historical Hāmjā died at the age of 57 to 59,[1] but in the poem he lived for 198 years. The faith he propagated is said by Saiyad Hāmjā in two places[2] in the poem to have been received from the prophet Ibrāhim, though it is invariably referred to as Islam. A similar anachronism has been observed in the poem, *Iuchaf-Jelekhā* by Fakir Garibullāh.

In the course of the poem some light is thrown on the attitude of Hindus to Muslims. The infidels regularly refer to Hāmjā as *turuk* and *neḍe*, the former being an unexceptionable term based on his place of origin, but the latter, which means bald-headed, is a term of abuse, earlier applied by Hindus to Buddhist monks and nuns (neḍā, neḍi), but later used for Muslims. This term was current after the lives of the two poets. It appears in some of the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterji who wrote in the second half of the 19th century, and the contexts in which he used it leave no doubt of its abusive implications.

Fate is regarded as being determined by Allah. Hāmjā's life was safe until the pre-determined hour of his death arrived with the loss of his horse's shoe. Destiny is irrevocable because it is fixed by Allah having regard to man's actions. As a man sows so will he reap. Both the poets are orthodox in their attitude towards fate, which is described by Garib-ullāh in the following words : "As you sow, so you

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. II, p. 255
2. *Amirhamjar Puthi* pp. 93 and 120

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reap. He who does evil cannot expect good return (from his deed). Who has heard that a wood apple tree produces mango fruit. As you sow, so you reap".[1] The poets taught that human pride is the main cause of man's suffering and that one should be humble to Allah. Even the Prophet of Allah could not escape disaster when he expressed his pride. The poet Hāmjā stated that the cause of Hāmjā's death at the hand of a woman and the injury suffered by Prophet Muhammad was pride.

In this poem, as in *Iuchaf-Jelekhā*, the role of Allah is significant. He is no lofty spectator of man's doings on earth. He rendered important assistance to Hāmjā in his campaigns. He sent his agents, usually angels, to help him, whenever he was in need. The digging of the tunnel, whereby Hāmjā was able to penetrate into the chamber of his beloved, is one example, but there are many others. Allah was also quick to punish any error, particularly, the sin of omitting to mention his name at the beginning of any enterprise. Hāmjā was obliged to spend 18 years instead of 18 days in the land of the fairies and the demons, simply because he forgot to invoke the name of Allah, when he was leaving his own country. The Prophet himself was punished too for a similar sin of omission. The battle, in which Hāmjā met his death, was lost, because the Prophet omitted to call upon Allah and boasted of the prowess of Hāmjā, which he said was sufficient to ensure victory. There seems

1. "Jei jāhā rope gāch sei phal phale/ Badi kaile neki nāhi hay kona kāle// Kebā kabe s'uniyāche bel gāche ām/ Jei jāhā kare tāhā pāy parinām/ /"

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more than a suspicion of pettiness, in the incident, in which Prophet Muhammad was punished, by the loss of his teeth, but the sin, which led up to the loss, was firstly pride in his own teeth and secondly omission to regard their beauty as a gift from Allah.

The poets make comparisons with scenes and incidents from various sources. When Mehernegār met Hāmjā for the first time, she became attracted to him and the poet compares her condition of mind with Jelekhā — "Iuchaf lāgiyā bibi Jelekhā yeman". When Ummar Uminiyā was teasing Landhar, he compared him with 'Hanumān' (monkey) who fought against 'Rāvaṇa'. The fort of Tanjā was compared with the fort of 'Rāvaṇa' in 'Laṅkā'.[1] There is also the influence of the story of the 'Arabian Nights'. Like Sindbād the Sailor, Hāmjā was harassed in an island by demons who were like old men and mounted on his shoulder.

Āmirhāmjār Puthi reveals, as did *Iuchaf-Jelekhā*, that the poets were Bengalis. Customs and festivals are frequently such as were common in Bengal. Women's toilet and the countryside are similarly Bengali ; but there is, on the whole, less of the Bengali atmosphere here than in the earlier poem, because the drums and pipes of battle are more prominent here and take up a far larger proportion of the whole. There is far less opportunity to watch the peacock dance or listen to the song of the 'kokil'.

1. References to 'Ravana', 'Hanuman', 'Lanka', are obviously from the epic '*Ramayana*'.

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CHAPTER VI

Dobashi Literature : Elegiac Poetry

Jaṅganāmā, Moktāl Hochen

The Marsiya (Elegiac) theme was first introduced into Bengali literature in the 16th century, and was taken up by subsequent writers until well into the present century. The earlier and late versions on this theme are in Bengali. The only version in Dobhasī is that by Fakir Garibullāh in the 18th century. It carried the title '*Jaṅganāmā, Moktāl Hochen*'. Garibullāh's work gained a great popularity, and was printed many times in the 19th century.[1] The theme is part narrative and part elegiac, being based on the events which culminated in the deaths of Hāchān and Hochen and the mourning among the faithful when their deaths became known.

Jaṅganāmā, Moktāl Hochen is a long poem of some 4,700 couplets, written in the traditional *payār* and *tripadi* metres. The edition on which the present study is based is that printed and published by the Mortajābi Press, Calcutta, in 1877.

1. There are fourteen printed copies of *Janganama, Moktalhochen* in the British Museum and in the India Office Library. The dates of their publication range between 1867 and 1881, and they were published in Calcutta by the different institutions. There is one manuscript of this work of Garibullah in the Dacca University Library. (See *Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts*, edited by S. S. Hussain, Dacca, 1960, p. 153)

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There are differences of opinion regarding the authorship of this poem. Abdul Gafur Siddiki maintains that it was composed by Munsi Muhammad Iyākub of 24-parganas (West Bengal) in the year 1694.[1] S. K. Chatterji followed Siddiki in his book, *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*.[2] Sukumar Sen however rejected this theory and said that Iyākub was only the scribe of the work which was composed by Fakir Garibullāh.[3] M. Shahidullah's opinion also confirms the theory of Sen. He remarks that the *bhaṇitās* of Iyākub are a kind of later corruption intentionally made by the publisher who also published the name of Iyākub as author of the poem. Once the Iyākub theory of authorship won currency, other publishers without examining the *bhaṇitās* of the poem published the name of the author as Iyākub.[4] M. E. Haq thinks differently. He says that the first part of the poem was composed by Garibullāh and the rest (major portion) composed by Iyākub.

I have examined fourteen printed copies of *Jaṅganāmā*, *Moktāl Hochen* in the British Museum and in the India Office Library, six in the British Museum and eight in the India Office Library. All the copies are catalogued under the authorship of Munsi Iyākub, except one in the India Office

1. *Sahitya Parisat Patrika*, Calcutta, Vol. XXIII, No. II, 1916, also Vol. XXIV, No. 11, 1918.
2. Chatterji, S. K., *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1926, P. 212.
3. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*. Vol. I, Second edition, Calcutta, 1918, pp. 915-16.
4. *Masik Mohammadi*, Kartik, 1361, BS, (1954 A. D.)

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Library.[2] The weight of the evidence appears to me to be in favour of Garibullāh's authorship. His *bhaṇitā* (signature couplet) occurs throughout the poem, whereas that of Iyākub occurs only sporadically. In some editions Iyākub's *bhaṇitās* are found only in the first part of the poem ; in others, in the middle part, and in others, towards the end ; and in none to the exclusion of Garibullāh's *bhaṇitās*, which occurs throughout the poem in all the editions I have been able to examine. Moreover, the language, style and manner of invocations used in *Jaṅganāmā, Moktāl Hochen*, are markedly similar to those in other works known to have been composed by Garibullāh. Here too are similar praises of his spiritual guide, and the same processes of naturalising a foreign theme in a Bengali setting.[1]

The poem commences with a long invocation and tributes to the author's spiritual guide, Bara Khā Gāji and three other saints, who are popular in different localities, Sāhā Sarfuddin of Ālāti, Dafar Khān of Tribeṇī and Sāhsufi of Peṛuā. The poet says, in different places in his poem, that he met Gāji secretly and was instructed by him to compose the poem, *Jaṅganāmā, Moktāl Hochen*.[1]

1, Haq. M,E. *Muslim Bangla Sahitya*, Dacca, 1957, p.224

2, This copy of the poem was published in Calcutta in the year 1877. It is wrongly catalogued in the India Office Library. It has been catalogued under the authorship of Shafi' al-Din. But in the title page I found the name of Kaji Safiuddin recorded as the publisher of the poem. I compared it with other copies of the poem and found that it is the same work, composed by Garibullah and like other copies it also contains the bhanitas of Garibullah and Iyakub.

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Though the main object of the poem is to describe the battle of Kārbālā in which Imām Hochen was killed and the subsequent war initiated by his followers to avenge his death, it contains many episodes and descriptions of many battles. Here we shall state the main incidents of the poem.

One day, while Prophet Muhammad was relaxing with his companions, the angel, Jibril, came to him and informed him that his beloved grandsons, Imām Hāchān and Imām Hochen would be killed by the son of Mayābiya, one of his companions. Mayābiyā was then a bachelor. When he heard this prediction, he decided not to marry. But after sometime, he was compelled to marry to get himself cured of some disease. In order to avoid the prediction of the angel, Jibril, he married an old woman, who was past the age of child-bearing. But after his marriage, the old woman suddenly became young, and bore him a son who was named Ejid.

In the course of time, Mayābiyā became the Caliph of the Muslim empire. When Ejid grew into a young man, he cast his eyes upon Jaynab, a beautiful wife of Jabbār, an inhabitant of Madinā. He p'ayed a trick on Jabbīr and persuaded him to divorce his wife ; but after the divorce, Jaynab refused to marry Ejid and married instead Imām Hāchān, the eldest grandson of Prophet Muhammad. This disappointment created enmity between Ejid and Hāchān. After the death of Mayābiyā, Ejid

1. *Janganama ,Moktalhochen*, Calcutta, 1877, pp. 7, 8, 11, 16, 19, 21 and 29

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became Caliph and sent his man to Madinā to kill Hāchān. Ejid's man found a clever, old woman, called Maymunā, whom he employed as a procuress. After long and persistent efforts, she succeeded in getting Hāchān poisoned by Kad Bīnu, one of his wives.

After the death of his elder brother, Hochen found himself helpless in Madinā and decided to go to Kufā, in the country of Irāq, where he had many followers. When he was advancing towards Kufā with his family and a small band of followers, he was surrounded by the soldiers of Ejid at Kārbālā by the side of the river Forāt. Hochen and his party were not allowed to take water from the river which was the only source of water in that desert. The army of Ejid asked Hochen to surrender to it. But he refused to submit to a force sent by the despot Ejid whom he did not acknowledge as the legitimate Caliph, because he had not been elected according to the method introduced by Prophet Muhammad. Battle ensued and Hochen and his party fought heroically but in the end all the male members of the party, except a young son of Hochen, died on the battlefield.

Abu Hānifā, the step-brother of Hochen, was, at the time, king of the city of Āmbāj. When he heard of this tragic incident, he united all the followers and sympathisers of Hochen into a large army and waged a campaign against Ejid which lasted for thirty years. Eventually Hānifā defeated and killed Ejid, and went on to exact his revenge on his supporters. Jaynāl Abedin, the sole surviving son of Hochen, became

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Caliph of the Muslim Kingdom. Hānifā was still engaged in a wholesale massacre when Allah decreed that he should be confined to the battlefield and surrounded by 'walls of gold and pearls'.

The story, as told in Garibullāh's poem, has little historical support. After the death of Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam and father of Imām Hachān and Hochen, Mu'āwiyah was proclaimed Caliph in 661. He gave a magnificent subsidy and pension to Hachān who was leading 'a life of ease and pleasure' in Medina and "died at the age of forty-five (669), possibly poisoned because of some harem intrigue."[1]

Mu'āwiyah founded the Umayyad dynasty and a hereditary kingship and nominated his son, Ejid as the Caliph of the dynasty. Ejid succeeded his father in April 680 and after a short rule he died in November, 683.[2]

Hāchān's younger brother, Hochen, lived in retirement at Medina throughout the reign of Mu'āwiyah. But, after his death, he refused to acknowledge Ejid as Caliph and "in response to the urgent and reiterated appeals of the Irāqis, who had declared him the legitimate Caliph after al-Hasan and Ali, started at the head of a weak escort of relatives, (including his harem and devoted followers) for al-Kūfah. Ubaydullāh, whose father Ziyād had been conveniently acknowledged by Mu'āwiyah as his brother, was

1. Hitti, P. K., *History of the Arabs*, fifth edition, London, 1951, pp. 189—90
2. *Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol. IV, part II, London, 1913, p. 1162.

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now the Umayyad governor of Irāq and had established outposts on all the roads leading from al-Hijaz to al-Iraq. On the tenth of Muharram, A. H. 61 (October, 10, 680) Umar, son of the distinguished general, Sa'd ibn-abi-Waqqās, in command of 4000 troops, surrounded al-Husayn with his insignificant band of some two hundred souls at Karbala, about twenty-five miles north-west of al-Kūfah, and upon their refusal to surrender cut them down. The grandson of the Prophet fell dead with many wounds and his head was sent to Yazid in Damascus."[1]

The death of Hochen in the field of Kārbālā gave rise to the Shī'ite school. "From now on the imāmship in Ali's progeny became as much of a dogma in the Shī'ite creed as that of the prophethood of Muhammad in Islam. Yawm (the day of Karbala) gave the Shī'ah a battle-cry summed up in the formula 'Vengeance for al-Husayn,' which ultimately proved one of the factors that undermined the Umayyad dynasty."[2]

The Shī'ahs respect both Hāchān and Hochen as great martyrs. The death of Hochen was considered by them as a murderous act on the part of Mu'awiyah and they "thus made al-Husayn a sahīd (martyr), in fact the Sayyid (Lord) of all martyrs."[3] In memory of Hochen they "have established the practice of annually observing the first ten days of

1. Hitti, P. K., op. cit., p. 190
2. Hitti, P. K., Ibid., p. 191
3. Hitti, P. K., Ibid., p. 190

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Muharram as days of lamentation, and have developed a passion play stressing his 'heroic' struggle and suffering."[1]

Fakir Garibullāh wrote in his poem that, in composing it, he followed a Persian work, named *Moktāl Hochen*,[2] but he did not give the name of the author.

"From its meagre historical basis as given by Tabarī and the earlier Arab historians the tragedy of Kārbālā grew by accretion in Persian literature" to the elaborate romance into which it has finally developed in the *ta'ziyas* and *rauza-khawāns*. But the romantic element appears early, even in the narrative of Abu Miknaf Lut ibn Yahyā, who flourished in the first half of the second century of the hijra (circ A. D. 750)"[3].

In commemoration of Hāchān and Hochen's martyrdom, a special type of passion play, which is known as *Ta'ziya* was developed. "Among the Shi'is it means in the first place the lamentation for the martyred imāms, which is held at their graves and also at home. In particular, however, it is mourning for Husain. The *tābut*, a copy of the tomb at Kārbālā, in popular language is also called *ta'ziya*. It is a model kept in the house, often very richly

1. Hitti, P. K., Ibid., pp. 190–91

2, *Jaiganāmā*, *Moktālhochen*, Calcutta, 1877, p. 4. The poet says : "Phārsī Ketāb chila Moktālhochen/ Tāha dekhi kabi āmi karinu racan//" (There was a book in Persian called Moktālhochen. I composed my poem following that book.)

3. Browne, E. G., *A Literary History of Persia*, Voi. IV, Cambridge University, 1928, p. 188

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executed. *Ta'ziya*, however, means particularly the mystery play itself. The time for performances of it is the first third of the month of Muharram especially the 10th Roz-i-Katl, the day of the murder of Husain — In a wider sense the plays include the street processions such as the cavalcade with Husain's horse, the marriage procession of Hussain's son al-Kasim with Hasan's daughter Fatima. ..... Lastly ta'ziya means the actual performance of the passion play itself. ..... The commonest are Persian but they also exist in Arabic and Turkish."[1]

The Muharram ceremony and the *ta'ziya* procession are popular in different places of India and Pakistan. In the Bengali-speaking regions of India and Pakistan, especially in the districts of Dacca, Rajshahi, Malda, Mursidabad and Hugli, they are very popular among the urban population. The *ta'ziya* is built like the *rath* of the Hindu festival and the procession with *ta'ziya* might have some influence from the *rath-jātrā*. "It is probable that ancient rites of earlier mythological festivals like the Tamuz and Adonis cults have survived in the subsidiary plays which in India have been adapted by some Sunnīs and even Hindus..... But the passion play itself is the popular expression of that religious feeling which has its roots in the historic fact of Karbala."[2]

The Muharram festival and *ta'zia* procession are mainly organised by Shīah Muslims and though Sunni

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. IV, part II, p. 711
2. Ibid., Vol. I " p. 712

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Muslims of Bengal participate in them it is often the occasion of a Shiah-Sunni clash in different places in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. The Sunni Muslims justified the action of Ejid even at the time of his reign. They "argued that Yazid was defacto ruler and that to question his authority constituted a treason punishable with death. They insisted that the Shī'ites should not view the facts otherwise."[1] In Bengal the tragic incident of Karbalā provokes the sympathy of the Muslims of both the Shiah and Sunni sects.

One of the most popular types of literature on this subject in the Persian language is called *Rauzakh-wani*. It is "said to derive this name from one of the earliest and best known books of this kind, the *Rawddatu* [Rauzatu]' *Sh-Shuhada* ('Garden of the martyrs) of Husayn waz-i-Kāshifi" who "died in 910/1504-5 A. D."[2]

One form that writings on the Kārbālī incidents took in Persian is that known as 'Marthiya' or elegy. Here the emphasis is on the sadness of the death.[3]

1. Hitti, P. K., op. cit., p. 191.
2. Browne, E. G., Ibid., pp. 181—82
3. 'Marthiya' is "a poem in Arabic (and other ianguages following Arabic tradition) in memory of a deceased person..... This tradition has been followed by Arabic poets from the times of paganism to the present date and the quantity of poems produced, for example, upon the death of the Egyptian statesman, Zaglul Pasha proves that the taste for them has not abated". See *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. III, London, 1936, p. 306. In Bengali literature the tradition of 'Marthiya' is however confined to the tragic death of Hachan and Hochen. The word 'Marthiya' has been adopted in Bengali as *Marsiya*.

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The most eminent Persian poet of this school was Muhtasham of Kashani, who died in 1588 A. D. Many poets followed him and "in a comparatively short time some fifty or sixty such poems" were produced.[1] One of the meritorious works was produced by a modern Persian poet Qa'āni who died in 1853 A. D. These poems reveal "something of that deep emotion which the memory of the unforgettable tragedy of Karbala never fails to rouse in the breast of even the least devout and serious-minded Persian".[2]

We have seen in Chapter II of the present work that in Bengali literature this theme was first introduced by a Muslim poet in the sixteenth century and thereby created a new stream which was current throughout the whole Middle Bengali period. It was cultivated also by many poets and writers in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. The most noteworthy works are *Guljāre Sāhadat* of Khān Bīhādur Hāmidullāh, *Sahid-i-Kārbālā* by Sād Āli and Ābul Ohāb, *Jaṅge Kārbālā* by Kāji Āminul Haq, and *Dastāne Sahid-i-Kārbālā* by Ishākuddin. After the development of prose as a literary medium in Bengal in the 19th century, prose versions on the Marṣiyā theme began to appear, the most popular of which is *Biṣād Sindhu* of Mir Mosharraf Hossain (first published in 1884). The book is a big volume. It is a work of fiction on the theme of the tragedy of

1. Browne, E. G., op., cit. pp. 172–73
2. " " Ibid., p. 177

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Hāchān and Hochen, and it is still very popular in East Pakistan and West Bengal. It has been published more than 40 times since its first publication. The theme was also cultivated in the early part of the present century both in prose and in verse. Works worthy of mention are *Kārbālā* by Abdul Bīri, published in 1913 in verse and *Emām Hāsān-O-Hosāyn* by Girish Chandra Sen, published in 1911 in prose. Sen stated, in the title page of his work, that "it is chiefly based on the well-known and old Persian work *Raojātos Sohādā* or the garden of martyrs."

Thus the sufferings and misfortunes of Hāchān and Hochen inspired a copious literature in Persian and Bengali languages. In Bengal it even evoked the emotion of non-Muslim writers. The story of the tragedy of the Imām brothers, especially that of Hochen touched the heart of many distinguished writers of non-Islamic faith. Gibbon observed : "In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hosen will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader."[1]

Sir Lewis Pelly commented on the tragedy of the *ta'zia* play in the following words : "If the success of a drama is to be measured by the effects which it produces upon the audience before whom it is represented no play has ever surpassed the tragedy known in the Mussulman world as that of Hasan and Husain."[2]

1. Bury, J. B., *The Decline and Fall*, London, 1898, Vol. V, p. 391. (The author quotes Gibbon in a foot-note.)
2. Pelly, *The Miracle Play Hasan and Husain*, London, 1879, Vol. I Preface.

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It appears that Garibullāh was moved to compose his poem by deep and genuine emotion. In one place, he expresses his feeling in the following words : "I cannot describe the sufferings of the members of the family of Hochen after his death ; because, when I start writing, my eyes become filled with tears and I cannot see."[1]

Garibullāh's *Jaṅganāmā*, *Mokʻāl Hochen* is a collection of stories of human sorrows, sufferings and heroism. The poet has given many accounts of battles in this poem. High imagination and exaggeration are very frequent in his descriptions of the battle of Hānifā after the death of Hochen. He painted the warriors and their fight in a manner which is not always credible. Some warriors had bodies 126 or 141 feet high but when they fought with the faithful followers of Hochen they were mowed down like grass. Hānifā, the leader of the followers of Hochen who fought against the army of Ejid to take revenge for the death of Hochen, killed his enemies so recklessly that the battlefield was flooded with blood and his horse was obliged to swim to save him from 'the ocean of blood'. The technique which produced the exaggerations already marked in *Amirhāmjār Puthi*, was clearly in operation in this work too.

In the battles, warriors used cannons and elephants fought with clubs held in their trunks.

1. The poet says : "Se sab dukher kathā likhite nā pāri/Heṭ mukhe likhile āchu āise akh puri// Dekhite nā pāi sāhā akher pānite/ Ehār kārane sab nā pāri likhite//"

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The time of the battle is in the last part of the seventh century before gunpowder was invented. The place of action of the poem is the middle-east where elephants were not used in battle. But the poet being a man of the 18th century, and an inhabitant of India was influenced by his environment and age while describing the battles of a distant age and region.

The influence of the nature of Bengal is obvious also in the descriptions in this poem. The poet employed similes from his own environment. The warriors cut down the enemies like banana trees; their war-cry is like thunder from the clouds; they rush upon their enemies as water flows in the rainy season and they crush them as mad elephants crush lotuses in a pond. When the elephants of Ejid's army encircled Hānifā the poet described it as clouds encircling a mountain, and when he fell down from his horse it was described as the fall of the moon from the sky. When the defeated soldiers fled from the battle-field the poet described them as fishes floating in the stream.

The festivals are Bengali. In the marriage ceremony, dancing girls dance and sing, people throw coloured water at each other and carry sandal-paste, (*candan*) for decoration.

In one place in the poem, the influence of the *Mahābhārata* is apparent. As the clothing of Draupadi was multiplied endlessly when Duryodhana tried to take it away from her, so the clothing of Umme Chālmā was increased endlessly when the soldiers of Ejid tried to take it away from her after she was acptured in the battle-field of Kārbālā.

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The picture of the sufferings of Hochen and his companions in the desert of Kārbālā is presented with emotion and sincere sympathy. The sufferings of thirsty men, women and children in Kārbālā, in particular, touch the heart of the reader. The imagery at times is very beautiful. When Hochen fell down in the battle-field of Kārbālā and raised his blood-stained hand to pray to Allah, the blood flowed from his hand into the sky where it became a red cloud on the horizon. So the red cloud at the time of the sun-set became associated with the blood of Hochen.[1] When Hochen was beheaded by a soldier of the army of Ejid, the throne of Allah, all heaven and hell trembled as did the sky, the earth, the mountains, the gardens, and the field of Kārbālā. All the beasts, birds and animals wept, and children and animal cubs refused to drink milk from their mother's breast and bees stopped their humming.[2]

It is interesting to observe how Bengali many of the characters in this poem become, a feature which was previously noted in the other works of Fakir Garibullāh. Even the Prophet himself, his daughter Fātimā and her husband Āli, and other leaders of

1. Text :— "Lahu bharā dui hāt Emām ucā kare/ Emāmer lahu gela āsmān upare// Äsmān upare lahu chitkiyā lāgila/ Sinduriyā megh haye āsmāne rahila// Äjitak sei megh ūṭhe ye āsmāne/ Hochener sahider lahu jāna sarbajane//
2. Text :— "Aras koras lauha sakal sahite // Behesta dojakh ādi lāgila kāpite// Äsmān jamin ādi pāhāḍ bāgān/ Kāpiyā asthir haila Kārbālā maydān// Äftāb mahtāb tārā Kālā haiyā gela/ Jānoār harin pākhi kāndite lāgila// Bālak sakal māyer dugdha haite/ Nā ommed rahe sabe Emām sogete/ Bāg bhālu kānde ār mahiṣ gaṇḍār/ Baccā ke nā dey dudh kānde jāre jār/ Gāi nāhi dud dey Emām lagiyā/ Bāchur nā khāy kichu dele sog pāiyā// Maumāchi bhomrā kānde mukhe nāi mau/

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Islam, would, on many occasions, not have seemed out of place in a Bengali household. This is especially true of Fātimā, who, in many places, is very much of the soil from which the author sprang. One remembers how jealous she was of her stepson, and how she berated her father when he showed affection for him. This is a very natural and homely scene ; and there are others.

In the same way, too, Garibullāh could not refrain from allowing the supernatural powers from playing their part in the development of the story. The angels, Jibril and Ajrāil, were very busy. After the death of Hochen, the angels arranged a *Jānājā*, a ritual prayer for the dead, on the battle-field. The ceremony was attended in person by all the Prophets from Adam to Muhammad, together with Hochen's dead parents and many other relatives who likewise were deceased. More than once during the course of events, Prophet Muhammad appeared to advise the faithful ; and, when, at one stage, Hānifā lost an arm, the Prophet told him how it could be restored to him. The garb of the Prophet on these occasions was that of a traditional fakir. He wore wooden sandals (*khaḍam*) and a long scarf (*jubbā*) and carried a stick (*āsā*) in his hand.[1] Such pictures naturally raise the question of orthodoxy, for it is considered by many that it is a sin to write or paint or even imagine any such image of the Prophet or his companions.

Garibullāh's poem has serious artistic defects, but, in spite of them, he achieved a liveliness of action and evoked the imagination and sympathy of his

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readers to such an extent that his work became very popular. This is evident from the number of editions of his poem which were published; and it should be remembered that his was the only work on the theme to be written in Dobhāṣī, and that a number of later writers were prompted to take up the same subject. His poem is widely read and listened to today, especially by Muslims, who celebrate the martyrdom of Hāchān and Hochen with much emotion and enthusiasm every year.

1. Text : "Tabe rātre Rachul nekjāt/ Khaḍam dukhāni pāy āsā liyā hāt//
Galāy hajer jubbā ghire pare gāy/ Hānifār chirāne basi sapan dekhāy//

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A reproduction of a page from the manuscript puthi of
Iūchaf Jelekhā by Fakir Garibullah in the Dacca University Library.

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মক্কিয়া ছিলা দানবের পিরীতে ॥ আমাকে মজাইতে চাও মানবের সাতে লিখন খবরে আসি তোমাকে দেখিতে ॥ কারতে,পাইয়া চাও জাতি মজাইতে ※ তুমি যে দানবের পিরীত ভুলনা কখন ॥ আমাকে করিতে চাও তোমার মতন ※ ছিছি মালেকা তোর নাহিক সরম। এখনে ঘরেতে কার রাখিয়া ভরম ※ কে কোথায় আসক হইল মোর নাম শুনি ॥ এসব বানি কেবল তোমার গাথনি ※ এত শুনি মালেকার হইল কাতর ॥ কান্দনাতে ভাবিতে আসিল নিন্দ ঘোর ※ বদিউজ্জামাল পরী পালঙ্কে শুইয়া ছুটি ফুটি করে মন কামাতুর হইয়া ※ লজ্জায় মালেকা কাতে না হইল করুল ॥ নিদ্রা নাহি আসে চক্ষে চিত্ত ব্যাকুল ※ চক্ষের পানি টলহ পরে বুক বাইয়া ॥ আপন মনেতে কহে কান্দিয়া ※

পঞ্চপদী ※ কহিল মালেকা শুন ধনি, গুমানেতে কাকা নাহি শুনি ॥ বাগানে দেখিনু যারে, যদি না বধিব তারে, নিবিবে না চিত্তের আগুনি মালেকা কহিল ভাল হিত, মনেতে বুঝিনু বিপরীত ॥ দারুন বদন বানে, যেই তীর বিন্ধিল প্রাণে, খসিবে না থাকিতে জেন্মেগীত ※ দৈবে মোরে নিছিল বাগানে, যেই রূপে দেখিনু নয়নে ॥ মালেকার সঙ্গে ছিল, লাজে ফিরে না চাহিল, বাচেনা প্রাণ সে রূপ বিহনে ※ শুনেছি মালেকার ঠাই, হেন রূপ ভুবনেতে নাই ॥ সত্য হইল সেই বানী, যে দেখে হারায় প্রাণী, কাম অনলে পুড়ে হয় ছাই ※ জেলেখা দেখিয়া ইউছুফেরে, এস্কেতে দেওয়ানা হইয়া ফেরে ॥ আমার ভি সেই দশা, পুরে কি না পুরে আশা, বিধি যদি আশা পুর্ণ করে ※ কাম অনলে মদনের বেথা, কহিতে বড়ই লাজ কথা ॥ ফুকারিতে নাহি পারি, শুনিলে আদম পরী, কলঙ্ক হইবে যথা তথা ※ মনেতে রহিল এই দুঃখ, ফিরে না চাহিলে চান্দ মুখ ॥ উথলিয়া মনে উঠে, আগুনের চিনগারী ছুটে, বজ্রাঘাতে বিজলী চমক ※ যে অনল দহিছে মোর চিত্তে, না পারিবে কেহ নিবাইতে ॥ না করিব লোক লাজ, সাধিব আপন কাজ, যাব এখন সেরূপ দেখিতে ※ এবলিয়া কান্দিয়া অস্থির, বুকে ভাশে নয়নের নীর ॥ আকুল হইয়া মনে, ছাড়ি লাজ তৎক্ষণে, ঘর হৈতে হইল বাহির ※

বদিউজ্জামাল সরন্দিপে আসে ও সাহাজাদার
সঙ্গে বদিউজ্জামালের আলাপ হয়।

পয়ার ※ নিরব হইল সবে নিদ্রায় বিভেলি ॥ বদিউজ্জামাল হইল কামেতে পাগল ※ ধীরেং শয্যা হইতে উঠে বিনোদিনী ॥ সাহার রূপ দেখিতে চলে হইয়া উন্মাদিনী ※ কামেতে চঞ্চল অতি ফিরে পুষ্পবনে ॥

A reproduction of a page from the modern printed puthi *Saifulmuluk-badiujjāmāl* in the Dacca University Library.

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CHAPTER VII

Dobhashi Literature : Didactic Poetry

It has been noted that Muslim poets introduced into Bengali literature a new stream which has been called Instructive or Didactic poetry.[1] The number of such poems is very large. In the classification of Long's catalogue of Dobhāṣī literature in Chapter IV, it has been seen that out of a total of 41 principal works, 17 belong to this categroy. Of the 290 Dobhāṣī works available in the U. K., 148 are Didactic.

Bedārelgāfelin

This type of composition consists solely of Islamic teachings on moral and religious subjects generally. It was addressed by Muslims to Muslims, and it is not therefore surprising that little is known of it outside the community for whom it was and is intended. The contents of the numerous poems in this category are more or less stereotyped. There is little scope for originality of presentation ; and, from the point of view of style, there is little to choose between one work and another. For this reason, it is necessary only to examine a single work. The one

1. See Chapter II, p. 50

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chosen is *Bedārelgāfelin* by Sekh Munsi Chamiraddin. In has been chosen because of its great popularity within the Muslim community of Bengal.[1] The edition on which the following synopsis is based is that printed and published by the Āhmadi Press of Calcutta in the Bengali year 1255 (1848 A. D.). It consists of approximately 2,600 couplets, and like the works examined above is written entirely in the Bengali *payār* and *tripadi* metres.

Bedārelgāfelin contains some autobiographical references, from which the following facts emerge. Chamiraddin was an inhabitant of the village Bāman pāḍā in the Bāliyā parganā in the district of Hugli. His father whose name was Muhammad Ākel was a pious man. In the course of composition the poet said that he had lost both his father and mother. He did not, however, mention the date of their demise. His spiritual master, Khondkār Erjātula, was also an inhabitant of the poet's village. The poet received help from Munsi Muhammad Pānā, Muniraddi, Sekh Jitu, Bhitu and Bhikhu in the printing of his work. No date of composition is mentioned in the poem, nor is any incident in his life dated. It is difficult therefore to ascertain the date. The earliest publication, so far as we can trace, is that of 1848 A. D. Long mentions this book in his catalogue in 1855.

1. There are eight copies of *Bedarelgafelin* in the Cambridge University Library, Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, British Museum and India Office Library. The dates of publication of these copies range between 1848 and 1880 and all were published in Calcutta by different institutions.

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The poet says that he published his poem in Calcutta. Since commercial publication was not established in Calcutta until the 19th century, it may be assumed that the work was composed in the early part of the 19th century and certainly before 1848.

Bedārelgāfelin presents the whole range of Islamic teachings and practices which were considered necessary for the guidance of the Muslims of Bengal. It expatiates on the being and the worship of Allah, describes the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad and the nature and activity of Iblich, the embodiment of evil known also as Satan. It lays down a code for human behaviour, both personal and social, and gives an account of rewards and punishments, and a description of heaven and hell. There are hundreds of rules concerning moral behaviour and ritual observances. The book can most simply be analysed under the followings four heads :

(a) *Doctrine* : the being of Allah ; the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad and other religious leaders ; the activity of Satan ; the description of heaven and hell ; and the definition of religious terms in common use.

(b) *Ritual :* daily observances, together with particular and occasional observances, both private and corporate.

(c) *Moral duties :* these include duties required of one Muslim in his dealings with another ; the duties of man to man, of man to woman, marriage, divorce, adultery etc. ; the duties of parents to children and vice versa ; and the rules which control the relation between Muslims and peoples of other creeds.

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(d) *Heterodox practices :* i. e., the religious, moral and social beliefs and practices which the author considers to be un-Islamic and, therefore, irreligious. This section of the poem has considerable sociological importance, as most of the heterodox practices listed can be ascribed to the influence of Hinduism on the day to day life of the Muslims in Bengal.

Doctrine.

First, Allah, whom all should praise. He alone is to be worshipped. He is the lord and creator of the universe and of all the creatures in it. He holds knowledge of past, present and future. He has neither form nor colour, and may not, therefore, be represented by any image. He is incomparable and all-pervading ; invisible but all-seeing. He hears all who call upon Him or mention His name. He provides livelihood (*rejek*) for all living beings. He can bestow life at will, or end it. He is above sin. He is the supreme judge. He can punish or reward. His qualities are beyond number and none can describe them fully.

It was Allah who first created Prophet Muhammad from His own light (*nūr*) ; and from the *nūr* of Muhammad He created all living beings. He created the fourteen worlds (*caudā bhuban*) for Muhammad. Allah himself describes the glories of Muhammad in the Koran, in the verse known as Iyāchin (*Iyāchin churāy*).

On the Day of Judgement, Allah will judge the actions of all men, bestowing heaven on the pious

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and hell on the sinner. The man who worships any god other than Allah or believes in any supernatural power other than Him is an infidel and will be consigned to the fires of Hell.

Prophet Muhammad is the beloved of Allah. There would have been no sky, no earth, no creation if he had not been created. He is so noble that Allah himself describes his qualities in the Koran. The Koran was preserved in the seat of Allah (āras). It was delivered to Muhammad gradually over a period of 23 years. Muhammad was alone when he started preaching Islam. He slowly gained ground and gathered followers. He fought against infidels. The poet gives a short sketch of Muhammad's life. He lost his father before his birth and his mother died when he was only six years old. He received the order to preach religion (*nabuat*) from Allah at the age of forty. He married fourteen wives and had three sons and four daughters. He lived in Madeinā for the last ten years of his life and died at the age of sixtythree. He was very kind and affectionate. He gives affection (*didār*) to his followers and pleads for them to Allah on the Day of Judgement.

Prophet Muhammad's chief associates (sāhābā) are four in number : Ābu Bakar, Omar, Osmān and Āli. The latter two were his sons-in-law. It was Osmān who compiled the Koran. The Prophet's daughter, Fātimā had two sons, Hāchān and Hochen. Hochen died in the field of Kārbālā and became a great martyr of Islam.

Iblich (Satan) was in the beginning a great and

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learned teacher of the angels (*ferestā*); but when he refused to bow down before *Ādam*, the first man created by Allah, he was cursed by Allah and became Satan, the embodiment of evil. He is portrayed as a cheat and a thief. It was he who incited Kābil, the elder son of Ādam, to murder his younger brother, Hābil. It is not wealth that he steals but the religious faith of men and women. He sits at the centre of the human heart, where he creates uncertainty and doubt and seduces man to sin. Unbelief is Satan's work, for by turning men infidels he is able to ensure their final consignment to hell. He does not work alone, however. His associates are depicted as being even meaner and more treacherous than he is. They are false teachers, and priests, who do not themselves follow the true path of Islam and encourage men to observe un-Islamic practices. The poet writes that the army of Satan is made up of the ignorant, for, ignorance, like false knowledge, is the fruit of sin. The poet perhaps indicates the animal instinct of man as Satan when he says — "Satan does not grow in trees, he grows in all parts of life. Every one has good and bad instincts".[1]

The poet describes seven frightful hells which he calls *Jāhānnam*, *Jahim*, *Chirach*, *Kartār*, *Nathi*, *Hotmā* and *Hābiyā*. He also gives a description of the beauties of heaven, but they have no name and are without number. He says that sinful Muslims will be allowed to live in heaven after the completion

1. Text : "Saytān ki gāche hay, sakali tarike hay, bhāla burā sakaler ṭhāi"/

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of the term of their stay in hell which will be determined according to the gravity of the sins committed by them in their earthly lives. But infidels (*kāfer*), polytheists (*mośrek*) and heretics (*monafek*) are doomed to live in hell for ever.

The poet defines certain religious terms.

(a) *Imān.* It is faith in Islam, and involves the reading of *Kalemā taiyb*, i. e., the invocation which says "there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet", and which must be believed. Imān has seven parts : (i) the sense of shame, (ii) education (iii) to speak the truth, (iv) to guard oneself from the act of embezzlement, (v) to believe in the Koran, the *forkan*, the *injil* and the *taurit* as the books of Allah, (vi) to believe in the final destruction of the universe and the Day of Judgement, (vii) to believe that there are heaven and hell.

(b) *Faraj* : religious duties which are enforced by Allah e. g., *rojā* (fasting), *nāmāj* (ritual prayer) etc. He who neglects these duties will go to hell and he who refuses to do them will become an infidel.

(c) *Oājeb* : religious duties which are enforced by the scriptures indirectly. He who neglects these duties will be a sinner.

(d) *Sunnat* : religious and moral duties and daily observances which were practised by Prophet Muhammad. He who neglects them will be a sinner and will be deprived of the Prophet's affection.

(e) *Hālāl* : food, drink, work etc., which are permitted by Allah. He who follows them will gather virtue. He who neglects them will be a sinner.

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(f) *Hārām* : opposite to *hālāl*. Food, drink, work etc., which are forbidden by Allah. He who does not follow the injunction of Allah will be an infidel.

(g) *Makru* : food, drink, work etc., which are neither permitted nor forbidden by Allah but which were avoided by the Prophet and other religious teachers. He who avoids them will gather virtue.

The poet concludes his teachings about the doctrines of Islam by presenting to the reader a series of images which .can be used as the basis for mystical and devotional exercises. The human body is likened unto a house which has been supplied with everything that it can need or desire. "First know yourself, and then you will come to know Allah."[1] Then comes the image of the ocean of Allah's love. Whoever immerses himself in the ocean of Allah will understand the divine love and be assured of eternal joy. Life, however, is transient. It is as ephemeral as "a drop of water on the leaf of a lotus".[2] Another image, not unknown in other schools of thought, is that of the river of life. Man has to cross its troubled waters, and to make sure of reaching the further shore he must hold firmly to the rudder of his boat. Elsewhere the world is depicted as a market in which man has come to do business. It is set in a strange and foreign land. Man must buy and sell carefully, for he is surrounded by thieves and cheats who are on the look-out to ruin his business. He may be summoned at any moment to render an account of

1. "Äpnāy cinile pare Ällāke cinibe/"
2. "Padma pāter pāni eychā ṭalmal kare/"

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his transactions to Allah, so it behoves him to keep himself free from the deceitful practices of the world.

It is interesting to note also that the poet recommends the employment of a spiritual guide. To be successful in the spiritual life one must learn to meditate, and that is possible only with the help of a teacher.

Ritual

The rites laid down for the faithful Muslim cover the whole range of human activities from the cradle to the grave. They relate to daily and seasonal observances, and embrace different forms of worship both individual and corporate. In no aspect of his life, however trivial or apparently mundane, is man left without some form of ritual guide. No brief summary can include all that is prescribed, but the following is sufficient to provide a picture of what the poet as teacher lays down for his readers.

Prayer (*nāmāj*) : Muslims are required to pray five times a day (*nāmāj*). He who prays regularly is free from sin. *Nāmāj* is a shield against hell. When a Muslim bows his head in prayer all his sins leave him. The performance of *nāmāj* five times a day is called *faraj*. *Nāmāj* consists of a regular series of postures, including the kneeling posture and prayers. One series is known as a *rekāt*. The *nāmāj* of the afternoon (*āchar*) consists of eight *rekāts*, which are believed to open the eight gates of the eight heavens. Night prayer consists of seven *rekāts*, which close the seven gates of the seven hells. Early morning

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prayer consists of two *rekāts* which absolve a man from all sins committed during the previous twenty-four hours. The poet explains that when a man comes to cross the bridge which is placed between heaven and hell, (*polserāt*) on the Day of Judgement the regular *nāmāj* he has performed will stand on the bridge like a torch, for without light no one can cross. He also uses another image to enforce his point. The Day of Judgement is depicted as a day of great heat and regular *nāmāj* which a man has performed will be to him like a sunshade.

Corporate prayer is considered more efficacious than individual prayer. To perform *nāmāi* in *jāmāt* (an assembly of worshippers) is considered to be 27 times more efficacious than to pray alone. To lead *nāmāj* in *jāmāt* an *imām* (prayer-leader) is required. He must be a pious man in whom his fellow Muslims have confidence. This section concludes with a stern warning. A Muslim who neglects *nāmāj* will be severely punished. The omission of one of the five daily prayers carries asits punishment confinement in hell for 80 *hokbā*, one *hokbā* being equal to 80 years.

Weekly prayer is also enjoined. The weekly *nāmāj* (*jummā*) is to be performed in *jāmāt* at noon every Friday, and in a mosque. There are also important annual festivals, *idulfetar* and *iduljohā* during which *nāmāj* is performed in *jāmāt* under the leadership of an *imām*. There are also special performances of *nāmāj* at times of solar eclipse (*kaśuf*) and lunar eclipse (*khaśuf*). The former is performed in *jāmāt*, the latter alone. At times of serious drought

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there is a special *nāmāj* in *iāmāt*, called *echtechkā*, in the earnest expectation that Allah will send rain. This *nāmāj* has to be performed on three consecutive days and in an open field. It is held to be efficacious unless there is an infidel in the praying company. The name *jānājā* is given to the *nāmāj* which is performed in *jāmāt* before committing a dead body to the ground in burial.

Fasting (*rojā*). In the Arabic month of *Ramjān* Muslims must observe fasting (*rojā*) for the whole lunar month. The month of *Ramjān* is holy. The Koran began to be committed to Prophet Muhammad in this month. On the 20th day of this month, the book of Allah *jabbur* was committed to Prophet Dāud ; on the 21st day, Prophet Cholemān was born ; on the 22nd day, Prophet Muchā was born ; on the 23rd day, Prophet Ichā was born ; on the 24th day, Allah met Muchā in the mountain, called *Kohtur* ; on the 25th day, Muchā crossed the river Nile with his followers and Ferāun (the king of Egypt) with his army sank and died in that river ; on the 26th day, Allah showed his light to Muchā ; on the 27th day, Allah sent Prophet Iuchaf in the stomach of a fish. In one of the days of the last part of the month of *Ramjān*, angels bring Allah's blessings to his creatures in the earth and on one of the nights of that period all the objects of the world, animate and inanimate, bow down to Allah. In this month angels put Satan into chains so that he cannot mislead the Muslims who observe *rojā*. It is a great virtue to give food and drink to a Muslim who observes *rojā*.

The period of *rojā* ends with a great festival

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called *Idulfetar*. It is observed on the lst day of the month of *Chāoāl*, the Arabic month after *Ramjān*. On that day the head of the family must distribute food among the poor at the rate of one seer (two pounds) of wheat or flour or the price of it per head of the members of his family.

The second great festival of the year is called *Iduljohā*. It is observed in the Arabic month of *Jelhaj*. Muslims should offer cows, buffaloes, camels, goats or sheep on that day. The animal for the offering should not be old or sick.

Sabebarāt is an annual night of festival. It occurs on the 15th of the Arabic month of *Sābān*. This is a very holy night and Muslims should pray *nāmāj* and read the Koran for the whole night if possible. They should give food and alms to the poor and orphans and pay respect to their teachers and learned persons and should visit sick neighbours.

Āśurā is a holy day. It is on the 10th of the Arabic month of *Mahram*. On this day Hochen, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad was killed in the field of *Kārbālā*. It is a great virtue to observe *rojā* on the day of *āśurā*. On this day Muslims should pay respect to their parents, teachers and superiors. If there are any conflicts or quarrel between Muslims they should try to reach agreement on this holy day.

The month of *Mahram* (an Arabic month) is a holy month. Allah bestowed *nabuat* (the authority to preach the religion of Allah) on ten thousand prophets in this month. Muslims should practise abstinence in this month, especially during the first ten days of the month.

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When a child is born to a Muslim he should give an animal offering (*ākikā*). This should be observed either on the 7th, 14th or 21st day after birth. *Ākika* should be given at the rate of one goat or sheep for a daughter and two for a son. On the day of *ākikā*, the head of the child should be shaved, and the hair should be weighed against gold or silver and the value of it should be distributed among the poor. On the day of *ākikā* a feast must be given to relatives, teachers and pious people with the meat of the animal offered as *ākikā*. When the child learns to speak, teach him to say *kalemā taiy'b*.

The practice of ritual charity is associated with certain major festivals and involves prayer and some form of fasting or abstinence. The Muslims who possess at least $7\frac{1}{2}$ *tolās*[1] of gold or $52\frac{1}{2}$ *tolās* of silver should pay a tax called *jākāt* at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ of his total wealth. The woman who possesses ornaments and does not give *jākāt* will be thrown into hell and her ornaments will turn to serpents and will bite her. The Muslim who possesses live-stock should also give *jākāt* at the rate of one cow or buffalo for every 30 and one sheep or goat for every 40. *Jākāt* should be distributed among the poor, either relatives or neighbours. To give *jākāt* is *faraj*, i. e., compulsory for Muslims.

Muslims should begin their meal by saying *bismillā* (with the name of Allah) and after finising their food they should say *ālhāmdolillāh* (all praise to Allah.)

1. *Tola* is a measurement of weight. One *tola* is less than half an ounce.

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Moral Duties

The duties imposed on the pious by their religion are set forth as series of commandments. The series can be separated as follows: the duty of man to man; food and drink; parents and children; respect for the teacher; man and wife; neighbours, being Muslims; neighbours, being infidels. The different categories can be seen as different, though there is some overlapping, and occasionally some repetition.

Do not lie. A liar will be changed to a pigeon on the Day of Judgement and cast into hell. He will never receive the blessings of Allah or the favour of the Prophet or saint.

Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not commit oppression. Do not envy. He who envies is a sinner and will go to hell. Live at peace with your neighbours. Respect your parents, teachers, learned men and pious men. Give charity to the poor and to orphans, and treat them with kindness. Do not slander (*gibat*[1]). He who commits *gibat* will lose the love of Prophet Muhammad, and the merit he has won will go to the victim of his *gibat*. It is a great sin to make a parade of wealth or to boast of it. The woman who boasts of her jewellery and makes a parade of it before her neighbours is a sinner. Give food to the hungry and clothes to the naked. Speak justly and listen only to that which is good.

1. The poet explains the term *gibat* in the following words: He who cannot speak ill in the presence of a person but speaks ill behind is called *gibat* "("Sumukhe kahite nāre piche burā bale// Tāhāke gibat kahe jānibe sakale//")

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Forget the good you have done and remember only the evil. Think of yourself as a sinner and of your neighbour as a good man. Be meek and address others with kindness. Wherever there is suffering, relieve it. The rich should not hesitate to pray in *jāmāt* with the poor. If they avoid doing so they will go to hell. He who respects the poor and the pious respects Allah, but he who hates them hates Allah too.

Seek after knowledge. Ignorant men (*jahel*) are like sheep. They follow the practices of their forefathers, and speak without understanding. The Prophet says that there are six categories of men who will certainly go to hell : the king who oppresses his subjects, the man who steals from another, the man who boasts of his own wealth or power, the man who is proud of his ignorance, the teacher who leads men astray, the bogus mendicant.

Do not eat pork. Do not drink wine. Do not commit adultery. Do not lend money on usury or involve yourself in business which rests on usury. Practice patience ; it is a great virtue. When you are happy, be grateful to Allah ; when you are in distress endure it with patience and pray to Allah for His help.

Obey your parents, unless they order you to transgress your religion. If they observe irreligious practices or behave like infidels, try to convince them of the truth of Islam respectfully and with courtesy. If they do not follow the path of Islam, do not abuse them or treat them with disrespect but rather keep yourself aloof from them. You should not speak to

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them harshly and should never be angry with them. Always try to help them in every possible way. Give them food and clothes if they need them.

Always respect your teacher, even if he happens to be your teacher for only one week. Salute him whenever you meet him. Talk to him courteously. Do not take your seat before your teacher sits down. Try to help him if he, at any time, needs your help. Always remain grateful to him, because he gave you the light by which you know things, whether they are good or bad.

Give your children good and religious names. Circumcise your male children. Give them good, especially religious, education. It is your sacred duty to give them education. If you fail to give them education you will be held responsible for the sins they will commit out of ignorance. When they are adult, give them in marriage to good and religious persons.

Keep your wife in peace and comfort. You should teach her religious, moral and social duties and obligations. If she refuses to learn or to follow them, try patiently to convince her. But if she still does not follow good teachings, stop talking with her and sleep in a separate bed. If then she does not change her ways, beat her, but do not inflict any injury. If, after all these measures, she remains unchanged, then divorce her. You should be kind and considerate to her. If you cannot live with her in peace, through her fault, do not insult or torture her ; rather divorce her. It is better to have one wife but if you marry more than one, you must do equal justice

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to them all. If one wife is poor and another wife is rich, you should respect and love both equally and not hate or insult the poor one and respect and love the rich one. You should not abuse your wife or her parents or her relatives. You should respect her parents. If you go away from your home, bring some gift and souvenir for her when you return home.

Remember that your husband is your master. Try to give him satisfaction and pleasure, both physical and mental. You should not lend anything (money or domestic articles) to any person without the permission of your husband. You should not observe optional fasting (*rojā*) without his permission. You should not disclose his weakness to others. You should not press him for money beyond the basic needs of the family. You should be happy at the happiness of your husband and sorry at his sorrows. You should not insult or rebuke him. You should beautify yourself so that your husband can find pleasure in you. You should not curse your children.

Duty to Muslim neighbours.

You should visit your neighbours as frequently as possible. You should be with them in their happiness and sorrow. If they ask help from you, you should try your best to help them. If any one is ill, you should go to see him frequently and help him in every possible way. If any one is away from his home, leaving behind his family at home, you should take care of them and protect their lives and property, if they are in danger. You should not quarrel with them.

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Duty to infidel neighbours.

Always try to do good to them. Do not do any harm to them or to their property. Do not insult them. Muslims are nowadays mixing with the Hindus and some are addressing them as father or brother. This is wrong. You must be conscious that your religion, custom and manners are very different from those of the Hindus. But, at the same time, live with them harmoniously. If any body oppresses them, you should try to help them in all possible ways.

The poet writes in terms of serious condemnation of certain practices which were prevalent in the Muslim community, most of which had been taken over at one time or other from Hinduism. He calls such practices un-Islamic, The list he gives shows the extent to which certain Muslims had moved from the orthodox position in respect of both their worship and social procedures and organisation.

Muslims worship at the graves of holy men, offering sweets and lighting candles. They observe the harvest rite known as *nabānna*. On certain festival occasions they put clay pitchers (*ghaṭ*) and fly flags at the doors of their houses. They observe the last day of the Bengali month, *Pauṣ* (*Pauṣ saṅkrānti*). They take part with Hindus in the celebration of the *Holi* and *Diyāli* festivals, and join in the *pujās* known as *bhāiphoṭā* and *garuparab* (cow festival). They worship *Satyapīr*, the snake goddess, *Manasā* and the pox goddess, *S'italā* to whom they pray for relief from disease or other misfortune and for the fulfilment of their desires. They burn clay lamps in their

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houses in the evening and invoke *kalemā*. They even go so far as to beg blessings from Brahmins, plaster their floors with cowdung and discard earthenware pots whenever death or birth occurs in their houses.

Muslims had apparently also taken over many superstitions current among Hindus. They consider it an ill omen to see an empty pitcher, to hear a sneeze, or to hear someone call from behind at the time of departure from home. They refuse to give their neighbours cowdung from their sheds in the early morning for fear it will harm their own live-stock. They will not give or accept loans on the *Lakṣmibār*, the day of Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth, because there is a superstition to the effect that to do so would displease the goddess and result in financial loss. This list of borrowed superstitions is followed by a short homily on the subject. Muslims are required to believe that Allah is the master of life, death, livelihood, wealth and property. He alone can bring good or evil to man. It is utterly against the teachings of Islam to believe that there is any other divine power, god or goddess or saint, who has control of good or evil. Anyone who believes in any other divine power will surely go to hell.

Certain aspects of behaviour and social practice have clearly been influenced by the caste system as it operates among the Hindus. Some Muslims, says the poet, claim to be aristocratic by virtue of their birth. They claim upper class status. They call themselves *āśrāf* and despise those of so-called lowly birth whom they refer to as *ātrāf*. There is no caste

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system in orthodox Islam, and those who call themselves *āśrāf* are irreligious and guilty of betraying their faith. Many Muslims show a regard for their ancestors that is tantamount to ancestor-worship. They refuse the right of a widow to re-marry, and when it is suggested to them that there is nothing in Islamic doctrine to prevent a widow from re-marrying, they lapse into a sort of bastard Urdu known as *Khoṭṭā*.[1] It is utterly cruel, says the poet, and against their religion to deny widows this right, which has been sanctioned by Allah and was practised at the time of Prophet Muhammad who himself married widows and gave his own widowed daughters in marriage. His grand-daughter, Umme Kulcham, married four times. The poet ends with a strong denunciation : "The practice of caste is utterly false. It is a man's character which is important. He who follows in the steps of the Prophet is a true Muslim".[2]

Other practices also call for condemnation. It often happens that during a marriage ceremony the bridegroom sits among his relatives with the bride on his knee, and the two of them eat milk and rice

1. The poet describes the language and attitude of 'ās'rāfs' in the following words:— "If anyone speaks to them on the subject they reply in the 'Khoṭṭā' language and say 'we are of a high-born caste. There is no such custom among us. If we are low caste people we should give our widows in marriage, but high caste people do not behave in this way." ('Kaile kay Khoṭṭā bāt, hāmchab ās'rāf jāt, merāchabkā nehi eychā cāl/ Kamjāt kaminā hogā, beoyājankā nekā degā, asrāfokā nehi eychā hāl//")
2. Text : "Jāt pāt sab jhuṭā āsal tārik/ Je cale Nabīr mate sei jāti ṭhik//"

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together, while the women-folk sing vulgar songs. This practice is *beimān* (contrary to the faith). Allah has laid down that a sense of shame is part of the true faith. Muslims also drink country-made liquors, eat opium and smoke hemp, whereas they ought to know that all forms of intoxication are forbidden (*hārām*). They also gamble, at cards and with dice. They shave their beards and grow the hair of their head long. If anyone tells them that it is wrong to smoke tobacco (*hokkā*), they quote Persian verses in support of smoking. They desecrate the festival of *Mahram* by riotous reading of the *marśiyā* poems on the death of the martyrs and by joining in unseemly processions, dancing and beating drums, during the performance of the memorial obsequies. *Mahram* is a sad occasion for all the Muslims, but they mark the occasion by banquets and riotous living. The sad thing is that many so-called religious teachers also participate in these unseemly frivolities.

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CHAPTER VIII

Critical Comments on Dobhasi Diction and Literature

Though writing in Dobhāṣī is without question part of Bengali literature, no exhaustive critical study of it has yet been made. Historians of literature and other critics have from time to time made reference to Dobhāṣī literature but none has given his full attention to it. All we have are a few passing comments inserted into general reviews which are principally concerned with other aspects of the literature. In this chapter it is proposed to set forth the comments so far made on Dobhāṣī literature by the scholars who have referred to it.

Dobhāṣī diction and works in it were first brought to public notice by an English scholar, the Rev. J. Long, as early as 1855. He named it 'Musalman Bengali literature.' In his work, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works*, he observed : "The Musalmans have always been noted for the tenacity with which they have clung to their own ideas and language, and for the obstinacy with which they have resisted foreign influence. The Persian, their great prop, has been shorn of its honours in India, and the Musalmans are averse to learn the Vernaculars ; as Urdu has been formed by a mixture of Persian and Hindi, so the Musalmans have formed in Bengal a kind of lingua franca, a mixture of Bengali and Urdu called the boatman's language. This must eventu-

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ally give way to the overwhelming influence of Bengali ; but in the meantime, as illustrative of the phases of mind of the people, is appended a list of the principal books in this dialect, printed at Musalman presses in Calcutta, which have a wide circulation and particularly among boatmen and the Musalman population of Dacca. They are chiefly translations from Persian or Urdu."

W. W. Hunter, in his book, *Indian Musalman*, published in Calcutta in 1871, wrote the following, while explaining the influence of Islam in lower Bengal : "To this day the peasantry of the delta is Muhammedan. So firmly did Islam take hold of lower Bengal, that it has developed a religious literature and a popular dialect of its own. The patois known as Musalman Bengali is as distinct from the Urdu of Upper India, as the Urdu of North India is different from the Persian of Herat."[1]

Abdul Gafur Siddiki read a paper on the contributions of Muslims to Bengali literature in the 9th session of the "Bañgïya Sāhitya Sammelan." It was published in *Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā*, Vol. XXIII, No. II in 1916. In this article he estimated that 8325 works had been composed by different poets in Dobhāṣï diction, and that 4446 works were still current. He also claimed that Dobhāṣï was the real Bengali and he accused Hindu scholars of eradicating Arabic, Persian and Urdu vocabulary elements, from the Bengali language, and substituting difficult

1. Hunter, W. W., *Indian Musalman*, Calcutta, 1871, p. 152

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Sanskrit words in their place. In the course of his observations on Dobhāṣī literature, which he called *baṭṭālār puthi*, he strongly condemned the suggestion that the vernacular of the Muslims of Bengal was Urdu and not Bengali. It appears from his article that there was a strong controversy on the question of the vernacular of Bengali Muslims in his time, and that a section of the Muslim community of Bengal was propagating the idea that the vernacular of the Muslims in Bengal was Urdu, and that Bengali was the vernacular of the Hindus only.

Ahsan Ullāh published a booklet, called *Baṅga Bhāṣā O Musalmān Sāhitya* i.e. Bengali language and Muslim literature, in Calcutta in 1918. He read it to the conference of "Yaśohar-Khulnā-Siddikiyā Sāhitya Samiti." He observes : "The *baṭtalā* press disseminated many *Musalmān puthis* in the early part of the 18th century. The most noteworthy of these were *Āmirhāmjā*, *Lāylāmajnu*, *Sonābhān*, *Iychafjolekhā*, *Khāchā-cholāmbiyā* etc. One notes the use of Arabic and Persian words in these books in large quantities. They are neglected by the Hindu community because the language in which they were written was hardly influenced by Sanskrit. Nevertheless the *puthis* put out by *baṭtalā* press undoubtedly form part of the Corpus of Bengali literature."[1]

Islām-darśan was one of the most influential monthly journals in Bengali during the early part of the 20th century. It was run by Muslim writers

1. Ullah, A., *Banga bhasa O Muslman Sahitya*, Calcutta, 2918, P.3.

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and social workers. The editor of the journal, Muhammed Abdul Hākim, was an able writer. He wrote a long article on the contributions of the Muslims to Bengali literature in *Islām-darśan* in 1921. The title of the article was "Baṅga Sāhitye Musalmān."[1] In the last part of the article, he discussed the growth and importance of Dobhasi literature under the sub-title, "Islāmi Bāṅglā bā Puthi-sāhitya." According to Hākim, *Islāmī Bāṅglā* was developed by Muslim writers as a rival language to the Sanskritised language of the Hindu *paṇḍits* who flourished before the establishment of the present day 'lucid' style by the persistent efforts of Vidyāsāgar, Baṅkim, Michael and Hemachandra. Hākim wrote his article in the 'lucid' style. He said also that he had written four poetical works in *Islāmī Bāṅglā*.[2] He praised the literary qualities of some of the Dobhāṣī works and expressed the opinion that they are the national literature of the Muslims of Bengal and urged his readers to gather inspiration from them. He praised the style of Vidyāsāgar, Baṅkim and Michael as being the

1. The article was continued in *Islam darsan* in Vol.1, No. 9, 11 and 12, Calcutta, 1921.
2. The following two works of Hakim are available in the India Office Library : (a) *Eske Goljar* was composed in 1909 and was published in Calcutta in 1913. This is a large work in 3 volumes on the romance of a prince of Delhi. In a preface the author says that he composed the work to improve the style of Dobhasi diction and the literature in it. (b) *Eskejahar* was composed in 1913 and was published in the same year from Calcutta. The language of the works is not Dobhasi. It is standard Bengali with some Perso-Arabic words which are employed with conscious effort.

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standard literary style, but he strongly condemned those Hindu writers who jealously excluded Perso-Arabic words, and imported difficult and unfamiliar Sanskrit words into the language.

Dinesh Chandra Sen also supported the use of Perso-Arabic vocabulary elements on many occasions and strongly condemned the Hindu writers who avoided them "as an orthodox Brahmin avoids the touch of a Muhammadan".[1] His comments on Dobhāṣī literature were, however, brief. In the introduction to the English edition of *Eastern Bengal Ballads*, he observed : "The Battala works of Muhammadan writers, written in what is called the 'Musalman Bangala', are so full of Urdu words that the literature created by them has become as exclusive as the Sanskrit Bengali of the Pundits of Fort William College."[2]

Suniti Kumar Chatterji, in his work, *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Vol. 1, Calcutta University, 1926, examines various aspects of Dobhāṣī literature in more detail than previous scholars had done. He observes : "Within the last century has been established, in the hands of some Urdu-knowing Maulavis, a form of Bengali which is known as 'Musalmāni Bengali' in which a considerable literature consisting of adoptions of Muslim and Persian stories and romances and religious works and tracts has grown-up. ... 'The Musalmāni Bengali' employed

1. Sen, D. C., *Eastern Bengal Ballads*, Vol. I, part I, Caicutta University, 1923, Introduction p, XIII
2. *Ibid*, p. 2. LXIT

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in these works, however, is often too much Persianised ; but the metres are Bengali, and a large percentage of Sanskrit words are retained, cheek by jowl, with the Perso-Arabic importations. It is the Maulavi's reply to the Pandit's *sādhubhāṣā* of the early and middle part of the 19th century. The percentage of Persian words in a typical 'Musalmāni Bengali' work ... is about 31.74. ...One of the features of 'Musalmāni Bengali', which demonstrates its rather artificial character, is the frequent use of Hindustāni words and forms ... which have no existence in the Bengali as spoken by the Musalmāns in the villages within the different dialectal areas. 'Musalmāni Bengali' thus savours of the mixed Bengali-Hindustāni-Awadhi jargon which is heard in the bazaars of Calcutta among Muhamedan working classes, cabmen, petty traders and others, who speak Calcutta Bengali and Hindustāni equally badly, and unlike the Muhamedan masses in the country have no proper dialect. Books in 'Musalmāni Bengali' begin from the right side, following the way of an Arabic or Persian book, although the alphabet is Bengali. The literature in Musalmāni Bengali has no merit, and some of the deathless tales of pre-Moslem Persia, as in the 'Shāh-nāmah', and of early Islam, have been ruined by the hack versifiers of Calcutta and Chittagong in rendering them in this jargon".[1]

Sukumar Sen expressed various opinions regarding

1. Chatterji, S. K. *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1926, pp,210-12

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Dobhāṣī diction in his works. In his book, *Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās*, he says : "The cultivation and appreciation of so called 'Islami' literature greatly increased in the later part of the 18th century among the little educated Muslim society. It is not true that the persons who used to write Musalmānī 'kecchā' had a poor knowledge of Bengali ; but the original Urdu, Persian or Hindi words which they adapted in Bengali were responsible for the excessive use of Arabic, Persian and Hindi words in their language. The ordinary readers could not appreciate their literature due to their mixture of languages and as a result their works were banished from the literary field of Bengal."[1] In another book, called *Islāmī Bāṅglā Sāhitya*, Sen observes : "What we now-a-days understand by the term 'Islāmi Bāṅglā' was created in the last part of the 19th century. Before its creation the Muslim writers used sādhubhāṣā in their works with a sprinkling of Perso-Arabic words. Some of the Perso-Arabic words they used were well-known only to the Muslim population and others were the common property of the work-a-day language of both Hindus and Muslims." In his third book, *History of Bengali Literature*, he observes : "By the beginning of the eighteenth century a literary and cultural centre of the West Bengal Muslims was established in the Bhursut (ancient Bhūriśreṣṭhi) region on the lower reaches of the Damodar. The

1. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol.I (2nd edition), Calcutta 1948, p. 915.
2. Sen, S., *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, Burdwan, 1951, p.183

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mid-eighteenth century poet Bhārat Candra Ray belonged to this region and his highly Persianized style of poetry reflects the influence of the style of the popular Muslim writers of that locality. .....The early nineteenth century Muslim writers of this region are worth mention here. They wrote mainly for the consumption of the illiterate people residing in Calcutta, and they drew largely from Persian, Hindi and Urdu popular romance. Their language was so much saturated with Perso-Arabic and Hindi words that it was often unintelligible to persons not acquainted with those tongues. This jargon was known as Muslim Bengali. It was a creation by the West Bengal Muslim writers and was taken up by their North and East Bengal brethren only towards the close of the nineteenth century."[1]

Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itivṛtta, a book written jointly by Muhammad Abdul Hai and Saiyad Ali Ahsan, was published by the University of Dacca in 1956. In this book the authors expressed the opinion that after the death of Bhārat Candra (1760), the Kavioyālās and Dobhāṣī puthi writers carried the cultural life of Bengal up to 1800 A.D.[2] Regarding the development of Dobhāṣī literature they observed': "We have named this (literature) Dobhāṣī puthi because in it Perso-Arabic words were used in large numbers along with Bengali. Some of these puthis were composed in Calcutta but most of them were

1. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, pp.157—58
2. Hai, M.A. and Ahsan, S.A. *Bangla Sahityer Itivrtta*. Dacca University, 1956, p.20.

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composed in the country villages. In the cities people from different parts of India used to assemble for many purposes. Some as soldiers, some for carrying on business and trade or for some temporary purpose. It is not unlikely that Dobhāṣī puthis were written in a mixed language to entertain them. Apart from this the subject matter of these puthis was romantic and mysterious love-stories and their main object was to give pleasure to the readers. The use of Perso-Arabic words in Bengali is not new in Bengali poems. Throughout the Middle Bengali literature Perso-Arabic words were used to create particular situation or to make the society, customs or behaviour of Muslims lively."[1]

Muhammad Enamul Haq wrote his book, *Muslim Bāṅglā Sāhitya* in 1957. In this book he observes: "Dobhāṣī Bāṅglā" or Musalmānī Bāṅglā is a creation of the British period. It was the dialect of little-educated and illiterate Muslims of lower Bengal who were influenced by the Ohābī movement. ... Titumīr (1831) and Dudhu Miā (1847) were residents of this area. Their movements for religious reform, called the Ohābī and Fārāyejī movements respectively, influenced this area. Even before this influence the Hindus took lead in the cultivation of Modern Bengali literature. The continued Hindu hostility to Muslims resulted in a recrudescence of Muslim consciousness of their separate identity and the Muslims especially of lower Bengal, filled their

1. *Ibid.*, pp.22-23.

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language with more and more Persian and Urdu words. This language gained popularity through the Ohābi aud Farāyeji movements and a good deal of religious literature was produced in it. Muslims of Hawra, Hugli and the 24-Parganas did a brisk trade in printing and publishing these books in the baṭṭalā[1] presses of Calcutta. Until much later, high-brow Bengali Muslims contemptuously called this literature 'baṭṭalār puthi.' Even today the term is used to express opprobrium.' [2]

It is noteworthy that all these comments are brief and very general. The majority of critics have made no attempt to analyse the language. The passing analyses made by S. K. Chatterji and S. Sen are not sufficient to explain the nature and character of Dobhāṣī diction. No critic has made a detailed examination of the Dobhāsī texts or constructed the history of the literature in that diction. An attempt to do so is made in the following chapters.

1. The word, *battala*, means 'under the banyan tree' i. e. out-of-doors, The *battala* press was a type of chief printing press in Calcutta in the 19th century, which was located at a place classed Battala.
2. Haq, M. E., *Muslim Bangla Sahitya*. Dacca, 1957, PP. 277—9

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CHAPTER IX

The Problems of Nomenclature and Origin

A variety of names have, during the past century, been applied to the diction we have known as Dobhāṣī and the literature in which it is used, but though the term Dobhāṣī has now achieved a certain currency it is not certain that the issue is yet settled. It is not surprising that it was late in the history of Dobhāṣī that it was found necessary to apply a name to it, or that the need to do so was first felt by a foreign scholar. The history of census returns contains much evidence of people not knowing or feeling the need to use a name for their own language.

In the introductory note referred to above, the Rev. J. Long applied the name, *Musalman Bengali Literature* to the texts he was cataloguing. This, as far as can be traced, is the first application of a name to this branch of Bengali literature. Hunter followed Long's lead and called the diction itself *Musalman Bengali*. It is important to note that Long's catalogue, dated 1855 A. D., is about a hundred years later than the work of Garibullāh and Bhārat Candra Rāy. The latter's phrase, *bhāṣā yābani miśāl*, is clearly a description and not a title.

From then on a variety of terms were coined. Some critics followed Long, but others employed quite different terms. Siddiki named the literature *baṭtalār puthi*. The word *puthi* is derived from Sans-

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krit *pustaka* (book), and, though, in other contexts, it has the meaning of *manuscript*, it was used by Siddiki to connote printed books in this particular diction. The phrase *baṭṭalār*, a nominal phrase in the genitive case, means literally *under the banyan* with the implication that the books in question were printed in cheap presses, and not in established printing houses[1]. It is hard to resist the feeling that it had for a time at any rate a derogatory significance. Ahsan Ullāh made a compromise in the term *Musalmāni puthi*. Hakim named the diction *Islāmi Bāṅglā*, and the literature written in it *Puthi-sāhitya*. D. C. Sen adopted Long's nomenclature with a slight variation. He added the Bengali suffix *–i* and arrived at the term *Musalmāni Bengali*. S. K. Chatterji also employed this title. S. Sen invented yet a further term. He used the term *Muslim Bengali* for the diction. Hai and Ahsan were the first to employ the term *Dobhāṣī*. They call works in the diction *Dobhāṣī puthis*. E. Haq uses two terms, *Dobhāṣī Bāṅglā* and *Musalmānī Bāṅglā*.

There is no documentary evidence to show how Hai and Ahsan arrived at the term Dobhāṣī, but as the word has wide currency in the speech of the

1. Baṭṭala was the name of a place near Chitpur in Calcutta which was known for publishing books at cheap rate and with unenviable get-up and printing quality. Most of the Dobhāṣī puthis were printed and published from this place in the 19th century and were sold at a very cheap rate. From this the Bengali term baṭṭalār puthi or Dobhāṣī puthi published from baṭṭala used to be looked down upon by the modernists who attributed a new significance to the term to mean inferior type of literature both in content and production.

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people of East Pakistan and West Bengal, it can be assumed that this was its source. There are two names for the literature in current usage, *Dobhāṣi Puthi-sāhitya* and *Puthi-sāhitya*. The word, *Dobhāṣi*, had been a popular term long before Hai and Ahsan employed it, and there is no doubt that they were wise to follow popular usage. The use of the term in this work is based on that assumption.

The word, *Dobhāṣi*, obviously means *derived from two languages*, and is, therefore, an over-simplification, as the language contains elements from more than two languages, namely, Bengali, Arabic, Persian and Hindustani. Nevertheless, it has a logical justification. The three languages, Arabic, Persian and Hindustani all came into Bengal as part of Muslim culture, and can, therefore, be regarded as forming one group, bound together by certain characteristics which differentiate them from the indigenous language, Bengali, with which they became mixed. The term, therefore, can be interpreted as meaning Bengali and Islamic, if that word may be coined to cover the group of languages which came into Bengal with Islamic culture.

The word *pūthi* or *puthi* is now established in popular and scholastic use to cover works written or printed in Dobhāṣi. It has been defined as a word which "connotes a work which is either a narrative or a treatise in verse, written during or after the 18th century in a mixed diction characterised by the fusion of Arabic, Persian and Bengali words." The longer term, *baṭṭālār puthi*, arose naturally by association with the cheap printing

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presses, *baṭtalā*, which were used for the publication of this type of literature from the early decades of the 19th century. *Baṭtalār puthis* are different in form from other books printed in Bengal. The fount of type used was larger than that used in other publications. In time this larger type later became established as peculiar to the *puthis*, and printing presses in other parts of Bengal adopted it exclusively. The *puthi* books can, therefore, be recognised on sight. One other feature which distinguishes them is that though they are printed in the Bengali character and from left to right on the page, they are bound in such a way as to begin like works in Arabic and Persian from the end of the book.

Scholars have advanced different opinions regarding the origin and development of Dobhāṣī diction, and as they differ quite significantly it is requisite to state them in order.

Long maintained that the Muslims of Bengal created a mixed diction as 'a kind of lingua franca', because, as he says, they were 'averse to learning the vernaculars'. He pointed out also that the Muslims had an affection for the Persian language and that they were inclined to resist 'foreign influence' by which he seems to have meant the influence of English. Hunter observed that Dobhāṣī owed its origin to the influence of Islam in lower Bengal. He drew attention to the close association between the Islamic religion and the Arabic and Persian languages, which, with the spread of the religion in certain areas, began to exert an influence on the local language.

Siddiki's view is quite different. He claimed that

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the diction was a natural growth in Bengal in view of the mixture of races and languages which had been taking place there since the Muslim conquest in the 13th century.

The opinion of Hākim, which is supported by both D. C. Sen and S. K. Chatterji, is that Dobhāṣī diction was developed by the Muslims as a rival language as against the Sanskritised Bengali created by the Hindu paṇḍits. Sen described Dobhāṣī as one of the two extremes of Bengali style ; the one extreme being the 'Urduised' style of the Muslims, the other the 'Sanskritised' style of the paṇḍits. S. K. Chatterji concurred with this view. He said that Dobhāṣī was the creation of 'Urdu-knowing Maulavis' and that it was the "Maulavis' reply to the Paṇḍits' sādhu-bhāṣā of the early and middle part of the 19th century."

Sukumar Sen's views vary. He first stated that Dobhāṣī literature "flourished among the little educated Muslim community from the last decade of the 18th century." In another place he says that Dobhāṣī diction and literature were "created in the last part of the 19th century." His third view is that the Muslim poets of West Bengal founded a centre of Dobhāṣī literature in Bhursut about the beginning of the 18th century. With regard to causes he thought that it was the nature of the literature cultivated in this diction which was responsible for the excessive use of 'Arabic, Persian and Hindi words' in it. He also said that the saturation of Perso-Arabic and Hindi words made this literature 'unintelligible to the common readers', who 'banished them from the field of literature.'

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Hai and Ahsan assumed that Dobāṣi diction and literature were created for the pleasure of the people of cities who had assembled from different parts of India to live there ; though elsewhere they state that the greater part of this literature was created in villages.

Haq has concluded that Dobhāṣī diction was the colloquial language of the Muslims of lower Bengal, and that its later development was influenced by the religious reform movements in the first half of the 19th century. He also said that the reform movements helped this literature to flourish as a reaction against the political and cultural influence on Bengali literature which was beginning to be exerted by Hindu writers.

At this point all that need be said by way of comment is that none of these critics mentions the fact that the Dobhāṣī diction was first used by Hindu poets in the 15th century and more widely in the 16th and 17th centuries ; and that during this period Muslim poets employed only the standard Bengali of the time.

Siddiki's claim that Dobhāṣī was a natural growth, Haq's suggestion that it was the colloquial language of the Muslims of lower Bengal, the views of Hākim, D. C. Sen and Chatterji that it was deliberately invented by orthodox Muslims as a counter-blast to the language which was being developed by the Hindu paṇḍits, or the opinion advanced by Hai and Ahsan that it came into existence in the villages and was later supplied to the cities for the delectation of the urban population who spoke other languages, are matters which require detailed examination. This

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is attempted later, but comment may be made here on Sukumar Sen's contention that it was the adoption by poets of subjects from Arabic, Persian and Urdu literature which was responsible for the importation of a large number of exotic words. This does not seem reasonable in view of the fact stated above, that though Muslim poets in the Medieval period did in fact adopt themes from the literature Sen mentioned, they nevertheless wrote them in standard Bengali and not in Dobhāṣī. The poet Ālāol may be cited against Sen's view. He wrote on imported themes in the indigenous language. Indeed, he went further, as D.C. Sen says. "Alaol is the first of the poets who aimed at word-painting and at that finished Sanskritic expression which is the forte of the Bengali literature of the 18th century."[1] It may also be observed that some Muslim poets continued to write on imported themes in the standard language during the 18th and 19th centuries after Dobhāṣī literature had begun to flourish.[2]

1. Sen, D. C., *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, Calcutta, University, 1911, p. 624.
2. Haq, M. E., *op. cit.*, Chapter V.

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CHAPTER X

The Influence of Arabic, Persian and Hindustani

Arabic, the language of the religion of Islam, and Persian, the language of Muslim culture and administration, started exerting their influence in Bengal from the beginning of the 13th eentury, when Muslims from outside India conquered Bengal. The Muslim rule in Bengal lasted for over 500 years and during this long period a large number of words and some grammatical forms were imported into the Bengali language from Arabic and Persian and later from Hindustani.[1]

Muslim rule in Bengal can broadly be divided into two periods, identified with two racial dynasties, Pathan and Moghal. The Pathan period ran from the 13th century to the last quarter of the 16th century; the Moghal period from the last quarter of the 16th century, when Akbar annexed Bengal to the Moghal empire of India, to 1764 when the East India Company took over the political control of Bengal. But Persian as the language of the law court and of

1. Chatterji, S. K. *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* Vol. I, Calcutta University, 1962. p. 206 ; also Vol. II, Chapter — Morphology, Formative Affixes. Chatterji estimated that some 2600 words from Perso-Arabic and Hindustani languages have come to Bengali as a permanent addition to the vocabulary of the Bengali language. See also, *Bangala Bhasar Itivrtta* by M. Shahidullah, Dacca University, 1960, pp. 7—9,

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administration continued until 1835, when it was abolished by the Company's government. During the Pathan period the rulers were independent and Bengal was more or less isolated from the rest of India. In the Moghal period Bengal was ruled by the central authority of Delhi and was exposed to a much greater degree than before to influences from outside.

Contact with the Muslims in the Pathan period "brought in a number of Persian words into Bengali during the early period of Mohammadan rule. Many of the practices of the Sultan's darbār at Gour were adopted by the petty chiefs of Bengal, and engrafted on the old Hindu court customs and etiquette."[1] Hindus studied Persian, and even Brahmins used to read it, perhaps to obtain positions in the government. It is not surprising that there was some opposition to the changes that were being effected. "In the middle of the 16th century, Jayānanda in his *Caitanya-maṅgala* makes Caitanya describe the evils of the Kali age, among which are the wearing of a beard by Brāhmans, their reading Persian, putting on high boots, holding a stick and a bow, and reciting masnavī."[2] Administrative, judicial and military terms from the Persian language, and Arabic and Persian names of important Muslim personalities and classes began to enter the Bengali language from the earliest period of Muslim rule. "In all these ways,

1. Chatterji, S.K,, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
2. Chatterji, S.K., *ibid.*, p. 204.

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quite a number of Persian words came in by the end of the 16th century, as it is attested from literature."[1]

During the Moghal period the influence of the Persian language increased. During Pathan rule "the Persian borrowings were confined to essential words and therefore limited in number."[2] But from the emergence of Moghal rule in the later part of the 16th century "there remained no longer any barrier to the flow of such foreign words into the Bengali vocabulary."[3] In the Moghal period "Persian reigned supreme not only in the court but almost in every walk of life. There is hardly a single Arabic inscription dating from the Moghal period. Persian was the language of the cultured classes ; it was inscribed in the mosques and on coins, spoken in the court and written in revenue records etc., etc. The social and educational status of a man was judged from his knowledge of Persian. It was the best recommendation for service of the crown. Hence the Hindus and the Muslims all laboured to learn

1. Chatterji, S. K., *op. cit.*, pp, 203—4. In this connection the author has given the following 'rough figures' which "will give some idea of the rate of admission of Persian words into Bengali in the course of the several centuries. Fourth quarter of the 14th century : 'Sri-Krsn*a*-K*i*rtan', about 9500 lines, only 4 Persian words ; fourth quarter of the 16th century : Vijaya Gupta's Padma-purana, some 18000 lines, about 125 words ...middle of the 16th century, Manik Ganguli's 'Dharma-mangala' about 17000 lines, over 225 words ; fourth quarter of the 16th century, Mukunda Rama Cakravarti's 'Candikavya', some 20,000 lines, between 200 and 210 words,"
2. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p.6.
3. Sen, S., *ibid*, P. 6.

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Persian.[1] Kṛṣṇarām Dās, a 17th century Bengali poet describes the study of Persian by students and Kāyastha Hindus. "(The hero) soon reached in the city of the King (and saw) boys were having lessons in Persian from the teachers. The Kāyasthas, who were learned in Persian works, were writing (Persian) with golden pens behind their ears and ink-pots in front of them."[2]

The dominance of the Persian language and its importance grew more and more and "in the 18th century the importance of it in the country was like that of English at the present day. Hindostānī, Bihārī and Bengali Munshīs taught Persian to the sons of rich people and there were Maktabs and Madrasahs frequented both by Hindus and Musalmans'"[3]

The emergence of the Hindustani language as a lingua franca in India in the 17th century made the way more open for the importation of Perso-Arabic vocabulary elements into Bengali. "Hindostanī made itself the inheritor and propagator of the Persian and Moslem spirit in India from the 17th and 18th century ; and it came to Bengal, and Persian words which formerly were brought into Bengali mostly directly, now began to be admitted in larger numbers through Hindostānī into Bengali and the various other vernaculars of the land. The

1. Haq, M. E., *op. cit.*, p. 134.
2. Bhattacharji, S. N., *Kabi Krsnaram Daser Granthavali*, Calcutta University, 1958, Introduction, p. 41 (Text : Abilambe uttarīla rājār nagare / Bālake Phārsi paḍe ākhon hujure // Sonar kalam kāne doyāti sammukhe/ Kitābat nipuṇ kāysthagaṇ likhell //)
3. Chatterji, S. K., *op. cit.*, p. 205.

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result of it all was that towards the end of the 18th century, the Bengali speech of the upper classes, even among the Hindus, was highly Persianised.[1]

It was in these circumstances that Halhed observed in 1778 that the knowledge in Persian was an "indispensable qualification for those who were to manage the extensive affairs of the East India Company."[2] He found the Bengali of his time largely mixed up with Persian words, so much so that he named it "the modern jargon" and expressed his doubt regarding the feasibility of compiling "a grammar of the pure Bengali dialect", in which it could be "expected to convey a thorough idea of the modern jargon of the Kingdom".[3] He quoted a petition in prose, dated 1778, which he called "debased Bengali", because of the excessive use in it of Persian words. This petition contains 61 words of which 26 are Perso-Arabic and Hindustani. The language of this petition which was the current language of such Bengali prose as existed probably remained in more or less the same form until the establishment of literary prose in the 19th century.

The occurrence of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani words in such Bengali prose as has survived is a fact which has been noticed by all the important critics of Bengali language and literature from Halhed to the present time. In line with Halhed's remark

1. Chatterji, S. K., *op. cit.*, p. 205.
2. Halhed, N. B., *A Grammar of the Bengali Language*, Hoogly, 1778, Preface, pp. viii-ix.
3. Halhed, N. B., *Ibid.*, Preface, p. xx.

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in his grammar, W. Carey comments on this subject in the following words, though he is referring more specifically to the spoken language : "Multitudes of words, originally Persian or Arabic, are constantly employed in common conversation, which perhaps ought to be considered as enriching rather than corrupting the language."[1] Carey had experience of the language used by different classes of people of Bengal which he recorded in his book, *Dialogues*, in 1801. In this book he recorded a dialogue between a Khānsāmā who was a Muslim and a European.[2] In the preface of the book he observed that this class of person while "talking to an European, generally intermixes his language with words derived from the Arabic or Persian, and some few corrupted English and Portuguese words."[3] Another important critic of the early 19th century the Rev. W. Yates, remarked in his work, *Introduction to the Bengali Language*, while considering the different styles of the Bengali language : "Another kind of style may be called the impure style, because it borrows too largely from the Hindi and Hindustani and partly also from the English. This is used by almost all Muhammadans who speak Bengali, by most persons in the employ of Europeans ; and by those who are engaged in commerce and in judicial matters. It would be pedantry to proscribe all foreign words from

1. Carey, W., *A Grammar of the Bengali Language*, Serampore, 1801, Preface, p. III.
1. The language of this dialogue has been analysed in the Chart No. III.
2. Carey, W., *Dialogues*, 2nd edition, Serampore, 1806, Preface, p. v.

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the Bengali language ; because in many cases they are the only terms which exist or which are likely to be understood."[1]

It would appear, therefore, that up to the beginning of the 19th century words of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani origin had found their way into the vocabulary of Bengali in a manner that was natural in the circumstances of a mixed culture, and that so far there had been no objection to the process from either community. Carey's statement above quoted makes it clear that spoken Bengali was interlarded with words borrowed from Muslim sources. It does not follow that such words necessarily displaced words of Sanskritic origin but that they were received into the language to enable speakers of it to operate situations which a mixed culture and Muslim overlordship had created. These words were necessary if the ordinary people were to operate the situations of their ordinary life. Written Bengali drew on the same type of mixed vocabulary. The statement of Bhārat Candra Rāy, quoted above, is proof of this. His remark that if what was written was to be understood by ordinary readers and hearers, it had to be written in the language they were accustomed to, and that this language was *bhāṣā yābani miśāl*, is confirmation beyond question. Both Carey and Bhārat Candra Rāy make it clear that in their opinion the language was richer for this inter-mixture of elements from different sources.

1. Yates, W., *Introduction to the Bengali Language*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1847, p. 121.

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After Carey's time, however, opinion changed, and criticism of the mixed vocabulary began to be expressed. In the *Calcutta Review* of 1850 a long unsigned article, entitled, 'Early Bengali literature and newspapers'[1] indicated a new trend. It has been alleged that the anonymous āuthor was Long.[2] The article makes reference to Rām Rām Basu's *Rājā-Pratāpādityacaritra*, which was written in 1801 under Carey's general supervision. The author describes its style as 'a kind of mosaic, half Persian and half Bengali. He goes on to say that it 'indicates the pernicious influence which the Muhammadans had exercised over the Sanskrit derived languages of India.' Long elsewhere speaks of Basu's book as written in a style which was a kind of mosaic and which "showed how much the unjust ascendancy of the Persian language had in that day corrupted the Bengali."[3] Whether these opinions were formed by Long after a study of the text is not known, though it is doubtful that he would have formed such a judgement had he known the text well. It is incredible, however, that Haraprasād S'āstrī should have echoed the same point of view some twenty years later, or that it should have become generally accepted by some later critics as a fair estimate of Basu's book. S'āstrī called

1. *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XIII, January-June, 1850,
2. De, S. K., *History of Bengali Literature*, Calcutta University, 1919, p. 166,
3. Long, J. *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works. (this catalogue has been reproduced in full in D.C. Sen's work, Bangla Bhasa O Sahitya,* 8th ed., Calcutta, 1946), p. 421.

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Rājā-Pratāpāditycacaritra 'unreadable and ugly' because of the Persian influence on its language.[1] The facts are quite the reverse. S. K. Das in a recent dissertation has made a count of the Persian content of the vocabulary of this work, and has shown that it is very low, lower in fact than the Persian occurrences in the work of Basu's orthodox Hindu contemporary, Mṛtyunjay Vidyālamkār.[2] More important, however, from our point of view than these judgements on Basu's style is the evidence they reveal of the growing attitude of Hindu critics and others towards a style of language which retained the Persian elements which had previously been received into the Bengali vocabulary. That a book could be dubbed unreadable and ugly because it contained some words derived from Persian is symptomatic of the trend of opinion in certain scholarly quarters in the 19th century. D. C. Sen confirms this conclusion when he writes of Hindu paṇḍits who tried scrupulously "to avoid Arabic and Persian words in written Bengali, which they made as exclusive as a Hindu temple".[3] These paṇḍits not only attempted to prune Bengali prose of Perso-Arabic words but they also gave it "a ridiculous air of so called dignity by imitating Sanskrit phrases and idioms and importing them into our vernacularly."[4] Thus a Bengali prose style was deve-

1. *Bangadarsan*, Vol. VII and VIII, Calcutta, 1880—81.
2. Das S. K., *Early Bengali Prose, Carey to Vidyasagar*, unpublished thesis for Ph.D. in the University of London, 1963, pp. 171—2.
3. Sen, D. C., *Eastern Bengal Ballads*, Vol.I, part I, Calcutta University, 1923, Introduction, p. IXIII.
4. Sen, D. C., *Bengali Prose Style*, Calcutta University, 1921, p.73.

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loped in the 19th century,[1] which was, to quote Sen again, "a fantastic thing, unintelligible, foolish and full of unmeaning vain pedantry."[2] That this style did not gain more ground than it did is due to Carey and other European scholars. It has been observed in the previous pages that Carey thought that Perso-Arabic words enriched rather than corrupted the language. He sincerely "wanted that the people's language should be popularised in literature for the purpose of the spread of knowledge in the province."[3] It has also been observed that Yates, another European scholar, thought it "pedantry to proscribe all foreign words." He, however, strongly advocated the acceptance of "indigenous terms" which have "every prospect of being as plain and intelligible as the exotic words now in common use."[4] In fact Carey and Yates tried to make the language easy and to keep the exotic vocabulary for the purpose of a popular and intelligible style without prejudice to the classical languages, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. D.C. Sen summarised this effort of the European scholars in the following words. "The European scholars tried to make our vernacular style simple, direct and to the point, so that the masses could be enlightened in modern science and literature."[5] Fortunately too there arose in Bengal in the last four decades of the

1. Sen, D. C., *Bengali Prose Style*, Calcutta University, 1921, p. 73.
2. Sen, D.C., *op. cit.*, p. 82.
3. Sen, D. C., *ibid.*, p, 72,
4. Yates, W., *op. cit.*, p. 121.
5. Sen, D. C., *op. cit.*, p. 86.

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century writers of genius, including principally Rabindranath, who would have none of this nonsense. The movement, however, had two important results : it created for the time being a wide gap between the language of the tongue and that of the pen, and between the Muslim writers who continued to operate the mixed vocabulary which was the inheritance of both communities and the pandits who continued to overload their prose with 'unintelligible' Sanskrit words and phrases.

The standard prose which developed in certain schools towards the middle of the 19th century and which became the vehicle of much though not all Modern Bengali prose literature retained far fewer Perso-Arabic words than had been current in earlier generations. Such was the influence of these schools that a number of Muslim writers also wrote in *sādhu-bhāṣā*, as this Sanskritised prose style was called.

It is unfortunate that a battle of the styles should have come to be associated with the two religious communities. There is evidence too that certain Christian missionaries contributed to this movement apart. It is possible that the spoken language of some Muslims in the 19th century did contain a slightly higher proportion of Perso-Arabic words than that of the Hindus ; but this can hardly justify the judgement of Yates that this was an 'impure style' of Bengali used by 'all Muhammadans who speak Bengali' ; and still less the misleading statement which appeared in the *Calcutta Review* in 1854.[1]

1. *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XXIII, July — December, 1854.

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This article was seeking to justify the publication of tracts in 'Musalman Bengali' by the Calcutta Bible Society and contained the argument that they were intended for the 'use of Musalmans who cannot read pure Bengali, but who can understand a language half Urdu half Bengali.'

The impression that Perso-Arabic element in the Bengali vocabulary actually debased the language has continued into this century. Even so distinguished a scholar as S. K. De has had a hand in continuing it. He quoted Halhed out of context as follows. "At present those persons are thought to speak this compound idiom (Bengali) with the greatest elegance who mix with pure Indian verbs the greatest number of Persian and Arabic nouns."[1] This quotation was used to support an argument that the Perso-Arabic content of 18th century Bengali was excessive. De makes his point by inserting the word *Bengali* in brackets in Halhed's text. The word is De's not Halhed's. But that is not all. Halhed was not writing of Bengali but of 'Hindostanie' as the whole of his passage on this subject makes clear. "The grammatical principles of the original Hindostanie, and the ancient forms of conjugation and inflexion remained the same ; and whilst the primitive substantives were excluded or exchanged, the verbs maintained both their inflexions and their regimen. They still subsist in their pristine state ; and at present those persons are thought to speak this compound idiom with the

1. De, S. K., *op. cit.*, pp. 282—83.

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most elegance, who mix with pure Indian verbs the greatest number of Persian and Arabic nouns. Such of the Hindoos as have been connected with the Mussalman courts, or admitted to any offices under that government have generally complimented their masters by a compliance with these literary innovations."[1] It is impossible to justify De's lapse of scholarship in this respect, or that later critics should have quoted De's quotation of Halhed with the word, "Bengali", erroneously inserted, and ascribed to Halhed views he did not hold.[2]

1. Halhed, N. B., *op. cit.*, Preface, pp. XI—XII.
2. We have been able to find out the following works where the critics followed S. K. De's quotation of Halhed : (a) *Bengali Prose Style* by D. C. Sen, p. 6 ; (b) *Bangla O Urdu*, an article by M. Shahidullah published in the Journal, *Mahe Nao*, Dacca, August, 1954, p. 98 ; (c) *Bangla Sahityer Itivrtta* by M. A. Hai and S. A. Ahsan, p. 23,

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CHAPTER XI

Muslim Society and its Language Problems

The veneration of the Hindu pandits for Sanskrit and their openly expressed contempt for Bengali as a literary language are now established historical facts. It appears that there was, from the very early days, a similar attitude to Bengali in Muslim society, matched by a similar high regard for Arabic and Persian. The two latter languages were the recognised vehicles of religious and literary composition, and the attempts of Muslim poets to use the local language for these purposes were viewed with disfavour. This is apparent from the fact that a number of writers, who did work through the medium of Bengali, found it necessary to justify their doing so.

The earliest known Muslim poet, Sāh Mahammad Sagīr, says, in his poem, *Ichuf-Jalikhā* (1389-1409), in connection with the language of his work : "Now I am going to talk about the language of the manuscript. I wish to be firm while at the same time avoiding sin, fear and shame. People get pleasure from the language used in various poems, and whatever a man is attached to will make his mind happy. People are afraid of writing *Ketābs* (i.e. books based on Arabic and Persian originals) in Bengali. Everyone will blame me but it is not right that they should. I have thought about this subject and I havc come

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to realise that such fears are false. If what is written is true, it does not matter what language it is written in. I have heard wise men say that one's mother tongue is the most precious jewel in the treasury of wealth."[1] It is interesting to note that the mother tongue of this early Muslim writer was Bengali.

Saiyad Sultān, a Muslim poet of the 16th century, who wrote several works, says : "Whatever language God created for a man that language is his greatest treasure ..... The people who cannot understand their own language criticise me and say that I have composed pāñcālī, i. e. what I have written is like the poetry of the Hindus. When they read my book they call me a traitor because I have Hinduised the language of Ketābs."[2]

The poet Āfjāl Āli hits back strongly against the people who looked down upon him for writing in Bengali. In his didactic poem, *Nasihatnāmā* (1532–33) he says : "The people who ridicule me for writing

1. Text : "Caturthe kahimu kichu pothār kathan/ Pāp bhay eḍi lāj daḍha kari man// Nānā kāvya kathā rase maje naragaṇ / Yār yei s'radhāy santoṣ kare man/ Nā lekhe ketāb kathā mane bhay pāe / Doṣiba sakal tāk eha na juyae// Guṇiyā dekhilum āmhi eha bhay michā/ Nā hay bhāṣāy kichu hay kathā sācā / S'uniyāchi mahājane kahite kathan/ Ratan bhāṇḍār madhye bacan se dhan//" Quoted in M. E. Haq's *Muslim Bāṅglā Sāhitya*, p. 59.

2. Text : Yāre yei bhāṣe prabhu karila srjan / Sei bhāṣ tāhār amūlya ratan//..... Ye sabe āpnā bol na pāre bujhite/ Pāñcālī raoilun kari āchae doṣite/ Monāfek bale more kitabeta paḍi/ Kitāber kathā dilum hiduyānī kari//" Quoted by M. E. Haq in his article, *Kabi Saiyad Sultān*, published in *Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā*, Calcutta, 1941, Vol. 41, No. 2.

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scriptures (in Bengali) are themselves traitors."[1]

Another 16th century poet, Hāji Muhammad, advises his readers not to despise the Bengali language because of its association with the Hindus but to regard it as a most valuable thing : "Do not despise what I have written because it is in the '*Hinduāni*' character. Among the letters of Bengali alphabet, āñji* bears a valuable mystic importance. So why should we despise it ?"[2]

The poet, Sekh Muttālib of the 16th century, fears that he has committed sin by writing scriptures in Bengali but he consoles himself with the thought that he has done good to faithful Muslims : "I am sure that I have committed a great sin in that I have written the Muslim scriptures in Bengali. But this I am sure of in my inner heart that the faithful will understand my book and bless me. There will be great virtue in the blessings of the faithful and Allah will surely forgive me my sins."[3]

The same type of fear was expressed by the poet

1. Text : "Upahāsya kare buli monāfekgan/ Āyet hādich lekhiyāchi tekāran//" Quoted in Haq's *Muslim Bānglā Sāhitya*, p. 75.
2. Text : "Hinduāni akṣar dekhi nā karia helā// Bāṅgālā akṣar paḍe āṅji mohādhan/Tāke helā karibek kiser kāran//" Quoted in S.S. Husain's *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts*, p. 271.

* Ānji is not a letter of Bengali alphabet. In fact it is a mystic sign written at the beginning of the Bengali alphabet to indicate that the writer begins with the name of Allah.

3. Text : "Muchalmāni s'āstra kathā Bāṅgālā karilum / Bahu pāp haila mor nis'cae jānilum // Kintu mātra bharasā āchae manāntare / Bujiā mumine doā kariba āmāre//Muminer ās'īrbāde punya haibek/ Abas'ya gafur Āllā doṣ khemibek //" Quoted in S.S. Husain's *op. cit.*, p. 61

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Abdun Nabi of the 17th century in his book, *Amir-hāmjā* (1684). He says : "I am afraid in my heart that God will be angry with me because I have written the Muslim scriptures in Bengali. But I reject that fear in order to do good to the common people."[1]

Perhaps the most strongly worded argument in favour of the Bengali language is that of Abdul Hākim of the 16th century. He says : "Whatever language God has given to man in any country God understands that language. God understands all languages whether they be the language of the Hindus or the vernacular language of Bengal or any thing else……. The people who being born in Bengal despise the Bengali language cast doubt on their own birth. The people who do not like the language and learning of their own country should leave it, and go and live somewhere else. For generations our ancestors have lived in Bengal. Instruction in the language of the country is good for the mind."[2]

In spite of the opposition of certain classes of Muslims in Bengal against the writing of Bengali a large number of Muslim poets cultivated Bengali

2. Text : "Muchalmāni kathā dekhi maneha ḍarāi / Rachile Bāṅgālā bhaṣe kope ki gosāi // Lok upakār hetu teji sei bhae / Dara bhābe rachibāre is'chilum hṛdae //" Quoted in S.S. Husain's *Ibid.*, p. 3

1. Text : "Yei des'e yei bākṣa kahe naragan/ Sei bākṣa bujhe prabhu āp niranjan/ Sarba bākṣa bujhe prabhu kibā Hinduyāni/ Baṅga des'i bākṣa kibā jata iti bāni //……Je sabe Baṅgeta jarmi himse Baṅgabānī / Se sab kāhār jarma nirnae nā jāni / Des'i bhāṣā vidyā jār mane nā yuyāe// Nij des' tyāgi kena bides'e nā jāe / Mātā pitāmoho krame Baṅgeta basati/Des'i bhāṣā upades man hit yati //" Quoted in S. S. Husain's *op. cit.*, p. 224.

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literature throughout the Medieval period.[1] They introduced different new themes into Middle Bengali most of which were taken from Arabic, Persian or Hindi words. Yet there is not a single known instance in which they overloaded their language with Perso-Arabic or Hindi words or employed Dobhāṣī diction. Their language was always standard Bengali of the time. It is clear too from what they wrote that they were all Bengali Muslims, and that Bengali was their mother tongue.

It is true that they had to use certain terms of Perso-Arabic origin when indigenous equivalents were not available, and that as exotic elements began to find a regular place in the Bengali vocabulary they used them too. It would have been unnatural not to do so. Nevertheless the proportion of such words is small, and in no case is it large enough to point out the Muslim origin of the poet. Hindu and Muslim poets of the Medieval period can be distinguished by their subjects but not by their vocabulary.

When in the 18th century Muslim poets began to compose in Dobhāṣī they utilised the same subjects which had been introduced into Bengali by their earlier co-religionists who wrote in Bengali and not in Dobhāṣī. This would seem to dispose of the argument that Dobhāṣī diction owed its origin to the adoption in Bengali of exotic Islamic themes. Dobhāṣī

1. See Chapter II.

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had been used as an occasional literary language for centuries before the advent of Garibullāh.

The Muslims of Bengal have always had great respect for the Arabic and Persian languages. They consider themselves bound by sacred ties of religion with the people of Arabia and Persia. They studied literature, law, theology and philosophy in these languages. The Muslims of Bengal were and still are, obliged to read or hear their scriptures in Arabic and Persian and in this way they have become familiar with these languages. The Arabic language and its characters are considered holy and are greatly respected. The same Ābdul Hākim who very strongly supported the Bengali language and learning in Bengali also expressed his great respect for the Arabic and Persian languages, and called Arabic learning the master of all learning and Persian learning as second only to Arabic : "The early period of (human) life is the best time for acquiring education. The person who does not obtain education at that period of his life, remains ignorant. An ignorant person is like a dark house without lamp..... Learn Arabic and through Arabic study religious scriptures. Arabic education is the best of all learning. If you cannot learn

1. Text : "Pratham bayase hena uttam samay / Hena kāle vidyāhīn jebā mūrkha hae // Jehena pradīp hīn grha andhakār / tehena jānibā vidyāhīn je kumār // ... ... Ärbi paḍiẏā bujha s'āstrer vacan / Jatek elem maidhye Ärbi pradhān // Ärbi paḍite yadi nā pāra kadācit / Fārchi paḍiyā bujha parinām hit // Fārchi paḍite jadi nā pāra kadācit / Nij des'ī bhāṣe s'āstra paḍite ucit // .....Jatek elem maidhye Ärbi bākhāni// Fārchi elem hae Ärbi tanae//" Quoted in S.S. Hussain's *op. cit.*, p. 250.

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Arabic then learn Persian and through it good things. If you cannot learn Persian you should study scriptures through your Vernacular.....Arabic is the best of all learning and Persian is its son."[1]

The Muslims of Bengal therefore resolved the conflict between Arabic and Bengali by a compromise similar to that which the Hindus reached in the solution of their conflict between Sanskrit and Bengali : they venerated Arabic, and to a lesser extent Persian, and used it as the language of religion, but they spoke and wrote in Bengali. Brahmins like Mukundarām in the 16th century and Mṛtyunjay Vidyālaṁkār in the 19th had the utmost respect for Sanskrit, but they wrote in their native Bengali. It is probable, however, that the conflict was not as severe during the Medieval period as it was later when political passions began to develop in the 19th century.

By tradition a Muslim child begins his education with Arabic by hearing and reciting verses from the *Koran* in that language, while a Hindu child begins his in Bengali by worshipping Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning.[1] Perhaps this respect for the Arabic language and its alphabet was responsible for the later practice of writing Bengali manuscripts in Arabic characters. There are about 50 such

1. W. Adam in his "*Second Report on the State of Education in Bengal*" (Calcutta, 1835), gives the following description: "It is expressly prescribed by the authorities of Hindu law that children should be initiated in writing and reading in their fifth year : or if this should have been neglected, then in the seventh or any subsequent year being an odd number. Certain months of the year,

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manuscripts in the collection of Abdul Karim Sāhityaviśārad[1] but they are all of a fairly late date and may be due to more recent political and social developments. They are supposed to have been copied during the 19th century.[2] The earliest evidence of Arabic transliteration of Bengali is the *Munāyāt* by Mahammad Fasih. He is assumed to have been a poet of the 17th century.[3] He gave a transliteration list in which the Bengali alphabet and

and certain days of the month and week, are also prescribed as propitious to such a purpose ; and on the day fixed, a religious service is performed in the family by the family priest, consisting principally of the worship of Saraswati, the goddess of learning, after which the hand of the child is guided by the priest to form the letters of the (Bengali) alphabet, and he is also then taught, for the first time, to pronounce them." p. II. "Like the Hindus, however, the Musalmans formally initiate their children into the study of letters, When a child, whether a boy or a girl is four years, four months, and four days old, the friends of the family assemble, and the child is dressed in his best clothes, brought in to the company, and seated on a cushion in the presence of all. The alphabet, the form of letters used for computation, the introduction to the *Koran*, some verses of Chapter LV., and the whole of Chapter LXXXVII, are placed before him, and he is taught to pronounce them in succession. If the child Is self-willed and refuses to read he is made to pronounce the Bismillah, which answers every purpose, and from the day his education is deemed to have commenced." p. 24.

1. Hundreds of manuscripts of Middle Bengali Muslim writers were collected by Sahityavisarad of Chittagong who died in 1953. His collections are now preserved in the library of the University of Dacca. A descriptive catalogue of his manuscript collections was published by the University of Dacca in Bengali in 1958, and an English edition of that catalogue was published by the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, ed. S. S. Husain in 1960.
2. Husain, S. S. *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 37, 40, 44, 45, 64-5. etc.
3. Haq. M. E., *op. cit.*, p. 222.

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the Arabic transcription were set down together. The language of his book is the standard Bengali of Middle Bengali literature.[1]

It appears that the practice of writing Bengali works in Arabic characters lingered even up to the first part of the present century, when certain works were also printed in Arabic.[2] But in all cases the process was one of transliteration only; it had nothing to do with the language and style of the work. Many works of the Middle Bengali period, which were written in standard Bengali, were later transcribed in Arabic.[3] This practice might have developed at the hands of Arabic-knowing Bengali Muslims, who, at a later period, advocated the adoption of the Arabic script for the Bengali language. This movement, however, was strongly opposed and ultimately rejected by the literate Muslim community,[4] and as a result of it now there remains only a trace of the practice of Arabic transliteration. In other parts of the Indo-Pak sub-continent Muslims have accepted and standardised "the use of the Arabic character. The chief of these are Urdū, Sindhī, Punjābī, Tāmil and Kashmīrī."[5] The adop-

1. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
2. There is a Bengali work in the British Museum called *Ihsan al Mumenin* by M Rahman, printed in Arabic characters in Calcutta, 1904,
3. Husain, S. S. *op. cit.*, pp. 44-5, 280, 288. Works like *Nabivamsa* of Sultan and *Padmavati* of Alaol were transcribed into Arabic in the 19th century.
4. *Islam Darsan*, Vol. i, No. IV, Calcutta, 1916.
5. Titus, M. T., *Indian Islam*, London, 1930. p. 240.

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tion of the Arabic characters for Bengali was rejected possibly as a result of some sort of love for their own language and its original form on the part of the people of the Bengali-speaking regions of India and Pakistan irrespective of religious faith.[1]

It is extremely difficult to establish precisely the relationship between Dobhāṣī diction and the spoken dialects of the Muslims of Bengal, because there is no extant example of the colloquial language of Muslims, nor is any reference made to it during the Middle Bengali period when Dobhāṣī was growing as a peculiar diction in the works of Hindu poets.

The first reference to the current language of Bengal is that made in the grammar of Halhed in 1778, but it is a reference only not a description. Halhed called Modern Bengali, i. e., the Bengali current during his time, 'a jargon', because of the intermixture of Perso-Arabic vocabulary elements.[2] The petition he quoted as an example of 'jargon' is a piece of work-a-day prose. It can be assumed that its language is nearer to the colloquial than to the literary form.

Carey gives an example of the dialect of a Muslim Khānsāmā who "intermixes his language with

1. In this connection the language movement of East Pakistan can be taken into account. There was a great public movement in East Pakistan for the acceptance of Bengali as one of the two state languages of Pakistan after the partition of India until Bengali was accepted as one of the two state languages of Pakistan in the Constitution of Pakistan.
2. Halhed, N. B., *op. cit.*, Preface, p. XX,

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words derived from the Arabic or Persian."[1] This cannot be taken as a fully authentic example of the colloquial language, but it is the nearest approximation to it we have.

Yates comments that 'almost all Muhammadans who speak Bengali' use a language of 'impure style' which 'borrows too largely from the Hindi and Hindustani'.[2] He did not, however quote any example of the 'impure style' of the Muslims.

Another comment on the dialect of Muslims was made in *The Calcutta Review* in 1854. It is in a review of a Christian missionary book especially written for Muslims. It says that the Muslims "cannot read pure Bengali" but they "can understand a language half Urdu half Bengali."[3] The book under reference was one published by the Calcutta Bible Society which had been publishing books of this type for many years. An examination of the language the Society employed in their publications for the Muslims reveals that it is not "half Urdu half Bengali". It is Bengali with an admixture of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani words.[4]

It is probable that the comments of the above-mentioned scholars were based on the language spoken by some of the Muslims of Calcutta and the areas adjacent to it. The references, however, are

1. Carey, W., *Dialogues*, 2nd edition, Serampore, 1806, Preface, p.V. The book was first published in 1801.
2. Yates, W., *op. cit.* p., 121.
3. *The Calcutta Review*, vol. XXIII, July-December, 1854.
4. See Chart III.

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expressed in general terms which make it impossible to deduce the proportion of non-Bengali to Bengali words. Yates uses the word "largely", from which it may be gathered that the proportion was fairly high. It was certainly high enough for the speech of the Muslims to be distinguished as a separate dialect, or 'jargon' as Halhed called it. One must be cautious, however, because the use of a few exotic words in significant places could be sufficient to give a distinctive colour to the whole.

The opinions of Halhed, Carey and Yates cannot be taken as valid for the speech of the millions of Muslims who lived in the countryside of Bengal or for the language of the Muslims who established centres of literary activity in the eastern part of Bengal, where they constituted a vast majority of the population. The nature of their language we possibly can infer from the comments of Adam, who, in the course of his extensive survey of the indigenous educational system of Bengal, came into contact with a cross section of the Muslims in the interior of Bengal. He found that "the rural Musalman population speak Bengali, attend, indiscriminately with Hindus, Bengali schools ; and read, write, correspond and keep accounts in that language."[1] He also found that many "Musalman teachers of Bengali schools" were teaching "Hindu as well as Musalman scholars" and that there were hundreds of "Musalman scholars in Bengali schools" who with the

1, Adam, W., *Third Report on the State of Education in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1838, p. 214.

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Hindu scholars "assemble in the same school house, receive the same instructions from the same teacher."[2]

These remarks of Adam suggest that the speech of the Muslims in the areas he visited differed little from that of the Hindus who lived in the same districts. It is improbable that children sitting in the samc class-room at the feet of the same teacher of language would continue to speak different dialects for long, even if their mother tongues were somewhat different, and we have no evidence that they were.

It is certain, however, that there was a difference between the language used by the Muslims in Calcutta and that used by their co-religionists in the country areas of Bengal. This is probably due to the fact that the Muslim population of Calcutta included a fairly large proportion of immigrants from other parts of northern India whose mother tongue was still or had been Hindustani. W. W. Hunter throws some light on this difference. He observed that the Muslim students of Calcutta Madrasah who came from the interior parts of Bengal and who "at home were engaged in ploughing their little fields or plying their boats speak the rude peasant dialect" which was "unintelligible to the Calcutta Musalman."[2]

Further evidence of the Calcutta Muslim dialect is found in the novel, *Ālāler Gharer Dulāl* (1858). The novel contains a Muslim character called *Thak Cācā*

1. Hunter, W. W., *The Indian Musalmans*, London, 1871, p. 200.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

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(cheat uncle), who can be described as an urban tout. His dialect is characterised by a high proportion of Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words. He also employs some Hindustani verbal forms and Hindustani roots (dhātu) alongside Bengali corresponding forms, together with some hybrid formations. Chart IV shows that such words are approximately 40 per cent of the vocabulary, but as *Thak Cācā* is presented for satirical purposes, it is just to assume that his linguistic peculiarities were intentionally exaggerated.

The earliest examples of the dialects of the Muslims of rural Bengal are recorded in the work of Grierson.[1] These dialects represent the Bengali speech of the Muslims of interior Bengal during the last part of the 19th century, because though the work was published in 1903, the survey was made a number of years before the actual date of publication.[2] Two Muslim dialects, one from Mymensingh district and one from the Noakhali district, were examined.[3] They are simple Bengali and have no similarity with Dobhāṣī diction or the dialect of *Thak Cācā* of Calcutta. The Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words in these dialects are far fewer in number than those found in Dobhāṣī, or in the dialect of *Thak Cācā* or in the petitions of the 18th and 19th

1. Grierson, G. A, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. V, part I, Calcutta, 1903.
2. *Ibid*, p, 206. In some places of his work Grierson gives dates of the collection of the dialects he quotes, e. g., the dialect of Dacca district was collected in 1898.
3, See Chart IV.

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centuries, or in the books of Christian Missionaries especially written for the Muslims. But it is also true that even the rural Muslims employed a larger number of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani words in their dialect than the rural Hindus. A comparative study of the dialects of rural Muslims and Hindus will make this fact clear.[1]

The percentage of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani words used by Muslims in the Bengali they spoke varies, therefore, from place to place and even in some cases from family to family. It is probable that in some areas, particularly in Calcutta and Hugli, the language spoken by certain groups of people was Hindustani and not Bengali at all. Controversy on this subject has continued until our own generation. Hindustani[2], as Halhed observed, was "utterly unintelligible to the villagers and peasants" of Bengal but it was used "in large towns frequented by Mahometans'[3]. Carey observed that Urdu was spoken "by the higher class of Muslamans" and in "the large cities, where the Musalman princes keep their courts - - - but in places remote from courts and camps it is scarcely known".[4] Adam observed that "the Hindustani or Urdu is the current spoken language of the

1. See Chart IV.
2. Halhed called the language as Moors. It is also called Hindustani. In this work we have used the word Hindustani to mean Urdu.
3. Halhed, N. B., *op. cit.*, Preface, p.xiV,
4. Carey, W., *A Dictionary of the Bengali Language*, vol. I, Serampore, 1815, preface, p. vi.

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educated Musalmans of Bengal."[1] By the phrase, 'educated Musalmans of Bengal', Adam seems to mean those resident in the western cities of the province. As far as is known, he did not visit the eastern areas of Bengal.

In 1882, the Government of India appointed an Education Commission under the chairmanship of W. W. Hunter to suggest measures necessary for the development of the education of the people of India. This Commission gave special attention to the problems of the Muslims of India. The Commission asked the opinion of Nawab Abdul Luteef, an influential Muslim of Calcutta and the Secretary of the 'Mahomedan Literary Society of Calcutta' established in 1863, regarding the vernacular of the Muslims of Bengal. Luteef said that the vernacular of the upper and middle class Muslims was Urdu, because these two classes came from Arabia, Persia and Central Asian countries and settled permanently in Bengal. The vernacular of the lower class of Muslims who were ethnically the same as Hindus, was Bengali. He recommended Persianised Bengali, which was current in the courts of Bengal, as the medium of instruction for lower class of Muslims of Bengal.[2]

About ten years before this recommendation was made, the Government of Bengal rejected the idea that the vernacular of the Muslims was Urdu. It said :

1. Adam, W., *op. cit.*, p. 76.
2. Luteef, A., *A Short account of my humble efforts to promote Education, specially among the Mahomedans*, Calcutta, 1885, pp. 49-51.

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"His Honour has come to the decided conclusion that however it may be in Behar, in Bengal it would not be desirable to encourage the Mahomedans to look to Oriental languages for higher education. Their vernacular language is generally Bengalee, not Hindustanee, far less Urdu. They come pretty freely to indigenous Bengali schools."[1] It also observed the bitter feeling of the Muslims against Sanskritized Bengali and said, "It is certain that they would have no desire to be instructed in an artificial Sanskritized Bengalee such as some Bengalee scholars affect."[2] It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the vernacular of the Muslims of Bengal was found to be 'generally Bengalee' except among upper class Muslims, most of whom lived in large cities.

On the 14th September, 1883, the Education Commission submitted its report to the Government of India. In this report seventeen special recommendations for the development of the education of Muslims of India were made. The fourth recommendation concerned their vernacular. "That Hindustani be the principal medium for imparting instruction to Mahomedans in Primary and middle schools, except in localities where the Mahomedan community desire that some other language be adopted."[3] It is a historical fact that in Bengal

1. *From the Govt. of Bengal to the Govt. of India*, letter no. 2918, 17th, August, 1872.
2. *Ibid.*, para. 6.
3. Education Commissions Report, quoted in '*Rules and Objects of the Central Mahomedan Association*', Caicutta, 1885, p. 79.

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Muslims in general have used Bengali as the medium of instruction in Primary, Middle and Secondary schools since 1883 and that the few schools where Hindustani was the medium of instruction, were located in the cities and attended by the children of Hindustani-speaking Muslims who form a very small percentage of the entire Muslim population of Bengal.

It is, however, true that a number of Hindustani-speaking Muslims lived in Bengal in the 18th and 19th centuries.[1] They were the so-called upper class Muslims, many of whom were educated in the Arabic and Persian languages ; and generally they despised Bengali as a 'language of idolatry.' They refused to send their children to the schools which 'conduct education in the vernacular of Bengal a language which the educated Muhammadans despise — —' "Nothing on earth", said a Muhammadan husbandman recently to an English official, "would induce me to send my boy to a Bengali teacher."[2] Perhaps it was

1. Though the first census of Bengal was made in 1881, it is not possible to find a correct figure of the linguistic population in terms of Bengali-speaking regions because the Province of Bengal included some parts of Assam, Bihar and Orissa until the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1912. The Province of Bengal as a Bengali-speaking region was formed in 1912 and remained so until 1947, when it was divided in two parts, East Pakistan and West Bengal. The first report on the census of Bengal was prepared in 1921. In this report it can be found that there were 1,780,000 Muslims in Bengal, speaking Urdu as their vernacular. It can be assumed, however, that this population was much smaller in number in the 18th and 19th centuries.
2. Hunter, W. W., *op. cit.*, p. 178.

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for this class of Muslims that the 'Dacca Mahomedan Friends' Association' conducted its primary examination for girls in Urdu as well as in Bengali.[1]

The first socio-political organisation of the Muslims of the sub-continent was formed in Bengal in the year 1863 by Nawab (then Moulvi) Abdool Luteef Khan Bahadur.[2] It was formed in Calcutta from 'the most learned and influential members of the community' with the purpose "of imparting useful information to the better classes of the Mahomedan community, who were mostly unacquainted with the English language."[3] Another object of the Society was "the promotion of social intercourse and interchange of thought among the different communities of Her Majesty's subjects."[4] The languages of the Society were three — English, Persian and Urdu. It was an organisation of 'the better classes of the Mahomedan community." Perhaps most of them did not know the Bengali language or its literature. There is, however, no evidence that this Society hated Bengali. This we find in a later age. The so-called upper class Muslims (āśrāfs) used to say : "We are true āśrāfs (coming from the top class society of Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Bagdād etc.). Unfortunately, our predecessors came to live in India. How can we learn Bengali ?

1. *The First Annual Report of the Dacca Mahomedan Friends' Association*, Dacca, 1883, p. 5.
2. Ruheemoodden, M., *A Quarter Century of the Mohamedan Literary Society of Calcutta*, from 1863—1889, Calcutta, 1889. p. 4.
3. Ruheemoodden, M., *ibid.*, p. 4.
4. Ruheemoodden, M., *op. cit.*, p. 6.

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Can *bāṅglā-fāṅglā* be the language of the aristocratic Muslims''?[1]

It can be assumed that this class of Muslims had been despising Bengali and abusing the Muslim poets who contributed to Bengali literature in the Medieval period. They may be also responsible for the introduction of Arabic characters for writing Bengali. Perhaps their most vigorous attempt was to establish Urdu as the mother tongue of all the Muslims of Bengal. This attempt was countered by the rising middle class Muslims in Bengal in the early 20th century. They called a man shameless who "being Bengali by birth claims Urdu or Arabic as his mother tongue and boasts by saying 'I do not know Bengali' or 'I have forgotten Bengali' — this is indeed a dreadful disease."[2] This section of Muslims is said to be "a few disobedient urban sons (of Bengal) who call the step-mother mother instead of their own mother."[3] These middle class Muslims called the Urdu movement 'absurd, unreasonable and ridiculous.' They admitted that 'in the cities of Bengal there are a few Urdu-speaking Muslims and most of them speak incorrect Urdu.' They branded "their effort to impose corrupted Urdu upon the thirty million pure Bengali-speaking Muslims as sheer madness."[4]

No certain conclusions can be drawn regarding

1. Sobhan, S. A., *Hindu Mosalman*, Calcutta, 1888, p. 97. The reduplicated form, *bangla-fangla* is a derogatory expression in Bengali.
2. *Al-Eslam*, Vol. I, No. VII, Calcutta, 1915.
3. *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, No. IV, Calcutta, 1917.
4. *Islam Darsan*, Vol. III, No. I, Calcutta, 1922.

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the form of language used by the Muslims of Bengal at any time of their history, but it can be deduced that they did not all speak the same language. The differences seem to be determined by two factors, geographical and social, and, to a considerable extent, these two coincide. A non-Bengali language, probably Hindustani, was used by upper-class Muslims who lived for the most part in certain districts of Calcutta and its hinterland or in some other large cities ; whereas the majority of the Muslim population which lived in the rural areas or which formed the middle and lower classes in the towns spoke a form of Bengali which was not always distinguishable, except in certain contexts of situation, from that employed by their Hindu neighbours.

Hindustani was mainly a spoken language in the first part of the 19th century in Bengal. Adam found that Hindustani was "never employed in the schools as the medium or instrument of written instruction."[1] He, therefore, suggested to the Government that Persian be maintained as a language of instruction for the upper-class Muslims.[2] Perhaps the upper-class Muslims knew both Urdu and Persian "but preferred to write Persian."[3] The prestige of Hindustani as a written language was not high in the early 19th century even in Calcutta, and, for that reason, the first Hindustani paper, *Jām-i-Jāhān Nūmā*, published from Calcutta

1. Adam, W., op. cit., p. 76.
2. Ibid., p. 214.
3. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies* Vol. XVIII, No, 3, London, 1956.

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in 1822 did not continue more than three months after which it was replaced by a Persian issue.[1] This seems to be proof that Hindustani had not yet become established as a literary language.

Mention needs to be made of another dialect which was current to a limited extent in the Calcutta area. It is known as *khotta*. Its origin is not yet known, neither has any attempt been made to describe it in linguistic terms, but it is obvious to even a superficial examination that it is compounded of Bengali and Hindustani elements. It has been described as a 'bastard' growth. Its origin may be ascribed to either of the two processes, or perhaps to both. Only a linguistic description will make clear which. It may have developed from the attempt made by Hindustani-speakers in the cities of West Bengal to acquire a working knowledge of Bengali, or from an attempt of Bengali-speaking servants of Hindustani households to acquire sufficient Hindustani to enable them to communicate with their employers. In either case it was a linguistic compromise necessitated by the existence of a mixed language community. *Thak Cācās's* language, already referred to, may be taken as a sample of it in spite of certain intentional exaggerations. In his case it may have been prompted by social pretensions. Those who used *khoṭṭa* came to feel that it was a socially superior dialect to Bengali.

It is possible, however, that it has a longer history in Bengal than is usually assumed. Many Muslims

1. *Ibid.*

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from Upper India, Persia and other Middle East countries came to Bengal from the beginning of the Muslim rule. "Wandering saints and preachers had been used to visit Bengal long before the Mughal conquest. But this stream became ampler in volume after annexation of the province to the empire of Delhi."[1] During Moghal rule, Bengal was exposed to the Persian and Hindustani languages and cultures. Bengalis were learning Persian and even cultivating Persian literature. "In the 18th century there was a fairly prolific crop of Sufi verses written in Persian in Bengal."[2] Many scholarly Muslims from Upper India 'made their homes in this rich province' and 'religious teachers, Sufi philosophers and religious mendicants' used to visit Bengal frequently and many of them lived there permanently. The wealth of medieval Bengal always 'attracted from abroad passing scholars in Arabic, in search of some less crowded market for their talent.' The vast expansion of the sea-borne trade of Bengal "in the middle of the 17th century' increased the oceanic communication with Persia, Arabia and other Middle East countries. 'A voyage from Bandar Abbas or Bosra to Hugli was much cheaper and easier than the land journey across upper India'. Persian Shiās from all walks of life who were coming to Bengal found Hugli a favourable place for their settlement. "This immigration of eminent Persians into Bengal was accelerated when

1. Sarkar, J. N., *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Dacca University, 1948, p. 224.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

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in the late 17th century the Safavi royal house of Persia fell into rapid moral decay, and misgovernment and official tyranny made life in the homeland intolerable to many a worthy son of Iran."[1]

Thus it is found that large numbers of Muslims were immigrating to Bengal in the Medieval period. Their language was not Bengali but it is expected that in the course of their stay in Bengal, either temporarily or permanently, they adopted some Bengali words and used to speak to the people of Bengal in a language which was a mixture of Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words and forms with some Bengali.

It has been observed that the poets who introduced and developed Dobhāṣī diction in the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th centuries belonged to the western part of Bengal, i. e. Calcutta and places adjacent to it.[2] In the 18th and 19th centuries there developed a literary centre of Muslim poets in the pargana of Bhurśuṭ,[3] which is not far from Calcutta and near to Hugli, an important port in Medieval Bengal. The poet, Bhārat Candra and the two most famous 18th century poets of Dobhāṣī literature, Garibullāh and Hāmjā, belonged to the Bhurśuṭ pargana. It is likely that the influence of the growing city of Calcutta and the old port of Hugli had much to do with the growth and development of Dobhāṣī literature in the 18th century.

1. Sarkar, J. N., *op. cit.*, p. 224.
2. See Chapter III.
3. Sen, S., *Bangala Sahityer Itihas*, Vol. I, (2nd edition), Calcutta, 1948, p. 919.

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The presence in Dobhāṣī diction of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani vocabulary elements and of some grammatical forms, verbs and pronouns from Hindustani, has been noted in Chart II. The constituents of Dobhāṣī cannot be compared with those of any of the spoken dialects which were employed by Bengali Muslims, because evidence of these dialects is not available. Certain limited conclusions may, however, be deduced on practical grounds. Nothing can be said on the noun content of the vocabulary of either Dobhāṣī or the spoken dialects, but it is unlikely that day to day speech could tolerate uncertainty with regard to common pronominal and verbal forms. The presence of *āmār* and *merā* alternatives etc. in Dobhāṣī presents no problem to the reader who knows the diction, but it would create practical problems for the speaker. The difference here is clearly that between a literary and a colloquial diction, and there is little doubt that Dobhāṣī, which, by the time of Garibullāh, had become, to a large extent, standardised, must be regarded as a literary diction, which in the course of time had lost contact with the spoken dialects from which it originally sprang.

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CHAPTER XII

The Tradition of Literary Languages in India

Sufficient has already been said to justify the hypothesis that whatever its origin, Dobhāṣī, as we know it, is a literary diction, which had become stereotyped as such at a fairly early date. There is no essential linguistic difference between the language of Garibullāh in the 18th century and that used by certain Hindu poets in the 17th century ; neither has there been any significant change since his time. Though we cannot prove it, it is reasonable to assume that the mixed language spoken by the Muslims of Bengal underwent changes from age to age ; but Dobhāṣī once fixed seems not to have undergone such changes. This phenomenon is not an exception in India, where, as the following paragraphs illustrate, there is a long tradition of literary languages, which bear some affinity to the languages of contemporary speech but which cannot be regarded as ever having been identical with them.

India[1] has a long tradition of literary composition in languages, which were almost certainly never spoken by the people at large. These languages were artificial literary languages cultivated by certain exclusive social classes, or by the theologians and

1. By "India" and "Indian" here, we mean the country and its people before independence in 1947.

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poets of certain cults, sects or religion. Often they bore traces of certain spoken dialects or languages, though not always sufficiently to determine their geographical origins. Many remained in use for a thousand years or more, and all of them long after the language or languages from which they may have been derived, had ceased to be spoken. It will be our purpose in the following pages to discuss, as far as is known, the origin and development of the most important of these artificial literary languages, so as to illustrate the length and strength of this tradition in which the Dobhāṣi diction grew in Bengal.

The first important artificial language of India is Vedic. It is a language which flourished throughout almost the whole of Northern India for more than a thousand years from approximately 1500 B. C. to 200 B. C.[1] Vedic may have originated from one Aryan dialect or from a mixture of several, but in the form in which we have it, it was never a spoken language. "Even in its earliest phase Vedic cannot be regarded as a popular tongue, but is rather an artificially archaic dialect, handed down from one generation to the other within the class of priestly singers".[2] Moreover, Vedic admitted "forms of other dialects as well, specially when towards the end of the Rig-Vedic period the mass of Vedic hymns became the common property of most Aryan tribes".[3]

1. Macdonell, A. A., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, London, 1900, p. 8.
2. Macdonell, A.A., *op. cit.*, p. 20.
3. Chatterji, S.K., *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1926, p. 34.

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Thus Vedic may be called a mixed language of literature drawn from various Aryan dialects.

The second important artificial language is Sanskrit. Monier Williams defines the word Sanskrit, as applied to the language as "refined, highly wrought speech".[1] This language "was used and studied by the followers of Vedic faith from Gandhāra to Benaras and Pāṭaliputra. Patañjali in the second century B. C. describes it as the language of the 'śiṣṭa' or cultured people, chiefly Brahmans of Āryāvarta".[2] By a gradual process of change, it evolved as a literary language from Vedic "but not in conformity with the natural development which appears in living languages".[3] The phonetic condition of Sanskrit language remains the same as that of the earliest Vedic but it is 'more modern and less complex' and "the changes in the language were mainly due to the regulating efforts of the grammarians, which were more powerful in India than anywhere else owing to the early and exceptional development of grammatical studies in the country".[4] The Sanskrit language was analysed in great detail and reduced to a stereotype by the great grammarian,

1. Monier, W.M., *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899, S. V. P. 1120. According to Macdonell it is "to be called Sanskrit, the 'refined' or 'elaborate' (Saṁskṛta, literally 'put together') *op. cit.*, p. 22. S. N. Dasgupta and S. K. De say that, "the word Sanskrit means purified and well-ordered". *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1947, Preface, p. VI.
2. Chatterji, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 60.
3. Macdonell, A.A., *op. cit.*, p.21
4. Macdonell, A. A., *op. cit* , p.21

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Pāṇini, towards the end of the fourth century B. C. He "gave this new language a fixity for all time".[1] It remained an artificial language used in religious, philosophic and literary writings for more than two thousand years.[2]

The third important literary language is Pāli. During the whole of the Old Indo-Aryan period[3] there "existed a vernacular, descended from a Vedic dialect and remaining parallel with Sanskrit, as the vehicle of Buddhism and bearing the designation of Prākṛt".[4] Prākṛt was "much simpler than Sanskrit both in sound and grammar"[5] and had many dialects. Pāli is not only a "very important and early Prākṛt"[6] but is regarded as "the oldest literary form of Prākṛt."[7] It seems to have been

1. Chatterji, S. K., op. cit., p.51
2. Macdonell, A. A., *India's Past*, Oxford, 1927, p.56
3. S. K. Chatterji's classification of the different historical phases in the development of Indian languages, laid down in *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* is useful and has been employed in this chapter. Chatterji's historical analysis is as follows. (a) Old Indo-Aryan (OIA) period (circa 1500 B.C. to 477 B. C.). (b) Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) period (circa 600 B. C. to 1,000 A.C.) of which 600 B.C. to 200 B. C. would be the early or first MIA stage, 200 B.C. to 200 A. C., the transitional MIA stage, 200 A. C. to 500 or 600 A. C. the second MIA stage and 600 A C- to 1000 A.C. the third or late MIA stage'. (c) New Indo-Aryan (NIA) period (after 1003 A. C.) 'The first few centuries after 1000 A. C. would be an Old NIA period, during which the NIA languages enter into life,' Vol, I. p. 17
4. Macdonell, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 59
5. Basham, A. L., *The Wonder that was India*, London, 1954, p. 391
6. Basham, A. L., *Ibid.*, p. 391
7. Macdonell, A. A., Ibid., p. 59

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established as a literary language "during the transitional MIA period (200 B. C. to 200 A. C.) retaining, however, a generally archaic (i. e. early MIA) type".[1] It became the religious and philosophical language of Buddhism. The original home of Pali was not, for a long time, known with certainty. Macdonell states that "its original home is still uncertain."[2] Grierson suggests that it originated from a North-Western dialect. Edgerton observes: "Pali, the sacred language of Southern Buddhism was a North India Middle Indic. It was certainly the dialect spoken in one of the localities to which early missionaries carried Buddhism and where thriving Buddhist centres were established. Its original home has been much disputed in the past, nowadays it has come to be rather generally held that it was the region of Ujjayinī."[3] Basham states that "Pali which became the language of the Sthaviravādin Buddhists" came from a dialect which "was probably spoken in the region of Sānchī and Ujjaynī."[4] Sukumar Sen suggests that Pāli "was used as a kind of lingua franca from one end to the other of Aryan-speaking India", and was "developed in Malwa (Ujjain Bhilṣā region) which was a centre not only of commerce and foreign contact but was a hub of

1. Chatterji, S. K., *Ibid.*, p. 57
2. Macdonell, A. A., *A History of Sanskrit Literature, London*, 1900, p. 25
3. Edgerton, F., *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*, Banaras Hindu University, 1954, p. 61
4. Basham, A. L., *op.cit.*, p. 391

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religion and culture as well."[1] The numerous and wide-spread rock and pillar inscriptions of Aśoka, written in Pāli, indicate that it was widely known throughout India as early as the third century B. C. After the fifth century it "entered into a career of artificial existence in India, Ceylon and later in Burma (among the Mons and Burmese) and in Siam, which can be compared only with that of Sanskrit."[2]

Thus Pāli, though it presumably originated from a regional dialect, has survived as an all-India artificial literary language. It was also used "by persons whose mother tongue was not Indo-Aryan",[3] many of whom lived outside the Indian sub-continent.

Buddhist Sanskrit, recently renamed Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, is another very important example of a mixed and artificial literary language in use in ancient India. It was developed by Buddhists and Jains. It consists of a peculiar mixture of Prākṛit and Sanskrit, and volumes of canonical works in both prose and poetry were composed in it.[4] Chatterji sees the development of the language as occurring between the second and third century A.D. According to him, Buddhist Sanskrit was employed for administrative as well as religious purposes e.g., in the chanceries of kings and in the public recording of

1. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 2
2. Chatterji, S. K., *op.cit.*, p. 58
3. Sen, S., op. cit., p.2
4. Macdonell, A.A., op. cit., pp. 25–26

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events. He writes : "The Buddhists for a time (2nd century B.C - 3rd century A.C.) almost side by side with their literary work in Pāli, sought to approximate the Prakrits they were familiar with, with the Sanskrit as used by the Brahmans, and this resulted in the curious dialect called Gāthā or Mixed Sanskrit or Buddhist Sanskrit from its very nature a most artificial mix-up, often with false Sanskritisation of Prakrit forms ; and this is the language which is found in works like the 'Lalita-Vistara', the 'Mahā-vastu' and the 'Divyāvadāna'. The same thing was done in the Chanceries of Kings and in the public recording of events, as is evidenced from inscriptions of the period."[1]

Winternitz calls this language "mixed Sanskrit"[2] but Edgerton used the term 'Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit', because of its artificial combination of Prākṛt dialects with Sanskrit. He observes : "The name Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit is my invention. Most people either speak of it simply as 'Sanskrit' or at most 'Buddhist Sanskrit', which seems to me unfortunate, because it implies that it is a kind of Sanskrit, whereas it can properly be called only a 'hybrid', primarily and originally not Sanskrit at all but Middle Indic, only secondarily and imperfectly Sanskritized."[3]

1. Chatterji, S. K., *op. cit.*, p. 53.
2. Winternitz, M., *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I. p. 83 (translated edition, Calcutta, 1927) translated by S. Jha.
3. Edgerton, F., *op. cit.*, p. 4.

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Initially the Buddhists and Jains ignored Sanskrit, preferring the use of Pāli and Prākṛt for all purposes. But as time went on, a desire to utilize the high social prestige of Sanskrit for their own ends came upon them and they "endeavoured to acquire a knowledge of Sanskrit. This led to the formation of an idiom which, being in the main Prakrit, was made to resemble the old language by receiving Sanskrit endings and undergoing other adaptations".[1] Thus they consciously tried to make their language "look more like Sanskrit, the socially respected language of their brahmin neighbours". This Sanskritization, as time went on, increased but "it never became complete".[2] This curious mixed language "has fully shown how much even an artificial language can do. The entire canonical texts of the Mahāyāna-school of Buddhism were rendered in this highly artificial Mischesprache".[3]

Our discussion of the nature and origin of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit has carried us forward into the Middle Indo-Aryan period. Before proceeding with our discussion of the linguistic events of this complex period, let us first recapitulate briefly. We have seen that the language of the Vedas was archaic, and that, in the words of Grierson, it shows "several signs of dialectic differences. As a literary language the form of speech preserved

1. Macdonell, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 25.
2. Edgerton, F., *op. cit.*, p. 7.
3. Sen, S., *A History of Brojabuli Literature*, Calcutta University, 1935, p.3.

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by them gradually developed into what is known as classical Sanskrit. On the other hand, as a group of cognate vernaculars, it took a different course in the mouths of the people, and branched out into different streams of living tongues as the Aryans spread and gradually advanced down the Gangetic Valley".[1] The dialectal problems unquestionably continued in the later phase of the old Indo-Aryan period, but the only evidence available is that contained in literary texts. Only by deduction can we arrive at any conclusion with regard to the languages or dialects actually spoken by contemporary people. By the time of Buddha (5th century B. C.) a number of dialects must have been spoken by the Aryan peoples of India and it is a reasonable assumption that the existence of these dialects was largely responsible for the dialectal condition of the old Indo-Aryan languages which had developed by the third century B. C. This phase "is called Middle Indo-Aryan or in a broad sense Prakrit",[2] which means "prākṛta, i. e., the natural, unartificial language, as opposed to Sanskrit, samskṛta, the polished,artificial language".[3]

Grierson has given a wider sense to Prākṛt. He classifies the Prākṛt languages in three main stages. The first stage is Primary Prākṛt. Vedic and Sanskrit are its literary forms. The second

1. Grierson, G. A., *A Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. V, part I, Calcutta 1903, p. 4
2. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 1
3. Grierson, G. A., *op. cit.*, Vol I, p. 121

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stage is Secondary Prākṛt. These are represented in Pāli literature, in the various Prākṛts of grammarians, in the dialectal languages of dramas and in Apabhramśa literatures. The third stage is Tertiary Prākṛt. The modern vernaculars of India are included in this stage.[1] This classification of Prākṛt is rejected by A. B. Keith. He observes : "It may be doubted whether the terminology has sufficient merit to render it desirable to give it currency, because it observes the constant process of change and suggests that there are greater distinctions between the periods than do exist, while it does not allow a special place to a fundamental innovation which occurs with the period designed as secondary Prakrit".[2]

Chatterji, examining the evolution of Aryan languages, finds it difficult to establish the inter-relationship of the various Middle Indo-Aryan languages. He observes : "The Prākṛts (and Apabhramśas) are literary and to a great extent artificial languages, standing to some extent off from the general current of development of MIA as spoken".[3] He follows 'the almost universally accepted hypothesis' as the 'missing links' between the NIA languages and OIA dialects, the derivation from one kind of 'spoken Prākṛt' of a "number of current NIA languages and dialects grouping themselves together

1. Grierson, G. A., *op. cit.*, pp. 121—25
2. Keith, A.B., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford, 1928, p.27
3. Chatterji, S.K., *op. cit.*, p.21

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by virtue of common traits".[1] It is most probable that successive forms of Prākṛt with many regional variations must have continued in use for centuries as the spoken languages of Aryan-speaking India. "All that we know about them is founded on the litterature in which they have survived and the grammars written to illustrate that literature."[2] The languages of this literature and these grammars cannot be accepted as the vernaculars of the people. They are "altogether artificial products suited for that artificial literature".[3] Thus the Prākṛts, persumbly derived from various dialects "became fixed exactly as Sanskrit had become fixed in the Brahmanical schools and remained unchanged as a literary form of speech for many generations".[4] This 'artificiality of Prākṛt poses problems to the students of the history of modern languages including Bengali because the changes which must have taken place in the spoken languages are not clearly reflected in the literary dictions which are the languages of the texts. We find the term Prākṛt associated with particular local names, such as Sauraseni, Mahārāṣṭri Māgadhi etc., but, whatever else these regional Prākṛts may be, they are not "really the spoken languages of those parts of the country. What we have are the standardised artificial forms of Prākṛt which were

1. Chatterji, S.K., *op, cit.*, p. 22
2. Grierson, G.A., *op. cit.*, pp. 122–3
3. Grierson, G.A., *Ibid.*, p.123
4. Grierson, G.A. *Ibid.*, p.123

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used for the purpose of literature".[1]

Another stage in the development of the Middle Indo-Aryan languages is that called Apabhraṁśa, "a word meaning 'corrupt speech' or 'decayed speech."[2] It is from the Apabhraṁśa dialects that the modern languages of Northern India eventually developed. The later stage of this language is variously known as Laukika or Apabhraṣṭa or Avahaṭṭha.[3] The Apabhraṁśa languages, as found in various texts, do not represent the spoken languages of the people. Like Sanskrit, Pāli and Prākṛt, this language was, in the form in which we have it, an artificial and fashionable literary diction. But some forms of spoken Apabhraṁśa gave birth to the New Indo-Aryan languages. S. Sen observes: "Like Sanskrit, Apabhraṁśa-Avahaṭṭha was a literary language, and in the available records it shows remarkably little local variation, practically the same form of the language appears in poems written in Gujarat and in Bengal. But the spoken language conditioned by the regional linguistic and ethnic environment took up the different regional characteristics, culminating in the birth of the different regional New Indo-Aryan languages".[4]

Grierson describes the Apabhraṁśa as 'local variations of Prakrit' and based on various dialects

1. Das Gupta, S. N. and De, S. K., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Vol. I, Calcutta University, 1947, P. CXX
2. Grierson, G. A., *op. cit.*, p. 124.
3. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, p. 4.
4. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, p. 4.

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of the people. He also constructed a scheme for the derivation of the New Indo-Aryan languages from the various local Apabhraṁśas.[1] But Keith observes that "this theoretical scheme will not stand investigation, for the evidence of texts and even of the literature proves clearly that Apabhraṁśa has a different signification".[2] He advances a theory that Apabhraṁśa is a different language like Sanskrit or Prākṛt. "The essential fact regarding Apabhraṁśa is that it is the collective term employed to denote literary languages not Sanskrit or Prākṛt. Bhāmaha expressly gives this three-fold division, and Daṇḍin expressly says that Apabhraṁśa is the the term applied to the idioms of the Ābhiras etc. when they appear in poetry. Guhasena of Valabhī, whose inscriptions have dates from A.D.559—68, is declared to have composed poems in three languages, Sanskrit, Prākṛt and Apabhraṁśa".[3] Chatterji thinks that the Apabhraṁśas as literary dictions, developed at the confluence of the Middle Indo-Aryan and New Indo-Aryan periods and that "these Aprabhraṅśas of literature are mainly based on hypothetical spoken Apabhraṅśas, in which the earlier Prakrits die and the Bhāṣās or modern Indo-Aryan languages have their birth".[4]

Though the sources of Apabhraṁśa are not known for certain the fact remains that this language, subject to local variations, developed as an artificial

1. Grierson, G. A., *op. cit.*, pp. 124-5.
2. Keith, A. B. *op. cit.*, p. 31.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
4. Chatterji, S. K. *op. cit.*, p. 17

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literary diction. Indian grammarians describe about twenty seven types of Apabhramśas, each named after the region in which it was employed. But, as Grierson points out, "That they were not actual vernaculars of the countries after which they were named is plain from these descriptions. These Apabhramśas were found even in countries of which the local language was Dravidian".[1]

One of the regional varieties of Apabhramśa in its later phase, Avahaṭṭha, was current in North East India, i. e., Bihar and Bengal. The language is presumed to have originated from this Apabhramśa-Avahaṭṭta.[2] "Some lingering traces of Avahaṭṭha have been found in the language of the Caryāpada",[4] supposed to have been composed during "the period 950-1200 A. C.".[3] This can be claimed as the oldest specimen of the Bengali language.

The history of the Bengali language may be divided into three stages, Old, Middle and Modern. According to S. Sen, "the Old Bengali stage roughly covered the period 950-1350. The Middle Bengali stretched from 1350 to 1800, and the Modern Bengali stage has stretched from 1800".[6]

During the Middle Bengali period an artificial mixed diction was used as the vehicle of some of the beautiful expressions of the poetic spirit in Bengali

1. Grierson, G. A. *op. cit.*, p. 124 (footnote)
2. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, p. 4
3. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6.
4. Chatterji, S. K., *op. cit.*, p. 123.
5. Sen, S., *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

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literature. This diction is called *Braja-buli*, which means speech of Braja. It "became the conventional jargon for conventional Vaiṣṇava sentiment. Braja in Bṛndāvana was traditionally supposed to have been the place where Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā lived in the 'dvāpara' age and Brajabuli (the language of Braja) came to be popularly regarded as the language in which Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā spoke".[1] The poems composed in it mainly describe the boyhod of Kṛṣṇa and his love for Rādhī in Brajadhāma, near Mathurā. The diction is a mixture of Maithilī and Bengali with a mixture of Western Hindi. It developed and was cultivated mainly in Bengal, though some "Vaishnava poets from Assam and a few devotees from Orissa wrote in it".[2] It is fairly generally assumed that Brajabulī came to Bengal because of the popularity of a poet by the name of Vidyāpati, who wrote songs on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme in Maithilī. Mithilā was a centre of learning during the Middle Ages and students from Bengal followed the custom of going there in search of learning. "Sanskrit students, especially in Nyāya and Smṛti, had to resort to Mithilā. When they returned home they brought with them, along with their Sanskrit learning popular vernacular songs",[3] which were current in Mithilā and said to be composed by Vidyāpati. Grierson supports the idea that Brajabuli language was created

1. Ghose, J. C., *Bengali Literature*, Oxford, 1948, p. 55.
2. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, p. 5
3. Sen, S., *A History of Brajabuli Literature*, Calcutta University, 1935, p.1

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by the influence of songs of Vidyāpati and by the effort made by subsequent poets to imitate him. He observes : "Songs purporting to be by Vidyāpati have become as well-known in Bengali households as the Bible is in an English one...To a Bengali, Vidyāpati wrote in a different and strange though cognate language, and his words were hard "to be understood of the people" so at first a few of his hymns were twisted and contorted, lengthened out and curtailed in the procrustean bed of the Bengali language and metre, into a kind of bastard language neither Bengali nor Maithilī."[1] The argument in favour of the influence of Vidyāpati on the origin of Brajabulī language is also given by Chatterji in the following words : "Vidyāpati's songs on the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa exerted a tremendous influence on the Vaiṣṇava lyric of Bengal. They spread into Bengali, and were admired and imitated by Bengali poets from the 16th century downwards, and the attempts of the people of Bengal to preserve the Maithilī language, without studying it properly, led to the development of a curious poetic jargon, a mixed Maithilī and Bengali with a few Western Hindi forms, which was widely used in Bengal in composing poems on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa."[2]

However attractive a theory it may be, that the songs of Vidyāpati were sung in Bengal and

1, Grierson, G. A., *An Introduction to the Maithili Language of North Bihar containing A Grammar, Christomathy Vocabulary*, part II, Calcutta, 1882, pp. 34-5

2. Chatterji, S.K., *op. cit.*, p.103

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the desire of Bengali poets to emulate him in their own songs resulted in the creation of a mixed diction, it cannot be proved for lack of evidence. It is known that there was a Bihari poet of the name of Vidyāpati living in the 15th century and that he wrote poems which were popular and delighted Caitanya.[1] These poems cannot today be definitely identified and therefore a theory based on their influence, however attractive and plausible it may sound, cannot be accepted in its entirety. What is known is that after the death of Caitanya some of his disciples and their successors wrote lyric poems on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme, which formed the centre of the cult established by Caitanya. These poems were written in both Brajabuli aud Bengali. According to Sen, the earliest known poem in Brajabuli is the work of a poet who was awarded the title, Yaśorāj Khān, by his patron, Husain Shah, King of Bengal (1493-1519), at whose court he lived.[2] The real name of the poet is not known for certain. According to Sen, he is supposed to have been a Hindu and his name "seems to have been Dāmodar Sen."[3]

The greatest of the post-Caitanya poets, Govinda

1. Krsna Das Kabiraj in his work *Caitanya Caritamrta*, a biographical book on Caitanya (composed sometime between 1575 and 1595) says that the songs of Vidyapati, Candidas and Jayadeb used to delight Caitanya : "Vidyāpati Caṇḍidās S'rīgītagovinda eitin gīte karaye prabhur ānanda//"
2. Sen, S., *op. cit.*, P.2
3. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 77

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Dās wrote in Brajabulī only, but others such as Jñānadās and Locanadās wrote on the same theme and in the same style in both Bengali and Brajabulī.

Once established in central Bengal the vogue of Brajabulī spread eastward as far as the court of Arakan. Daulat Kāji, a 17th century poet of this court wrote a number of lyrics in Brajabulī in his work, *Satīmaynā Lorcandrāni*. "He was the poet who proved that even without the love-lore of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Brajabuli could be effectively employed in Bengali".[1] Kāji's great successor, the poet Ālāol, also used Brajabulī in some of his lyric poems on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme in the 17th century.

The popularity of Brajabulī with the strong tradition of Vaiṣṇava poetry lingerd on into the 19th century. Rabindra Nath Tagore used this diction in his poetical hoax, *Bhānu Siṁha Ṭhākur*. He composed a series of lyrics during 1881 to 1885 in Brajabulī. Chatterji rightly remarks — "Brajabuli poetry is a standing example of the extent to which an entirely artificial dialect can be utilised by a whole people, for poetic exercise, and its position in Bengal can be compared with that of S'auraseni Apabhraṁśa and Avahaṭṭha outside the Midland in the late Middle Indo-Aryan and early New Indo-Aryan periods".[2]

It may be clear from the above observations that in India there is a long and continuous tradition

1. Haq, M.E., *Muslim Bengali Literature*, Karachi, 1957, p.146
2. Chatterji, S.K., *op, cit.*, p. 104

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of the use of artificial literary languages. The consensus of opinion of the authorities seems to be that many of these languages were of mixed origin, and that some at least, as for example, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, may have been deliberately evolved for specific reasons and purposes. The growth of Dobhāṣī as a literary diction is, therefore, no innovation in the processes which form the tradition of literature in India. Like the other literary languages before it, it became stereotyped in respect of both vocabulary and grammatical forms, and once fixed, it changed very little.

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CHAPTER XIII

Historical Summary

The problem of the origin of Dobhāṣī as a literary diction must be studied against the back-ground of the history of Bengal. It is reasonable to assume that if the Muslims had not conquered Bengal and settled there, Dobhāṣī could never have come into existence. Whatever the literary stimuli and other factors which contributed to its later development, its origin must be sought in the mixed culture which grew from the living together of different peoples.

The first Muslim conquerors of India reached Bengal about 1200 A.D., though it is probable that they did not reach the east and north-east parts of the region until about a century later. A certain amount is known of the political and religious history of the first two centuries after the conquest but nothing is known directly about the literary history of the period, because no literary compositions have survived. No extant composition can with certainty be dated much, if at all, before 1400 A.D. This, however, should not be taken to imply that no poets were at work between 1200 and 1400 A.D. The developed form of literary works which have survived from the 15th century suggest that there was no long break in creative activity. Sukumar Sen is right in his statement tha t "the forms and the

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contents of the Middle Bengali narrative and lyrical poetry presuppose uninterrupted cultivation for centuries".[1] Nevertheless we can know only by deduction what was being composed at that time. The significant fact, however, is that, by the time literary evidence began to be available, the Muslims and the indigenous peoples of Bengal had some 200 years in which to work out a *modus vivendi*. Court patronage of the arts had begun, and a number of Hindu poets were writing under the encouragement of Muslim rulers. Clearly too the linguistic adjustment needed to ensure intercommunication had already taken place.

It is at this point in history that a diction compounded of Perso-Arabic and Bengali vocabulary elements first found its way into the province. The introduction of such a diction into the poetical works presupposes the prior existence of forms of colloquial speech, in certain areas at any rate, which themselves contained a similar, if not identical, mixture of vocabulary elements. Poetry at the time was composed to be recited. Its subjects were of popular interest, and for that reason we can assume that the poets would not have experimented with a diction unless they were sure that some of their audience understood it. This argument cannot be proved because no samples of the speech of the age in question have survived, but it is a reasonable one. Muslim rulers and their officers, who spoke

1. Sen, S., *History of Bengali Literature*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 39.

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a form of Persian, and their subjects, most of whom spoke Bengali, obviously had to talk to one another and it is most likely that they did so by means of a mixed language to which both parties contributed words from their own languages. The language of administration at the higher levels was Persian, but administration had also to operate at lower levels at which the language in current use was Bengali. It is natural that certain words of administrative, and religious relevance for which there were no Bengali equivalents should be received into Bengali as loan words. Thus, in the course of time, Bengalis in certain areas must have learned a form of Bengali in which there were a number of Persian words. Converts to Islam would also have taken over a number of words from Arabic. On the other hand, Muslim officials must have found it necessary to acquire a certain amount of Bengali, even though what they spoke presumably had a strong Persian flavour. So arose a mixed lingua franca. We do not know the proportion of Perso-Arabic to Bengali words it contained, though it is probable that the proportion was not stable ; neither do we know how many people regularly spoke it, or where ; but it is clear that by about 1400 it was sufficiently stabilised to have formed the basis of literary experimentation. And in this experimentation with a mixed diction lies the origin of Dobhāṣī.

It has been stated in earlier chapters that the first occurrences of Dobhāṣī were few and sporadic ; that they are confined to contexts which involve the participation of Muslim characters, princes,

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officials, faqirs etc.; and that the only poets who experimented with Dobhāṣī were Hindus, some of them Brahmans. It may at first sight seem surprising that this mixed diction was not used by any Muslim poet before the 18th century.

It is probable however that this was a result of the structure of Muslim society. The lower classes, many of whom were originally converts from Hinduism, spoke Bengali and being poor they were almost certainly illiterate too. The upper and educated classes spoke Persian, and read chiefly Persian and Arabic. Evidence has been cited in an earlier chapter to show that there was a tendency to despise Bengali, and to regard Persian and Arabic as the only languages worthy of being used for literary purposes. Muslim poets who did use Bengali felt it necessary to justify their doing so. In circumstances where so many poets were supported by courtly patrons, it is possible that Hindu poets, whose mother tongue was Bengali, felt that an occasional attempt to write in a partially Persianised Bengali would redound to their credit in the eyes of their patrons; whereas Muslim poets, especially those who claimed to know Persian, would tend to regard it as being in their best interests to write in that language. They could justify the employment of Bengali as the language of the major part of the population, but such arguments in their case would not be so appropriately applicable to Dobhāṣī. All this of course is pure conjecture, but it has some degree of probability; and the fact remains that until the 18th century no Muslim poet used Dobhāṣī.

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A survey of the centres of literary activity in Bengal shows that Dobhāṣī was employed in certain areas but not in others. Garibullāh and Bhārat Candra Rāy both belonged to the Hugli dlstrict, to the north and west of Calcutta. Earlier poets had lived there too. It would seem, therefore, that mixed dictions, including Dobhāṣī, were fairly well established in that area. In Chittagong, however, which was the home. of Daulat Kāzi and Ālāol, the most important Muslim poets of the medieval period, there is no evidence that mixed diction of this type was used at all. Both Daulat Kāzi and Ālāol wrote exclusively in Bengali, except for occasional passages of Brajabuli, even though the themes they developed were of non-Bengali origin. In other parts of East Bengal, and in the northern districts, there are no examples of mixed diction in the works of Muslim poets. It would seem, therefore, that a direct connection exists between the areas in which Dobhāṣī texts are found and the distribution of the different classes of Muslim society. Halhed and Yates bear testimony to the currency of a mixed jargon in Calcutta and its surrounding districts, whereas Adam's educational surveys lead one to suppose that in the north and east of Bengal Hindus and Muslims alike spoke Bengali and learned it together in school.

Earlier analysis, supported by the charts, demonstrates that in the 15th and 16th centuries Dobhāṣī writers drew upon Persian and Arabic for certain words of the noun category, but retained Bengali verbs, pronouns and invariables exclusively. In the 17th century, however, verbs and pronouns of Hin-

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dustani origin begin to appear. It was suggested that this addition to the vocabulary marks the divergence of Dobhāṣi from the language of speech. Verbal and pronominal diversity is an artificial literary feature. When Garibullāh, the first Muslim poet to write in Dobhāṣi, adopted it as the exclusive language of his poetry, it was obviously firmly established as a literary language, as was the case with Brajabuli when Govindadās composed his Vaiṣṇava lyrics. Garibullāh had no inhibitions about using any word form from either language group. Bengali verbs and pronouns feature side by side with their Hindustani counterparts; and hybrids are found in which Hindustani nouns and verbs are used with Bengali inflections and vice versa. Dobhāṣi was by now free to develop according to its own rules. It was clearly Garibullāh's high prestige which was responsible for the acceptance of Dobhāṣi as an established literary diction. Saiyad Hāmjā, Garibullāh's younger contemporary and successor, first wrote in Bengali. It was only when he agreed to complete an unfinished work of Garibullāh's, that he went over to Dobhāṣi. From that time on, works in Dobhāṣi by Muslim poets began to proliferate, as Long's catalogue so clearly demonstrates.

In the 19th century, Muslim poets were able to choose between two languages, Bengali and Dobhāṣī. Some wrote in one, others in the other. There are many examples of works in both, except, it should be noted, that Muslim poets tended in their Bengali to avoid the excesses of Sanskritisation which were becoming fashionable in certain schools

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of Hindu writers. It may well be, as some critics have suggested, that some Muslim poets were prompted to write in Dobhāṣī as a counterblast to the Sanskritic Bengali which the *paṇḍits* were advocating. There may also be some truth in Enamul Haq's contention that the popularity of Dobhāṣī in certain quarters was not unconnected with the Ohābi and Fārāy'eji movements in Bengal though the leadership of these movements was mostly in the hands of Persian, Arabic and Hindustani *scholars*. As the Muslim community found it increasingly necessary to defend its position against the Hindus, who had been far quicker to avail of the facilities created by Western education, it is not improbable that they saw in Dobhāṣī a means of declaring and confirming their separate identity. Whether this is true or not, it is a historical fact that up to the 18th century Hindu poets had not been ashamed to write in Dobhāṣī, whereas from the 19th century onwards they wrote exclusively in Bengali. Dobhāṣī became a literary language of the Muslims, and once it was established as such, it began to be assailed by certain *paṇḍits* as 'unintelligible' and not worthy of the name of literature, a trend of opinion which is still alive in our own day.

It is regrettable that attitudes to Dobhāṣī literature should be determined by political and communal considerations. Much has been written in that language. Some of it, admittedly, is of a low standard, but some of it has considerable literary quality. Nevertheless, whatever its standards, it is right that Dobhāṣī poetry should be judged by criteria which derive from literature, and from that only.

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Chart II

Statistical analysis of the words in the works of Garibullah and Hamja

Name of the work, author, date and portion	Total No. of words.	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words.	Word Analysis			
			Noun	Pronoun	Verb	Adjective, Adverb etc.
Āmirhāmjār puthi by Fakir Garibullāh, approx. 1765, 60 couplets from the beginning of the story	792	347	275	10	14	48
Ämirhāmjār puthi by Saiýad Hāmjā 1739-94, 60 couplets from the beginning of the story	622	268	226	6	10	26

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Chart III

Statistical analysis of the words in the prose writings between 1748 & 1873

Date	Passage	Total number of words	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words	Word Analysis			
				Noun	Pronoun	Verb	Adjective, Adverb etc.
1748	A	321	30	23	×	×	7
1778	B	59	26	·23	×	×	3
1801	C	90	15	12	×	×	3
1806	D	70	19	19	×	×	×
1850	E	236	55	45	×	×	10
1858	F	87	41	31	×	×	10
1873	G	166	62	49	×	2	11

A — It is a private letter of a Hindu of Bengal. Mahārāj Nanda Kumār wrote this letter to his brother in 1748, quoted in *Types of Early Bengali Prose* by S. R. Mitra, C. U., 1922, pp. 115-16.

B — A petition dated 1778, quoted in *A Grammar of Bengal Language* by N. B. Halhed, Hoogly, 1778, p. 208.

C — Basu, R. R., *Rājā Pratāpāditya-charitra*, Serampore, 1801, p. 30.

D — Carey, W., *Dialogues*, Serampore, 1806, pp. 2 and 4.

E — A petition, quoted in '*A Collection of Bengali Petition*, Calcutta, 1869, pp. 185-89.

F — Thomas, J., *Dāy'uder Jabburer Ketāb*, Baptist Mission Press, 1858, p. 2.

G — Sah, B. — *Jalchānāmā*, Calcutta, 1873, p. 56. This is the self introduction of the poet in prose. This is a Dobhāṣī work on mystic philosophy.

Chart IV

Statistical analysis of the words in the dialect Muslims & Hindus

Dialects of Muslims of Bengal

Passage	Total words	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words	Word Analysis			
			Noun	Pro-noun	Verb	Adj. Adv. etc.
A	162	67	38	×	3	26
B	218	28	20	×	1	7
C	218	30	21	×	1	8

Dialects of Hindus of Bengal

Passage	Total Words	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words.	Word Analysis			
			Noun	Pro-noun	Verb	Adj.. Adv. etc.
D	128	5	4	×	×	1
E	218	4	3	×	×	1
F	218	8	6	×	1	1

A — This is the dialect of Thak Cācā, a Muslim character in the novel *Ālāler Gharer Dulāl*. (by P. C. Mitra,) and his wife. I have examined their dialect from the pages 202 and 215 of 'Basumati Sāhitya Mandir' publication of the novel. This novel started being published in a monthly journal in 1855. See *Bānglā Sāhityer Itihā* by Sukumar Sen, Vol. II, (3rd ebition), Burdwan, 1955, p. 166.

B, C, E & F — These are the dialects produced by G. A. Grierson in his work *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. V, part I, Calcutta, 1903, pp. 211, 249, 206 and 241 respectively. The dialects are from B — Mymensingh district, C — Noakhali district, E — Dacca district and F — Tippera district, and they are on the same subject.

D — This is the dialect of Mokṣadā, a Hindu lady and Becārām, a Hindu gentleman in the novel *Ālāler Gharer Dulāl*. We have examined their dialect from the pages 162 and 203 of the said edition of the novel.

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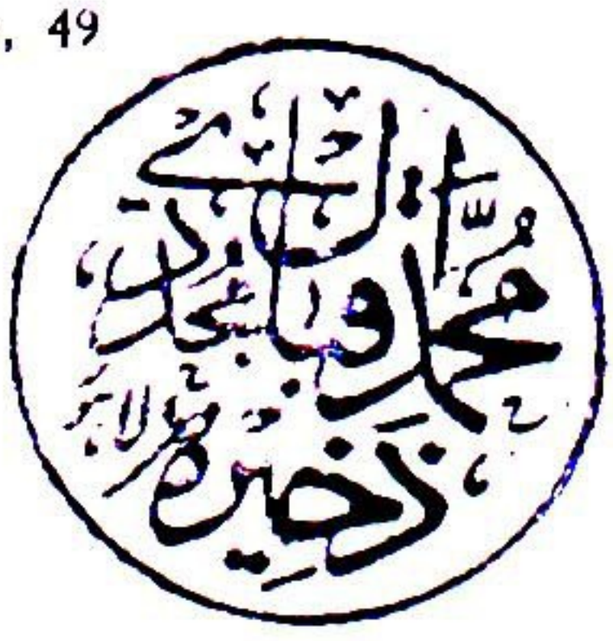

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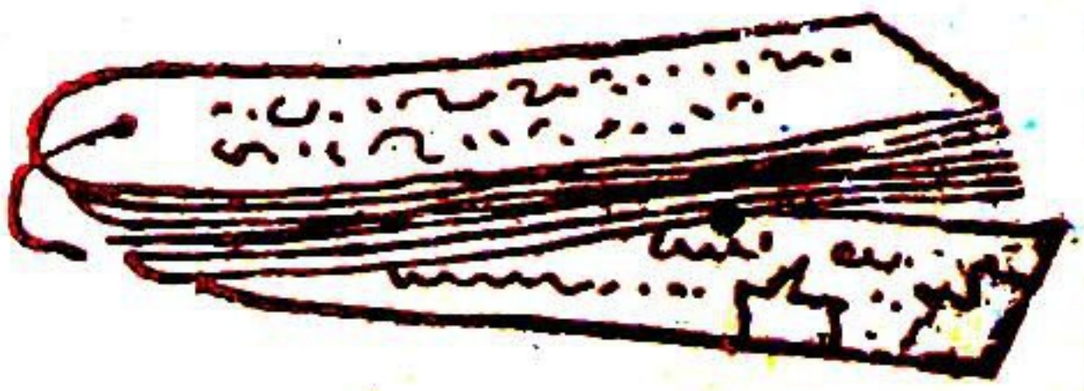

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