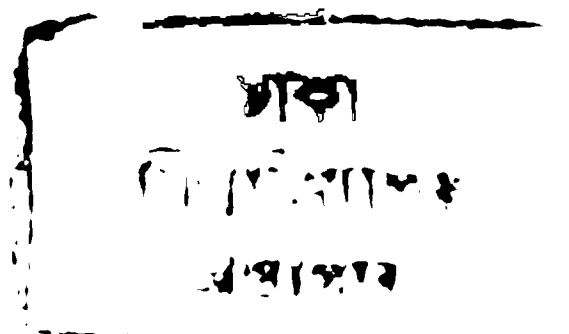


**BENGAL
UNDER THE RULE OF
THE EARL ILIYAS SHAHI DYNASTY**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY
1987**

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ABSTRACT

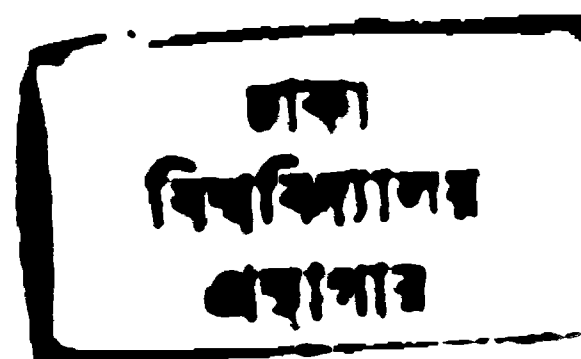
The present study is an attempt at reconstructing the history of the Early Iliyas Shahi rule in Bengal embracing its political, economic and social aspects.

Introduction deals with scope of the present work, evaluates the existing works and the significance of the period in the history of medieval Bengal is emphasized. An attempt is also made to analyse the sources.

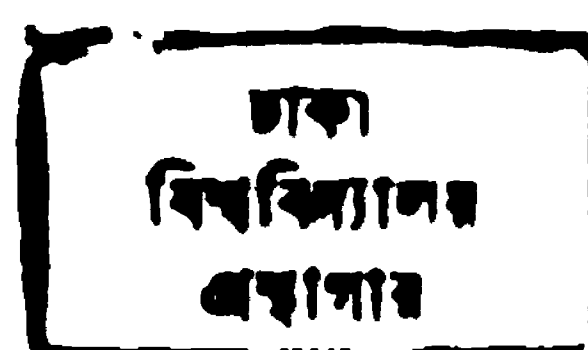
Chapter I attempts to discuss the main features of the history of Bengal of the pre-Iliyas Shahi period under the following heads : the establishment and expansion of the Muslim Kingdom in Bengal; the spirit of independence among the rulers of Bengal and their resistance to the Delhi authority; the foundation and growth of the Muslim society and the establishment of a distinct system of administration under the new rulers of Bengal.

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Chapter II deals with the origin and rise of Haji Iliyas to the throne of Lakhnauti. We have tried to clear the confusions hitherto prevalent regarding the rise of Iliyas Shah.



- Chapter III gives an account of the political history of Bengal under the early Iliyas Shahi Sultans. It also discusses the career and achievements of the early Iliyas Shahi Sultans.
- Chapter IV attempts to describe the administrative system. It deals with the nature of the Early Iliyas Shahi Sultanate, the power and position of the Sultan, the Darbar (court) of the Sultan, the Royal Household, the question of succession, the role of the Nobles, Ministers and high officials. It also deals with the administration of Finance, Army and Justice and the administrative system of the different units.
- Chapter V deals with the economic condition of Bengal. It discusses the rural settlements, rural classes and urban settlements; the Agriculture and Stock-breeding, the Crafts and Industries, Trade and Commerce and the Currency system.
- Chapter VI attempts to present the social life of Bengal. It treats the Muslim society and the Hindu society separately. Discussion on the Muslim society includes its composition and the social groupings, status of women, character of the Muslim society, dress with toilets and ornaments, food and drink, social ceremonies and amusements. Discussion on



the Hindu society contains the caste system together with the social divisions, role of the Hindus in politics, their family life, position of women, public women, dress toilets and ornaments used by men and women, food and drink, religious festivals, social ceremonies, recreation, social beliefs and customs and social morality.

Chapter VII

is devoted to study the architectural development. It discusses the pre-Iliyas Shahi architectural features, existing monuments of the Early Iliyas Shahi period and its follow-up which is manifest in the Eklakhi mausoleum. It attempts to point out the development of the art of building in this transitional phase of the art in Bengal.

Conclusion

attempts to summarise the main issues discussed in the above chapters.

Acknowledgement

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A.B.M. Samsuddin Ahmed.

Abbreviations

A.A.	: <u>Āyn-i-Akbarī</u> of Abūl Faḍl.
^{Daw} Al-Daw al-Lami	: <u>Al-Daw al-Lāmi' li-ahl al-Qarn al-Tasi'</u> of Al-Sakhāwī.
Annals	: <u>Viśva Bhārati Annals</u> , Visva Bharati.
A.S.I.R.	: <u>Archaeological Survey of India Report</u> , by Alexander Cunoningham.
Bibliography	: <u>Bibliography of the Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal</u> (Down to 1538 A.D.), by A.H. Dani.
Catalogue II	: <u>Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum</u> , Calcutta, Vol. II by H.N. Wright.
C.E.H.I.	: <u>The Cambridge Economic History of India</u> , ed. by Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib.
Chronicles	: <u>The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi</u> by Edward Thomas.
C.H.I.	: <u>The Cambridge History of India</u> .
Coins and Chronology	: <u>Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal</u> , by N.K. Bhattasali.
Corpus	: <u>Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal</u> by Abdul Karim.
E.B.D.G.	: <u>Eastern Bengal District Gazetteer</u> , Calcutta.
H.B.	: <u>History of Bengal</u> , published by the University of Dhaka.
I.C.B.	: <u>The Initial Coinage of Bengal</u> , by Edward Thomas.
I.H.Q.	: <u>Indian Historical Quarterly</u> , Calcutta.
Imp. Gaz.	: <u>Imperial Gazetteer of India</u> .
Inscriptions	: <u>Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol. IV</u> , by Shamsuddin Ahmad.

- J.A.S.B. : Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.
- J.A.S.P. : Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dhaka.
- J.B.O.R.S. : Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna.
- J.B.R.S. : Journal of the Bihar Research Society, Patna.
- J.N.S.I. : Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Bombay, Banaras.
- J.P.H.S. : Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi.
- J.R.A.S. : Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London.
- J.V.R.M. : Journal of the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.
- M.A.B. : Muslim Architecture in Bengal by A.H. Dani.
- Muntakhab : Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh of 'Abd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī.
- P.P.H.C. : Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference.
- Riyāḍ : Riyāḍ al-Salātīn of Ghulam Husain Salim.
- S.C.H.B. : Social and Cultural History of Bengal by M.A. Rahim.
- Shillong Cabinet : Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet of Assam by A.W. Botham.
- Siyar : Siyar al-Mutākhkharin of Ghulām Husain Tabātabāi.
- S.K.K. : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Caṇḍidāsa.
- Social History : Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Down to A.D. 1538).

- Suppl. I.C.M.II : A supplement to vol. II of the Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta by Shamsuddin Ahmad.
- Suppl. Shillong Cabinet : Supplement to the Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of Coins, Assam by A.W. Bothom and Friel, Allahabad.
- T.A. : Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī of Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad.
- T.F. : Tārīkh-i-Firishtah of Abūl Qāsim Hindu Shāh Firishtah.
- T.F.S. : Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī of Shams-i-Sirāj ‘Afīf.
- T.M.S. : Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī of Yahya bin Ahmad bin ‘Abd Allāh al-Sīhrindī.
- T.N. : Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī of Minhāj.

TRANSLITERATION

For Arabic and Persian letters :

ا = a	ر = r	ق = q
ب = b	ز = z	ك = k
پ = p	س = s	گ = g
ت = t	ش = sh	ل = l
ث = th	ص = s	م = m
ج = j	ض = d	ن = n
چ = ch	ط = t	و = w
ح = h	ظ = z	ه = h
خ = kh	ع = 'e	ء = 'e
د = d	غ = gh	ی = y
ذ = dh	ف = f	

Short vowels = a, i, u

Long vowels = ā, ī, ū

Diphthongs = au, ai

بھ = bh

پھ = ph

تھ = th

جھ = jh

چھ = chh

دھ = dh

কھ = kh

গھ = gh

For Bengali letters :

অ = a	ঔ = au	ঐ = ã	ন = n	শ = s'
আ = ā	ক = k	ট = t	প = p	ষ = s
ই = i	খ = kh	ঠ = th	ফ = ph	স = s
ঈ = ī	গ = g	ড = d	ব = b	হ = h
উ = u	ঘ = gh	ঢ = dh	ভ = bh	ড = d
ঊ = ū	ঙ = ṅ	ণ = ṇ	ম = m	য = y
ঋ = r	চ = c	ত = t	র = r	ং = ṁ
এ = e	ছ = ch	থ = th	ল = l	ঃ = h
ঐ = ai	জ = j	দ = d	ব = v	ঋ = ṛ
ও = o	ঝ = jh	ধ = dh		ক্ষ = ksh

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INTRODUCTION

It is desirable that every one should know the history of one's own country. History is the sheet-anchor of a nation. A noble future can be built only on the foundation of a correct realization of the past. A nation without the knowledge of its history is like a boat without a rudder in the midst of a stormy river. With this adage in mind, no one can deny the need of a comprehensive socio-political history of Bengal under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns. It is unfortunate that till now any specific research work on the history of this period does not seem to have been attempted.

What we have are general works covering the entire period of Muslim rule in Bengal. History of Bengal, vol.II, edited by Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar and published by the University of Dhaka in 1948 A.D., is the first comprehensive modern work, though its scope is limited to political history only.¹ Since the publication of this work scholars attempted to write the history of the period incorporating materials which have come to light from time to time. Among them two works in Bengali are outstanding : Sukhamay Mukhapadhyaya's Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, Svadhīn Sultānder Āmal (first published in 1962 and the

1. Of course, Charles Stuart's History of Bengal published in 1813 A.D. is possibly the first modern work on the Muslim rule in Bengal but, to a great extent, not very comprehensive and out of date in many ways.

3rd revised edition came out in 1982) and Abdul Karim's Bānglār Itihāsa, Sultānī Āmal (published in 1977). Authors of these two works have given us an upto date comprehensive history of the Muslim rule in Bengal in the Sultānate period, and both works include discussions on social, economic and administrative aspects besides political history. Bānglā Deśer Itihāsa, vol. II, edited by R.C. Majumdar and published in 1973 A.D., is another general work which is also an attempt to write a comprehensive history of the period. Specialised works on social and cultural aspects of the period have also been published.² Recently Muhammad Mohar Ali's History of the Muslims of Bengal, in two volumes, is another attempt to write a comprehensive history of Muslim rule in Bengal upto British occupation.³ In vol. IA of this book, the author gives a general political account and vol. IB deals with the administrative, social and cultural aspects. All these are attempts to write the history of Bengal from the coming of the Muslims, in some cases, to the end of the Sultānate period and in others, to the British occupation. One work of outstanding merit is an exception : M.R. Tarafdar's Iusain Shāhī Bengal (published in 1965 A.D.) which attempts to highlight a particular phase of Bengal's history focusing attention on political as well as socio-economic aspects. This work has shown very clearly that it is possible to focus attention on a narrower time scale and the result is a much clearer understanding of the history. With this idea in mind we have attempted the present work.

2. A. Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal, (Down to A.D. 1538), published in 1959 A.D.; M.A. Rahim, Social and Cultural History of Bengal, vol. I, published in 1963 A.D.

3. Published by the Department of Culture and Publication, Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, 1985.

Though Sukhamay Mukhapadhyaya in his book gave rather an elaborate treatment of the early Iliyās Shāhī rule in Bengal, but so far scholars have not attempted any comprehensive history of this period of Bengal history - a period which is important in many ways in shaping the history of Bengal in the succeeding ages. The present work is an humble attempt to fill up this gap.

As to the choice of the period, a word is necessary. The early Ilyas Shahi period is very significant. Several factors are responsible to give this period a distinct place in the history of Bengal. First, for the first time, the different parts of Bengal were united under the sole authority of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh. From this time, the united territories of Bengal received the name of Bangālah and its people came to be known as 'Bāṅgālī'. This unification of Bengal also integrated the Bengali - speaking peoples into one politico-social union and laid the foundation of the history of 'Bangālah' and 'Bāṅgālīs'. Secondly, the independent Sultānate founded by Iliyās Shāh continued its independent existence for nearly two hundred years and this long independent existence was not without significance. Thirdly, it appears that the condition prevailing in the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period was not congenial for the development of any proper and systematic structure of administration. But during the early Iliyās Shāhī period things changed greatly and in this period, the rudiments of a well organised system of administration started to take shape. Fourthly, Bengal's economy also made great strides at that time. There was remarkable

prosperity in agriculture, industries and commerce. The abundance of agricultural and industrial products and the large volume of trade, both external and internal, evoked the wonder and admiration of the foreign merchants and travellers. Fifthly, in this period, great changes also took place in the field of architecture and as a consequence there ushered in a new epoch in the art history of Bengal. The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns made bold attempt to develop a grand architectural style befitting the dignity of the new Sultānate. In fact, they set the trend of a style in the field of architecture which was followed with great success in the subsequent periods. In the field of the building art early Iliyās Shāhī period represents an amalgam of local and Muslim elements. As a result, the Muslim architecture of the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period turns to be the Bengali Muslim architecture. Thus a comprehensive study of the period is bound to shed interesting light on Bengal's past.

The objective of the present study is to throw sufficient light on the socio-political life in Bengal of the period of our investigation by analysing the factors or the forces that were at work.

Though we do not have enough materials on the subject, it is not impossible, as it apparently poses to be, to carry on research with the help of the Persian works, Bengali literature, coins, inscriptions and some itineraries of foreign travellers. In view of the paucity of materials at our disposal on some specific issues we have often been compelled to use materials belonging to earlier and later times. Because it is well-known that the socio-political structure of an area rarely undergoes sudden change; many of the forces now prevalent must be regar-

ded as a continuation of earlier period and the continuation of the present day trend can very well be expected in the future.

The sources for drawing a pen-picture of the socio-political life of Bengal under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns may be discussed under four broad heads : (i) Bengali literature, (ii) Persian and Arabic works, (iii) Coins and Inscriptions, and (iv) Itineraries and accounts of foreign travellers.

Bengali literature : The importance of the contemporary Bengali literature in the reconstruction of the history of Bengal under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns can hardly be overstated. Literature, indeed is the mirror of the age in which it flourishes. There is, however, sufficient scope for literary exaggerations, yet, making possible allowances, it can be said that literature throws ample light on the various aspects of the life of a people. Hence, particular care has been taken in the present work to study the various aspects of social life of the people of Bengal, during the period in question, as reflected in the contemporary Bengali literature. We find two contemporary Bengali Kāvyas - namely the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Caṇḍīdāsa and the Yusuf Zolekhā of Shāh Muhammad Sagīr. These two kāvyas give us sufficient light on the various aspects of social life of the people of Bengal. In the category of folk literature, the sayings of Dāk and Khanā also contain many useful instructions which greatly help us in getting an idea about the behaviour of the people of Bengal.

Sagīr dāsa?

Besides, an attempt has been made here to utilize some of the semi-contemporary works belonging to a period slightly earlier or later than that under review. Buddhist work entitled the Caryāpada belongs to the earlier period. It consists of songs which throw immense light on the different aspects of social life of the people of Bengal. Some ballads - namely the Mañik Candra Rājār Gān, Gopī Candrer Gān and Maynāmatīr Gān, may have also been current in early medieval Bengal. These ballads give us some light on the day to day life of the people of early medieval Bengal. Of the books of later period, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya of Mālādhara Basu, Padma Purāṇa of Vijaya Gupta, Manasā Vijaya of Vipradasa, Rasul Vijaya of Joyeuddin and Caṇḍīkāvy of Mukunda Rāma deserve special mention. More over, materials gathered from the Śūnya Purāṇa of Ramai pandit, Śekh Śubhadaya of Halayudha Misra, Pūrva Baṅga Gītikā, Caitanya Bhāgavata of Brindavandasa and many others have been utilized with profit for our present study. Every possible effort has also been made here to check up the date collected from the literary sources by an analytical and corroborative comparison with the accounts of the foreign travellers and Persian works.

Persian and Arabic works : In studying the Persian and Arabic works for the period under review, a few facts are to be borne in mind. Though the Persian and Arabic works are one of the main sources for reconstructing the history of the early Iliyās Shāhī period, the strictly contemporary works of the category are only a few in number. Hence, attempt has been made to use the works of the earlier and later period as well. Of the

Persian and Arabic works, the following are important :

1. Tabaqāt-i-Nāsirī of Abū 'Umar Minhāj al-Dīn 'Uthmān bin Sirāj al-Dīn al-Jawzānī.
2. Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī of Diyā al-Dīn Baranī.
3. Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī of Shams-i-Sirāj 'Afīf.
4. Futūh al-Salātīn of 'Iṣāmī.
5. Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī of Yahyā bin Ahmad bin 'Abd Allāh al-Sīhrindī.
6. Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī of Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad Bakhshī.
7. Āyn-i-Akbarī of Abūl Fadl.
8. Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh of 'Abd al-Qādir bin-i-Malūk Shāh al-Badāūnī.
9. Tārīkh-i-Firishtah of Abūl Qāsim Hindu Shāh Firishtah.
10. Akhbār al-Akhiyār fī Asrār al Abrār of Shaykh 'Abd al-Haq Dehlawī.
11. Riyād al-Salātīn of Ghulām Husain Salīm.
12. Al-Daw al-Lāmi' li-ahl al-Qarn al-Tasi' (A) of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhāwī.

Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi?

These Persian and Arabic works give us immense materials for reconstructing the history of Bengal.

Coins and Inscriptions : Coins and inscriptions are also very valuable source of information. sometimes, they unfold forgotten chapters of history. They provide us with useful information about the dates and reign period of Sultāns, they often furnish us important facts about them. Coins also contain legends indicating Sultāns' attitude towards the khalīfah of Islām, their love of power and show, their learning and particular inclinations and sometimes dynastic relations. The

metals and execution of coins may often serve as an index to the economic condition and artistic talent of the people. Though coins are portable and may be carried away by the traders and merchants their find-spots often help us to determine the extent of the Sultanate. They also reveal the nature and extent of foreign influence upon the country's civilisation. Like coins the contemporary inscriptions, though a few in number, also offer us singular as well as corroborative information in many ways. We have taken recourse to the analysis of the tills that appear in the coins and inscriptions for finding various aspects of administration and administrative set-up.

The itineraries and accounts of foreign travellers : The itineraries and accounts of foreign travellers, who visited Bengal during the period under review, also constitute indispensable and valuable contemporary sources of information. Their chief importance lies in the fact that the foreign travellers record in their accounts what they saw and experienced while they were in Bengal. But their records may not be accurate in all cases, because they visited only a few places, their stay also was very short and they did not have the opportunity of mixing with all sections of the population. Nevertheless their accounts open a storehouse of information which, when sifted with care, provide materials for reconstructing the socio-economic history.

The accounts of Ibn Baṭūṭah and the Chinese envoys who visited Bengal during the period of our investigation are important. The Moorish traveller Ibn Baṭūṭah who lived in Bengal for a few months in 1345-1346 A.D., supplies valuable information regarding the socio-economic condition

of Bengal. He gives us a list of commodities he found in the markets and their price. He has also described the state of plenty of the country.

The Chinese author Wang Ta-Yuan gives us valuable information on the socio-economic condition of the people of Bengal. He was the head of the Taxation Department of the Province of Fu-King. Though he did not visit Bengal, he himself heard descriptions of many places of the world. On the basis of these information he compiled the book Tao-Yi-Che-Leo in the winter of 1349-1350 A.D.

The Chinese envoys who visited the Muslim court at Pāṇḍuāḥ in the early years of the fifteenth century, also recorded many things that shed ample light on political, social and economic condition of the period. Based on the information of the Chinese missions to the court of Pāṇḍuāḥ, the Chinese authors compiled the following records on Bengal :

- (i) Ying Yai Sheng lan, compiled by Kuo Chiung-li long before 1433 A.D. It is a general account of Bengal without any reference to the king or court.
- (ii) Sing Ch'a Sheng lan, compiled by Fei-Sin in 1436 A.D., is also a general account of Bengal with some information on the king and the court but the name of the king does not occur. The earlier Chinese work of Chau-ju-Kua has also been utilized.

Besides, an attempt has also been made to utilize some of the Chinese records on Bengal of the later period. Of these records, Si Yang-Ch'ao-Kung tien-lu of Huang Sing-ts'eng, Shu Yu Chou Tseu-lu of Yen Ts'ong

Kien and Ming-She are important. These records are valuable as supplementary sources to other accounts of earlier period.

Valuable information can also be gleaned from the accounts of the European travellers and traders. Of them, the names of Nicolo di Conti, Varthema, Barbosa and Ralph Fitch deserve special mention. Every possible effort has been made to utilize these sources of the later period in order to clarify certain points not properly explained by the so far available contemporary sources.

With the help of these materials an attempt has been made in the following pages to reconstruct the history of early Iliyās Shāhī rule in Bengal.

We may not claim to have found any new startling fact of the history of the period under review. But we have tried to sift the materials with care and reconstruct aspects of political, social and economic life of the period in greater depth and details. We have attempted to high light various aspects of the period, which is so important in the history of Muslim rule in Bengal. However, we must admit that we have been restrained, to a great extent, by the limited nature of the sources in formulating our hypotheses and in finding all answers to the queries that naturally arise in the mind of an investigator.

THE BACKGROUND

In order to place the history of Bengal under the rule of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty in the right perspective, it is essential to briefly dilate upon the main features of the history of the period from Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī to the rise of Hājī Iliyās, as this was a period which witnessed the evolution of the distinguishing features that had tremendous effect and influence upon the subsequent period.

The main features of the history of the period are (I) the establishment and expansion of the Muslim kingdom in Bengal, (II) the spirit of independence among the rulers of Bengal and their resistance to the Delhi authority (III) the foundation and growth of the Muslim Society and (IV) the establishment of a system of administration under the new rulers of Bengal.

I

In the winter season of 1204-1205 A.D. (from November, 1204 to February, 1205 A.D.)¹, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī by a

1. The absence of any date in the accounts of the contemporary historians has led modern scholars to suggest different dates for the conquest of Naudiyah. Refuting all the earlier suggestions A.H. Dani asserted that Bakhtiyār conquered Naudiyah in the early part of 1204 A.D. cf. I.H.Q., vol. XXX, June, 1954, pp. 133-147. But recently A.Karim, on the basis of a gold coin found it reasonable to suggest that "Bakhtiyār's conquest of Nadia took place in the winter season of 1204-1205 A.D. and to be more precise, from November, 1204 A.D. to February, 1205 A.D." (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, vol. XXIV-VI, 1979-81, P.10)

combination of stratagem, military skill and adroitness conquered Naudiyah,² the capital of Bengal³ which was then ruled by Lakshmana Sena of the Sena dynasty and laid the foundation of Muslim rule in Bengal. Despite his success, Muhammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī did not think it wise to stay at Naudiyah⁴. He proceeded northward and captured Lakhnautī (Gauda)⁵, in the month of Ramadān, (?) 601 A.H. corresponding to the month of May, 1205 A.D.,⁶ which he made his capital and brought the different parts of that territory under his sway.⁷ From the contemporary sources, it is very difficult to get any light about the actual extent of the kingdom of Muhammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī. Some modern scholars are inclined to underestimate the extent and importance of Muhammad Bakhtiyār's achievements. But from the circumstantial evidence it seems that the extent of his kingdom was roughly bounded on the north by a north-eastern straight line from the modern town of Purnea via Devkot to the town of Rangpur; on the east and south-east by the Tista and the Karatoyā; on the south by the main stream of the Ganges; and on the west by the lower course of the Kōsi and from its mouth across the Ganges to the Rajmahal hills.⁸

2. For details of the conquest of Naudiyah see. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, vol. XXIV-VI, 1979-81 A.D. pp. 1-10; A. Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, pp. 67-69; J.N. Sarkar (ed.) : H.B., Vol. II, pp. 4-8.

3. There is no reference in the documents of the Kings of the Sena dynasty that Naudiyah was ever a capital of the Sena kings. It was merely a holy place on the bank of the Ganges (J.N. Sarkar (ed.) : H.B., vol. II, p. 5). But Minhāj-i-Sirāj mentioned it as the capital of Rai Lakhmaniyah (Minhāj : T.N., P. 148). G.H. Salīm followed him (Salīm : Riyād : P. 62). N.B. Roy, on the basis of Dhoyi's Pavanadutam, Abul Fadl's Ayn-i-Akbari and Śrī Caitanya Bhagavata expressed the opinion that Naudiyah was the Capital of Lakshmana Sena (I.H.Q., vol. XVII, No. 1, 1941 A.D., P. 94-95). It is true, however, that during his old age, Lakshmana Sena was staying at Naudiyah, and so at that time it was his seat of Government. In this sense Naudiyah may be considered as the capital of Bengal.

4. Md. Habib and Ahmad Nizami (ed.) : A Comprehensive History of India, vol. V, pp. 174-175.

5. Minhāj : T.N., P. 151. Minhāj did not mention any detail account of the conquest of Lakhnautī.

6. J.V.R.M., vol. 4, 1975-76, pp. 29-33.

7. Minhāj : T.N. p. 151.

8. J.N. Sarkar (ed.) : H.B., vol. II, pp. 12-13.

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This Muslim kingdom of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī was nothing but a small principality in the north-western part of Bengal. Still the greater portion of Bengal lay outside their principality and the completion of the task begun by Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī took quite some time. During the period of his two immediate successors, Muḥammad Shīrān Khaljī and Ḥusām-al-Dīn 'Iwāḍ Khaljī, the expansion of the kingdom of Lakhnauti came to a halt. But afterwards, the rulers of Bengal continued the policy of expansion whenever they found the situation favourable.

Ghiyāth-al Dīn 'Iwāḍ Khaljī (609-624 A.H./1212-1227 A.D.) was the first Sultān to make an attempt to extend the frontier in all directions. Minhāj-i-Sirāj says that he conquered and annexed Lakhnūr⁹ to his kingdom. He also annexed Bārbakābād¹⁰, identified with modern Rajshahi¹¹, and a portion of Sulaimānābād (Burdwan)¹² to the kingdom of Lakhnauti. He re-annexed south-Bihar and pushed his frontier upto Awadh as far as the mouth of the Gandak in North Bihar¹³. He extended his southern frontier upto the bank of the river Damodar¹⁴ and in the east his territory extended to the Brahma putra¹⁵. Perhaps he was not so successful in the north. Minhāj-i-Sirāj mentions that the neighbouring states of Lakhnauti such as Jājnagar, Bang,

9. Minhāj : T.N., p.163. Lakhnūr was identified with Nagar in the Birbhum district (J.N. Sarkar (ed.) : H.B., vol.II, p.10).

10. H.B., vol. II, p.29.

11. Suśīla Mandal : Baṅgadeśer Itihāsa, Madhyayug, pt.I, p.118.

12. H.B., vol. II, p.29.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p.22.

15. Saīlīm : Riyād, p.9, f.n.I.

Kāmrup and Tirhat all sent tributes to Ghīyāth-al Dīn 'Iwāḍ Khālījī¹⁶. But a careful study reveals that it was probably the result of raids and not of annexation¹⁷.

During the governorship of Malik 'Izz al-Dīn Tughral Tughān Khān (1236-1245 A.D.), Lakhnūr was lost by the Muslims¹⁸. But Malik Ikhtiyār-al Dīn Yūzbak (650-655 A.H./1252-1257 A.D.) tried to recover the loss. By a well-planned attack, he captured Urmardan¹⁹, identified with Mandaran in the Hughly district²⁰. Then he completed the conquest of Radha by capturing Naudiyah²¹. But unfortunately he lost his life in course of his Kāmrup expedition²². The next important move was taken by governor Tughral (1272-1281 A.D.) who, having consolidated his position in Lakhanutī, extended his authority upto the modern districts of Faridpur, and Dhaka²³ and annexed the reverain tract on both banks of the Padma as far as Lorical²⁴.

The appointment of Bughrā Khān as the governor of Lakhnautī in 1281 A.D. marks an important phase in the history of the expansion of the Muslim Kingdom of Bengal. It is known from Baranī that Sultān Balban gave instruction to his son Bughrā khān to exert himself in the conquest of Iqlīm Bangāla and advised him to consolidate his authority there²⁵.

It is not known what part did he play in completing the task given to him by his father, but it is certain that from this time an all-round expansion of the Muslim kingdom of Lakhnautī began. During the period of Ruknal-Dīn

16. Minhāj : T.N., p.163.

17. A.Karim : Social History, p.35.

18. J.N. Sarkar (ed.) : H.B., vol. II, p.49.

19. Minhāj : T.N., p.263. Malik 'Izzal-Dīn Yūzbak made his first attempt to capture Urmardan in 651 651 A.H./1253 A.D. This time he failed. But he was successful in capturing it in 653 A.H./1255 A.D.)

20. J.N. Sarkar (ed.) : H.B., vol.II, p.51.

21. Md. Habib and Ahmad Nizami (ed.) : A Comprehensive History of India, vol.v, p.1139.

22. Minhāj : T.N., p.265.

Kaikaūs (1291-1300 A.D.) and Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh (1300-1322 A.D.), Muslim Kingdom was extended to south and east Bengal and important centres were established at Satgāon²⁶ and Sunārgāon²⁷. The appearance of Ghiyāthpūr as a mint town²⁸ indicates that the area round about the present town of Mymensingh was annexed to the Muslim kingdom during the reign of Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh.

Firūz Shāh also extended his conquests across the Brahmaputra into the district of Sylhet²⁹. It is said that during the period of the joint-governorship of Bahrām Khān and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahadur, the Muslim rule was extended beyond the Meghna river to the territory represented by modern Tripura state³⁰. During the reign of Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh Chittagong was conquered³¹ and annexed to the Muslim kingdom of Bengal.

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23. Md.Habib and Ahmad Nizami (ed): A comprehensive History of India, vol.v, p.1141.
24. Lorical (Narkila of Baranī) is situated at about 25 miles due south of Dhaka and about 10 miles south-west of Rajbari (J.N. Sarkar(ed): H.B., vol.II, p.59.)
25. Baranī : T.F.S., p.92.
26. From the evidence of inscriptions, it is clear that Satgāon or Triveni area was conquered by Zafar Khān in or about the year 698 A.H./1298 A.D. during the reign of Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kaikaūs (P.P.H.C., 1956, p.237). But Satgāon was finally captured and annexed to the Muslim kingdom of Lakhnautī in the reign of Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh (J.A.S.B., New Series, vol. XVIII, 1922 p.412) Satgāon, previously known as Saptagrām, is situated about 20 miles to the north of Calcutta, near the junction of the three rivers-Ganges, Swarasati and Jamuna - known by the poetic name of Triveni (J.P.H.S., vol.I, part.IV, 1953 p.403). In the Muslim period the name Satgāon roughly corresponded to south-west Bengal (P.P.H.C., 1956, p.235, f.n.I)
27. The coin of Rukn al-Dīn Kaikaūs and the appearance of mint town in the region of Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh indicate that the conquest of Banga (East Bengal) began in the reign of Rukn al-Dīn Kaikaūs and it was finally annexed to the Muslim kingdom of Bengal during the reign of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh (J.A.S.B., 1922, A.D. p.410; J.P.H.S. vol.I, part-IV, 1953 402; A.Karim : Corpus, PP.25,158. Sunārgāon is situated about 12 miles to the south-east of the city of Dhaka (J.P.H.S., vol.I, part IV, 1953, A.D. p.402.
28. Ibid., p.404; A.Karim: Social History, p.37. Ghiyāthpūr is identified with a mauza of the same name near Enayetpur, about 15 miles south east of the modern town of Mymensingh (J.A.S.B., 1922, A.D.P. 416 ff: A.Karim: Corpus, p.159).
29. The Sylhet inscription records that Sylhet was first brought under Muslim Control in the reign of Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh by his general Sikandar Khān Ghāzī (A.Karim : Social History, p.37, f.n.3; J.A.S.B, New series, vol.XVIII, 1922, A.D. PP 413-14; J.N. Sarkar (ed) H.B., vol.II, p.79).
30. R.C. Mazumdar (ed): The Delhi Sultanate, p.195.
31. J.N. Sarkar : Studies in Mughal India, p.122.

Thus within a period of nearly one hundred and fifty years, the Muslim kingdom of Bengal extended over a vast territory with Devkot in the north, Sylhet in the east, Chittagong in the south east, Satgaon in the south and Radha in the west. The small Muslim principality established by Muhammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī turned into the Muslim kingdom of Bengal.

II

The history of Bengal from Muhammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī to the rise of Hājī Iliyās was also characterised by struggles for independence and resistance to the authority of Delhi by the rulers of Bengal and their subjugation by the Sultāns of Delhi. The peculiar geographical features and climate of Bengal, the distance from Delhi and the difficult communication tempted the rulers of Bengal to declare independence whenever they found the situation favourable. For this reason Bengal was always a problem to the Sultans of Delhi and it was known to them as "Balghākpūr" (Zone of strife)³². As a matter of fact, Bengal during this period, except for short intervals, remained practically independent and its rulers enjoyed a wide measure of independence in respect of administration and in the fulfilment of their military designs.

It is very difficult to ascertain the nature of Muhammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī's relations with Qutb-al Dīn Aibak of Delhi and Sultān Mu'izz al-Dīn Muhammad Ghūrī. Some historians are of the opinion that he subordinated himself to the Delhi authority³³. But Minhāj-i-Sirāj, the near contemporary historian,

32. Baranī : T.F.S., p.82.

33. Badāūnī: Muntakhab., Eng.tr.vol.I, p.82; Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., Eng.tr., p.50; Salīm: Riyād., Eng.tr., p.59.

He did it in the name of Muhammad bin Sam

did not mention anything like this. Moreover, from the circumstantial evidence it seems that Qutb al-Dīn Aibak ascended the throne of Delhi after the death of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī³⁴. Hence the question of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār's subordination to the Delhi authority does not seem to be valid. But it appears that he had an understanding with Qutb al-Dīn Aibak³⁵. Minhāj-i-Sirāj says that Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī minted coins and caused the Khutabah to be read in every part of his kingdom³⁶. He did not mention explicitly whether these were done in his own name or in the name of Sultān Mu'izz al-Dīn. But from his account it is known that Muḥammad Bakhtiyār had great regard for Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Sam³⁷. Recently P.L. Gupta tried to establish that Bakhtiyār issued coins in the name of Sultān Mu'izz al-Dīn.³⁸ However, whatever might be the relation of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār with the Delhi authority and Sultān Mu'izz al-Dīn, it is now almost certain that he conquered Naudiyah and Lakhnautī on his own initiative and founded the Muslim kingdom there and his outward loyalty did not preclude him from making administrative arrangements in his kingdom. His administration points to his almost independent status.

34. From Minhāj-i-Sirāj, it is known that till immediately before the death of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Muslim kingdom of Delhi was under the away of Sultān Mu'izz al-Dīn. Muḥammad Ghūrī and Qutb al-Dīn Aibak acted there as his viceroy. Sultān Mu'izz al-Dīn was assassinated on the 15th March, 1206 A.D. (J.N.Sarkar (ed): H.B. vol.II, p.15) and it is said that almost at the same time Muḥammad Bakhtiyār died (Minhāj: T.N., p.156). As Qutb al-Dīn Aibak celebrated his coronation at Lahore as an independent Sultān of Hindustan on the 25th June, 1206 A.D./3rd Shābān, 602 A.H. (J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.15), it is clear that he ascended the throne of Delhi after the death of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār.

35. Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī showed his diplomatic skill in appearing before and sending presents to Qutb al-Dīn Aibak after the conquest of Bihar and Naudiyah respectively. It was perhaps due to these gestures Qutb al-Dīn Aibak did not interfere into the affairs of Bengal during the life time of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār.

36. Minhāj : T.N., p.151.

37. Ibid., p.156. It is evident from Muḥammad Bakhtiyār's lamentation that he uttered at his death bed : "perhaps some misfortune has befallen my master, Sultān Mu'izz al-Dīn that fortune deserted me".

38. J.V.R.M., vol.4, 1975-76 A.D., p.34.

Muhammad Shīrān Khaljī (602-603 A.H./1206-1207 A.D.) the newly chosen chief of the Khaljis, pulled on well with the administration of Bengal by showing more allegiance to the Delhi authority. But his authority did not last long due to the enmity of 'Alī Mardān Khaljī who, on being present at the court of Delhi, instigated Sultan Qutb al-Dīn Aibak to interfere into the affairs of Bengal. Sultān Qutb al-Dīn Aibak took advantage of the internal feuds of the Khaljis of Bengal to materialize his policy of imperialism and ordered Qāimāz Rūmī, governor of Awadh, to proceed towards Bengal to settle the affairs of the Khaljis. When Qāimāz Rūmī reached Bengal, Muhammad Shīrān Khaljī did not submit, rather withdrew towards the north where he died in an internecine strife. Thus Muhammad Shīrān preferred death as a sovereign to submission to the vassalage of Delhi³⁹. Anyway, after the tussle between Sultān Qutb al-Dīn Aibak and Muhammad Shīrān, Husām al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khaljī continued to rule Bengal till he was replaced by 'Alī Mardān Khaljī in 606 A.H./1209-10 A.D. 'Alī Mardān Khaljī remained loyal to Sultān Qutb al-Dīn Aibak as long as he was alive. But on his death in 607 A.H./1210 A.D. 'Alī Mardān Khaljī took advantage of the situation and asserted independence, styled himself as Sultān and caused the khutbah to be read in his own name⁴⁰. This action of 'Alī Mardān indicates that he subordinated himself to Sultān Qutb al-Dīn Aibak only to secure his position in Bengal, but he wanted to be independent in all reality. Possibly this action gave rise to a sense of independence in the minds

39. Minhāj : T.N., p.158.

40. Ibid., p.159. No coin or inscription of the time of 'Alī Mardān Khaljī has hitherto come down to us. Anyway, his period of rule is very important in the history of Bengal. For, he was the first ruler of Bengal who openly declared independence, assumed the title of Sultān and ruled the country independently.

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of the Muslim ruling elite of Bengal. This sense of independence had far reaching effects on the history of the Muslim rule in Bengal. Husām al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khaljī (609-624 A.H./1212-1227 A.D.) also, on being elevated to the throne by the Khaljīs, assumed the title of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn and began to function as an independent ruler⁴¹. This independence of 'Iwadh Khaljī was not tolerated by Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish, the then Sultān of Delhi and it was obvious that he would attack Bengal at the opportune moment. So, 'Iwadh Khaljī at first tried to consolidate his authority in Lakhnautī in order to strengthen his position. In this respect he succeeded in attaining his goal by doing good deeds⁴². Minhāj-i-Sirāj says that people from all directions turned their faces towards him⁴³. 'Iwadh Khaljī also took some military measures⁴⁴ for the defence of his kingdom against any aggression. The most important step he took was the building of a flotilla of war-boats⁴⁵. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khaljī issued coins and introduced the khutbah in his own name⁴⁶. In order to stabilize his political position against Sultān Iltutmish he tried to show his connection with the Ghūride ruling family of Ghazna⁴⁷. Besides, with the same purpose, he also

41. Minhāj : T.N., p.160-161.

42. For details, see. J.N.Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, PP.23-25; (II); A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa; PP.93-95.

43. Minhāj : T.N., p.161.

44. For the protection of the capital city of Lakhnautī, he founded the fortress of Basankot (Minhāj : T.N., p.161). In order to facilitate the military transport and movement 'Iwadh Khaljī connected the two frontier cities of Devkot in Dinajpur and Lakhnur (Nagar in the Birbhum district) with his capital by building a highway (Minhāj : T.N., p.162).

45. 'Iwadh Khaljī was the first Sultān of Bengal to realise the importance of Navy for a country like Bengal.

46. Minhāj : T.N., p.161. 'Iwadh Khaljī was the first Sultān of Bengal whose independent coins have come down to us.

47. For showing his connection with the Ghūride ruling family of Ghazna, 'Iwadh Khaljī accepted the phraseology of Ghazna coins as a model for Bengal coinage, applied to himself the regal titles assumed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Sām and mentioned Muizz al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Sām's regal titles on his own coins. (M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, p.3).

exhibited his legal sanction to rule the country by inscribing the name of the khalifah of Baghdad on his coins⁴⁸. All these activities prove that he had sovereignty and claimed equal status with Sultān Iltutmish of Delhi⁴⁹. The assumption of the imperial title of 'Sultān al-Salāṭin', as evidenced by his coins, suggests that Sultān 'Iwadh Khalji made a bid for founding an empire in Eastern India, incorporating the whole of Bihar and Bengal⁵⁰. This step offended Sultān Iltutmish who took it as a challenge to his authority. Sultān Iltutmish sent his forces in order to establish his authority over the Eastern region. Minhaj-i-Siraj mentioned that Iltutmish first wrested Bihar from 'Iwadh Khalji', posted his own officers and then marched on to Lakhnauti in 622 A.H./1225 A.D.⁵¹ Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khalji rose to the occasion and blocked the way of the invading army with a strong navy and ultimately a peace treaty was concluded between the contending Sultāns of Delhi and Bengal⁵². A careful analysis of the event shows that though Bihar was separated from the kingdom of Lakhnauti and minting of coins by the Sultān of Bengal was stopped, the independent position of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khalji was not disturbed. Moreover, soon after Sultān Iltutmish's return, 'Iwadh Khalji ousted 'Alā' al-Dīn Jāni from Bihar and recovered the lost territories, over which he could exercise uninterrupted control till 624 A.H./1227 A.D. when he was finally attacked and killed by the Delhi troops⁵³.

48. For details, see. J.P.H.S., vol.III, part II, April, 1955, p.116; A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, PP.99-106. On the basis of the coins, some historians are of the opinion that Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khalji received investiture from the khalifah of Baghdad. But this theory has been challenged (See, P.P.H.C., 1953, pp.111-14).

49. Thomas enunciated a theory that 'Iwadh Khalji subordinated himself to the Delhi authority at the initial period of his reign. But this theory of 'Iwadh Khalji's vassalage has been refuted by scholars (For details see, J.N.Sarkar (ed) : H.B., vol.II, pp 39-40; P.P.H.C., Dacca session, 1953 pp. 111-14).

50. J.P.H.S., vol.III, part II, 1955, p.116-117.

51. Minhaj : T.N., pp.163, 171.

52. Ibid., p.163.

53. Minhaj : T.N., p.163-164.

Though after the death of Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwāḍ Khālji the kingdom of Lakḥnautī was ruled by governors appointed by the Delhi authority, still they behaved almost as independent rulers. Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd (1227-1229 A.D.), the first governor of Lakḥnautī enjoyed much independence in the affairs of Bengal. It is evident from his lofty title "Malik al-Sharq" (Lord of the East)⁵⁴. On the evidence of coins⁵⁵ it appears that governor Daulat Shāh Khālji called himself a Sultān and assumed the Persian title of "Shāhān Shāh" and used the title "Sultān al-Aẓam" for Iltutmish⁵⁶. This fact indicates that Daulat Shāh Khālji wanted to rule the country independently by showing nominal allegiance to the Sultān of Delhi. But Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Balkā Khālji, who seized power from Daulat Shāh Khālji, discarded even this outward show of submission to Delhi and ruled Bengal as an independent Sultān, which warranted Sultān Iltutmish to come to Bengal in 628 A.H./1230 A.D. But Balkā Khālji did not submit easily; he fought against the army of Delhi and for a time eluded capture. At last he fell a prisoner and lost his life⁵⁸.

The chaos and confusion that followed the death of Sultān Iltutmish gave opportunity to the rulers of Bengal to assert their independence. After the death of Saif al-Dīn (631 A.H./1233 A.D.), Aur Khān Aibak⁵⁹ made himself master of Lakḥnautī. But his authority was challenged by Malik 'Izza al-Dīn Tughral Tughan Khān, the governor of Bihar, who ultimately became the master

54. J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B., vol.II, p.44.

55. Dault Shāh Khālji is known to have issued a coin in 627 A.H./1230 A.D. which bore his own name and also that of his sovereign Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish (Indian Culture vol.XI, No.2, 1944, pp.54; A.Karim : Corpus, p.12).

56. H.N. Wright : The coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi, coin no.53A, p.21.

57. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Balkā Khālji and Daulat Shāh Khālji have been confused and are generally considered as one and the same person. But actually they are not. (For details see, (I) Indian culture, vol.XI, No.2, 1944 A.D. pp.54-55; f.n. 2; A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, PP.112-113).

58. Minhāj : T.N., p.174. J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.44.

59. Aur Khān was a Turkish general and probably one of the slave officers of Saif al-Dīn.

of Lakhnauti with the permission of the Sultān of Delhi and embarked on the design of establishing an Eastern Sultanate⁶⁰. He ruled Bengal for about nine years (1236 A.D.-1245 A.D.). During this period with a show of nominal allegiance to the Sultāns of Delhi, he exercised his power in Bengal independently⁶¹

On the evidence of inscriptions, it is found that Jalāl al-Dīn Masūd Jānī (1227-1252 A.D.), the next governor of Lakhnauti assumed the titles of "Malik al-Sharq" (Lord of the East) and 'Shāh'⁶², which clearly show his spirit of independence. The next governor Malik Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Yūzbak⁶³, after having consolidated his authority over Lakhnauti, openly flouted the authority of Delhi and assumed the title of Sultān and ruled Bengal independently⁶⁴. After his death Malik 'Izz al-Dīn Balbanī Yazbakī also ruled over Lakhnauti for about two years in virtual independence⁶⁵. The evidence of the Barahdari inscription of Bihar⁶⁶ and the accounts of the Riyād al-Salātīn, indicate that Malik Tāj al-Dīn Arsalān Khān ruled over Bihar and Lakhnauti independently with the title of Sultān. His son Tātār Khān also ruled Bengal independently (659 A.H./1261 A.D.-666 A.H./1268 A.D.)⁶⁸.

60. Minhāj : T.N., p.242 ff; J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B., vol.II, pp. 45-47.

61. Though Tughral Tughān Khān subordinated himself to the authority of Delhi and maintained cordial relations with the sultans of Delhi, he had high ambition and enjoyed much independence in the affairs of Bengal. This is proved by the lofty title he assumed, as found in the inscription of his time in Bihar : Majlis-i-Alā. Ghiyāth al-Islām wa al-Fatha Tughral al-Sultānī (Shamsuddin Ahmad; Inscriptions, p.2).

62. Shamsuddin Ahmed : Inscriptions, p.7

63. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Yūzbak, governor of Awadh was appointed governor of Lakhnauti in 650 A.H./1252 A.D.

64. Minhāj : T.N., p.263; H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, p.146; A.Karim : Corpus, p.139. J.N. Sarkar (ed):H.B., vol.II, p.52.

65. Balbanī Yūzbakī succeeded Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Yūzbak in 655 A.H./1257 A.D. J.N., Sarkar (ed) : H.B., vol. II, p.55.

66. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Inscriptions, pp.9-10.

67. Salīm : Riyād, p.77.

68. Ibid : p.78; J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B., vol.II, 57; Thomas : I.C.B., p.34.

His successor Sher Khān⁶⁹ acknowledged the suzerainty of Sultān Balban of Delhi. He restored the name of Balban on his coins⁷⁰. But the next governor Tughral, again, declared independence⁷¹. He assumed a canopy of state, caused the khutbah to be read coins to be struck in his own name and took the title of Sultān Mughīth al-Dīn⁷². In order to strengthen his position against the Sultān of Delhi, he also succeeded in winning the support of the people by distributing his wealth lavishly. Sultān Balban tried to subdue Tughral by sending royal forces twice. But his forces were repulsed by the ruler of Bengal. Then Sultān Balban himself marched towards Bengal with a huge army. Tughral avoided direct clash and for a time eluded the Sultān. But eventually he was found out and was killed in an encounter. Bughra Khān, the youngest son of Sultān Balban, was appointed governor of Lakhnautī⁷³. Though he began his rule in Bengal as a governor under his father, he maintained a splendid court at Lakhnautī. On his father's death, he took the title of Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd, caused the Khutbah to be read and the coins to be struck in his own name⁷⁴. His independent position was also tacitly recognized by the Sultān of Dehli⁷⁵. The next rulers of Bengal namely Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs (1291-1301 A.D.), son of Bughrā Khān, and Shams al-Dīn

69. Sher Khān was a member of the family of Tāj al-Dīn Arsalān Khān. He was not sent by the Sultān of Delhi to Lakhnautī. Probably he ruled Lakhnautī upto 1272 A.D.

70. H.N.wright : Catalogue, vol.II, p.34.

71. Baranī:T.F.S., p.81. According to Yahyā, after the death of Sher Khān, Amīn Khān became the governor of Lakhnautī and Tughral became his deputy (Yahyā: T.M.S., p.40).

72. Baranī: T.F.S., p.83.

73. Ibid., PP.83-91.

74. Ibid., P.139.

75. Ibid. PP.141-43; J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.73.

Fīrūz Shāh (1301-1322 A.D.)⁷⁶ and his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur⁷⁷ also ruled Bengal as independent Sultāns till 724 A.H./1324 A.D.⁷⁸. It may be mentioned that sons of Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh, among whom the spirit of independence was evident, sharing the sovereignty with their father, ruled some portions of Bengal independently⁷⁹. Anyway, in 728 A.H./1328 A.D. an attempt was made again by Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur, the joint governor of Sunārgāon to assume sovereignty⁸⁰ but he was repulsed and killed by Bahrām Khān⁸¹. Credit goes to Fakhr al-Dīn who, after the death of Bahrām Khān, declared independence at Sunārgāon in 739 A.H./1338 A.D.⁸² and assumed the title of Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh⁸³. On the other hand, his example was followed by 'Alī Mubārak⁸⁴ in 1339 A.D. after the death of Qadar Khān, governor of Lakḥnautī. Almost at the same time or a short while before, Hājī Iliyās⁸⁵ occupied south Bengal and gradually carved out an independent kingdom for himself.

From the above analysis it is clear that there was a constant factor in Bengal history that its rulers tended to behave independently whenever the opportunity arose and the spirit of independence that grew out of the tradi-

76. Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh was a noble of Delhi and not a descendent of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd (Bughrā Khān), as is generally believed (For details see, I.H.Q., vol.XVII, 1942, p.65 ff; J.N.Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, 93-94 A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa PP.153-161).

77. After the death of Fīrūz Shāh, there was a war of succession in which Bahādur succeeded (A.Karim : Corpus, p.14).

78. In 724 A.H./1324 A.D. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq of Delhi, on getting advantage of internal rivalry between two sons of Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh, Captured Lakḥnautī and brought it under the sway of the Delhi authority (A.Karim:Corpus, p.141).

79. A. Karim: Corpus, p.140.

80. Ibid, p.142. How long he could enjoy sovereignty is not definitely known. From the evidence of coins it may be said that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur was defeated, captured and killed in between 729 A.H. and 733 A.H.

81. Bahrām Khān was the adopted son of Sultan Ghiyath al-Dīn Tughluq of Delhi. He was appointed governor of Sunārgāon and Satgāon in 724 A.H./1324 A.D. But during the reign of Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq he acted as governor of Sunārgāon only.

(Footnotes continued next page)

tion of this period helped to cement the independence that Bengal enjoyed from 1338 A.D. to 1538 A.D. and it is possible to visualise that the spirit of independence was an important factor in shaping the policies of the early Iliyās Shāhi rulers.

III

Though Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī was a soldier, he rightly thought that the Muslim rule would depend on the support and co-operation of the Muslim population of Bengal. So, he took steps to organize the Muslim society in Bengal. Minhāj-i-Sirāj mentioned that after the establishment of the Muslim rule in Bengal, he built mosques, madrasah and Khānqahs⁸⁶. These activities of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī was the first planned attempt to organize the Muslim society in Bengal. Subsequent rulers of Bengal followed the example of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī⁸⁷. The Sultāns of Bengal also patronised the 'Ulamās (scholars), the Mashā'ikhs (learned in religion and law), the Saiyyids (desceendents of the prophet) and the Sūfīs (saints)⁸⁸ in order to foster the cause of the Muslim society in Bengal. Besides, the Sultāns of Bengal by doing benevolent works and by adopting liberal attitude in the affairs of administration, became successful in winning support of the local

82. Yaḥyā : T.M.S., p.104.

83. A.Karim : Corpus, p.143.

84. A.Karim : Corpus, p.143. 'Alī Mubārak was the paymaster (Ārid) of Qadar Khān's army. He ascended the throne of Lakhnautī under the title of Sultān 'Alā'al-Dīn(Yaḥyā: T.M.S., p.105).

85. Hājī Iliyās was the foster-brother of 'Alī Mubārak, the Ārid of Qadar Khān's army (Salīm: Riyād., p.98).

86. Minhāj : T.N., p.151. Remains of any have not yet been discovered.

87. Ibid, p.161; J.R.A.S. vol.6, 1872 A.D. PP.371-372; J.A.S.B., vol.39, No.IV, 1870 A.D. PP.285-287, 288.

88. Minhāj : T.N., PP.161-162, 198-199, 243. Baranī: T.F.S., p.91. Badāūnī : Muntakhab, vol.I, Eng.tr., p.217.

people⁸⁹. The Muslim scholars and the Sūfīs also played a vital role in the growth of the Muslim society in Bengal. The Muslim scholars founded madrasahs, wrote books and held discussion with the non-Muslims and won them over to the religion of Islām. The Sūfīs, on the other hand, through their simple and austere life and manner and their renunciation of worldly affairs, attracted the local people and converted them to Islām. Thus it is revealed that through the combined efforts of three forces; namely (I) the Sultāns of Bengal, (II) the Muslim scholars and (III) the Sūfīs and Saints, the Muslim society of Bengal grew, developed and gathered strength⁹⁰.

During the period under review, the Khaljī nobility and the officers of Bengal also came forward to provide facilities for the dissemination of Islamic learning by founding madrasahs, for the propagation of Islām by helping the dargāhs and for the observance of religious duties by building mosques⁹¹. These works of the Khaljī nobility and the officers of the rulers of Bengal greatly helped the growth of the Muslim society in Bengal. Besides, a few warrior-saints played an important role in shaping the Muslim society of Bengal. They started their career as soldiers and earned reputation in conquering some portions of Bengal. But afterwards they changed their career and adopted simple life of the saints and devoted their energies for the propagation of Islām. Among them the name of Zafarkhān Ghāzī is worth mentioning⁹².

89. A.Karim: Social History, p.59. Pierre Bessainget (ed) : Social Research in East Pakistan, p.12.

90. For details see. A.Karim: Social History, PP. 62-76, 124-139.

91. Minhāj: T.N., p.151; J.A.S.B., vol.41, No.I, 1872 A.D., PP.103-104; J.A.S.B vol.39, No.IV, 1870 A.D., PP. 285-287, 289.

92. Zafar Khān Ghāzī conquered Satgāon during the period from 1298 A.D. to 1313 A.D. under Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs and Sultān Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh (A.Karim : Social History , p.117).

Initially those who founded the Muslim society in Bengal were all immigrants. They poured into Bengal as governors, administrators, generals, soldiers, teachers, missionaries, traders and fortune-seekers⁹³.

Of the immigrants the Turkish Muslims came to Bengal in large number. From the contemporary sources it is not possible to ascertain the exact number of soldiers in the army of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī. But a careful study of the Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī reveals that the first contingent of Muslims who founded the kingdom of Lakhnautī numbered a few thousand⁹⁴. Migrations continued thereafter and fresh waves of immigrants came to Bengal with every new governor and chief. But different tribes of the Turks gained ascendancy at different times⁹⁵. In the wake of the Muslim conquest of Bengal, the Persians⁹⁶ and the Arabs⁹⁷ migrated to Bengal as peaceful settlers, traders and missionaries. Besides, many central Asian families uprooted by the Mongal eruption, moved out of their homeland and settled in Bengal. Along with these immigrants came the poets, scholars, theologians, craftsmen, architects and painters⁹⁸.

93. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.I, p.47.

94. Minhāj : T.N., PP.152, 156-158.

95. Upto the time of Balkā Khaljī, the Khaljī Turks were predominant in Bengal but thereafter, the Turks of non-khaljī origin began to get ascendancy (Indian culture, Vol. XI, No.2, 1944, p.55). During the period of Muḥith al-Dīn Tughral, Turks obtained full supremacy.

96. In the writings of Minhāj-i-Sirāj, references to Persian merchants and officers are available (Minhāj : T.N., PP.157, 159-160). Majority of the Sūfīs who came to Bengal were of Persian origin (M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.I, p.49).

97. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. I, p.47. Among the Sufis who preached and taught Islam in Bengal, a large number were Arabs. It is said that every one of the saints was accompanied by 120 disciples and followers. Shaikh Shāh Jalāl came with 360 disciples and they all settled down in Bengal. Mongal leader Cenghiz Khān devastated the cities of Khurasan and Trans-Oxiana.

98. J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, PP.27-28; M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.I, p.50; A.Karim : Social History, p.141.

There are also evidence that Muslims of diverse territorial groups came and settled in Bengal⁹⁹. Besides, when the imperial sway passed to the house of Khalji, many faithful supporters of the Early Turkish Sultāns of Delhi, primarily owing to the persecution of Sultān Kaikobād and finally on account to the over-threw of his government fled to Bengal and placed themselves under the protection of Bughrā Khān¹⁰⁰. A large number of people also fled to Bengal to avoid disasters of famines that occurred twice in Delhi during the reign of Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq¹⁰¹. Moreover, there are references to show that groups of recalcitrant people came to Bengal and settled there¹⁰². These people maintained a strong sentiment against the Sultāns of Delhi and had a far-reaching influence on the Muslim society of Bengal.

There is another factor which was responsible for increasing the number of the Muslims in Bengal, i.e. merger of the local populace in the Muslim society after conversion to Islām. The local converts hailed from different ranks of the non-Muslim society of Bengal. The democratic and humane ideals of Islām, brought by the new-comers, initiated a revolutionary change in all spheres of local life. As a matter of fact, Islām appeared with a new meaning and outlook on life and it impressed the people so much that the suppressed Buddhist¹⁰³ and many humble and persecuted lower class Hindus accepted Islām

99. Pirre Bessoignet (ed): Social Research in East Pakistan, p.13.

100. Khondkar Fuzli Rabbee : The origin of the Musalmans of Bengal, p.19.

101. Ibid, p.21; Firishtah : T.F., vol.I, Eng..tr., p.428.

102. Baranī : T.F.S., p.189; Nāzīm al-Dīn : T.A. vol.I, Eng.tr.p.137.

103. Rāmāi Pandit : Sūnya Purāṇa, p.233.

in order to get rid of injustices and cast restrictions and to get good position in the society. But examples are also there to show that higher class people including the Brahmins gradually succumbed to the influence of Islam either politically or religiously¹⁰⁴.

During the period under review, the Muslim society of Bengal was divided into two broad classes; the higher class and the lower class.¹⁰⁵ The higher class was mostly composed of the Turks (mainly Khaljī and Ilbarī), the Persians and the Arabs. People, belonging to the upper or higher class, were again grouped according to their professions as follows : (i) 'Ulamā, Mashāikh and Sādāt¹⁰⁶ and others of similar nature. (ii) Official class under the titles of Amīr, Malik Khān and Ṣadr¹⁰⁷.

The lower class of the Muslim society of Bengal was mostly composed of the local converts¹⁰⁸. There is no detailed account of the professional classes of people in the writings of the contemporary historians, though they refer to their existence in the society. It is learnt from Minhāj-i-Sirāj that people belong to different of professions used to get wealth from Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwāḍ Khaljī¹⁰⁹. Baranī mentioned that Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral was very much liberal towards Qalandars (wandering darwish) to whom he presented three maunds of gold¹¹⁰. This proves the existence of a class of people known as Qalandars in the Muslim society of Bengal.

104. During the reign of 'Alī Mardān Khaljī one Bhojar Brahmin accepted the religion of Islām after his enquiry about that religion.

(ii) Caitanya Bhāgavata, Adi parva, 14th., P. 292.

হিন্দুগণে কেহ হেন হইয়া ব্রাহ্মণ । / আপনে আসিয়া হয় ইচ্ছায় যবন ।।

Eng.translation : Some Hindus, though they are Brahmins, become Yavanas according to their own wish.

105. A. Karim : Social History, P. 157.

106. Minhāj : T.N., P. 161. The words 'Ulamā, Mashāikh and Sādāt mean scholars, doctors in Muslim law and theology and descendants of the Prophet respectively.

(Footnotes continued next page)

The Muslim immigrants of different nationalities came to Bengal under the banner of Islām and they brought with them their own cultural traditions. On the other hand, the local converts, though they accepted Islām, could not altogether change their ways of life. These together formed the basis of the Muslim society of Bengal which turned to be a breeding field of a new culture that took final shape after a long process of gradual evolution.

IV

During the period under review we notice the development of a system of administration in Bengal. In order to understand it properly we may discuss it under four distinct periods, namely (1) the kingdom of Lakḥnautī under the Khaljī Malik; (2) Lakḥnautī under the Sultānate of Delhi; (3) the Kingdom of Lakḥnauti from Bughrā Khān to Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur and (4) Lakḥnautī under the Sultānate of Delhi from 1324 A.D. to the rise of Hājī Iliyās Shāh.

1. Bakhtiyār Khaljī, whose relationship with the authority at Delhi is not very clear, remained at least outwardly, loyal to Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghūrī¹¹¹. But this outward loyalty did not prevent him from making administrative arrangement independently. After establishing his capital at Lakḥnautī Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī introduced elements of Muslim administration in Bengal. He minted coins and caused the khutbah to be read in every part of his kingdom¹¹². From the political and administrative point of view, he divided his kingdom into a number of divisions¹¹³ and placed one military chief in charge of each divi-

107. Ibid, PP.151, 152, 157-158; Badāūnī: Muntakhab, vol.I, Eng.tr.p.217.

108. Pierre Bessaignet (ed): Social Research in East Pakistan, p.52.

109. Minhāj: T.N., p.161.

110. Baranī: T.F.S. 91

111. For details, see Supra, chap.I, part II.

112. Minhāj: T.N., p.151.

113. The policy of dividing the territory into several divisions was a general practice among the Muslims who themselves had developed it under the Abbāsids. The Ghaznavids and the Ghūrīdes (I.H.Quereshi : The administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.122).

sion. Each administrative division was called 'Iqtā' and its governor was known as 'Muqta' and names of two 'Muqta's' are found in the Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī¹¹⁴. 'Alī Mardān Khaljī, the 'Muqta' of Nārkotī¹¹⁵ and Iḥusām al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī, the Muqta' of Ganguri or Kankuri¹¹⁶. These arrangements of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī indicate that he introduced a sort of tribal confederacy in the administration of Bengal.

Muḥammad Shīrān Khaljī (1206-1207 A.D.) followed his master's policy and confirmed the Khaljī amirs in their respective posts which they had been holding¹¹⁷. He did not even punish the supporters of 'Alī Mardān Khaljī, rather maintained the status quo within his principality.

'Alī Mardān Khaljī (606-609 A.H./1208-12 A.D.) was the first ruler of Bengal who declared independence openly.¹¹⁸ ^{^ After him came 'Iwād Khaljī} and his reign (609-624 A.H./1212-1227 A.D.) marked a new epoch in the history of the Muslim administration in Lakhnautī. Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī was the first Sultān of Bengal whose independent coins have come to light, and the name of the khalīfah of Baghdad is found inscribed on some¹¹⁹.

114. Minhāj : T.N., PP. 156-158.

115. For variation of reading see Raverty's translation of the Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī, P.572, f.n.7. Nāṣir al-Dīn Ahmad mentioned the name of the fief of 'Alī Mardān Khaljī as Barsul (T.A.Eng.tr., vol.1, p.54). Barsul is identified with the area of Sarkar Ghoraghat belonging to the district of Dinajpur. It is situated at the meeting place of three districts namely Bogra, Rangpur and Dinajpur. A.Karim: Bānglār Itihāsa, p.70, f.n.I).

116. Qanungo identified it with mahal Gankarah in Sarkār Tanda (J.N.Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.37).

117. Minhāj : T.N., p.158.

118. Ibid., p.159.

119. J.A.S.B., 1873, p.358. On the basis of these coins, some historians enunciated a theory that 'Iwād Khaljī received investiture from the khalīfah of Baghdad. But this theory has now been challenged. For details see, P.P.H.C., 1953 A.D., PP. III-14; A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, PP.99-107.

For the first time he realized the importance of navy for a country like Bengal and built a flotilla of war-boats¹²⁰. He, was also the first Sultān of Bengal to make a vigorous attempt to extend the frontier of his kingdom in all directions¹²¹. All through his reign, Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khaljī laboured hard for the welfare of his people¹²². All these traits of his reign must have had some impact on the administrative arrangements of his time. In the absence of details nothing more than this assumption can be made.

2. After the death of Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khaljī Lakhnautī passed to the Delhi authority. This position, except for short intervals¹²³, lasted till the time of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban. During this period upto the year 1281 A.D. we find hardly any development in the administrative system of Bengal, and actually the Lakhnautī government became a replica of the Imperial court of Delhi¹²⁴. But Bughrā Khān's appointment (1281 A.D.) in the province of Lakhnautī marked a change. In the preceding period i.e. from 1227 A.D. to 1281 A.D. Lakhnautī was termed as 'Iqtā'' or 'Wilāyat'¹²⁵ but afterwards, it was called Iqlīm, a term which was also used for Bangālah¹²⁶. It is learnt from Baranī that the territorial assignment like 'Iqtā'' continued¹²⁷. Hence, the use of

120. Minhāj: T.N., p.163.

121. J.A.S.P., vol.III, 1958 A.D., p.70.

122. In order to facilitate transport and communication, even during the monsoon, Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwadh Khaljī built embankment (pul) from Nagar to Devkot passing through the capitalcity of Lakhnautī. He also built a series of dykes to protect the city of Lakhnautī from floods. Besides, he erected public buildings and bestowed property and goods upon the people of all classes (Minhāj : T.N., PP.161-162).

123. The period when Balkā Khaljī (1230 A.D.), Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbak, (1251-1257 A.D.), 'Izz al-Dīn Balbanī (1257-1259 A.D.), Tāj al-Dīn Arsalān (1259 A.D.-1261), Tātār Khān (1261 A.D.-1268 A.D.) and Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral (1279 A.D.-1281 A.D.) ruled over Lakhnautī independently. For details, see Supra, Chap.I, part.II, PP. 22-24.

(Footnotes continued next page).

the 'Iqlīm' for Lakhnautī is significant. In fact, by changing the term for Lakhnautī, Sultān Balban wanted to enhance the position of Lakhnautī in order to keep a vigilant eye over the activities of 'Iqtādārs'. So, the position of Iqlīm Lakhnautī seems to be higher than an 'Iqtā' or wilāyat and thus the status of the governor of Lakhnautī was enhanced and he acted as more than a governor¹²⁸. It is evident from the account of Baranī that Bughrā Khān had a 'Dabīr' (Secretary) of his own¹²⁹ and his father bestowed upon him 'chatr' (Umbrella) and 'Dūrbāsh' (royal staff)¹³⁰. It is also clear from Baranī that Sultān Balban, who followed a policy of non-expansion, gave directions to his son Bughrā Khān to conquer and to bring Iqlīm Bangālah under his control¹³¹. These facts refer to the special position of the governor of Lakhnautī.

3. The next phase of the Bengal administration was run independently which lasted for thirty seven years, i.e. from 1287 to 1324 A.D.¹³². On his father's death, Bughrā Khān declared independence (1287 A.D.)¹³³. But it is not known whether he issued independent coins. But his son Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs (1291-1301 A.D.) not only minted coins with full regal titles, but also inscribed

124. J.A.S.P., vol.III, 1958, p.71, J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.42.

125. Minhāj : T.N., PP. 239, 242-43, 246.

126. Baranī: T.F.S., PP.92-93. In one place, Bangālah was termed as 'Arsah' by Baranī (Baranī : T.F.S., p.93). This led K.R. Qanungo to suggest that 'Arsah Bangālah meant Satgāon and Iqlīm Bangālah meant Sunārgāon (J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.71). But actually these suggestions are not correct. A careful reading of the Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī reveals that 'Arsah Bangālah was only a part of Iqlīm Bangālah. (For details see, J.A.S.P. vol.III, 1958 A.D., PP. 72-73, f.n. 40).

127. Baranī : T.F.S., p.92.

128. J.A.S.P., vol.III, 1958, p.73.

129. Baranī : T.F.S., p.95.

130. Ibid, p.92.

131. Ibid.

132. Sultān Balban of Delhi died in 1287 A.D. In 1324 A.D. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq captured Lakhnautī and it under the control of the Delhi Sultanate.

133. Baranī : T.F.S., p.139.

on these coins the name of the Khalīfah of Baghdad¹³⁴. A careful study of the inscriptions of Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs shows that he divided the Sultanate of Lakhnautī into two provinces, namely Bihar and Lakhnautī, appointed governors there and the Sultān and the governors assumed the lofty titles¹³⁵. This clearly demonstrates their mentality to under-mine the status of the Sultans of Delhi¹³⁶. During the reign of Sultān Shamsal-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh (1301-1322 A.D.) new administrative centres were established at Satgāon and Sunārgāon¹³⁷. It may, therefore, be said that during his reign, the kingdom of Bengal was divided into four provinces - Bihar, Lakhnautī, Satgāon and Sunārgāon. But the most important and striking feature of the administrative reorganizations brought about by him was that he shared the sovereignty with his three sons - that is during the life-time of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh, his three sons, namely (I) Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd, (II) Shihāb al-Dīn Bughdah Shāh and (III) Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur Shāh, ruled some portions of Bengal enjoying the right of issuing coins in their own names¹³⁸.

134. A.Karim: Corpus, p.140. H.N. Wright: Catalogue, vol.II, PP.147-148.

135. Shamsuddin Ahmad: Inscriptions, PP.11-14, 17,19,20,22. The governors of Bihar and Lakhnautī were Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Fīrūz Aitigīn and Shahāb al-Dīn Zafar Khān Bahrām Aitigīn respectively. Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs took the following titles : "Sultān al-Salātīn", "Al-Sultān al-Muāzzam Malik Riqab al-usm Mawla Mulk al-Turk wa al-Azam". Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Fīrūz Aitigīn, was given the title of Khān al-Azam, Khāqān al-Muāzzam, Khān al-Sharq wa al-Shīn and Sikandar al-Thānī. Zafar Khān Bahrām Aitigīn, was given the title of "Khasru-i-Zamān and Sikandar al-Thānī".

136. A.Karim: Bānglār Itihāsa, PP.149-150.

137. Though the process of the conquest of Satgāon and Bangalah (East Bengal) was started in the reign of Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs, but these places were finally captured and annexed to the Muslim kingdom of Bengal in the reign of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh (A.Karim: Bānglār Itihāsa, p.163).

138. A.Karim: Corpus. p.140. This is how A.Karim, after refuting K.R. Qanungo (H.B., vol.II, 80-81) explains the concurrent issue of coins.

4. The kingdom of Lakhnautī lost its sovereignty again in 1324 A.D. when Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq captured it¹³⁹. After bringing Lakhnautī under the control of the Delhi authority, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq took steps for its administration and placed Nāṣir al-Dīn Ibrāhīm at Lakhnautī¹⁴⁰ and assigned the charge of Sunārgāon and Satgāon to Bahrām Khān alias Tātār Khān¹⁴¹, Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq of Delhi adopted a more effective policy towards Bengal. He again divided Bengal into three administrative units - Lakhnautī, Satgāon and Sunārgāon - and appointed governors for each of them¹⁴². In order to run the administration of Bengal smoothly, he introduced the system of dual governorship, appointing Bahrām Khān and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur¹⁴³ as governors of Sunārgāon and after reinstating Nāṣir al-Dīn Ibrāhīm at Lakhnautī, he appointed Malik Pindār Khaljī entitled Qadar Khān as joint-governor there. Satgāon was placed under 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā¹⁴⁴.

The above facts show that during the period from Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī to the rise of Ḥājī Iliyās, the rulers tried to evolve a pattern of administrative system based on their past experience and concepts and in accordance with the need of the society and time. They brought about many necessary and innovative changes in the system to make it more effective and efficient and thus leaving scope for its continuity and further development by the future rulers of Bengal.

139. This view also finds support in the fact that during the reign of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh, the frontier of the Muslim kingdom was extended in all directions.

Yahyā: T.M.S., p.96.

140. Baranī: T.F.S., p.451.

141. Salīm: Riyād., p.93. Bahrām Khān was the adopted son of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq.

142. P.P.H.C., 1955, p.209.

143. A.Karīm : Corpus, p.16. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur was the son and successor of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh. He was taken as captive to Delhi in 1324 A.D. He was released by Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq and was sent back to Sunārgāon as governor, but among scholars there are differences of opinion regarding the respective position of Bahrām Khān and Bahādur Shāh, the two rulers of Sunārgāon (For details see, P.P.H.C., 1955, PP.212-213; J.A.S.B., 1922, p.423).

Chapter II

Origin and rise of Iliyās Shāh

The origin of Iliyās Shāh and his rise in the political arena of Bengal are two big riddles in the minds of many scholars. The contemporary sources furnish us very little information about his early life. However, the later sources give some stray references and a critical and minute study of them enables one to form an idea about Iliyās Shāh's origin and his rise to the throne of Lakhnautī.

Ibn-i-Hajar 'Asqalanī, the contemporary Arab historian mentioned in his Inbāul ghumr that the ancestor of Ḥājī Iliyās belonged to Sijistān, the country to the east of Persia¹. Another Arab historian Shams al-Dīn Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhāwī also mentioned that Ḥājī Iliyās was a Sijistānī by origin². But we do not know anything from their accounts about the time and the way of his coming to the Indian subcontinent. The coins of Sultān Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh give us new information about Ḥājī Iliyās. On the obverse of one of his coins³, the legend reads thus : Saif al-Duniyā wa al-Dīn Abū al-Mujāhid Ḥamzah Shāh bin A'zam Shāh bin Sikandar Shāh bin Iliyās Shāh bin Sultān (Saif al-Duniyā

1. Ziauddin Desai : "Some New Data Regarding the Pre-Mughal Muslim Ruler of Bengal", Islamic Culture, vol.32, No.3, July 1985, p.199.

2. اعظم شاه بن اسكندر شاه بن شمس الدين غياث الدين ابوالمظفر السجستاني
الافضل صاحب منجاة بلاد الهند
"A'zam Shāh son of Iskandar Shāh son of Shams al-Dīn, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Abū-al-Muẓaffar, al-Sijistānī by origin, (was) the ruler of Bengal in the country of India". Al-Ḍaw al-Lāmi, Cairo, 1303 A.H. part II, p.313.

3. H.N. Wright : Catalogue II, coin No.87, p.160. We have personally examined the photocopy of this coin.

wa al-Dīn Abū al-Mujāhid Ḥamzah Shāh son of A'zam Shāh son of Sikandar Shāh son of Iliyās Shāh son of Sultān). Thus the reading of this coin indicates that Iliyās Shāh was the son of one called Sultān.

The Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī informs us that Ḥājī Iliyās was the father of 'Alī Shāh who was in service of Pindār⁴. It is also known from the same source that Pindār, who was a servant of one of the servants of the court of Delhi, addressed Shams al-Dīn Iliyās as his brother⁵. These facts seem to be incredible. Because, we know it clearly, that 'Alī Shāh was dethroned by Ḥājī Iliyās⁶. This contention induces one to disbelieve the relation between Ḥājī Iliyās and 'Alī Shāh. A. Karim is also of the opinion that it is not possible for the son of Ḥājī Iliyās to serve under an official of Fīrūz Shāh⁷. Besides, the account of the Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī is not supported by any other source. Hence, it would not be wise to accept its views.

According to Ghulām Husain Salīm, Ḥājī Iliyās was the foster brother of 'Alī Mubārak⁸, the army chief of Qadar Khān⁹. He also informs that both Ḥājī Iliyās and 'Alī Mubārak were in the service of Malik Fīrūz (later on Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq) in Delhi¹⁰. On the other hand, Buchanan is of the opinion

4. Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī, Extract translated by K.K. Basu in J.B.O.R.S., vol. XXVII, part I, 1941, p.92.

5. Ibid.

6. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.105; Nizām al-Dīn: T.A., vol. III, p.262; Badāūnī: Muntakhab, p.230; Firishtah: T.F., part II, p.295; Salīm : Riyāḍ, p.95; Martin : History of Eastern India, vol.III, p.616.

7. A. Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa; p.224.

8. Salīm : Riyāḍ, p.93.

9. Qadar Khān was the imperial governor of Lakhnautī under Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq of Delhi.

10. Salīm : Riyāḍ, p.93.

that Ḥājī Iliyās was a servant of 'Alī Mubārak¹¹.

A close study of the Persian works shows that Ḥājī Iliyās came of a noble family. In the words of Badāūnī, Ḥājī Iliyās was a man of family and retinue¹². Yahyā Sīhrindī¹³, Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad¹⁴ and Firishtah¹⁵ called him Malik. Abūl Faḍl¹⁶ also mentioned him as an Amīr. These point to his high lineage.

Thus collating the information of the above sources it appears that Ḥājī Iliyās was a Sijistānī by origin. He came of a noble family and his father's name was Sultān.

The contemporary historians Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Baranī and 'Abd al-Malik 'Isāmī are completely silent on the rise of Ḥājī Iliyās in Bengal. Of the later historians Yahyā bin Aḥmad Sīhrindī mentions that Ḥājī Iliyās, who had a big army and a good number of followers, making friendship with the Amīrs, Maliks and the people of Lakhnautī, put 'Alā' al-Dīn ('Alī Mubārak) to death and ascended the throne of Lakhnautī under the title of Sultān Shams al-Dīn¹⁷. We find similar account in the writings of Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad, 'Abd al-Qādir Badāūnī and Firishtah¹⁸. Ghulām Husain Salīm gives us a little more information. It is mentioned in the Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn that Ḥājī Iliyās and 'Alī Mubārak were in

11. M.Martin : History of Eastern India, vol.III, p.616.

12. مالک الیاس حاجی کہ صاحب قبیلہ و حشم بود
Badāūnī : Munatakhab., p.230.

13. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.105.

14. T.A., vol.III, p.262.

15. T.F., part II, p.295.

16. A.A., vol.II, PP.65-66.

17. T.M.S., p.105, :

حاجی الیاس صاحب خیل بود و جمعیت بسیار داشت

18. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol.III, p.262; Badāūnī : Munatakhab, PP.230-231;
Firishtah : T.F., part II, p.296.

the service of Malik Fīrūz in Delhi. During the first year of the reign of Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq, Ḥājī Iliyās, doing something wrong, escaped from Delhi. On being asked by Malik Fīrūz, 'Alī Mubārak searched for him. But when he failed to present Ḥājī Iliyās, Malik Fīrūz banished him as well. 'Alī Mubārak started for Bengal and took service under Qadar Khān, the imperial governor of Lakhnautī. Ultimately when he ascended the throne of Lakhnautī. Ḥājī Iliyās came to Pāṇḍuāh. Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn ('Alī Mubārak) kept him a prisoner for some time, but at the intercession of Iliyās's mother, who was the nurse of Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn, he released him and giving him an impart and position admitted him to his presence. Ḥājī Iliyās, with in a short time gained over the army to his side and one day with the help of the eunuchs slew Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn and proclaiming himself Shams al-Dīn Bhangrah occupied Lakhnautī and Bengal¹⁹.

The above narration does not give us a clear idea of the rise of Ḥājī Iliyās in the politics of Bengal and, in order to get a clear picture of his rise, it is necessary to know the political conditions of Bengal after the death of Bahrām Khān, the imperial governor of Sunārgāon under Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq of Delhi.

On the death of Bahrām Khān, the governor of Sunārgāon in 739 A.H./ 1338 A.D., his Silahadār (armour bearer) Fakhr al-Dīn rebelled and assumed the insignia of royalty under the designation pf Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn. On receipt of this news Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq directed Qadar Khān, governor of Lakhnautī, 'Izz al-Dīn Yaḥyā, governor of Satgāon and Fīrūz Khān of Kara to

19. Salīm : Riyāḍ, p.93-95.

undertake a joint campaign against the rebel Fakhr al-Dīn. The combined forces marched to Sunārgāon. Fakhr al-Dīn also came out with his men to meet them and in the contest that followed he was defeated and took shelter in the nearby jungle. Qadar Khān remained at Sunārgāon, while the other Amīrs returned to their respective Iqtās (fiefs)²⁰.

When the rainy season drew in, most of the horses in the army of Qadar Khān died. He had collected much money and immense wealth. As he did not give due share to his soldiers, discontent broke out among them²¹. Fakhr al-Dīn carried on secret negotiations with the discontented soldiers of Qadar Khān, and when he returned to fight with Qadar Khān, his soldiers sided with him (Fakhr al-Dīn) and killed the latter. Fakhr al-Dīn took his seat at Sunārgāon and appointed his slave Mukhlis to Lakhnautī. But Alī Mubārak, the ‘Arid-i-Lashkar (Paymaster) of Qadar Khān, put Mukhlis to death and possessed himself of Lakhnautī. He applied to the Delhi authority for his confirmation as governor of Lakhnautī. Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq, on the other hand, instead of confirming him, sent Malik Yūsuf to assume the charge of Lakhnautī. But Malik Yūsuf died on the way to Lakhnautī. As the Sultān of Delhi was engaged otherwise, he could not pay attention towards Lakhnautī anymore. In this situation, ‘Alī Mubārak, owing to his opposition to Fakhr al-Dīn assumed the insignia of royalty and called himself Sultān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn²².

20. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.104. Firishtah : T.F., part II, p.295.

21. Yahyā : T.M.S., PP.104-105, Badāūnī : Muntakhab, p.230.

22. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.105. Badāūnī : Muntakhab, p.230; Firishtah : T.F., part II, p.295.

It is difficult to ascertain the date of Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn's accession to the throne of Lakhnautī. In the annotated volume of *Āyn-i-Akbarī* it is recorded that Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn ascended the throne of Lakhnautī in 1339 A.D./740 A.H.²³ But modern scholars like N.K. Bhattasali and Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay have different opinion. According to them the date of Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn's accession was 742 A.H./1341 A.D. N.K. Bhattasali ascertained this date on the basis of the assumption that the collision between Qadar Khān and Fakhr al-Dīn took place in 742 A.H. and in that collision Qadar Khān was killed²⁴. On the other hand, Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay is of the opinion that as coin of Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn bearing the date 742 A.H. has been found, so it is expected that he ascended the throne in that year(742 A.H./1341 A.D.)²⁵ He also argued in favour of his view by saying that in 739 A.H./1338 A.D. Fakhr al-Dīn declared independence and after that the following events took place successively : suppression of the rebellion of Fakhr al-Dīn by Qadar Khān, assassination of Qadar Khān, capture of Lakhnautī by Fakhr al-Dīn, appointment of Mukhlis as governor of Lakhnautī, murder of Mukhlis and recapture of Lakhnautī by 'Alī Mubārak, application to the Sultān of Delhi by 'Alī Mubārak for his confirmation as governor of Lakhnautī, appointment of a new governor by the Sultān of Delhi, death of the new governor on his way to Lakhnautī, waiting for further appointment and finally 'Alī Mubārak's accession to the throne of Lakhnautī. All these events must have taken not less than three or four years. So, he ascertained

23. Abūl Faḍl : *A.A.*, vol. II, Engtr., p.126.

24. N.K. Bhattasali : *Coins and Chronology*, p.15.

25. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : *Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar*, p.15.

742 A.H./1341 A.D. as the year of Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn's (Alī Mubārak) accession to the throne of Lakhnautī²⁶.

On a close examination neither of the above mentioned explanations seems to be valid. For, N.K. Bhattasali did not mention the source of his information. Besides, as it is clearly written in the Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī that Fakhr al-Dīn declared independence in 739 A.H./1338 A.D.²⁷, we need have no hesitation in assuming that Qadar Khān and his party marched towards Sunārgāon to subdue Fakhr al-Dīn just after they heard of his declaration of independence. The intervening period could not have been a long one. Hence it is reasonable to think that the first collision between Qadar Khān and Fakhr al-Dīn must have taken place in 739 A.H./1338 A.D. From the Persian works it is known that in this collision Fakhr al-Dīn was expelled from Sunārgāon, and some time later when Fakhr al-Dīn returned to fight with Qadar Khān, the latter's discontented soldiers sided with him (Fakhr al-Dīn) and killed Qadar Khān who was staying at Sunārgāon. These events indicate that Qadar Khān was killed either in the end of the year 1338 A.D./739 A.H. or in the beginning of the year 1339 A.D./739 A.H.

It is mentioned in the Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī that after the assassination of Qadar Khān, Fakhr al-Dīn took his seat at Sunārgāon and sent his slave Mukhlis to Lakhnautī²⁸. On the basis of this Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay inferred that Fakhr al-Dīn conquered Lakhnautī²⁹. But this inference does not seem to

26. Ibid.

27. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.104.

28. T.M.S., p.105.

29. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, PP. 4-5.

be valid. The author of the Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī was not very clear in his narration of the events. Moreover, the event of the conquest of Lakhnautī by Fakhr al-Dīn is not mentioned in any other source. Besides, a careful study of the Persian works leads us to believe that Fakhr al-Dīn did not have to capture Lakhnautī separately. It is known that Qadar Khān, the governor of Lakhnautī, was killed by his soldiers at Sunārgāon. As Fakhr al-Dīn became victorious over Qadar Khān, it is quite natural that with a view to establishing his authority, he would appoint his own man to the vacant seat of Lakhnautī. Actually, this is what Fakhr al-Dīn did after the assassination of Qadar Khān. On getting appointment, Mukhlis went to Lakhnautī where he was killed by 'Alī Mubārak, the 'Ārid-i-Lashkar of Qadar Khān, who taking possession of Lakhnautī, applied to the Sultān of Delhi for his confirmation as the governor. The Sultān immediately sent Malik Yūsuf to take the charge of Lakhnautī. But Malik Yūsuf died on the way. After that the Sultān could not turn his attention to the affairs of Lakhnautī, which lost all contact with Delhi after 740 A.H./1339 A.D.

Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay mentioned that after receiving the news of the death of Malik Yūsuf, 'Alī Mubārak waited for some time for further appointment from the court of Delhi³⁰. But this view is not in agreement with the Persian sources. In fact, it is revealed from these accounts that on getting the news of the death of Malik Yūsuf, 'Alī Mubārak, owing to his opposition to Fakhr al-Dīn, perforce, ascended the throne of Lakhnautī and called himself Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn³¹. Hence, it would be reasonable to think on the basis of the accounts

30. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, P. 15.

31. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.105; Badāūnī : Muntakhab; p.230; Firishtah : T.F. vol. II, p.295.

of the later Persian works, that the events that took place between the declaration of Fakhr al-Dīn's independence in 739 A.H./1338 A.D. and the rise of 'Alī Mubārak to the throne of Lakhnautī, required not more than one year, which in effect retifies the view that 'Alī Mubārak ascended the throne of Lakhnautī in 1339 A.D./740 A.H.

Now, we find that of the three administrative units of Bengal³², two - namely Sunārgāon and Lakhnautī - became independent under Fakhr al-Dīn and 'Alī Mubārak respectively.

During the period in question what happened at Satgāon is very difficult to ascertain with the help of the contemporary or the later historians. From Yahyā Sihrī^{Indi} it is known that on Fakhr al-Dīn's declaration of independence at Sunārgāon 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā, governor of Satgāon, marched to Sunārgāon with the combined forces of the governors of Lakhnautī and Kara to subdue Fakhr al-Dīn. It is said that after defeating Fakhr al-Dīn, Qadar Khān, governor of Lakhnautī, remained at Sunārgāon and the other Amīrs went back to their respective Iqtās³³, which in effect means that 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā returned to his Iqtā' at Satgāon. We hear nothing of 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā after this. The contemporary historian Baranī records that after the death of Bahrām Khān, the Fakhrā trouble arose in Bengal. Fakhrā and the Bengal troops rebelled in Bengal and Qadar Khān was killed and his women, children, elephants and swords were cut to pieces and the treasure of Lakhnautī was pillaged and Lakhnautī, Satgāon

32. Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq of Dehli divided Bengal into three administrative units : Lakhnautī, Satgāon and Sunārgāon.

33. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.104.

and Sunārgāon passed out of hands³⁴. These accounts of Yahyā and Baranī lead us to believe that 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā, governor of Satgāon died either on his way back to Satgāon or on reaching Satgāon in 1338 A.D./739 A.H. or soon after³⁵. The rise of Ḥājī Iliyās is to be viewed in the perspective of this vacant position at Satgāon.

Ghulām Husain Salīm gives us information that during the first year of the reign of Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq, Ḥājī Iliyās, who was in service of Malik Fīrūz, having committed some wrong, escaped from Delhi³⁶. After this, nothing is known about Ḥājī Iliyās till his appearance in the court of Sultān 'Alā'al-Dīn ('Alī Mubārak) at Panḍuāh. So, the question arises : where had he been so long ? It is also known from Ghulām Husain Salīm that Sultān 'Alā'al-Dīn, giving Ḥājī Iliyās a position, admitted him to his presence³⁷. But the accounts of Yahyā Sīhrindī, Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad, Firishtah and Abū'l Faḍl clearly show that Ḥājī Iliyās was holding the position of Malik before his coming to Panḍuāh. All of them mentioned that Malik Iliyās, some time after 'Alī Mubārak's accession to the throne of Lakhnautī, by making friendship with his Amīrs and Maliks killed him³⁸. Yahyā mentions that he had a big army and a good number

34. Baranī : T.F.S., p.480.

35. As the Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī (p.104) and the Tārīkh-i-Firishtah (part II p.295) furnish us the facts that on receiving the instruction from the Sultān of Delhi, the governors of Lakhnautī, Kara and Satgāon marched to Sunārgāon to subdue Fakhr al-Dīn, it is very likely that this joint campaign was under taken within a short time of Fakhr al-Dīn's declaration of independence. We know that Fakhr al-Dīn declared independence in 739 A.H/ 1338 A.D. Hence, it is quite reasonable to ascertain that 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā died in 1338 A.D. or soon after.

36. Salīm : Riyāḍ., p.93.

37. Ibid., p.95.

38. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.105; Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol. III, p.262; Firishtah : T.F. vol. II, p.295; Abū'l Faḍl : A.A., vol. II, Engtr. p.161.

of followers³⁹. Badāūnī mentioned him as a man of retinue⁴⁰. In the Riyād al-Salātīn, it is evident that Ḥājī Iliyās was not a Malik under Sultān 'Alā al-Dīn⁴¹. Now the question is where did he obtain the position of Malik and maintain a large army ?

We know that 'Alī Mubārak, having been dismissed by Malik Fīrūz, started for Bengal and took service under Qadar Khān, governor of Lakhnautī⁴². It is also known from the Persian accounts that in the preceding periods, people of different groups and ranks, being driven out from the court of Delhi or out of fear of oppression, took shelter in Bengal⁴³. So it is quite likely that Ḥājī Iliyās, doing something wrong, escaped to Bengal and took service under 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā, governor of Satgāon and by dint of his merit, obtained the position of Malik. In this capacity, he was also able to maintain a big army. So, when 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā died in 1338 A.D., Ḥājī Iliyās took the advantage of the situation and became the master of Satgāon. This view that Ḥājī Iliyās first establishment his authority in south Bengal, is also confirmed by the discovery of the only inscription of Ḥājī Iliyās at a place known as Bina Pukur which lies within about 30 miles from Satgāon⁴⁴. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay expressed doubt about this inscription as it is found in a modern mosque and there is no proof

39. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.105.

40. Badāūnī : Muntakhab., p.230.

41. Salīm : Riyād., p.95.

42. Ibid.

43. Baranī : T.F.S., p.189; Nizām al-Dīn. T.A. vol. I, Eng.tr., PP.137, Firishtah : T.F. vol.I, Eng.tr.p.428; Khondkar Fuzli Rabbee : The origin of the Musalmans of Bengal, PP. 19,21.

44. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Inscriptions, vol. IV, p.32. The Bina Pukur Inscription of Ḥājī Iliyās Shāh refers to the construction of a mosque for the reputed saint 'Alā'al-Ḥaq on the 2nd Shābān, 743 A.H./31st December, 1342 A.D.

that it originally belonged to South Bengal. It is evident from all sources that the saint 'Alā' al-Ḥaḡ lived at Pāṇḍuāḥ and so there is little doubt that the inscription originally belonged to Pāṇḍuāḥ⁴⁵. These arguments of Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay do not seem to be very strong. For, it does not matter whether the saint 'Alā' al-Ḥaḡ came to Satgāon or not. In fact, out of reverence to a saint a mosque can be constructed any where at any time. It may not be unreasonable to think that Ḥājī Iliyās constructed the mosque in honour of the famous saint in South Bengal where he first captured power.

An indirect reference may also be found in the "Letters of Ain-ul-Mulk Mahrū"⁴⁶ which contain a proclamation of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq. From this it appears that Ḥājī Iliyās was obedient to Sultān Muhammad bin Tughluq. This implies that Ḥājī Iliyās did not declare independence immediately after taking his seat at Satgāon. This may be taken to be the result of his political prudence in order to avoid immediate interference of the Sultān of Delhi. However, the allegiance of Ḥājī Iliyās did not last long, as from 740 A.H., that is during the lifetime of Sultān Muhammad bin Tughluq we find an independent coinage of Ḥājī Iliyās⁴⁷.

Thus it can be said that after the death of Bahrām Khān, the imperial governor of Sunārgāon, Fakhr al-Dīn became independent in 739 A.H./1338 A.D. at Sunārgāon; Ḥājī Iliyās became the sole master of Satgāon in 1338 A.D./739 A.H. and 'Alī Mubārak ascended the throne of Lakhnautī in 1339 A.D./740 A.H.

45. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, p.21.

46. Inshāh-i-Māhrū, Extract translated by Mvi. 'Abdul Wālī Khān in J.A.S.B. 1923; p.279.

47. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl.I.C.M. II, coin No.22, p.43.

This possibly led to a tripartite struggle between the three independent rulers of Sunārgāon, Satagāon and Lakhnautī.

Of the three places. Lakhnautī enjoyed a special position in terms of political importance. So immediately after taking his seat at Sunārgāon, Fakhr al-Dīn sent Mukhlis to conquer Lakhnautī. But he failed. According to Ibn Baṭūṭah, hostilities between Fakhr al-Dīn and 'Alī Mubārak of Lakhnautī were going on. Fakhr al-Dīn led an attack against Lakhnautī in the rainy season, for his naval strength was superior to that of 'Alī Mubārak, while the latter, who possessed better land forces, retaliated with equal vigour in the dry season⁴⁸. But in this intermittent fights neither Fakhr al-Dīn nor 'Alī Mubārak could achieve any success.

Similarly, when Ḥājī Iliyās felt secure of his position at Satgāon, he marched to Lakhnautī against 'Alī Mubārak in 1339 A.D./740 A.H.⁴⁹ became victorious. This is confirmed by his coin which he issued from Fīrūzābād in 740 A.H.⁵⁰.

The Persian works⁵¹ refer to hostilities between Ḥājī Iliyās and 'Alī Mubārak for the throne of Lakhnautī. On the evidence of coins Thomas and Blochmann also thought of a long drawn hostility between Ḥājī Iliyās and 'Alī Mubārak for the sovereignty of Lakhnautī, sometimes one being the victor and

48. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, Eng.tr. by Agha Mahdi Husain, p.237.

49. The accounts of Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī (p.105), Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh(p.230) Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī (vol.III, p.262), Tārīkh-i-Firishtah (pt.II, p.296) and Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn (p.94) show that soon after 'Alī Mubārak's accession to the throne of Lakhnautī, Ḥājī Iliyās appeared at Lakhnautī. Hence it is reasonable to think that Ḥājī Iliyās marched to Lakhnautī against Alī Mubārak in 1339 A.D./740 A.H.

50. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl. I.M.C.,II, coin No.22, p.43.

51. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.105; Badāūnī : Muntakhab.,p.230; Niẓām al-Dīn : T.A., vol. III, p.262; Firishtah : T.F., vol.II, p.296, Salīm : Riyāḍ,p.94.

sometimes the other⁵². Iliyas is seen to have coined money in Fīrūzābād in 740 A.H., the chance seems to have been denied to him in 741/his adversary and in 742 'Alī Shāh is found in full possession of the mint in question⁵³. But N.K. Bhattasali did not agree with the view of Thomas and Blochmann. He writes "It should be borne in mind that the rights to coin money and to have benedictory prayers recited in one's own name (Sikka and Khutbah) were the most cherished and legalising rights of sovereignty, and no king could lightly proceed to have these two operations performed without a firm hold on the throne. If he did, the people would simply not obey, with the result that his sovereign dignity would be nowhere. Coinage does not simply mean the occupation of the mint town, but its concern is of more public nature. It means currency and its acceptance by the people at large"⁵⁴. These remarks may be theoretically true. But so far the practical side is concerned, Bhattasali's view does not stand. For, though no king could lightly proceed to issue coins without having a firm hold on throne, there are ample evidence to show that capable persons immediately after capturing power issued coins⁵⁵. Even, a prince, rising in rebellion

52. Thomas : The Chronicles., PP. 267-268; J.A.S.B., 1873, p.254.

53. Thomas : The Chronicles., PP. 267-268.

54. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology, p.22.

55. Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbak, governor of Lakhnautī, issued his independent coins in 653 A.H./1255 A.D. Immediately after his accession to the throne, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur issued coins in 723 A.H. We also find that soon after his assumption of power Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh issued coins in 739 A.H./1338 A.D. (A.Karim : Corpus., PP.139,141,143; Journal of the Bangladesh Itihas Samiti, vol.II, 1973 A.D., p.8).

against his father, issued coins before his accession to the throne⁵⁶. So, it may be said that by issuing coins in turn, Ḥājī Iliyās and 'Alī Mubārak did not do a very unusual thing; rather, they coined money with a view to establishing their own authority and make it known to the people.

N.K. Bhattasali also rejected the date 740 A.H. read by Thomas⁵⁷, and Botham and Friel⁵⁸, and corrected it as 754 A.H. He tried to establish his belief that the date 740 A.H. was incorrectly read on the ground that 'Alī Shāh ('Alī Mubārak) had not risen to power at that time and Qadar Khān still held supremacy⁵⁹. But this view of Bhattasali does not seem to be correct, for a critical analysis of the Persian works leads us to believe that 'Alī Shāh was in power at that time at Lakhnautī⁶⁰. On a close examination of the photograph of the coin no. 2/42 of the Suppl. Shillong Cabinet it is found that the coin was issued from Sunārgāon, not from Fīrūzābād as is mentioned by Thomas, and Botham and Friel⁶¹. It is really astonishing how they read Fīrūzābād in place of Sunārgāon. N.K. Bhattasali's correction of the date 740 A.H. as 754 A.H. is also not tenable. For, it can be emphatically said that the reading

56. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh, rising in rebellion against his father, issued coins in 790 A.H. cf. J.A.S.B., vol. XXXVI, pt.I, 1867, coin No.33, p.68; Lane-Poole : The Coins of the Muhammadan States of India in the British Museum, p.XII; H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, coin Nos. 80 and 81, p.159; N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology, p.63; Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl.I.M.C. vol.II, coin Nos.86 and 102, PP.50,52; A.Karim . Carpus., PP. 144, 154, 182.

57. Thomas : I.C.B., p.62.

58. Botham and Friel : Suppl.Shillong Cabinet coin No.2/42, PP.120-121.

59. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology., PP.22-23. 60. See Supra, P.41-45.

61. Thomas : I.C.B., p.62; Botham and Friel : Suppl.Shillong Cabinet, PP.120-121.

of the unit 4 by N.K. Bhattasali is wrong. It is, in any way other than 'Arba' (four). As the unit is not clear and apparently does not seem to be in agreement with any unit from 'Ahdi'(one) to 'Tasa'(nine), the correct reading of the unit is impossible. Hence, it is difficult to draw any conclusion unless a better and clearer specimen is discovered.

But after the publication of N.K. Bhattasali's work, Shamsuddin Ahmad examined a few coins of Iliyās Shāh discovered from Khulna. Of these coins he noticed one coin of the year 740 A.H. which was issued from Fīrūzābād. Regarding the reading of the coin, A. Karim is of the opinion that Shamsuddin Ahmad did not give any reference to the objection raised by Bhattasali and followed the reading of Thomas⁶³. But the preface which he wrote for the Supplement to the volume II of the Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, shows that he was aware of N.K. Bhattasali's work⁶⁴. Possibly Shamsuddin Ahmad did not think it necessary to make any reference to the objection which N.K. Bhattasali raised after examining the coin no. 2/42 of the Suppl. Shillong Cabinet as this coin was altogether a different coin from what is cited by him. Any way, on an examination of the photograph of the coin no.22 of the Suppl. I.M.C. II^{64a}, it is found that the coin was issued from Fīrūzābād. Regarding the date, it may be said that the units are very indistinct. Though the units are not legible, it would not be difficult to assume that the coin bears the date 740 A.H. For, the unit after the word 'Sanata'(year) started with 'Alif',

62. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl.I.M.C.,II, PP.43-44.

63. A.Karim : Corpus, p.143.

64. See Preface of the Suppl.I.M.C.,II.

64a. The photograph of the coin was brought from the Indian Museum, Calcutta for our verification.

740 A.H. coin?

which indicates to the units 'Arba' (four) and 'Arba'in' (forty). This leads us to infer the possibility of the following four dates of the coin: 704 A.H., 740 A.H., 744 A.H. and 754 A.H.

The possibility of 704 A.H. can easily be rejected for at that time Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh was the Sultān of Lakhnautī⁶⁵. If the date were 744 A.H. or 754 A.H., it would have been written thus : Arba' wa Arba'in wa Sabāmāita, or Arba' wa Khamsīn wa Sabāmāita. But the space containing the units would not permit in any way the accommodation of either of the above mentioned five words. Thus the probability of the date being 744 A.H. or 754 A.H. can be ruled out. In fact, as the probability of the word 'Arba' is nullified, it is quite reasonable to think that the word 'Arba'in' is written there. Moreover, the space for the units in the coin could contain only three words like Arba'in wa Sabāmāita. Hence, it is revealed that this coin is the coin of 740 A.H.

Now, it is clear that hostilities between Ḥājī Iliyās and 'Alī Mubārak began from 740 A.H./1339 A.D.; and in the first collision the former was the winner. But this victory of Ḥājī Iliyās seems to be short-lived. For, we find a coin of 'Alī Mubārak of the year 741 A.H.⁶⁶ which implies his victorious position. It is also seen that 'Alī Mubārak issued coins in 742 A.H.⁶⁷ and 743 A.H.⁶⁸ Thomas also noticed 'Alī Mubārak's coins dated 744 A.H., 745 A.H. and 746 A.H.⁶⁹ But N.K. Bhattasali challenged the reading of these dates and concluded that

65. A.Karim : Corpus., p.140.

66. J.N.S.I., vol.I, p.37.

67. Thomas : The Chronicles., p.256. N.K. Bhattasali questioned the reading of the date 742 A.H. and said that the unit should more probably be 3 (Coins and chronology, p.15). But A.Karim, after analysing Bhattasali's description, holds the view that the unit is clearly 2 (A.Karim: Corpus, p.40)

68. H.N. wright : Catalogue II, coin no. 22, p.150; A.Karim: Corpus., p.39.

69. Thomas : The Chronicles., p.265.

the last coinage of Alī Mubārak was dated 743 A.H.⁷⁰. A. Karim also holds the same opinion⁷¹. Besides, this is proved by the fact that Ḥājī Iliyās is found to have issued coin in the year 743 A.H.⁷² After that we do not find any coin of 'Alī Mubārak. So, the appearance of the coin of Ḥājī Iliyās dated 743 A.H. establishes the fact that Ḥājī Iliyās, after finally defeating and killing 'Alī Mubārak ascended the throne of Lakhnautī towards the end of the year 743 A.H./1342 A.D.

Thus it may be said in conclusion that Ḥājī Iliyās was a Sijistānī by origin and came of a noble family. His father's name was Sulṭān. During the initial stage of his career Ḥājī Iliyās was in the service of Malik Fīrūz. But having committed some wrong, he escaped to Bengal and took service under 'Izz al-Dīn Yaḥyā, the imperial governor of Satgāon. Ḥājī Iliyās, by dint of his merit, rose there to the position of Malik and when 'Izz al-Dīn Yaḥyā died he became the master of Satgāon in 1338 A.D. After consolidating his power at Satgāon, Ḥājī Iliyās marched towards Lakhnautī against 'Alī Mubārak in 1339 A.D./740 A.H., and this ensued a long drawn hostility which ultimately came to an end with the defeat and death of 'Alī Mubārak in 743 A.H./1342 A.D. Iliyās' capture of the throne of Lakhnautī may be taken to mark the beginning of the rule of his family as paramount rulers in Bengal.

70. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology., p.16.

71. A.Karim : Corpus., PP.40-41.

72. Botham and Friel : Suppl. Shillong Cabinet, coin no. 2/65, PP. 126-127. On the authority of H.E. Stapleton, N.K. Bhattasali corrected the date 743 A.H. as 748 A.H. (Coins and Chronology., p.24). But A. Karim, after examining the photograph of the coin, did not find any reason, why the reading of 743 A.H. should be corrected (Corpus., p.47).

Chapter III

Early Iliyās Shāhī Dynasty

The rule of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty opened a new chapter in the history of Bengal. Under the rule of this dynasty the Bengali speaking peoples were integrated into one politico-social union and laid the foundation of the history of Bangālah and the Bangalis¹. In fact, from this period Bangālah became the common name of the vast region from Teliagarhi to Chittagong and from the foot of the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal. This dynasty established an independence for Bengal that lasted for nearly two hundred years, and the Sultans of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty initiated a policy of giving the administration a popular character by soliciting the co-operation of the local people.

The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns ruled Bengal for a period of seventy years, from 743 A.H. to 814 A.H./1342 A.D. to 1412 A.D. and four rulers ruled during this period : (1) Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh; (2) Sultān Sikandar Shāh; (3) Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh and (4) Sultān Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh.

1. In the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period the Muslim kingdom of Bengal was known as the kingdom of Lakhnautī. But with the foundation of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate, Lakhnautī was replaced by the term Bangālah. Upto the middle of the fourteenth century, only Eastern and Southern Bengal were known as 'Bangālah'. After uniting the territories of Satgāon, Lakhnautī and Sunārgāon under his sole authority, Iliyās Shāh gave to the united territories the name of Bangālah and to the people thus integrated the name of Bangali.)

Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh

Ḥājī Iliyās, ascended the throne of Lakhnautī in 743 A.H./1342 A.D.² and thereby founded a dynasty which, with an interruption of about twenty five years in the beginning of the ninth century of the Hījah, continued to rule over Bengal till 893 A.H.³

On his accession to the throne of Lakhnautī, Ḥājī Iliyās assumed the title of Sultān Shams-al-Dīn⁴. According to Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Bakḥshī, Ḥājī Iliyās took the title of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Behnegarah⁵, which means Sultān Shams al-Dīn, the just. But the word 'Behnegarah' is misread by the historians as Bhangrah⁶. Firishta informs us that with the consent of the Amīrs, Ḥājī Iliyās assumed the title of Shams al-Dīn Shāh Bhankrah⁷. It appears from his writings that he does not know the origin of the word 'Bhankrah'. H. Blochmann is of the opinion that 'Bhangrah' is a corruption of the Hindustani word 'Bhangera', a seller or eater of the drug bhang(hemp)⁸. Ghulām Husain Salīm gives a similar explanation of the title of 'Bhangrah' as Iliyās Shāh took much Bhang(hemp), he was called 'Bhangrah'⁹. It is to be noted that Ḥājī Iliyās ascended the throne of Lakhnautī against the authority of the Delhi Sultānate. Not only that, he, for the first time in the history of Bengal, united the different parts of Bengal under his authority and gave the united

2. See Supra, P. 54.

3. A. Kārim : Bānglār Itihāsa, PP. 308, 334.

4. Salīm : Riyād, P. 95; Badāūnī : Muntakhab, P. 231.

5. T.A. vol. III, P. 262.

6. Salīm : Riyād, P. 95.

7. T.F., pt. II, P. 296.

8. H. Blochmann : Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal, P. 49.

9. Salīm : Riyād, P. 95. Here Salīm spells the word as Bhang.

territories the name 'Bangālah' and it is for this reason, 'Afīf mentioned him as 'Shāh-i-Bangālah'¹⁰. This elevated position of Hājī Iliyās became the eye-sore to most of the historians of the Delhi Sultānate. So, they out of malice may have depicted him as 'Shāh-i-Bhangrah' or 'Bhankrah' instead of 'Shāh-i-Bangālah'¹¹. A.H. Dani rightly maintained that Hājī Iliyās, in no way can assume the title of Bhangrah. But it appears that he made a mistake in making a proper reading of the word 'Behnegarah', which he read as 'Bhangrah'. The word 'Behnegarah' is a compound word: 'Beh' and 'negarah'. 'Beh' means better and 'negarah' means one who observes. The compound word 'Behnegarah' thus expressed the following meaning : One who observes well, i.e., one who is just. The word 'Behnegarah' may also be read as 'Pahannegarah', which is also a compound word of 'Pahan' and 'negarah'. 'Pahan' means wide. Hence, the compound word 'Pahannogarah' carries the meaning : One who widely observes, i.e., one who is just. This variation of reading of the word 'Behnegarah' is due to the fact that in the medieval period one dot is used for ب and پ¹². Besides, the word "Behnegarah" (بهنگره) cannot be read as 'Bhangrah' meaning Bhang eater. Because the Persian word for hemp is (بنگ) as used by Salīm in the Riyād¹³, not as (بهنگ) as is mentioned in the Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī¹⁴.

10. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 114-118.

11. A.H. Dani : Shamsuddin Iliyās Shāh : Shāh-i-Bangālah', Sir J.N. Sarkar Commemoration Volume, PP. 50-58.

12. For all these explanations I owe greatly to Mr. Mortaza Sarraf, Professor of Persian language, Institute of Modern Languages, Dhaka University, Dhaka.

13. Riyād, p.95.

14. T.A., vol.III, p.262.

The circumstantial evidence also leads us to believe that Iliyās Shāh, after his accession to the throne, assumed the title of 'Behnegarah'. Historically it is true that Iliyās Shāh founded an independent Sultānate in Bengal. As a statesman, he rightly realized that his success in founding an independent Sultānate would not go unchallenged from the Delhi Sultān. So, in order to defend his Sultanate he must have the support of the local people. With this end in view, Hājī Iliyās, immediately after his accession, tried to prove himself to be a man with a strong sense of justice, meeting out equal treatment to all his subjects. Hence, the title assumed by Iliyās Shāh was not 'Bhangrah', but it was 'Behnegarah' or 'the Just', which is significant in the context of the contemporary situation. Probably, the word 'Behnekara'¹⁵ wrongly read as 'Bhankrah', is a corruption of the word 'Behnegarah'.

In the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of Diyā'al-Dīn Baranī, Iliyās Shāh is mentioned as Iliyās Bahangi (الباس بنگی)¹⁶, which is wrongly translated as Iliyās - the Bhang-eater¹⁷. The Persian word for Bhang-eater is بنگی (bangi)¹⁸ not 'Bahangi'. The word 'Bahangi' means a kind of yoke for carrying burdens across the shoulders¹⁹. This meaning indicates that on his accession to the throne, Iliyās Shāh took the responsibility of his subjects on his shoulders. Hence, Baranī rightly styled Iliyās Shāh as Iliyās 'Bahangi' which means Iliyās, the yoke-bearer.

15. Firishtah : T.F., pt.II, p.296.

16. T.F.S., p.593.

17. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology., p.163.

18. M. Morin : A. Persian Dictionary, vol.I, p.574.

19. John Richardson : Dictionary, Persian, Arabic and English, vol.I, p.203.

However, Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh, after consolidating his power at Lakhnautī, initiated an era of brilliant achievements in the history of Bengal. As Eastern Bengal was yet to be conquered by Iliyās Shāh, it was expected that he would undertake a plan of annexing this area. But instead he decided to extend his dominions in the west. The reasons for taking this decision are not far to seek. Firstly, as a true military strategist, Iliyās Shāh rightly realized that it would not be easy for him at that time to conquer the riverine tract of Eastern Bengal. Secondly, the political conditions that prevailed at that time on the western frontier of Bengal allured him to turn his attention towards the west. Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq, beset with various problems, could not pay attention to his eastern frontier. As a result, the Hindu Rajas and chiefs threw off their allegiance and practically became independent. But there was no unity among them. Taking advantage of this feeble hold of the Delhi Sultān and of the absence of union among the Hindu Rajas, Iliyās Shāh came out of his capital to extend his dominion towards the west. He first attacked Tirhut. At that time, Tirhut was torn by internal discord and was ruled by two rival Hindu rulers, Sakti Singh, grandson of Harisingh Deva, holding his court at Simraon, and Kamesvara, the nominee of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq, at Sugaon, near Madhubani in Darbhanga district²⁰. This internal feud between the two rival Hindu rulers facilitated the task of Iliyās Shāh who, without facing much difficulties, occupied Tirhut easily in 745 A.H./1344 A.D.²¹

20. J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B., II, p.103-104.

21. Suśilā Mandal : Vaṅgadesher Itihāsa, Madhyayug, pt.I, p.197.

Then in the year 1350 A.D. Iliyās Shāh made a bold thrust across the inhospitable region of Terai in Nepal which was yet undtrodden by Muslim soldiers. He advanced as far as the capital Kathmandu, destroyed the temple of Svayambhunath and captured immense wealth. It is learnt from a Nepal Inscription, dated 1371-1372 A.D., that "in the Nepal year 467(1346 A.D.) in the month of Marga-Sirsha, on the 10th day of the bright fortnight, on Thursday in the reign of king Jayarajadeva, Suratarana Samsadina (Sultān Shamsuddin) along with a large army of Bengal, having come into Nepal, broke and burnt completely the Dharm-dhatu Stupa (the pious relic shrine), the banner of the Muni (Budha) which had been founded by the predecessors of the king (or by earlier people)²². But the Nepal Rajvamsavali states that in 469 Newari year (1348 A.D.) Joyraj Malla, king of Nepal took money from the treasure of Pashupatinath. After this Sultān Shams al-Dīn of the East, having come into Nepal, broke Pashupati into three pieces and burnt the whole of Nepal. The nation loudly laments²³. It is further noticed in one of the inscriptions of Svayambhunath Temple at Kathmandu that Iliyās Shāh attacked Nepal in 470 Newari year i.e., in the year 1350 A.D.²⁴ This also finds support in the inscription of Patan²⁵. From the above sources it would be reasonable to hold that Iliyās Shāh invaded Nepal, but did not really annex any part of it to his kingdom, and returned with booty after destroying some temples²⁶.

22. J.B.O.R.S., 1936 A.D., p.84.

23. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn., p.22.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. A. Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.202.

Then Iliyās Shāh led a campaign against Eastern Bengal. He defeated Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ghāzī Shāh, the ruler of Sunārgāon and annexed his dominions in 753 A.H./1352 A.D.²⁷ It has been mentioned earlier²⁸ that Hājī Iliyās first captured the seat of Satgāon and then occupied the throne of Lakhnautī in 1342 A.D. Now, on capturing Sunārgāon in 1352 A.D. he became the master of the whole of Bengal, which no Sultān before him could claim. For this reason, 'Afīf adorned him with the titles of Shāh-i-Bangālah, Shāh-i-Bangāliyān, and Sultān-i-Bangālah²⁹. So, the conquest of Sunārgāon by Iliyās Shāh was an important event in the history of Bengal.

Iliyās Shāh's success in Eastern Bengal emboldened him further and accordingly he led an expedition to the South-West of Bengal and invaded Jajnagar (Orissa)³⁰. Orissa is described as a land of plenty. As a result rulers of both the east and west cast their eyes on it. Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh advanced through Jajpur and Katak as far as the Cilka Lake.³¹ He destroyed the temples of Orissa and came back with immense booty including 44 elephants³². Then Iliyās

27. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ghāzī Shāh issued his last coins in 753 A.H. from Sunārgāon (A.Karim: Corpus, p.38). On the other hand, we also find Iliyās Shāh's first coins issued from Sunārgāon in 753 A.H. (Ibid.; Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl. I.M.C., II, PP. 45-46). Thus coins emphatically prove that Ghāzī Shāh was defeated by Iliyās Shāh in 753 A.H./1352 A.D.

28. See Supra, P.46-48, 54.

29. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 114, 116-118, 120.

30. T.A., III, p.263; T.F., II, p.296; Riyād, p.96. There is a lot of controversy among scholars regarding the identification of Jajnagar, most of them accept the identification of Orissa. cf. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology., p.24-25; R.D. Banarjee : History of Orissa, vol.I, p.282; Jarret in his translation of Āyn-i-Akbarī, vol.II, p.219, Cambridge History of India, vol.III, p.263.

31. J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B. II, p.105.

32. Firishtah : T.F. II, p.296; Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., III, p.262.

Shāh invaded Bihar which was at that time, under the rule of the Delhi Sultānate and was governed by Imperial governor Malik Ibrāhīm Bayyū³³. That Iliyās Shāh waged war on Ibrāhīm Bayyū, governor of Bihar, is revealed by Buchanan on the basis of his Paṇḍuāh manuscript³⁴. Iliyās Shāh's attack seems to be either as the continuation of the policy of extending his frontier on the western frontier, or as a step ahead towards the fulfilment of his ambition, or as a war of revenge on the governor of Bihar who might have interfered in the affairs of Bengal, or just as an attempt to annex the province of Bihar which for long formed a part of the Bengal Kingdom and was very recently separated³⁵. Though we do not know anything about the result of the war between Iliyās Shāh and Malik Ibrāhīm Bayyū, it is certain that Ibrāhīm Bayyū died on the 13th Dhil Hajj, 753 A.H./20th January, 1353 A.D.³⁶ From this we may infer that possibly Iliyās Shāh gained a victory and that Malik Ibrāhīm Bayyū was killed in the battle against Iliyās Shāh. Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī informs us that Iliyās Shāh further extended his authority beyond Bihar to Champaran and Gorakhpur. It is also said that he went to Bahraich twice with the object of visiting the tomb of Shaikh Masud Ghāzī³⁷. He finally extended his dominions right up to Banaras³⁸. It is said that on returning to Lakhnautī from Bahraich and Banaras, Iliyās Shāh said in grief that "what a fine thing it would have been if with such plentitude

33. J.B.O.R.S., Patna, 1919.

34. Martin : History of Eastern India, vol.III, Delhi, 1976, p.616.

35. For details see Abdul Momin Chowdhury: 'New light on Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq's First invasion of Bengal', J.A.S.P., vol.VIII, No.1, 1963, PP.47-54.

36. Epigraphia Indica, vol.II, p.292.

37. J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.105; A.Karim: Bānglār Itihāsa, p.204.

38. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., Eng.tr. by B.De.vol.I, p.244; Salīm : Riyāḍ, p.96.

of strength and resources, army and fleet, I had passed to the city of Delhi (instead of going to Bahraich) and paid my respects to Shaykh-ul-Islām Nizām al-Dīn. Who could then have dared to oppose me and my forces"³⁹? We do not know exactly whether Iliyās Shāh made this remark or not. If there is any truth in this remark, surely it bears testimony to the success of Iliyās Shāh's march in the west.

But the success of Iliyās Shāh did not go unchallenged from Delhi. For, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq, after restoring peace and order in the realm, came out of his capital and marched towards Lakhnautī on the 10th Shawāl, 754 A.H./November, 1353 A.D.⁴⁰ and came back to the capital again in the month of Shābān, 755 A.H./September, 1354 A.D.⁴¹. It is learnt from the Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī that when the atrocities of Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh became unbearable to the people Lakhnautī they sent a written petition to Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi requesting his protection in the matter. When Fīrūz Shāh read the petition he was highly offended at the attitude of Iliyās and wrote a letter warning him; but to no effect, because the latter did not refrain from his atrocious activities. These activities of Iliyās Shāh induced the Sultān of Delhi to lead an expedition against Bengal⁴². Regarding the causes of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh's expedition towards Lakhnautī, Baranī writes, "when it was made to reach his auspicious ears that Iliyās, the governor of Lakhnautī who was forcibly holding that coun-

39. J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.105; J.A.S.P., vol.VIII. No.I, 1963 A.D. p.49.

40. Baranī : T.F.S., p.586.

41. Ibid, p.596.

42. J.B.O.R.S., vol. XXVII, 1941, PP. 79-83.

try, had at that time assembled a multitude of pāiks and dhānuks (bowmen) made plump with waters of Bengal and had raided Tirhut rashly and had oppressed the Musalmans and the Zimmis and had molested the country on that frontier.... he had been devastating the towns of the Musalmans. On account of zeal for religion Fīrūz Shāh came out with victorious army from Delhi and was pleased to march towards Lakhnautī"⁴³. It appears from Baranī's account that Iliyās Shāh was a tyrant and in order to restrain him Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq attacked Bengal. On the eve of his Bengal expedition Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq issued a proclamation which reads as follows :

"Whereas it has come to our auspicious ear that Iliyās Ḥājī has been committing oppression and high-handedness upon the people of the territory of Lakhnautī and Tirhut, shedding unnecessary blood, even shedding the blood of women, although it is a well established proposition in every creed and doctrine that no women even if she be kafir should be slain. And (whereas the said Iliyās Ḥājī) has been levying illegal cesses not sanctioned by the law of Islām, and thus putting the people into trouble; there being no security of life and property, no safety for honour and chastity. And whereas the territory was conquered by our masters and has come down to us by inheritance, and also as a gift of Imām (Abbasid Khalifa of Egypt) it devolves upon our Royal and courageous selves to safeguard the people of that State. And as Iliyās Ḥājī during the life time of his late Majesty was obedient and loyal to the throne; and even during our auspicious coronation he conferred his submission and fealty, as becomes a subordinate, sending petitions and waiters to attend upon us; so if, heretofore it were brought to our august notice an infinitesimal part of the oppression and high handedness

43. Baranī : T.F.S., p.586.

that he had been committing on God's creatures, we might have admonished him, so that he might have desisted therefrom. And whereas he was exceeded the limit and publicly rebelled against our authority, therefore, we have approached with an invincible army for the purpose of opening this territory, and for the happiness of the people thereof; desiring thereby, to convert the wounds of his oppressions by the salves of justice and mercy, and that the tree of their existence, withered by the hot pestilential wind of tyranny and oppression, might flourish and fructify by the limpid water of our bounty"⁴⁴.

In this proclamation also, Iliyās Shāh was pictured as a tyrant and efforts were being made for putting up a justification for a military campaign by Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq against Bengal.

Among the other causes, it is mentioned in the proclamation that Iliyās Shāh was loyal and obedient to Muḥammad bin Tughluq and even during the coronation of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq he confessed his submission and fealty. Regarding Iliyās Shāh's obedience to Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq, it may be said that to avoid immediate interference of the Sultān of Delhi, he did not declare independence after becoming the sole master of Satgāon in 739 A.H./1338 A.D.⁴⁵ But this outward allegiance to the Sultān of Delhi did not last long, for, from 740 A.H. we find an independent coinage of Iliyās Shāh⁴⁶. Depending on the evidence of coins⁴⁷, it can be said emphatically that the question of Iliyās Shāh's submission to Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq during the period

44. J.A.S.B., 1923, PP. 279-280.

45. See Chapter II.

46. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl., I.M.C.II, Coin No.22, p.43.

47. Botham : Shillong Cabinet, PP.146, 150; Shamsuddin Ahmed : Suppl.I.M.C.,II, PP. 43-44; Thomas : The Chronicles, p.269.

of coronation does not arise at all. It also appears from the Nīṣhān (proclamation) that as Iliyās Shāh publicly rebelled against the authority of Delhi, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq marched towards Lakhnautī to bring him under his control. This is possibly not the sole cause. Because, there were other rebels who severed the connection with Delhi, but Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq is not seen to take any action against them. A careful study of the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of Baranī leads us to exonerate Iliyās Shāh from the charges of oppression. It is found in the writings of Baranī that the pāiks of Bengal were ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause of Iliyās Shāh⁴⁸. It is also seen that he successfully withstood the onslaught of the Delhi forces with the help of the local soldiers. If Iliyās Shāh had been a tyrant and a slaughterer of women, it would not be possible on his part to mobilise the support of the Bengal soldiers. We also learn from the Nīṣhān of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq that he gave assurance to the people of Lakhnautī to remit duties wholly for the current year and he had given direction to levy the revenue and duties in accordance with the regulation promulgated during the reign of the late Sultān Shams al-Dīn⁴⁹ from the next year. He also gave assurance to the effect that the extra or illegal taxes imposed upon the people were remitted and removed entirely⁵⁰. These assurances given by the Sultān of Delhi indicate that the main purpose of issuing the Nīṣhān (proclamation) is to bring the people to his side by

48. Baranī : T.F.S., p.593.

49. This Sultān Shams al-Dīn is identified with Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh of Bengal who ruled Bengal from 701 A.H./1301 A.D. to 722 A.H./1322 A.D. cf. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Du śo Bachar, 3rd edn. PP.39-40, f.r

50. J.A.S.B., 1923, p.280.

giving them concessions and privileges. Actually, the Nishān which is issued on the eve of the Bengal expedition is nothing but a paper of propaganda. hence, on the basis of this Nishān and the Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī of Baranī, which was written to get favour from the Sultān, it would not be fair to conclude that Iliyās Shāh was a tyrant. Ghulām Husain Salīm mentioned another cause of the Bengal expedition of Firuz Shāh Tughluq. Iliyās Shāh built a bath, similar to the Shamsī bath of Delhi. Being furious by this event, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq set out for Lakhnautī to punish Hājī Iliyās⁵¹. This view also does not seem to be reasonable. For, a large scale invasion like the Bengal expedition cannot be undertaken on such a trifling ground. As a matter of fact, there were obvious reasons for the Bengal expedition of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq. We know that Bengal was incorporated into the Delhi Sultānate by Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq in 1324 A.D. But during the later part of the reign of Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq different administrative units in Bengal re-asserted their connection with Delhi at different times under Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh, Hājī Iliyās and 'Alī Mubārak⁵² and with the passage of time. Hājī Iliyās became the sole master of Bengal by capturing Lakhnautī in 1342 A.D. and finally by occupying Sunārgāon in 1352 A.D. Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq, who had succeeded Muḥammad bin Tughluq on the throne of Dehli in 1351 A.D., naturally viewed with great concern the rise of a powerful independent kingdom in Bengal. This concern of the Sultān might have induced him to bring back the lost province of Bengal under the imperial rule. But the real and immediate cause of

51. Riyād., P. 96.

52. See Supra, 2nd Chapter, P. 43.

Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq's Bengal expedition was the encroachment made by Iliyās Shāh upon the eastern region of the Delhi Sultānate. It is seen that Iliyās Shāh, after becoming the master of the whole of Bengal, captured Bihar and extended his authority beyond Bihar to Champaran, Gorakhpur and Kashi⁵³. This encroachment by Iliyās Shāh tentamounts to a direct threat on the Delhi Sultānate. If there were any truth in the boast of Iliyās Shāh⁵⁴, there were ample reasons for Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq to feel alarmed. A careful reading of the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of Baranī also reveals that Iliyās Shāh had been invading the territories of the Delhi Sultānate even when Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq was on his way towards Lakhnautī⁵⁵. Hence, it is obvious that Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq, in spite of the presence of serious troubles in the Deccan and other parts of his empire, had to turn his attention towards Bengal for its reannexation to the Sultānate of Delhi.

We get information about the Bengal expedition of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq in the contemporary and later Persian works. Though the authors of the Persian works differ on a few points in their narration, all of them give the same description about the Bengal expedition of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq. It is learnt that leaving Wazīr Khānjahān at Delhi, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq started for Lakhnautī on the 10th Shawāl 754 A.H./November, 1353 A.D. with an army consisting of 70,000 Khāns and Maliks, 80,000 cavalry, 470 elephants in addition to infantry and artillery⁵⁶. After a continuous march the imperial army reached the province of Awadh and secured the support of the Rajas, Ranas

53. Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī, Quoted by A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.204.

54. See Supra, p. 60-61.

55. Baranī : T.F.S., p.586.

56. Ibid. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP.109,144. According to 'Afīf, at the time of fighting, the imperial army had 90,000 cavalry. The additional 10,000 must have been the contribution of neighbouring rulers who had recognized the suzerainty of the Sultān.

and the chieftains of Hindustan who willingly and gladly accompanied the imperial army with their cavalry and infantry⁵⁷. Then the imperial army crossed the river Sarayu. On receiving this news, Iliyās Shāh retreated from these frontiers and retired to Tirhut. After crossing the Sarayu, the imperial army entered the country of Kharosa⁵⁸ and Gorakhpur⁵⁹. The rais of Gorakhpur and Kharosa, who had been evading payment of tribute for a long time, submitted to the Sultān and paid their dues in lakhs of silver coins. They also helped him with their infantry and cavalry and joined the army which continued its march till it arrived on the bank of the river Kosi⁶⁰. When Iliyās Shāh received this news, he swiftly went to Paṇḍuah from Tirhut and encamped on the opposite bank of the river Kosi. As this river was very deep and its current was strong, Iliyās Shāh thought that the imperial army would not be able to cross it. Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq finding the difficulties moved 200 miles upwards and arrived at a place where the river issued from the mountain and though the water was not so deep there, its current was so strong that it could wash off a load of 500 maunds⁶¹. But the Sultān, using the elephants, crossed the river with great difficulty. As the imperial army was proceeding fast, Iliyās Shāh left Paṇḍuah and took shelter in the fortress city of Ekdālah⁶². It is mentioned in the Riyāḍ al-Salātīn that Iliyās Shāh left Paṇḍuah keeping his son there with an army⁶³. Iliyās Shāh's decision of taking shelter in the fort of

57. Baranī : T.F.S. PP. 586-587.

58. It is very difficult to locate the exact position of Kharosa. In the Āyn-i-Akbarī we find a Mahal Kharosna (Abū'l Faḍl : A.A. Eng. tr. by Jarret, vol. II, p. 93). But it is very difficult to infer that it was identical with Kharosah of Baranī. Probably it is situated in Bihar near Tirhit.

59. It is in the United Province. The city lies near the left bank of the Rapti and the junction of roads to Ghozipur and Fayzabad (Imp. Gaz., vol. XII, p. 341).

60. 'Afīf : T.F.S., p. 40.

61. Ibid., p. 111.

62. Baranī : T.F.S., p. 589.

63. Salīm : Riyāḍ, p. 96. A. Karim (Bānglār Itihāsa, p. 216) does not accept this. But he does not put forward any argument in support of his contention.

Ekdālah proves that he was an expert military strategist. He rightly realised that it would not be possible on the part of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq to capture the fort of Ekdālah which was surrounded by water on one side and by jungle on the other. Moreover, as the rainy season was approaching soon, he thought that it would also be very difficult for the Sultān to stay there for long. Anyway, the Sultān occupied Paṇḍuāh without any opposition. He ordered his troops neither to harass the citizens nor to destroy the gardens of the palace of Iliyās⁶⁴.

Then he attempted to win the sympathy of the local people by issuing a proclamation⁶⁵. He proclaimed complete security of life and property to the inhabitants of Paṇḍuāh, and having declared Iliyās Shāh a rebel and an impious Muslim called upon the people to disown him as their Sultān. He made very tempting offers to those who would desert the cause of Iliyās. To the captains of pāiks (infantry) he promised to double their allowance on joining with their full quota of contingents; to the land-owners, remission of the current year's revenue and other pecuniary advantages; and to the Muslim theologians, increased land grants and stipends. We are not able to judge whether these measures had any tangible effect.

However, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq marched to Ekdālah⁶⁶. On reaching there, the imperial forces encamped at a place just opposite to the fort of

64. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 589-590.

65. J.A.S.B., 1923, p.279.

66. There is a lot of controversy regarding the identification of Ekdālah. But now most of the scholars accept the view of Westmacott who identified Ekdālah with a village of the same name in the Dhanjar Parganah of Dinajpur district, about 23 miles north of Paṇḍuāh in Maldah district, 42 miles north of Gaur, 15 miles west of Ghoraghat on the Malda side of the river Tangan (J.A.S.B., 1874, PP.244-245). For details see J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B.II, p.107 fn.1; A.Karim: Bānglār Itihāsa, PP.218-220.

Ekdālah⁶⁷. We have a detailed description of the subsequent happenings in 'Afīf's account⁶⁸, which is as follows : Every day the army of Iliyās Shāh used to come out of the fort and indulge in sporadic raids. This continued for a long while, at length the Sultān held a council to decide the future strategy. In the course of discussion it was pointed to the Sultān that Shams al-Dīn had taken shelter in the fort of Ekdālah because he was certain of the retreat of the imperialists during the rainy season, which was approaching fast. Once the rain had set in the low lands in which the imperialists had pitched their camp, would become water-logged. As such it was stressed that the operations should be completed before the rains. But this was not possible unless Shams al-Dīn had been lured out of the fort to meet the imperialists in an open engagement. The council devised a stratagem according to which they feigned retreat towards Delhi leaving behind a few spies disguised as Qalandar monks. The latter were directed to move to the fort of Ekdālah and were asked to inform Shams al-Dīn that the Sultān had retreated with all his forces. The stratagem worked satisfactorily. When the fake monks (Qalandar) were brought to Sultān Shams al-Dīn, they told the latter that Sultān Fīrūz Shāh had retreated with all his forces. Shams al-Dīn fell a victim to the stratagem. He, believing the words of the fake Qalandars, came out of the fort to deliver a charge upon the retiring imperialists. He pushed ahead with 10,000 cavalry 2,00,000 infantry and 50 elephants. Fīrūz Shāh was lying in wait for the enemy. He disposed his army in battle array dividing it into three commands i.e. the right wing under

67. Baranī : T.F.S., p.590.

68. 'Afīf : T.F.S., p.111-116.

Malik Dīlān, the left wing under Malik Husām Nawā and the middle under Tātār Khān. Each wing was supported by 30,000 cavalry. The Sultān moved from one place to another goading his soldiers to action.

When Shams al-Dīn saw these preparations he understood that he had been deceived by the fake Qalandars. Anyway, the action started with full force. Shams al-Dīn attacked the left wing of the imperial army; the right wing fell on another group. A violent contest then ensued. The Bengalis, particularly the pāiks, fought with reckless valour. The imperial troops hurled back the Bengalis repeatedly as they surged forward, and before the sun had set, the Bengalis were seen fleeing away from the battle field in confusion and disorder. The battle thus ended in the discomfiture of the Bengalis.

The court-historians, as usual, magnify the success of the imperial arms. Baranī writes, "At the very outset of the fight, the army of Islām captured the umbrella, the royal staff, the royal trumpet and the standard of the governor of Lakhnautī and 44 elephants. Iliyās, who had in his head the idea of leadership and kingship, became vanquished in the twinkling of an eye and fled in such a hurry that he could not distinguish the bridle from the back-string and stirrup from the side ... The victorious soldiers of the army of Islām cut off with their swords the heads of the cavalry and the infantry following the vanquished Iliyās, ... The rebels became so much bewildered and confused from fear of the victorious soldiers of Islām, that they lost all sense and could not find the way to flee nor knew the right from the left"⁶⁹.

69. Baranī : T.F.S., p.592.

'Afīf echoes the same tone when he writes, "After much fighting and slaughter, Shams al-Dīn retreated and fled towards his own city forty seven elephants were taken and three were slain. The king of Bengal, out of all his enormous force, fled with only seven horsemen and his whole army was scattered⁷⁰. According to Yahyā, Iliyas fled without any fight and a large number of his soldiers were killed⁷¹. The authors of the later Persian works have followed suit⁷². But such a view is hardly compatible with the events that followed. 'Afīf further mentions that Sultān Fīrūz Shāh proceeded after his victory to Ekdālah and again besieged the town. Thereupon all the ladies and respectable women went to the top of the fort and when they saw him they uncovered their heads and in their distress made great lamentation⁷³.

The mild-hearted Sultān was moved by this pathetic scene and he stopped fighting remarking, "I may enter into the fort and capture it, and the khutbah may be read in my name but all these Muslim ladies would fall into the hands of our indisciplined soldiers and their honour will be at stake How shall I answer to God on the day of my judgement"⁷⁴? Though Tātār Khān repeatedly urged the Sultān to capture the fort, but he remained firm in his resolve and abandoned the siege⁷⁵. Having decided to quit Bengal the Sultān gave an order "for collecting the heads of the slain Bengalis and a silver tanka was offered

70. T.F.S., PP. 117-118.

71. T.M.S., p. 125.

72. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol.I, Eng.tr. by B.De, p.245; Badāūnī : Muntakhab Eng.tr. by Ranking, p.325; Firishlah : T.F., vol.I, Eng.tr.by Briggs, p.260; Salim : Riyād, Eng.tr. by A. Salam, p.102.

73. T.F.S., PP. 118-119.

74. Ibid, p. 119.

75. Ibid.

for every head The heads were counted and amounted to rather more than 15,000 The Sultān then turned with his army and marched ~~quickly~~ towards Delhi"⁷⁶.

From the description of the two contemporary authors it would appear that Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq was victorious in his war at Ekdālāh, Iliyās Shāh's army was scattered and only on the ground of saving the honour of the besieged Muslim women he abandoned the fruits of victory and raised the siege to return to Delhi. How far this is a faithful account of the happenings at Ekdālāh is doubtful. Fīrūz Shāh's second invasion against Sikandar Shāh, his overtures for peace with Iliyās Shāh and the exchange of presents, of which we have information in other sources, all these go against this portrayal of glorious victory on the part of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq. It is also a very flimsy ground that coming all the way from Delhi the Sultān abandoned at the point when he was about to consolidate his success on the ground of saving the honour of the ladies at Ekdālāh. The contemporary historians would naturally record the campaign in a partisan way. That Iliyās Shāh ruled in peace hereafter in full glory would rather make us feel that the war did not go the way the contemporary historians would make us believe. On the contrary, the author of the Riyāḍ al-Salātīn writes that when the rainy season set in, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh made overtures for peace. Sultān Shams al-Dīn also, being hard pressed by the siege, sought for peace. As a consequence, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh, releasing the son of Sultān Shams al-Dīn together with other prisoners of the kingdom of Lakhnautī, raised the standard of return⁷⁷. We also get reference to this peace in the

76. Ibid, p.121.

77. Salīm : Riyāḍ, p.98.

works of Badāūnī⁷⁸ and Firishtah⁷⁹. Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad also writes that Sultān Fīrūz Shāh concluded peace with Shams al-Dīn and released the captives⁸⁰. But neither Barani nor 'Afīf mention anything about peace. Moreover, it is found in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of 'Afīf that Iliyās Shāh, after Fīrūz Shāh's return to Delhi, entered Ekdālah (most probably Paṇḍuāh, because Ekdālah was always under Iliyās Shāh) and killed its governor who was appointed by Fīrūz Shāh⁸¹. But the subsequent exchange of presents between the two sovereigns and the fact that Fīrūz Shāh never again attempted to conquer Bengal as long as Iliyās Shāh lived, lead us to give credence to the conclusion of a peace between Fīrūz Shāh and Iliyās Shāh.

Though we do not know the terms of peace, it is obvious that Shams al-Dīn continued to rule as an independent Sultān. Yahyā tells us that in 756 A.H. when ambassadors with valuable presents came from the court of Lakhnautī to the court of Delhi. Sultān Fīrūz Shāh addressed them in the following words : "My humble servants possess better effects than those you have brought here, henceforth you should bring such picked elephants which a king should present to a brother king"⁸². Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī mentions that in 757 A.H. Iliyās Hājī sent fighting tribute, and became the recipient of the imperial favour. At this time the entire country of Hindustan was in the possession of the Sultān except Lakhnautī and the Dakhin; since the death of Sultān Muḥammad Tughluq Shāh, Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Hājī was in possession of the former⁸³. As a matter of fact,

78. Muntakhab, p.244.

79. T.F., vol.I, p.146.

80. T.A., vol.I, tr. by B.De, p.245.

81. Elliot and Dowson : History of India, vol. III, p.298.

82. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.126.

83. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol.I, Eng.tr.by B.De, PP.245-246. Badāūnī also tells us the same thing. cf Muntakhab, p.245.

almost every year after the return of Fīrūz from Bengal, plenipotentiaries from Ḥājī Iliyās of Lakhnauti with valuable presents came to Delhi. They became recipient of excessive favours and endless affections. Such exchanges of presents and tokens of goodwill, as obtain only between two sovereigns, continued till the death of Sultān Shams al-Dīn and these leave no doubt that Fīrūz Shāh recognized the sovereignty of Iliyās Shāh in the kingdom of Bengal.

Though Baranī and Afīf speak highly of the magnanimity of the Delhi Sultān and tried their best to conceal his failure to crush Iliyās Shāh by saying that Fīrūz Shāh had prohibited his soldiers from plundering and trampling down the fort of Ekdālah out of his piety as the women of the fort were seen mourning, there cannot be any doubt about the fact that the Bengal campaign of Fīrūz Shāh was not successful. The authors of the later Persian works had this feeling as Firishtah writes that Fīrūz Shāh returned without effecting his object⁸⁴. The thinly veiled pretext of the contemporary historians to explain the retreat of the Sultān is not likely to convince a critical investigator. Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq was fighting in a distant land where supplies were difficult to replenish, the approach of the rainy season, the damp condition of the country side -- all these possibly made it difficult for the Sultān to press home the initial success he may have had.

But there cannot be any doubt about the fact that Sultān Fīrūz Shāh failed to conquer Bengal. But he was successful in recapturing the other territories of the Delhi Sultānate. As a result, the high ambition of Iliyās Shāh

84. T.F., vol.I, p.146.

was checked. This is the only direct result of Fīrūz Shāh's Bengal expedition. On the other hand, the nett result of the Bengal expedition of Fīrūz Shāh was the creation of friendly relations between the Sultān of Delhi and Iliyās Shāh of Bengal which were further cemented by exchanges of gifts and envoys which took place in 756 A.H./1355 A.D.,⁸⁵ 757 A.H./1356 A.D.,⁸⁶ 758 A.H./1357 A.D.⁸⁷ and in 759 A.H./1358 A.D.⁸⁸

The amicable settlement with the Sultān of Delhi gave Iliyās Shāh an opportunity to exert his influence on the neighbouring territories and to extend his territory further. This time Iliyās Shāh turned his attention towards eastern frontiers. It is noticed that he succeeded in exerting his influence on the neighbouring kingdom of Tippera. Rajamala informs us that Dangar Fa had eighteen sons. He was thinking of the problem of succession. One day he examined all his sons and found that Ratna Fa, the youngest, to be the most clever one. So, he nominated Ratna Fa as his successor. At this all the other sons became angry and after the death of their father plotted against Ratna Fa, and ousted him from the kingdom. Ratna Fa, took shelter in lakhnautī and sought assistance from the Sultan of Bengal. With his assistance Ratna Fa, recovered his own throne from the hands of his brothers. As a mark of gratitude, Ratna Fa, presented a manik (jewel) and some elephants to the Sultān of Bengal. In return, the Sultān of Bengal, being very much satisfied, gave him the title of Manikya⁸⁹. From this time onward, the king of Tippera assumed this title

85. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.126; Nizām al-Dīn : T.A. vol.1, p.230.

86. Salīm : Riyāḍ, p.98.

87. Ibid, pp. 98-99.

88. Badāūnī : Muntakhab., p.246.

89. Rajamālā, part I, ed. by Kali Prasanna Sen, pp.60-71; part II, ed. by Kailas Chandra Sinha, p.28.

of Manikya⁹⁰. Now the question arises : which Sultān of Bengal helped Ratna Fa, and gave him the title of Manikya ? K.R. Qanungo took him to be Tughral, the rebel governor of Sultān Balban⁹¹. At the time of Tughral's governorship, one Danuj Rai ruled Sunārgāon. Though Tughral conquered some territories in Eastern Bengal, still vast areas of that part were outside his authority. At that time there was also no link between the kingdom of Lakhnautī and the kingdom of Tippera. So, it was not possible on the part of Tughral to have helped Ratna Fa. Hence, K.R. Qanungo's view cannot be accepted. Besides, the discovery of two coins⁹² of Maharajah Ratna Manikya of the date 1288 Saka era has upset the view of K.R. Qanungo. 1288 Saka era is equivalent to 1366 A.D. In this year, Sultān Sikandar Shāh was on the throne of Panduāh. There is no evidence to the effect that Sikandar undertook all round conquest. Besides, there is also no reason to believe that 1366 A.D. is the first year of Ratna Fa's reign. We know that it was Iliyās Shāh who extended his territories before the year 1366 A.D. He became the sole master of the whole of Bengal and his dominion extended upto the frontier of the kingdom of Tippera. So, it is likely that Iliyās Shāh helped Ratna to capture the throne of Tippera and gave him the title of Manikya.

Towards the close of his reign Iliyās Shāh added one more laurel to his crown by leading a successful campaign against Kamrup. Neither contemporary Persian nor Assamese sources mention anything about this campaign. But we get

90. A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.621.

91. J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B., II, p.59.

92. Kali Prasanna Sen (ed) : Rājamālā pt.I, p.196.

a coin of Sultān Sikandar Shāh, son of Sultān Iliyās Shāh, of the year 759 A.H. (first year of his reign) bearing the mint name Chawalistan 'urf Kamrup⁹³. Sultān Sikandar Shāh, just after his accession, had to face the formidable army of Delhi led by Sultān Fīrūz Shāh. So, it was not possible for him to lead an expedition and conquer Kamrup in the first year of his reign. Hence, it is quite reasonable to think that the conquest of Kamrup had taken place towards the close of the reign of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh. As Kamrup was a flourishing kingdom from remote antiquity, it drew the attention of the Muslim rulers of Iakhnautī from time to time. Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī (in 1227 A.D.) and Malik Yūzbak (in 1257 A.D.) had advanced as far as Kamrup, but both of them failed to capture it. After a century, Iliyās Shāh again invaded Kamrup in 758 A.H./1357 A.D.⁹⁴. At that time, the ruler of Kamta was Indra Narayan. ~~He~~ was a weak ruler. He possessed neither the material resources nor probably the ability to check the invaders⁹⁵. In these favourable conditions Iliyās Shāh quite easily conquered a portion of Kamrup. But the old Sultān did not live long. Soon after his victory he died.

At present, it is not very difficult to ascertain the last date of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh. It is now clear that Iliyās Shāh issued coins in his own name upto 758 A.H./1357 A.D.⁹⁶. On the other hand, we get a coin of Sultān Sikandar Shāh of the year 759 A.H./1358 A.D.⁹⁷. According to the Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī, Iliyās Shāh's death occurred in 759 A.H./1358 A.D.⁹⁸.

93. H.N. Wright : Catalogue II, p.152.

94. J.N. Sarkar (ed): H.B.II, p. 110.

95. Ibid.

96. cf. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology, PP. 38-41.

97. H.N. Wright : Catalogue I, p.152.

98. J.B.O.R.S., vol. XXVII, 1941, p.91; J.N. Sarkar (ed) H.B.II, p.110.

This date is confirmed by the Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī⁹⁹. It is also learnt from the writings of the later histories that the Sultān of Delhi despatched some Arab and Turki horses with other fine presents for Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh in 759 A.H./1358 A.D. When the Delhi embassy arrived at Bihar, they heard that Sultān Shams al-Dīn had died¹⁰⁰. So, on the evidence of coin together with the information gathered from the Persian works, it can be safely concluded that Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh died in 759 A.H./1358 A.D.

(Undoubtedly Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh was an illustrious figure in the history of Bengal. He was one of those fortunate men who, by dint of their merits and sustained efforts, rose to the position of power and glory from humble origin. In his early life he had neither the means nor any following at his disposal to assist him in his struggle for power and position. Beginning his career as a personal attendant to a Delhi noble he escaped to Bengal and, in course of time, became the sole master of Bengal by uniting the territories of Satgāon, Lakhnautī and Sunārgāon. It was no mean achievement on his part. In fact, to him goes the credit of laying the foundation of the first independent Muslim Sultānate in Bengal. An ambitious Sultān like him could not remain satisfied with what he had achieved by that time. He wanted to raise the glory of his empire by an aggressive policy of expansion. He succeeded in fulfilling his desire by conquering territories beyond the boundaries of Bengal.)

99. T.M.S., p.126.

100. Ibid; Badaūnī : Muntakhab, p.246; Firishtah : T.F., I., p.146.

Iliyās Shāh was a daring soldier and a general of high calibre. He possessed all the qualities of a successful military leader. He commanded the absolute loyalty of his soldiers who were ever prepared to sacrifice every thing for the sake of their leader¹⁰¹. It was because of his good generalship that he won wonderful victories against his adversaries in Bengal and outside Bengal. His success against Tirhut, Nepal, Orissa and Kamrup clearly shows his eminence as a military leader. He was also a great military strategist. He showed great farsightedness when he left Panduāh and took shelter in the fort of Ekdālah without giving any resistance to the Delhi forces. He rightly realized that it would not be possible on the part of the Sultān of Delhi to conquer Ekdālah which was surrounded by water on one side and jungle on the other. He also comprehended that as the rainy season was approaching soon, the Sultān could not possibly continue the seige for long. These assumptions of Iliyās Shāh came to be true and we find the Sultān retreating without effecting his object.

Iliyās Shāh was also a successful statesman. He realized that it would not be easy for him to unite the whole of Bengal under his parasol at a stretch, and so he bided his time until circumstances turned in his favour. He attacked 'Alī Mubārak at a time when the latter was still busy with his formidable enemy Fakhr al-Dīn of Sunārgāon, and was finally able to capture Lakhnautī. He did not march against Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ghāzī Shāh of Sunārgāon until he sufficiently strengthened himself by his successful raids to the west and north west. In

101. Baranī : T.F.S., p. 593.

dealing with Sultān Fīrūz Shāh he proved himself to be a shrewd statesman. He did never engage himself in frontal war with the Sultān of Delhi. But when the war was inevitable he fought bravely. Again, when Sultān Fīrūz Shāh made overtures for peace, Iliyās Shāh did not ignore the peace proposal. After the conclusion of peace, Iliyās Shāh maintained friendly relations by sending envoys and rich presents to the Sultān of Delhi. On the other hand, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh maintained good relations with the Sultān of Bengal and so long Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh was alive, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh did not attempt to capture Bengal. Fīrūz's second invasion of Bengal immediately after the death of Iliyās Shāh tends to suggest that Fīrūz Shāh was respectful to the ability and prowess of his adversary.

Although Sultān Shams al-Dīn was almost constantly engaged in wars throughout his reign, he was not unmindful of the need of putting his administration on the right track. Ghulām Husain Salīm gives testimony to this fact. According to him, Sultān Shams al-Dīn, with absolute independence devoted himself to the administrative affairs of Bengal¹⁰². Because, from the very beginning of his reign he realized that his success in Bengal would not go unchallenged for a long time. So, for his own sake he felt the necessity of winning the support of the local people. With this end in view, he tried to give the administration a popular character by offering liberal concessions to local elements. These concessions were expressed in terms of patronage given to "local culture, art and literature and also in the formation of a party of local Zamīndārs as opposed to the party of foreign elements that had

102. Riyād, p.96.

so long been strong in the capital"¹⁰³. Iliyās Shāh opened the government service to talent without any distinction of caste, creed or colour. He was probably the first to make a large recruitment of the local people in his army. This is supported by the writings of Baranī¹⁰⁴. Yahyā mentions one Sahdeo as one of the commanders of Iliyās Shāh¹⁰⁵. The Inshāh-i-Māhrū (Letters of 'Ain-ul Mulk Māhrū) throw some light on his administration¹⁰⁶. Khāns, Maliks, Umārā, Sadrs, Akābers and Māārifs, mentioned in the proclamation of Fīrūz Shāh, were probably charged with civil and military administration. Possibly the Khāns, Maliks and Umārā were grandees of the kingdom holding fiefs and villages. Some of them might have been advisers to the Sultān as ministers of State. A council of such ministers was called by Sultān Shams al-Dīn in the fort of Ekdālah, while he was besieged by Sultān Fīrūz Shāh¹⁰⁷. These facts show that Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh was an able administrator whose liberal policy worked well and formed the basis of the administrative system of the later period. }

Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh was a deeply-religious man. This contention finds support in the attachment of the word Hājī (one who performed Hajj) with his name Iliyās. Iliyās Shāh had great veneration for Muslim saints. During the period of his reign Shaikh Sirāj al-Dīn and Shaikh Biyabani came to Bengal. The former is known as the mirror of Hindustan. Shaikh Biyabani died in 754 A.H./1353 A.D.¹⁰⁸ Iliyās Shāh respected him very much. For this reason, even when he was besieged by Sultān Fīrūz Shāh at the Ekdālah fort,

103. A.Karim : Social History, PP. 28-29.

104. T.F.S., p. 593.

105. T.M.S., p. 125.

106. J.A.S.B., 1923, p.279ff.

107. Baranī : T.F.S., p.589.

108. Salīm : Riyād, Eng. tr. by A. Salam, p. 102, f.n.I.

he came out in disguise to attend the funeral of Shaikh Biyabanī. This highly speaks of his devotion to saintly personalities of his time. Though a devout Muslim, he showed tolerant attitude towards the non-Muslims. This fact is revealed in the Inshā-i-Māhrū in which it is noticed that the non-Muslim hermits, Sains (Sanyāsīs) also received stipends as the Sādāt, 'Ulamā and Mashāikh received stipends from the Sultān¹⁰⁹.

Muslim historians of Delhi passed adverse judgement about Shams al-Din Iliyas Shah. They described him as a rebel, an oppressor of Muslims including women, a bhangi, a leper and what not¹¹⁰. But doubts can be cast about the correctness of these remarks. A careful study of his activities shows that Iliyās Shāh was a popular Sultān. Baranī informs us that the Pāiks of Bengal were ready to sacrifice their lives for their leader¹¹¹. Iliyās Shāh was also adorned with the titles of Shāh-i-Bangālah, Sultān-i-Bangālah, and Shāh-i-Bangāliyān¹¹². It appears from these titles that he was not only the Sultān of the Muslims alone but also of the whole community consisting of both the Muslims and non-Muslims of Bengal. Actually, his independence with a separate court at Lakhnautī and his popularity became the eye-sore of the Delhi historians and as such adverse comments from the Delhi historians can well be understood. Hence, their assertions about him cannot be accepted at their face value. In fact, he was a noble man and was held in respect and love by his subjects in Bengal and this possibly led to the ascriptions like Shāh-i-Bangālah and Shāh-i-Bangāliyān.

109. J.A.S.B., 1923, P. 279.

110. Inshāh-i-Māhrū, J.A.S.B., 1923, P. 279 ff; Baranī : T.F.S., P. 593; Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī, P. 34; J.N. Sarkar (ed) : I.I.B.vol.II, P. 110.

111. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 593.

112. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 114-120.

Shams al-Din Iliyās Shāh also showed great qualities of a nation builder. In the history of Bengal, it was he who for the first time founded an independent Sultānate by uniting the territories of Satgāon, Lakhnautī and Sunārgāon. He gave to this united territories the name of 'Bangālah' and to the people thus integrated the name of 'Bangalī'. Henceforth, the people, either of East Bengal or of North Bengal, or of West Bengal or of South Bengal passed for under the common name of the 'Bangalī' and the people of other countries called them by this name. On the other hand, Iliyās Shāh, declaring himself as a national monarch, took up the cause of Bengal as his own. He did his best to advance the political, social, economic, and cultural interests of this country. In fact, he infused a new life in the society by adopting a liberal policy to bring a cohesion among the people. As a result, all the people of Bengal came under the banner of one politico-social and linguistic platform. Like a true national leader he gave equal treatment to all his people. His achievement as a nation-builder, were not merely personal. He infused such a spirit in his administration and his liberal policy became a model for the future rulers of independent Sultānate in Bengal. Iliyās Shāh can rightly be given the credit of initiating such a liberal policy for the independent Sultānate of Bengal.

Shams al-Din Iliyās Shāh was a builder too. According to tradition, it is said that he was the founder of the city of Hajipur¹¹³. Ghulām Husain Salīm informs us that he built a bath like Shamsī bath of Delhi¹¹⁴.

113. Charles Stewart : History of Bengal, p.108.

114. Salīm : Riyād, p.96.

Thus in conclusion Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh may be said to have inaugurated a glorious period in the history of Bengal, which lasted for nearly two hundred years (i.e. from 1352 A.D. to 1538 A.D.) and in initiating the policies and values which helped the Sultānate to thrive for such a long time. Iliyās Shāh's contributions, though not very clearly and elaborately recorded for us to draw upon, should not be underestimated.

Sultān Sikandar Shāh

Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh was succeeded by his eldest son Sikandar Shāh in 759 A.H./1358 A.D.¹ Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī records that on the third day after his (Iliyās Shāh) demise, the Amīrs and the chiefs of different groups placed his eldest son on the throne, giving him the title of Sikandar Shāh². Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī informs us that Sikandar Shāh had a brother, 'Alī Shāh by name, who was in service under Pindār Khaljī, an official of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh³. The credibility of this statement has been disputed by A.Karim⁴ and it is not likely that a son of Iliyās Shāh served under an official of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq. (On his accession to the throne, Sikandar Shāh "proclaimed the gospel of justice and beneficence and occupied himself with the duties of the Sultānate"⁵.)

Immediately on accession, Sikandar Shāh rightly realized that in order to consolidate his position on the throne, he should maintain good relations with the Sultān of Delhi. Accordingly he sent an envoy, named 'Ālam Khān to Delhi in the very year of his coronation⁶. Within a short time, he also sent five elephants as gift through Malik Saif al-Dīn⁷. But in spite of his earnest desire and efforts, Sikandar Shāh could not avert the hostility of the Sultān of Delhi.

1. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.127.

2. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol.III, p.264.

3. Extract translated by K.K. Basu in J.B.O.R.S., vol. XXVII, pt.1,1941,p.92.

4. Banglar Itihasa, p.224.

5. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol. III, p.264.

6. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.128.

7. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol.III, p.264.

We have noticed earlier that during the reign of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh of Delhi first attacked Bengal. But without achieving his objective, the Sultān had to go back to Delhi. Of course, good relations were maintained between them so long Iliyās Shāh was alive. The Sultāns of Bengal and Delhi exchanged envoys and presents on a number of occasions⁸. It is even recorded that at the time of Iliyās Shāh's death, the envoys from Delhi were coming to Bengal with presents. When they reached Bihar, they heard the news of the death of Iliyās Shāh and did not proceed further⁹. But we find Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq leading a second expedition to Bengal immediately after the death of Iliyās Shāh. Possibly he was waiting for an opportune moment.

Writing by way of an explanation for the second Bengal expedition of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh, Shams-i-Sirāj Afīf accused Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh. According to him, soon after the retreat of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh from Bengal, Iliyās Shāh invaded Sunārgāon and captured Fakhr al-Dīn. He then killed him and occupied his territory. As a result, the followers and friends of Fakhr al-Dīn were put to flight. At that time, Zafar Khān, son-in-law of Fakhr al-Dīn, was busy with examining the accounts of the revenues. When he received the news of his father-in-law's death, he, in sheer fright of the turn of the events, fled by water. He first reached Thatta and then proceeded towards Delhi. He met the Sultān at Hisar Firuzah and related to him the pathetic tale of his sufferings. He solicited royal help for avenging the wrong done

8. See Supra, p. 77.

9. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A. vol. III, p.264; Firishtah : T.F., II, p.296.

to his father-in-law and for his reinstatement in Sunārgāon. The tender hearted Sultān promised the refugee fullest support. He advanced to him and his followers a sum of four lakhs of tankah (rupees) besides conferring on him costly robes. Furthermore, an important post in the Dīwān-i-Wizārat was assigned to Zafar Khān in addition to 1000 horsemen and innumerable infantry. But these gifts and rewards did not soothe his mind. He repeatedly broached the subject with the Sultān. The latter consulted with Khānjahān and decided to lead a second expedition to Bengal with the avowed object of reinstating the exiled Zafar Khān in the territory of Sunārgāon¹⁰.

But this explanation of 'Afīf does not seem to be tenable. Because, it is clear that 'Afīf was not aware of the facts related to the second Bengal expedition of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh. Numismatically it is proved that Iliyās Shāh conquered Sunārgāon from Sultān Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ghāzī Shāh in 753 A.H./1352 A.D.¹¹ Whereas, the first Bengal campaign of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh took place in between 754 A.H./1353 A.D. and 755 A.H./1354 A.D.¹² So, it is obvious that 'Afīf made a mistake in respect of the time of the conquest of Sunārgāon by Iliyās Shāh. Besides, there is no reason for Sultān Fīrūz Shāh helping the son-in-law of Fakhr al-Dīn. For, Fakhr al-Dīn too, like Iliyās Shāh, declared independence against the authority of Delhi. The author of the Sirat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī mentioned another cause of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh's second Bengal expedition.

10. T.F.S., PP. 137-144.

11. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and chronology; PP. 24,27-28.

12. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 587, 596.

He mentioned that Sikandar Shāh showed impudence after his accession to the throne of Bengal and this led Sultān Fīrūz Shāh to attack Bengal. This view can also be doubted. Sikandar Shāh inherited sovereign position from his father. So, the question of showing impudence to Delhi does not really arise¹³. Actually, the fact is that by his first Bengal expedition, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh could neither overthrow Iliyās Shāh nor reduce him to vassalage. This independence of Iliyās Shāh was galling to his pride and prestige and he remained watchful for a favourable turn of events to amend this failure.

So, Iliyās Shāh's death revived Sultān Fīrūz Shāh's hope of redeeming his prestige by conquering Bengal. He must have thought that at the initial stage of his reign Sikandar Shāh would find it difficult to check the onslaught of the Delhi forces. Hence, immediately after Sikandar Shāh's accession Sultān Fīrūz Shāh sent an ultimatum from Zafarābād calling upon Sikandar to tender him allegiance¹⁴. Although Sikandar Shāh tried to please the Sultān of Delhi by sending presents of five elephants and other valuable presents to Delhi, the army of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh marched towards Bengal in the month of Zil Hajj, 759 A.H./1358 A.D.¹⁵. This time the force consisted of eighty thousand cavalry, 470 war elephants, barrier breaking boats, and a huge

13. A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.226.

14. J.N.Sarkar(ed) : H.B. vol.II, p.111.

15. It appears from the writing of Yahyā that Iliyās Shāh died towards the end of the year 759 A.H. (TMS., p.127). The invasion of Bengal occurred just after Iliyās Shāh's death. As such it is very probable that it occurred in 759 A.H./1358 A.D.; Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī, extract translated by Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay: Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, p.48.

fighting infantry. Besides this, there were two reception tents, two sleeping tents and two tents for cooking and domestic work, 180 flags of various kinds, 84 drums and trumpets loaded upon asses, camels and horses in large number¹⁶. ✓

The imperial army marched through Kanauj, Oudh and reached Jaunpur where the Sultān stayed for six months and founded a city after the name of his illustrious predecessor Jaunan Shāh¹⁷ and then he marched to Bengal. When Sikandar Shāh, the successor of Iliyās Shāh heard of the approach of the imperial army, he followed the strategy of his father and having avoided an open engagement took shelter in the island fortress of Ekdālah¹⁸. As on the previous occasion the imperial forces opened the siege of the fort signalling their action with a heavy discharge of arrows and ballistae. In the midst of these operations, one of the bastions of the fort collapsed causing much confusion on either side. There was a great uproar. In sheer nervousness Prince Fataḥ Khān cried out, "The Bangalis are coming to fall upon the imperialists"¹⁹. On hearing the uproar, the Sultān went to the scene. There Hisāmūl Mulk informed Fīrūz Shāh that the chief tower has fallen and asked the Sultān for immediate assault to capture the fort²⁰. Fīrūz Shāh thought over and said that if it were taken by sudden assault thousands of worthy women would be subjected to violence and indignity. Hence, the Sultān did

16. 'Affif : T.F.S., PP. 144 - 145.

17. Ibid., PP. 148 - 149.

18. Ibid., p.149.

19. Ibid., p.150.

20. Ibid., p.151.

not agree to the proposal of capturing the fort and asked Hisāmūl Mulk to wait till the following day²¹. Once more the Sultān, because of his chicken heartedness, failed to rise to the occasion and play the role of a successful general. His hesitation proved a boon to the enemy, who, during the night repaired the breach and strengthened their defences. Desultory warfare continued for days together till at length both the parties, getting tired of war opened negotiations for peace²².

‘Afīf dwells at length how the negotiations were conducted and peace was concluded²³. He mentioned that Sikandar met his ministers in a conference to consult them. The ministers advised him to seek peace²⁴. On this Sikandar Shāh remained silent and the ministers retired. This ministers then, of their own accord, thinking that silence of the Sultān meant consent, sent a clever confidential agent to the ministers of Fīrūz Shāh to open negotiations for peace on the pretext that the combatants were Muslims and war among them meant considerable loss of Muslims on both sides²⁵. It appears that the

21. ‘Afīf : T.F.S., p.151. ‘Afīf mentioned the same motive which persuaded Fīrūz Shāh not to storm the citadel of Ekdālah in the first expedition (*Ibid*, p.119). It could not have been unknown to Fīrūz that the ignominy of Muslim women was an inevitable consequence of military campaigns, and if therefore this consideration weighed with him in not pressing the campaign to a victorious conclusion, he should not have undertaken the second. Actually, ‘Afīf applies the same argument as is applied in the first expedition to save the face of Fīrūz Shāh.

22. *Ibid.*, p.152.

23. *Ibid.*, PP.152-163.

24. *Ibid.*, p.153. It is by no means clear how the imperialist author came to know of this secret conference of the council Chamber of Ekdālah.

25. *Ibid.*, PP.153-154.

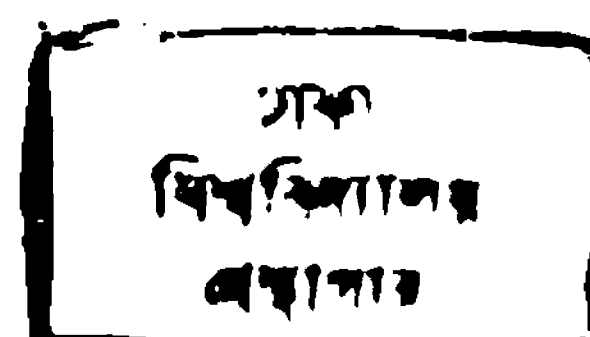
agent who was sent to the ministers of Fīrūz Shāh had no royal authority in the truest sense. However, when the proposal of the Bengali agent was communicated to Sultān Fīrūz Shāh, he agreed to conclude peace only on condition of reinstatement of Zafar Khān on the throne of Sunārgāon²⁶. Sultān Fīrūz Shāh sent one of his Bengali official named Haibat Khān for the mission of conducting negotiations with Sikandar Shāh. Though the minister of Sultān Sikandar met and received the envoy, Sikandar himself pretended to be in ignorance of the negotiations. Haibat Khān, however, set forth the terms on which peace might be made and when he perceived that Sikandar Shāh also spoke in favour of peace, he said that the chief reason why Sultān Fīrūz had undertaken the campaign was the establishment of Zafar Khān in the country of Sunārgāon. At this, Sikandar replied that if it was his intention, then why should he come to Bengal personally; if the Sultān sent message to that effect, he would have surrendered Sunargaon to Zafar Khān²⁷. Here it is to be pointed out that the circumspection with which the subject of Sunārgāon was launched, deserves notice. Certainly it does not look like the demand of a victor and the show of the victor to the vanquished; for, the settlement of the terms of peace is absolutely unique. Anyway, Haibat Khān returned joyfully and reported to Fīrūz Shāh the result of his negotiations, that is Sikandar Shāh agreed to surrender Sunārgāon to Zafar Khān²⁸. This greatly pleased the Sultān and he proclaimed, "There should be no war now and ex-

26. Ibid, p.156.

27. Ibid, PP.156-158.

28. Ibid, p.158.

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-pressed his desire to look upon him as a nephew"²⁹. He sent a 'Kulāh' (Crown or Cap) worth 80,000 tankahs and 500 Arab and Turki horses to Sikandar Shāh as presents through Malik Qabūl with an expression of wish that he might not be again at war with Sikandar Shāh³⁰. In return, Sultān Sikandar Shāh also, to show his satisfaction, sent 40 elephants and other valuable presents expressing a desire that every year there should be such exchanges of friendly feelings between them³¹. The Sultān then asked Zafar Khān to proceed to Sunārgāon offering to remain with his army near Ekdālah till his arrival at the destination. But Zafar Khān consulted his followers and they pointed out to him the impossibility of staying at Sunārgāon. He, therefore, gave up his idea of going there and said to the Sultān, that he and his family were so happy and secure under the Government of Delhi that he had given up his desire for Sunārgāon. In spite of the pursuation of the Sultān, Zafar Khān did not go to Sunārgāon³². Here it is to be noted that the reason given in favour of Zafar Khān's refusal to go to Sunārgāon, does not seem to be true. Because, if the argument advanced by Zafar Khān was sincere, why was the campaign undertaken at all ? What about avenging the claims of Zafar Khān, which according to 'Afīf, was the sole motive of Fīrūz Shāh in undertaking this campaign ? Actually, Sikandar Shāh appears to be so powerful in the eyes of Zafar Khān that he even in spite of getting assurance of the support of the imperial forces, did not dare to resume sovereignty in Sunārgāon, situated in the interior of the Kingdom of Sikandar Shāh.

29. Ibid., p.159.

30. Ibid., pp. 159-160.

31. Ibid., p.161.

32. Ibid., p.162.

However, it may well be said that the introduction of this story of Zafar Khān is an ill concealed attempt by the contemporary historian to save the face of the Delhi Sultān, who like his first attempt, did not fare very well even in his second. Anyway, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh left Ekdālah for Jajnagar in the month of Zil Ḥajj, 761 A.H./1360 A.D. and reached Delhi in the month of Rajab, 762 A.H./1361 A.D.³³.

Thus it is clear that the second invasion of Bengal by Sultān Fīrūz Shāh, like the first, was a failure, as he could not achieve the object for which he had undertaken the expedition. It also shows that Fīrūz Shāh was eager for peace with Sikandar³⁴. According to N.K. Bhattasali, "A perusal of the accounts of the negotiations for peace leaves a clear impression that it was the the imperial side that sought peace, and not the Bangalee Sultān"³⁵.

33. Yahyā : T.M.S., p.129.

34. According to 'Afīf, Sikandar Shāh's ministers initiated the proposal for peace first. Thereupon Sultān Fīrūz Shāh agreed to conclude peace with the only condition of reinstating Zafar Khān on the throne of Sunārgāon. It is noticed in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of 'Afīf that Sikandar Shāh accepted the condition. But Zafar Khān refused to go to Sunārgāon and he expressed his desire to remain in service under Sultān Fīrūz Shāh. Sīrat-i-Fīrūz Shāhī informs us that when Sultān Fīrūz Shāh besieged the fort of Ekdālah, Sikandar became pale out of fear and he sought mercy to Fīrūz Shāh. Fīrūz Shāh evinced magnanimity by showing mercy to Sikandar (Extract translated by Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay in Bānglār Itishāser Du só Bachar, 3rd edn. p.48). It is needless to say that there the Delhi historians are not really impartial, Firstly, it is not easy to understand why Zafar Khān, in spite of getting the offer of reinstatement on the throne of Sunārgāon, did not accept the proposal. Secondly, if Sikandar Shāh, on becoming pale out of fear, surrendered, why then Bengal was not incorporated into the Delhi Sultānate? Thirdly, we find that the Bengali agent went to the ministers of the Fīrūz Shāh without having any royal authority. On the other hand, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh sent as his envoy one of his Bengali officials named Haibat Khān to settle the terms of peace with the Sultān of Bengal. So the details about the conduct of the peace negotiations induce us to believe that it was Sultān Fīrūz Shāh who took the initiative in opening the overtures for peace.

35. Coins and Chronology, p.49.

The formal recognition of Sikandar Shāh as an independent ruler by Sultān Fīrūz Shāh marks the last attempt by the Sultāns of Delhi to reassert suzerainty over that province and for nearly two centuries Bengal was left in peace without any interference from the imperial court.

Sikandar Shāh had a long and prosperous reign of thirty four³⁶ years (759 A.H.-793 A.H./1358 A.D.-1390 A.D.). He was an able ruler and a military leader of high calibre. He possessed great personal courage and wonderful patience. He successfully defended his Sultānate against the aggression of Delhi and maintained its integrity. A careful study shows that in his second Bengal expedition, Sultān Fīrūz Shāh came with greater preparation than that of his first. His first campaign of Bengal did not last even one year and he took decision to retreat mainly on the approach of the rainy season³⁷. But the second expedition of Bengal covered a period of two years and seven months. This time Sultān Fīrūz Shāh stayed in Bengal for nearly two years³⁸; even the rainy season could not deter him. This long stay of the imperial forces did not shake Sikandar Shāh; who did not face even a nominal defeat at the hand of the imperial forces as was faced by his father. Hence, as a general, his achievement may be said to be greater than his father.

Sultān Sikandar Shāh was an able administrator. He devised efficient and useful administrative system. He divided the Sultānate into seven administrative units namely - Fīrūzābād, Satgāon, Shahr-i-Naw, Mu'azzamābād or Sunār-gāon, Fathābād, Chāt-gāon and Kāmru³⁹.

36. On the basis of Hijra years.

37. See Supra.

38. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Du Śo Bachar 3rd edn. p.50.

39. For details - see chapter IV (Administration).

Sultān Sikandar Shāh was a great patron of art and architecture. His age saw a remarkable development of architecture. His liberal attitude led to the fusion of indigenous and foreign elements in the domain of architecture. The most magnificent building of his reign is the Adina Masjid at Ḥaḍrat Panduāh. According to an inscription fixed on the western wall of the mosque, it was built in Rajab, 776 A.H./1375 A.D.⁴⁰. This mosque was planned in the conventional style with an extensive courtyard and arched recess and ways. According to Marshall it was the most ambitious structure of its kind ever essayed in eastern India⁴¹. This mosque engrafted new features in its plan and design. It called forth the best of masons, stone workers and materials that were then available. It is a bold creation unique in its kind⁴².

Like his father, Sultān Sikandar Shāh was also a devout Muslim. He held the 'Ulamās and the learned in the highest esteem. It is said that in honour of Mawlānā 'Aṭā, he built a mosque at Devkot in the district of Dinajpur in 1363 A.D.⁴³. He had close contact with Shaikh 'Alā' al-Ḥuq and Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Manerī who lived at Panduāh and Bihar respectively. It is revealed in one of the letters of Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī, addressed to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh of Bengal that Sikandar Shāh was in correspondence with Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Manerī⁴⁴. Though Sikandar Shāh had

40. A.H. Dani : MAB., p.55.

41. Cambridge History of India, vol. III, p.602.

42. A.H. Dani : MAB., p.26; For details of the Adina Masjid - See Chapter VII (Architecture).

43. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Inscriptions, vol. IV, PP.34-35.

44. J.B.R.S., vol.42 Part-II, 1956, p.178.

profound respect for Shaikh 'Alā' al-Huq it appears that in the end of his reign there was a clash of opinion between them. As a result Sultān Sikandar Shāh turned the Shaikh out of Paṇḍuāh and banished him to Sumārgāon⁴⁵. The author of Akḥbār al-Akḥiyār mentions that by a super human power, the Shaikh spent so much money in feeding the beggars, pupils and wanderers that even the State treasury could not have borne such a huge expenditure. The Sultān grew jealous and ordered the Shaikh to leave the capital. From a minute observation of the events of the subsequent period, it appears that the reason put forward by the author of Akḥbār al-Akḥiyār is far from satisfactory. We have noticed earlier that Iliyās Shāh first laid the foundation of the Muslim Sultānate in Bengal against the authority of Delhi. Iliyās Shāh rightly realized that the newly established Sultānate of Bengal, for its survival, must be broadbased upon the sympathy and co-operation of the local people. Hence, he followed a policy of toleration and co-operation towards the local people. As a consequence, the local people were employed in the different fields of administration in large number. They were also getting key positions in the administration. Other concessions were also granted to them in the social and cultural fields. This liberal policy towards the local people was followed by his successors. But the Sūfīs were against this liberal attitude of the Sultāns of Bengal as is gleaned from the letters of Ḥaḍrat Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī. He admonished Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh about the bad effect of the appointment of the Hindus to the key-position⁴⁶. Now

45. 'Abd al-Haq : Akḥbār al-Akḥiyār, p.143.

46. J.B.R.S., vol. 42, pt.II, 1956, PP.186-187.

if Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh could be warned by a Ṣūfī of Bihar, was it not possible for Shaikh 'Alā' al-Huq to do the same in the time of Sikandar Shāh ? Thus the estrangement between Sikandar Shāh and Shaikh 'Alā' al-Huq may be said to have been due not to any personal jealousy as Shaikh 'Abd al-Huq Dehlawī would have us believe, but due to their wide difference on matters of state policy towards the local non-Muslim⁴⁷. It is recorded in the Rafīq al-'Ārefīn of Farīd bin Sālār that Sikandar Shāh was praised repeatedly as a king and as a man by Shaikh Husām al-Dīn Manikpūrī⁴⁸.

But the last days of Sultān Sikandar Shāh were not happy. It was embittered by palace intrigues. It is mentioned in the Riyād al-Salātīn that "Sikandar Shāh had seventeen sons by his first wife, and by his second wife he had one son, named Ghiyāth al-Dīn who, in polish of manners and other qualities, was superior to his other brothers, and was proficient in the art of government. Consequently, the first wife kindling the fire of envy and jealousy and wishing the destruction of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, sought for an opportunity to injure him. One day, finding an opportunity, she respectfully placed the hand on her chest in the presence of the King and desired to state her object. The King guessing from the manner of the wife said : "Speak out what thou hast to say". The wife said "I would submit my prayer, if the King would take an oath to fulfil it and try his best to fulfil it". The King swore to fulfil it, and indulging in a bit of hyperbole said :

47. For details see A.Karim : Social History, PP.126-130.

48. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn. p.55.

"Unbosom the desire that thou hast, and make thy lip the mirror of the dust of thy heart". The shrewd queen said : "I am in great anxiety, in consequence of the conduct of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. He is scheming to mount the throne, by killing the King and destroying my sons. Although he is in the position of a son to me, and I do not wish that he should be killed, yet as the safeguarding of the life of the King is incumbent, you should not let slip from the hand the rein of alertness, but provide previously against any mishap. The best course would be that you should imprison him, or blind his eyes. The King on hearing this became perturbed and said, "What is this aim of thine which thou hast mingled with the liquid of my welfare and what is this fire of envy that thou hast mixed with solicitude for me ? Thou feelest no shame that thou hast seventeen sons, whilst the other frail lady has only this one son. What you do not like for yourself, do not desire unto others". The queen again anxiously said : "Envy and jealousy have nothing to do with my suggestion. The duty that I thought incumbent upon myself in the interests of thy well being. I have discharged; after this, my sovereign is at liberty to do what he pleases". The King putting the padlock of silence on the portal of the tongue, kept quiet, and said within himself, "As Ghiyāth al-Dīn is a dutiful son and possesses capacity for ruling, even if he seeks to take my life, let it be so ! Happy it is, if the son is dutiful. But if he is undutiful, may he perish " ! After this he put the reins of authority entirely into the hands of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. But Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who suspected always the wiles and stratagems of the queen, one day on the pretext of hunting escaped towards Sunārgāon and in a short time mobilising a large

army, demanded the throne from his father. Shortly after, in order to wrest the Kingdom, he marched with a large army from Sunārgāon and encamped at Sunargadhi⁴⁹. From the other side, the father also with a powerful army advanced. On the next day, on the battle field of Goalpara⁵⁰, both sides marshalling their forces prepared to fight. There was no love and affection between the father and the son. War started between the two parties. Ghiyāth al-Dīn had given strict orders to his soldiers and commandars that to the utmost they should capture the King alive. But, as fate willed otherwise, Sikandar Shāh was unknowingly killed at the hands of one of the commandars of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. On knowing that Sikandar Shāh was killed, the slayer in fright went to Ghiyāth al-Dīn and said, "In case we fear that by restraining our hands, we may be killed, can we kill him" ? Ghiyāth al-Dīn said, "certainly you may kill him" and after some reflection he said; "Apparently thou hast killed the King". The slayer said; "Yes unknowingly I inflicted a cut with the spear on the heart of the King. Still he has some remnants of life". Ghiyāth al-Dīn proceeded swiftly, dismounted from the horse, and placed the head of the father on his lap, and tears trickled down his cheek and he said : "Father open thy eyes and express thy dying wish that I may fulfil it". The King opened his eyes and said : "My life's work over; the Kingdom is welcome to thee. May you prosper in your sovereignty. As I have quitted the World". After saying this he died. Ghiyāth al-Dīn left behind some nobles to attend the burial of his father, and himself rode forward towards Panduāh and ascended the throne⁵¹.

49. Not identified; but A. Salam thinks that it must have close to Sunārgāon (Salīm : Riyād, Eng. tr. p.107, f.n.I.).

50. Wise identified Goalpara with a village near Jafargunge in Dhaka district (J.A.S.B., 1874, p.85).

51. Salīm : Riyād, PP. 101-105.

The above description of Ghulām Husain Salīm shows that during the last years of Sikandar Shāh's reign, his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh, suspecting that his father's ears were poisoned against him by his step mother; fled to Sunārgāon and openly revolted against his father. As a result, a battle ensued in which Sikandar Shāh was defeated and killed, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh ascended the throne of Bengal. We do not find any reference to this fact in the contemporary sources. Of course, as there was a complete separation between Bengal and Delhi, it is not expected to get any information about the event in the writings of the historians of Delhi. But Ghulām Husain Salīm's description finds support in the accounts of Buchanan. Buchanan says, "Ghyashuddin, having also taken disgust, returned to the same place (Sonargang), and afterwards made war against his father, who, after a reign of 32 years, fell in battle at a place called Satra, near Goyalpara"⁵². Here it is to be mentioned that Buchanan's information about the period of Sikandar Shāh's reign is corroborated by the evidence of coins. Hence, his description of war between Sikandar Shāh and Aẓam Shāh appears to be true. It is found in one of the letters of Shaikh Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī, addressed to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh that Sikandar Shāh was mentioned as "Sultan-i-Shaheed" (martyred Sultan)⁵³. This fact indicates that Sikandar Shāh became a martyr in the war and gives a hint that the father was killed by his son. If N.K. Bhattasali's reading of the date of one of the coins of

52. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Du ō Bachar, 3rd edn.p.56.

53. J.B.R.S., Vol. 42, Pt.II. 1956, p.184.

Aẓam Shāh as 790 A.H. is correct, then we may say that numismatically it is also proved that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh rose in rebellion against his father⁵⁴.

It is not easy to ascertain the date of the death of Sultān Sikandar Shāh. Numismatic evidence shows that the Sultān issued coins from 759 A.H.⁵⁵ to 792 A.H.⁵⁶. On the other hand, the first undoubted date noticed in the coins of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh is 793 A.H.⁵⁷. On the basis of this evidence, it is suggested that Sultān Sikandar Shāh died sometime in between 792 A.H. and 793 A.H.

54. Coins and Chronology, p.63-70.

55. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, II, coin nos. 37, 38 and 39, PP.152 - 153; Botham and Friel : Suppl. Shillong Cabinet, p.133.

56. A. Karim : Corpus, PP.50, 154.

57. H.N. Wright : Catalogue II, coin nos. 67, 73 and 74, PP. 157 - 158.

Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh

On the death of Sultān Sikandar Shāh the rebel prince Aẓam Shāh ascended the throne with the title of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn¹ in 793 A.H./ 1390-1391 A.D.² Apparently it would appear that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was a patricide. As we have seen in the preceding section that the conspiracy of his step mother compelled him to rise in rebellion against his father and ultimately a battle took place between the son and the father at Goalpara in which the latter was killed³. The first act of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was to seize his half brothers, whose eyes he ordered to be eradicated and sent to their mother⁴. According to Buchanan, the Sultān killed his step brothers⁵. To kill or blind the rivals is not a new thing in the history of the Indian Sub-continent. There are many examples of such events in the history of Delhi Sultāns and of the Mughal emperors. So, it would not be wise to judge the character of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh on the basis of his initial acts. As a Sultān he earned fame for his love of justice and for his good administration.

Like his predecessors, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was also a very capable ruler. But his greatness does not lie in the field of war. He earned reputation for his noble characteristics; patron of scholars

1. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol.III, p.265.

2. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh's coin bears the date 793 A.H., which commenced on 9.12.1390 A.D. (N.K.Bhattachali : Coins and Chronology, p.176). Therefore, it may be considered that he ascended the throne some time in between 1390 and 1391 A.D.

3. Salīm : Riyād, PP.102-105.

4. Ibid., p.105.

5. A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.231.

and poets, profound respect for the ṣufis, establishment of Madrasah in the city of Makka and for his maintenance of good relations with the emperor of China.

There is very little information about his conquest. According to Buchanan, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was in a long conflict with one Shahāb Khān. But he could not achieve any success. Shaikh Nūr Quṭb'Ālam tried to bring them to an understanding. In these circumstances, on an opportune moment Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh captured Shahāb Khān⁶.

Previously A. Karim expressed his doubt on the testimony of Buchanan. Because no contemporary of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn with the name of Shahāb Khān was found to exist in the history of Bengal. Hence, it is not possible for a common man without having any royal background to fight for a long period with the Sultān of Bengal⁷. But recently one coin of Shahāb al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh has been discovered⁸. On the basis of this coin A. Karim revised his former opinion partially and writes, "Although in the absence of date in this coin, we cannot firmly identify Shahāb al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh of this coin with Shahāb Khān, the contender of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh as stated by Buchanan, the probability of such an identification is very great. A final decision in this point should, however, be deferred until fresh coins with date and the name of the mint are available"⁹.

6. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd.edn.,p.77.

7. A. Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.232.

8. A. Karim : Catalogue of Coins in the Cabinet of Chittagong University,p.17

9. Ibid., p.18.

It appears that during the reign of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh, war took place between Bengal and Kāmrup. It has been mentioned earlier that Iliyās Shāh conquered a portion of Kāmrup and Sikandar Shāh issued coins from the mint of Kāmrup in 759 A.H.¹⁰ But it cannot be said with certainty that Kāmrup was always under the rule of Sikandar Shāh. No coins of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh issued from Kāmrup has been discovered till now. One inscription of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh is preserved in the Museum of Ghuhati¹¹, but its place of origin is not known. If it belonged to any part of Kāmrup, it may be said that some portion of Kāmrup was included in the empire of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh. It is stated in the Yogini Tantra that the Muslims invaded Kāmrup in 1394-95 A.D. and held that country for twelve years¹². If this statement is correct, it may be assumed that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh conquered Kāmrup during the first years of his reign and kept it under his control for twelve years.

During the reign of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh, a conflict arose between the Ahom Rājā Sudangphā (1397-1407) and the Rājā of Kāmtā. It is stated in the Assam Buranjis that the Ahom Rājā Sudangphā went to war against the Rājā of Kāmtā for harbouring a noble Tao Sulai who had offended the Ahom Rājā¹³. Taking advantage of this situation, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn intended to extend his authority and invaded the territory of the Rājā of Kāmtā.

10. See *Supra*, p. 78-79.

11. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd ed. p.78.

12. *Ibid.*, p.78.

13. J.N. Sarakar (ed): H.B., vol.II, p.118.

In the face of Muslim invasion the two Hindu Kings made up their quarrel and appeared against the Sultān with their combined forces. Ghiyāth al-Dīn could not face them and his army was forced back to the river Karatoyā¹⁴.

Meng - tsau - mwan (Narimekhala), the King of Arākān, being expelled from his Kingdom took shelter in the court of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh who made an unsuccessful effort to restore him to his throne¹⁵. It is known from the Purusa Parikshā of Vidyāpati that Raja Shiva Singha of Mithilā defeated one King of Gauḍa¹⁶. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay is inclined to identify this King of Gauḍa with Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh. The reign of Rājā Shiva Singha ended in 1415 A.D. Hence, war between Shiva Singha and the King of Gauḍa can be said to have taken place before 1415 A.D. or before 1410-11, upto which date Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh is known to have ruled Bengal¹⁷. But Shahidullah is of the opinion that the Mithilian Poet Vidyāpati wrote his book Purusa Parikshā in 1413 A.D.¹⁸. Hence, the King of Gauḍa who was defeated by Rājā Shiva Singha does not appear to be Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh; he may be identified with a later King of Bengal. Besides, we do not know anything in details where, how and when the war took place between the King of Gauḍa and Shiva Singha. Moreover, the sayings of Vidyāpati regarding his patron may contain a lot of exaggerations. So, on its basis, it would not be fair to say that Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was defeated by Rājā Shiva Singha of Mithilā¹⁹.

14. Ibid.

15. R.C. Mazumdar (ed) : The Delhi Sultānate, p.203.

16. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn.PP.79-80.

17. Ibid.

18. P.P.H.C., Dhaka, 1953, p.212.

19. A. Karīm : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.233.

If Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh cannot be said to have earned any great fame for his conquests, he, however earned a good name for his ideal character, patron of learning and for his good administration. Reference may be made to two anecdotes which throw interesting light on the character and personality of the Sultān. Riyād mentions that one day while the King was amusing himself in the practice of archery, one of his arrows by chance wounded a boy, the son of a widow. The widow immediately sought for redress from Qādī Sirāj al-Dīn. The Qādī was in anxiety; for if he showed partiality towards the King, he would be held culpable before the tribunal of God, and if he did not do so, the summoning of the King would be a difficult affair. After much reflection, he summoned the King and himself sat on the tribunal of justice, placing a whip underneath the masnad. When the Qādī's peon reached the palace, finding access to the King impossible, he commenced shouting out the call to prayer (Azān). The King hearing this untimely call to prayer, ordered the Mu'azzin (caller to prayer) to be brought to his presence. When the servants carried the latter to the royal presence, the King enquired as to this untimely call to prayer. He (peon) replied, "Qādī Sirāj al-Dīn has deputed me, in order that I may take the King to the tribunal of justice. Since access to the King was difficult, I adopted this device to obtain access. Now get up, and come to the tribunal. The widow's son whom you wounded with an arrow, is the complainant". The King instantly rose and concealing a short sword under his arm-pit, went before the Qādī, who, far from paying him any mark of respect, said to him, "Console the heart of this old woman". The King consoled her in a way that he could and said; "Qādī, now the old woman is satisfied". Then the Qādī turning to the old woman

enquired, "Have you received redress and been satisfied?" The woman said, "Yes, I am satisfied". Then the Qādī got up in great delight, and showing respect to the King, seated him on the masnad. The King drawing out the sword from his armpit said, "Qādī, in obedience to the injunctions of the sacred Law, I have appeared at your tribunal. If to-day I found you deviating by one hair breadth from adherence to the injunctions of the Law, with this very sword I should have severed your head. God be thanked, that everything has been all right". The Qādī also drew his whip from underneath the masnad and said, "Sir, if today I found thee in the least transgressing the injunctions of the sacred law, by God, with this very whip I should have turned your back red and black", and added, "A calamity had come but has ended well". The King was much pleased and handsomely rewarded the upright judge and returned²⁰. How far this anecdote is true, we cannot say with certainty. This story is not corroborated by any other source. But this anecdote gives testimony to the fact that the Sultān's fame as a great lover of justice had transcended to the time of Ghulām Husain Salīm.

We also find other qualities in the character of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh. He himself was a scholar and held literary men in great esteem. He was also a poet. He used to compose poems in Persian language. Once he invited the famous Iranian poet Ġāfīz to Bengal. In this respect also, there is a fine anecdote in the Riyād²¹. It is related that once Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh falling seriously ill despaired of life and selected three maids from his harem named Sarv (the cypress), Gul (the Rose) and Lālah

20. Salīm : Riyād, PP.106-108.

21. Ibid., PP.105-107.

(the Tulip) to perform the last bathing ceremony. The Sultān recovered on that occasion and considering them auspicious he bestowed attentions on them more than before. Jealous of the Sultān's attention to them, the other maids gave them the mocking epithet of Ghassālegī (corpse - washer). One day, while the King was in a jolly mood, they related to him this affair. One hearing this, the King recited the first line. "Oh cup - bearer, this is story of Sarv (the cypress) Gul (the Rose) and Lālah (the Tulip)", but he could not compose an apt second line. None of the poets attached to court also could supply it. Then the King writing this line, sent it through an envoy to Shams al-Dīn Hāfiz of Shirāj. Hāfiz quickly supplied the next line, "This story relates to three bathers". Hāfiz also sent another ghazal to the Sultān which runs thus:²²

"Saqi the tale of the cypress and the rose and the Tulip goeth.

And with the three washers (cups of wine), this dispute goeth.

Drink wine; for the new bride of the sword hath found beauty limit
(is perfect in beauty).

Of the trade of the broker, the work of this tale - goeth.

Sugar - shattering (verse of Hāfiz devouring), have become all the
parrots (poets) of Hindustan.

On account of this Farsi candy (sweet Persian ode) that to Bengal - goeth.

In the path of verse, behold the travelling of place and time. This child
(ode) of one night, the path of (travel of) one year to Bengal - goeth.

That eye of sorcery (of the beloved) Abid fascinating behold.

How, in its rear, the caravan of sorcery - goeth.

22. Dīwān-i-Hāfiz, E.tr. by H.W. Clerk, vol.I, PP.310-311; A.Karim : Bānglār Itihasa, PP. 236-237.

Sweet expressed, the beloved proudly moveth; and on the face of the white
rose.

The sweet (drops) of night dew from shame of (the beloved's) face - goeth.

From the path, go not to thw world's blandishents for this old woman.

Sitteth a cheat : and a bawd, she - goeth.

Be not live Samivi, who beheld gold; and, from assishness, Let go Musa;

and, in pursuit of the (golden) calf, - goeth.

From the King's garden, the spring - wind bloweth.

And within the Tulip's bowl, wine from dew - goeth.

Of love for the assembly of the Sultān Ghiyasu-d-Din Ḥāfiz.

Be not silent, for, from lamenting, the work - goeth".

From the historical point of view, this ghazal of Ḥāfiz bear a great importance. Firstly, in it the intention of coming of Ḥāfiz to Bengal is clearly written. In it, the name of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh is also mentioned. These facts clearly indicate that this ghazal was written for the Sultān of Bengal and was sent to him. Secondly, in the last two verses of the ghazal, Ḥāfiz expressed his grief for his incapability of coming to Bengal. This fact shows that Sultān Ghiyāth al-Din Aẓam Shāh invited the Iranian poet Ḥāfiz to come to Bengal.

Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh built madrasahs in the holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah at an enormous cost and richly endowed it for the support of the teachers and students. We find references to this fact in the writings of Ibn Hajar, al Fasī, Quṭb al-Ḥanafī and Al Sakhāwī. Quoting

from Quṭb al-Dīn Ḥanafī's Tārīkh-i-Makkah, Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī also relates Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh's benevolent activities in Makkah and Madīnah. This same account is also available in the works of Ḥamīd Allāh Khān who copied Bilgrāmī verbatim²³. All of them furnish us with the following facts : Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh had a wazīr, Khānjahān by name, whose real name was Yaḥyā son of 'Arab Shāh. He inspired the Sultān to build madrasahs in the cities of Makkah and Madīnah and under his instigation the Sultān, also sent valuable presents for the inhabitants of Makkah and Madīnah through their slaves Yāqūt and Ḥājī Iqbāl. But before they could reach, the boat carrying the goods etc. capsized near Zeddah²⁴.

Al-Sakhāwī furnishes the following information about Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh. Ghīyāth al-Dīn Abu'l Muẓaffar, al Sijistānī by origin was the ruler of Bengal in the country of India. He was a Ḥanafī (belonging to the school of Abū Ḥanīfah), favoured with learning and health, loved in the circle of theologians and pious men, brave, generous and bountiful. He built a madrasah at Makkah at the gate of Umme Ḥanī' and spent for it and for its endowments twelve thousand Egyptian mithqāl, established lectures in it for the people belonging to four madhhabs²⁵ and the lectures came to an end there in Jamādī II, in the year 14 (probably meaning 814 A.H./1411 A.D.) Similarly he founded a madrasah in the city of the Prophet (Madīnah) at a place called the 'Old Fort' near the 'Gate of Peace'. This is in addition

23. A. Karim : Social History, PP. 47-50; Islamic culture, vol. XXXII, No. 3, July, 1958, PP. 199-207; Itihas Patrika, Tritio Barṣa, Pratham Sangkhyā, PP. 1-10.

24. A. Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, p. 238.

25. The four madhhabs are, Ḥanafī, Shāf'iyī, Mālekī and Ḥanbalī named after their founders.

to his sending rich presents for the people of Ḥaramayn (Makkah and Madīnah) several times²⁶.

The writings of Ibn Hajar and Taqī al-Fasī corroborate the accounts of Al-Sakhāwī and add that the construction of the madrasah began in the month of Ramaḍān 813 A.H., and though the madrasah had started functioning at the beginning of the year 814 A.H., when the endowment was made, the building was completed about six months latter²⁷. It is learnt that Takī al-Fasī belonged to the madhhab of Mālekī and he was himself a Professor of the madrasah at Makkah. He taught the students about the Mālikīte School of law. There were sixty students attending this institution, of whom twenty were studying shafite law, twenty Ḥanafīte and ten each Mālikīte and Ḥanbalīte. Some property - two plots and four water reservoirs in the vicinity were purchased and endowed for covering various heads of expenditure in the running of this institution. The income accruing from the endowments was to be spent thus : One fifth of the amount was meant to cover the salaries etc. of the teachers, three fifth to meet the expenses of the students and of the remaining one fifth, two third was meant to defray the expenses of the residents of the building (presumably caretakers, attendants etc.) numbering ten, while the remaining one third was to be utilised for the proper upkeep of the building, oil for lamps, water and such other things. A house opposite to the madrasah was also purchased at a cost of 500 gold mithqāls and was made wakf (endowment) for the madrasah²⁸.

26. Al Sakhāwī : Al-Daw al-Lāmī; Cairo, 1303 A.H. pt.II, p.313.

27. Islamic Culture, vol. XXXII, No.3, July, 1958 A.D., p.199.

28. Islamic Culture, vol.XXXII, No.3, July, 1958, p.200.

Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī records a similar account about the establishment of the madrasah and endowments and adds that Ghiyāth al-Dīn wrote a letter to Mawlānā Ḥasan bin 'Ajlān, the Sharīf of Makkah and sent him valuable presents. The Sharīf accepted the presents and ordered the works to be done according to the wish of the Sultān. The Sharīf took one third (of the wealth sent) according to his family custom and the rest were distributed among the learned and destitutes of the holy cities. So much wealth was sent that everyone of the two holy places got his own share there of. Yāqūt purchased two houses near the place known as Bāb-i-Ummehānī for building the madrasah and the sarāi. The two houses were demolished and the madrasah and the sarāi were built on the same site. Two aṣīl and four rahba²⁹ of land were purchased and endowed to the madrasah. He appointed four teachers of four madhhabs and sixty students were gathered, the expenditure was to be borne out of the proceeds of the endowment. He bought another house in front of the madrasah at five hundred gold mithqāl and endowed it for the benefit of the sarāi. Mawlānā Ḥasan charged twelve thousand gold mithqāl for the two houses over the site of which the madrasah and the sarāi were built and the two aṣīl and four rahba of land. In addition to this he took a large amount, which no one can tell. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn also sent money (about thirty thousand mithqāl) for the excavation of a rivulet at 'Arafah through the said Yāqūt and Mawlānā Ḥasan accepted it and said, "We shall do the needful"³⁰. It is also known that Ghulām 'Alī

29. Aṣīl is derived from Aṣl (root) and technically it means the original site of a house. Rahba means the courtyard of a house or open place (A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.240, f.n.2; See also Itihas Patrika, Tritio Barsa, Pratham Sangkhyā, Baishakh, 1376, p.7, f.n.24,25).

30. Ghulām 'Alī Āzād Bilgrāmī : Khazānah-i-'Āmirah, Newal Kishore edition, PP. 183-184; A.Karim : Social History, PP. 48-50.

Āzād Bilgrāmī himself visited the places and saw the madrasah, sarāi and the rivulet of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh³¹.

The above discussion shows that Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh spent a large sum of money for building madrasah and sarāi and also for digging canals in the cities of Makkah and Madīnah. These activities of the Sultān clearly shows his interest in the development of learning and his attachment for the holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah. Unfortunately, we do not have any evidence to show that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh built similar institutions in Bengal. But, as almost all Sultāns of Bengal patronised learning³², it is quite reasonable to infer that Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh also spent a lot for the cause of promoting learning in Bengal.

Like his father and grand-father, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh also respected the 'Ālims and the Sūfīs. Of his contemporaries, Shaikh Nūr Qutb'Ālam, son and spiritual successor of Shaikh 'Alā' al-Huq was well known. After the death of his father, he established khānqah at Paṇḍuāh and assumed the spiritual leadership of the Sūfīs in Bengal. According to the Riyād, he was a fellow student of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh and both of them received education from Qāḍī Hamīd al-Dīn Kunjanashīn of Nagawrī³³. There was a good relationship between the families of the Sultān and Shaikh Nūr Qutb'Ālam. It is asid that Āzam Khān, brother of Nūr Qutb'Ālam, was the Wazīr of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh. It is also known that the Sultān often

31. A.Karim : Social History, p.50.

32. A.Karim : Social History, p.51 ff.

33. Salīm : Riyād, p.108.

sought advice on the different affairs of the Sultanate from Shaikh Nūr Qutb 'Ālam³⁴. It also appears that the Sultān paid great homage to Shaikh Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī of Bihar. Muẓaffer Shams Balkhī was the disciple of the celebrated saint Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī, with whom Sultān Sikandar Shāh had correspondence. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh had similar correspondence with Shaikh Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī. It is found in the letters that Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī advised Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh on the religious and administrative affairs. In one of his letters, we find that he requested the Sultān to issue an order to the officials of Chātḡāon so that they would take necessary steps to accommodate him and his followers in the first ship bound for Makkah³⁵. The admonition which he gives through his letter on the administrative affairs, is worthy of notice. He says, "The exalted God has said 'Ye who believe ! take not into your intimacy those outside the ranks'. The long and short of the matter is that in commentaries and lexicons they have said that the faithful should not make the unbelievers and strangers their confidants and ministers. If they say that they do not make them their favourites and friends but for the sake of expediency, the reply is that God says that it is not expediency but the cause of trouble and sedition. He says, 'La Yalunakum Khabalan' (they will not fail to corrupt you) i.e., 'La Yaqseruna Ifsad-i-Amrekum' (they will not hesitate or spare themselves in creating troubles for your). Therefore, it is incumbent on us that we should listen to the divine command and cast aside our weak judgement. God says 'Wadduna Ma Anittum' (may only desire your ruin) i.e., when

34. Ibid., P.P.H.C., Dhaka session, 1953, p.5.

35. J.B.R.S., vol. 42, pt.II, 1956, p.190.

you make them intimate with yourself they will love to involve you in evil deeds. An infidel may be entrusted with some work but he should not be made Wālī (chief supervisor of Governor) so that he may have control over and impose his authority on the Muslims. God says 'Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers and neglect God : if any do that, in nothing will there be help from God except by way of precaution, that we may guard yourselves from them. There are severe warnings in the Qur'ān, the Ḥaḍīth and historical works against those who have given authority to the unbelievers over the believers. God grants opulence and provisions from unexpected sources, and he gives deliverance from them'. There is an authoritative promise of provisions, victory and prosperity. The vanquished unbelievers with heads hanging downward, exercise their power and authority and administer the lands which belong to them. But they have also been appointed (executive) officers over the Muslims, in the lands of Islām, and they impose their orders on them. Such things should not happen"³⁶.

The above admonitions indicate that the Sufis were against the principle of appointing the Hindus to the high posts in the Muslim Kingdom. We have noticed earlier that Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh had to follow a liberal policy towards the Hindus for the protection and survival of the newly established independent Sultanate of Bengal³⁷. As a result, a new phase of the ascendancy of the Hindus in the society started. They were getting appointments in most of the branches of administration. They also took part

36. Ibid., PP. 186-187.

37. See Supra, p. 82-83.

in the war with the Muslims against the Delhi forces. This policy of appointing the Hindus in the administration continued. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh, on his accession to the throne, also followed the policy of his predecessors. It is seen that during the period of his reign, the Hindus, even got the post of Wazīr. In this respect, the name of Rājā Gaṇeśa is to be mentioned. He was a Zamīndār of Bhaturiya in the district of Rajshahi³⁸. Gradually, he got the upper hand in the administration and was ultimately appointed to the post of Wazīr under Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh. We do not know whether the Sultān accepted the advice of Shaikh Muzaffar Shams Balkhī or not. But the events of the later period point out the reality of the counsel of the Shaikh. It was the Hindu Officers who toppled the early Iliyās Shāhī Dynasty and founded the Hindu empire under the leadership of Rājā Gaṇeśa.

38. This is a controversial issue. No help is received from the contemporary sources for locating Bhaturiya. Buchanan intended to identify it with Dinajpur. But it appears that he was not even satisfied with his own explanation. He writes, "Whether or not, it is the same with Dynwaj, the governor (Hakim) of which, Gones, usurped the government of Gaur, I cannot say (Martin : History of Eastern India, Vol.II, p.624). But we find a place named Bhaturiya in Renell's Bengal Atlas (Sheet No.6). This place was bounded by the rivers Mahānandā and Punarbhava on the west, by the Karotoyā on the east and Dinajpur and Ghoraghat on the north. References to Bhaturiya are also available in the documents of ancient period. In Jaffr Khan's settlement (1722 A.D.), it was included in chakla Ghorghat. Grant tells us that Bhaturiya belonged to Sarkār Bazuha and in the Āyn-i-Akbarī, we find a Bahuriabazu or Bahsuriya as a large mahal in that Sarkar. H. Beveridge thinks that the name Bhaturiya became Bhuriya or Bahsuriya by mistake (J.A.S.B., 1892, pt.I, No. 2, p.120). However it appears that Bhaturiya belonged to the district of Rajshahi and there is good evidence of the antiquity of the name. For details see, J.A.S.B., 1892 A.D., pt.I, No.2 and Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay: Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar 3rd, end. PP.102-104.

Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh is known for his friendly relationship with foreign countries. In reality, his efforts to cultivate friendship by sending envoys are a novel and laudable characteristic of his reign. It has been mentioned earlier that Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh sent his envoys to the famous Iranian poet Ḥāfiẓ. By sending his agents to Makkah and Madīnah, he also made necessary arrangements to build madrasah, sarāi etc. there. Besides these examples, there are evidence to show that the Sultān established cordial relations with the Kings of other countries. At first, Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh sent his envoys to Khwajā Jahān who founded the independent Kingdom of Jaunpūr and sent elephants as gift to him³⁹. Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh also exchanged ambassadors with the Emperor of China. The contemporary Chinese Emperor Yong-lo initiated a policy of opening up relations with Bengal. Hence, envoys were exchanged between Bengal and China almost every year. It is found in the Si Yang Ch'ao Kung tien lu, the Shu Yu Chou tseu lu and the Mingshe that Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh sent ambassadors to China in 1405, 1408 and 1409 A.D.⁴⁰ The Chinese Emperor received the envoys cordially and sent presents for the Sultān and his wife⁴¹. Kuo Ch'ung-li who visited Bengal in between 1409 A.D. and 1411 A.D., has left a very interesting account of the people of Bengal, particularly their dress, manufactures and pastimes⁴².

39. Yahyā : T.M.S, Eng.tr. by K.K. Basu, p.165.

40. Annals vol.I, 1945, PP. 96-134.

41. Ibid.

42. Hitherto, the account of Kuo ch'ung-li is known to us as the account of Mahuan. Because, it is believed that Mahuan came to Bengal with the chinese embassy that visited Bengal in 1409 A.D. (R.C. Mazumdar (ed) : The Dehli Sultanate, p.204). But this is not true. In the words of J.V. Mills, Mahuan visited Bengal during the first half of 1432 (Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan : Cambridge, Hakluyt Society, 1970, p.35). Actually, Kuo Ch'ung-li came to Bengal in 1409 - 1411 A.D. and writing the account of Bengal, he included it with Ying Yai Sheng-lan. For details see - Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar 3rd.ed.PP.319-322.

Sultān Gḥiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Sḥāh issued coins upto the year 813 A.H./1410-1411 A.D.⁴³ Numismatically it is also proved that his son and successor Saif al-Dīn Hamzah Sḥāh coined money in 813 A.H.⁴⁴ Hence, it can be said without doubt that Sultān Gḥiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Sḥāh died in 813 A.H./1410-1411 A.D. It is said in the Riyād that by the stratagems of Rājā Gaṇeśa, the Sultān was treacherously killed⁴⁵. We have noticed earlier that the Hindus obtained the high posts during the early Iliyās Sḥāhī period and became very powerful. In this respect, Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī admonished Sultān Gḥiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Sḥāh to follow the policy laid down by the Qurʾān and the Hadīth in State affairs and not trust the non-Muslims with responsible offices of the State. The words of the Shaikh came true. The Hindus under the leadership of Rājā Gaṇeśa went against Sultān Gḥiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Sḥāh and it was under the instigation of Rājā Gaṇeśa that they killed the Sultān. According to Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay, Sultān Gḥiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Sḥāh, on his accession to the throne of Bengal, followed the liberal policy of his predecessors towards the Hindus and gave them high posts. But afterwards the Sultān, being influenced by the advice of Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī, became fanatic and adopted anti-Hindu policy. As a result, Rājā Gaṇeśa acted in opposition to the Sultān⁴⁶. But it is not clearly known how far the Sultān accepted the advice of Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī and acted upon them, and the circumstances of the death of the Sultān is also not clearly known.

43. A. Karim : Corpus, PP.58, 144, 154.

44. Ibid, p.154; Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl. IMC., 11, p.53.

45. Salīm : Riyād : p.108.

46. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar 3rd end.p.91.

Thus it is seen that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was a great Sultān of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty and one of the greatest Sultāns of medieval Bengal. He was a worthy son of a worthy father. After the death of his father, he became the master of a vast empire and it goes to his credit that he successfully maintained his father's empire intact. He was also an able administrator. But he excelled his father and grand-father in respect of his ideal character, his patronage of learning and of his love of justice. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was a man of polished culture and taste. He was himself a learned man and is reported to have written poems. He contributed a good deal to the development of Bengali language. It is said that it was under his patronage that Shāh Muhammad Sagīr wrote his famous Kavya Yusuf Zulekha⁴⁷. Probably, the Sultān also ordered Krittivas to write the Rāmāyana in Bengali⁴⁸. By building madarasah and sarāi and by digging canals in the cities of Makkah and Madīnah, the Sultān set examples of public services in the one hand and on the other, showed extreme respect for learning and religion. For these activities, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh is known to the whole Muslim World. He was a great lover of justice and showed great respect for the rule of law. Of all the Sultāns of Bengal, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was probably the most interesting personality. In some of the events of his life about which description are available, we get a fine picture of a witty mind of high order and the events of his life are so variegated that he may be placed at par with a prince of fairy tale.

47. M.E.Huq (ed) : Yusuf Zolekha, PP.3 - 4; Ahmad Sharif : Bāngālī O Bānglā Sāhitya, PP. 339 - 363.

48. A. Karīm : Bānglār Itihāsa, p.247.

Sultān Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh

Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was succeeded by his son, Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh, who was raised to the throne by the amīrs with the title of Sultān al Salātīn¹. Numismatically, it is also proved that Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh had the title of Sultān al Salatin.²

No inscription of Sultān Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh has yet been found. But he issued coins from the mint towns of Fīrūzābād, Satgāon and Mūazzamābād³ and they are dated 813 A.H. and 814 A.H.⁴. So, on the evidence of coins, it appears that Sultān Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh had a short reign of two years, 1411-1412 A.D.

One notable thing about his reign is that he continued the friendly relations with the Chinese court. It is recorded in the Ming she that in the 10th year of his reign (i.e. in 1412 A.D.), the Chinese Emperor Yong-lo, just before the arrival of the envoys of Bengal to China, sent ministers to Chen Kiang to arrange for their reception. When arrangements had been made the ambassadors arrived with the news of the death of their King (Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh). The Chinese Emperor then sent officials to attend the mourning ceremony of the dead King and the coronation ceremony of the prince Sai Wu ting (Saif al-Dīn)⁶.

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1. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A. vol.III, p.265; Firishtah : T.F., pt.II, p.297; Salīm : Riyāḍ : p.109.
 2. A. Karim : Corpus, p.69.
 3. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl. I.M.C.II, PP. 53-54; A.Karim : Corpus; p.66.
 4. A. Karim : Corpus, PP.66, 154.
 6. Annals, I, 1945, p.133.

According to Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad, Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh was a merciful, patient and brave ruler⁷. Firishta writes about him that "he was a King, brave, patient and kind. Because of his intelligence and practical experience, his officers conducted the administration very carefully. The neighbouring Rajahs obeyed him and paid their tributes regularly"⁸. J.N. Sarkar expressed his great doubt on these writings of Firishta. He is of the opinion that Firishta used the compliments for Ḥamzah Shāh by mistake. Actually, the compliments made by Firishta are applicable to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh⁹. But a careful observation shows that the view of J.N. Sarkar is not correct. Because, if J.N. Sarkar's view is taken to be true, then it is to be believed that Ḥamzah Shāh was a weak ruler. Hence, it would not be difficult for Rājā Gaṇeśa to exert his influence on the weak Sultān and there would be no reason for him to conspire and kill him. But in reality, we find that within a short period of Ḥamzah Shāh's reign, Rājā Gaṇeśa conspired against the Sultān to dethrone him. This indicates that possibly, Ḥamzah Shāh, who was placed on the throne by influential nobles, immediately on accession, tried to free himself from the hands of Rājā Gaṇeśa and to run the administration on his own. In these circumstances Rājā Gaṇeśa had to hatch a conspiracy against the Sultān and Shihāb al-Dīn, a slave of the Sultān under the influence of Rājā Gaṇeśa, killed his master and ascended the throne himself.

7. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A.III, p.265.

8. Firishta : T.F. pt.II, p.297.

9. J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B. vol.II, pp. 115 - 116.

But recently one coin of Sultān Muḥammad Shāh bin Ḥamzah Shāh has been discovered¹⁰. This coin shows that Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh was succeeded by his son Muḥammad Shāh who ruled Bengal at least for some time. It is learnt from Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī¹¹, Tārīkh-i-Firishtah¹² and Riyāḍ al-Salātīn¹³ that after the death of Ḥamzah Shāh, his son Shams al-Dīn ascended the throne of Bengal. But the contemporary Arab historian Ibn Hajar clearly wrote in his Inbawl ghunr that Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh was succeeded by his slave Shihāb al-Dīn¹⁴. This contention finds support in the account of Buchanan Hamilton¹⁵.

The recently discovered coin of Muḥammad Shāh does not bear any date or mint name. Even it cannot be said emphatically that this coin belongs to any Sultān of Bengal. Hence we cannot say anything with certainty. Of course it is found that Muḥammad Shāh claimed himself as Hami Millat-i-Rasūl al-Rahmān (the protector of the people of the messenger of the Merciful i.e. Prophet)¹⁶. Possibly this statement is made from the view point of the capture of power by Rājā Gaṇeśa and it may be inferred that after the killing of Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh, his son Muḥammad Shāh declared himself Sultān some where in Bengal and issued coins in his name and posed himself as the King of the time and age and the protector of the people of messenger of the Merciful, i.e., Prophet (al-Sultān al-ʿahd Wa'l Zaman Hami Millat-i-Rasūl al-Rahmān)¹⁷.

10. A. Karim : Catalogue of Coins in the Cabinet of Chittagong University, p.69.

11. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A. vol.III, p.

12. Firishtah : T.F. pt.11, p.297.

13. Salīm : Riyād, p.109

14. Islamic Culture, 1958 A.D., p.201.

15. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn.p. 97.

16. A. Karim : Catalogue of coins in the Cabinet of Chittagong University p. 19, 69.

17. Ibid, p.19.

In the coin, the full regal title of the Sultān does not appear. We get only Abu'l Muẓaffar Muḥammad Shāh bin Ḥamzah Shāh¹⁸. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay is of the opinion that probably his real name was Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh¹⁹. But this is a mere conjecture. However, it is not unlikely that after a very short reign, Muḥammad Shāh was defeated by Rājā Gaṇeśa and Shihāb al-Dīn. Ibn Hajar, the contemporary 'Arab historian, did not hear about this interregnum, and so he did not mention the name of Muḥammad Shāh in his book.

Thus the conspiracy of Rājā Gaṇeśa during the reign of these successive Sultāns led to the fall of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty in 814 A.H./ 1411-12 A.D. marking the end of a significant period of the history of Bengal.

18. Ibid.

19. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn.p.97.

Administration under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate

The rule of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns is an important phase in the history of the administration of the Muslim Sultāns in Bengal. In the preceding period, that is, from Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī to the rise of Hājī Iliyās, the Muslim Kingdom of Lakhnautī¹ passed through a phase of transition. During this period, Lakhnautī was sometimes ruled independently with a show of allegiance to the Dehli Sultānate; sometimes independently in the truest sense of the term and sometimes it was ruled as a province of the Sultānate of Delhi. In fact, the history of Bengal of the period in question was marked by the struggle for independence by the governors in the one hand and by the subjugation of the independent rulers by the Sultāns of Delhi on the other². So, it appears that the condition prevailing at that time was not very congenial for the development of any proper and systematic structure of administration. We have observed earlier that Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī, after establishing his authority in Bengal, tried to introduce the Iqtā' system³. In most of the regions, then coming under Muslim rule, methods of revenue collection of the pre-Muslim period must have continued till they were accepted entirely or in a modified form under the Iliyās Shāhī rulers.

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1. Before the foundation of the independent Sultānate of Bengal, Lakhnautī was used to denote the Muslim Kingdom of Bengal.
 2. For details, see the Background chapter.
 3. See Supra, p.31-32. Literally the word Iqtā' means a portion; technically it was the land or revenue assigned by the ruler to an individual (W.H. Moreland : The Agrarian System of Moslem India, Appendix, PP.216-223).

But during the early Iliyās Shāhī period things changed. For the first time in the history of Bengal, its different parts were united under the sole authority of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh. From this time the united territories of Bengal also received the name of 'Bangālah' and its people were known as 'Bangali'⁴. Besides the independent Sultānate of Bengal founded by Hājī Iliyās continued its independent existence for nearly two hundred years. Hence, it is expected that during the period of our investigation, the rudiments of a well organised system of administration took a definite shape. It is in this context that the early Iliyās Shāhī administrative system is to be viewed.

But there is dearth of materials on the topic. The contemporary and later Persian works, the coins and inscriptions and the accounts of the foreign travellers give us inadequate information. Depending on these scanty materials it is very difficult, yet not impossible, to form an idea of the administration of the early Iliyās Shāhī period. Fortunately, we get an over all detailed picture of the Husain Shāhī administration of Bengal, which definitely was not a sudden development, but its growth and formation has to be naturally referred to the preceding age. Therefore, the early Iliyās Shāhī period has to be looked into for finding the genesis of the administrative system which we get in a developed stage in the Husain Shāhī period. Besides,

4. The term 'Bangālah' to denote Bengal as a whole, is first traced in 'Afīf's Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī (Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 110-118). 'Afīf calls Hājī Iliyās Shāh-i-Bangālah, Sultān-i-Bangālah and Shāh-i-Bangāliyān. Hadrat Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī referred to Shaikh Nūr Quṭb 'Alam as Shaikh Nūr Bangali (M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. I, P.6). Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was also referred to by the famous poet Hāfiz as the Sultān of Bangālah (Salīm : Riyāḍ, PP. 105-106). The Chinese record also mentioned the whole of Bengāl as Pang-Ko-la (Bangalah)-Rockhill : Notes on the Relations and Trade of China, Pt. II, PP. 69,76, 79-80,83; Śukhaymay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn., P.322.

there are also sporadic references to the administration of the period in question. So, the administrative structures of both the central and the other administrative units under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns may be re-constructed on the basis of the available contemporary sources, particularly on the information supplied by the inscriptions, coins, and Bengali literature and supplemented by the sources of the later period.

The early Iliyās Shāhī sovereign and the nature of the Sultānate :

The record of the early Iliyās Shāhī Kingship in the imperial line centres round four personalities - namely Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh, Sultān Sikandar Shāh, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh and Sultān Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh. All of them enjoyed sovereignty and ruled independently and the fact is best illustrated by the titles assumed by the Sultāns.

Ḥājī Iliyās, the founder of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty, took the title of Shāh Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh and caused the Khuṭbah to be read in his name⁵. He is also known to the people as Shāh-i-Bangalah and Shāh-i-Bangā-liyān⁶. Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh also assumed the titles like 'Al-Sultān al-ʿAdal, (the just Sultan)⁷, 'Al-Sultān al-Ḡhāzī' (the Sultān who is the champion of the faith)⁸ and Sikandar al-Thānī (Alexandar the Second)⁹. Numismatic¹⁰ and epigraphic¹¹ records show that he used the titles of Shāh and 'Al-Sultān at the end of his name. All the later Sultāns of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty followed this tradition.

5. Firishtah : T.F., pt.II, p.296.

6. 'Afif : T.F.S., PP.114, 116-118,120.

7. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin No.24, p.150.

8. Thomas : I.C.B., coin No.14, p.62; Botham : Shillong cabinet, coin No. 33, p.150.

9. Thomas : I.C.B., coin No.14, p.62.

10. Ibid; H.N.Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, PP.150-159; Botham : Shillong Cabinet, PP. 150 ff.

11. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, p.10; Shamsuddin Ahmad : Inscriptions; vol. IV, p.33.

A careful study of the titles of Iliyās Shāh reveals that his actual title was Al-Sultān¹². All the Turkish and Afghan rulers of Delhi used the title of 'Sultān'¹³. Hence, it may be said that by assuming the title of Sultān, Iliyās Shāh placed himself on an equal footing with the Sultān of Delhi. It also appears that Iliyās Shāh took the title of 'Shāh' in the general sense of the term¹⁴ to give a high impression of his position and to put up a show of difference between the Sultāns of Bengal and the Sultāns of Delhi. Anyway, his titles indicate that he had an independent status with sovereign power.

Coins and inscriptions of Sikandar Shāh show that he assumed the titles of 'Al-Sultān'¹⁵, 'Al-Sultān al-Mu'azzam' (the honoured Sultān)¹⁶, Al-Sultān al-Azam (the great Sultān)¹⁷, Al-Imām¹⁸ and Al-Imām al-A'zam (the great leader)¹⁹. Sikandar Shāh is also found have used the title of 'Shāh' before his name (Shāh Sikandar)²⁰. A close examination of his titles indicates that Sikandar Shāh adopted higher titles than his father to enhance his position.

12. It is still somewhat obscure exactly how and when the title of Sultān originated. But it has an interesting history behind it. It is used in the Qurān in the sense of strength or might (Hughes : Dictionary of Islam, P. 622; also cf. I.H.Q., vol.13, P.432). As a title, it was first used by the rulers who set up as independent Kings in the former provinces of the Caliph of Baghdad (Arnold : The Caliphate, p.202). Later on the independent princes who after the disruption of the Khilāfat, divided the Islamic world among themselves, assumed this title. Mahmud of Ghazni is regarded as the first important Muhammadan ruler to set this example (I.H.Q., vol.13, p.432). The Mamluks of Egypt, the Turks and Afghans of Delhi and the early Iliyās Shāhi Sultāns of Bengal uniformly followed this practice.

13. I.H.Q., vol.13, 1937 A.D., p.432.

14. Shāh is a Persian title meaning a King. But in the Indian Sub-continent, it appears to be used as honorary title. Its general meaning is the high position without having any constitutional significance. The usage of the title Shāh also indicates that Hāji Iliyās took it as a part of his name.

His titles Al-Imām and Al-Imām al-Aẓam deserve special note. Because, the assumption of this title is an epoch making event in the history of Bengal. Before him, no Muslim ruler of Bengal did ever use this title. So long we knew that Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh was the first ruler of Bengal to take the title of Khalifah. But this is not true. Actually, among the Muslim rulers of Bengal, Sikandar Shāh is found first to assume the title of Al-Imām or Khalifah²¹. The assumption of this title is against the tradition of the earlier Muslim rulers of Bengal. So, the question arises : why did Sikandar Shāh take the title of Al-Imām ? To answer this question it is necessary to have a glimpse of the prevailing political situation in the Indian Sub-continent. Sikandar Shāh was contemporary of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Dehli. We have seen that soon after his accession to the throne, Sikandar Shāh had to face the onslaught of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq. Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq received recognition from the Abbasid Khalifah of Egypt. He inscribed the names of the Khalifahs Abūl 'Abbās Aḥmad Abūl Fath al-Mutāsīd Billah and al-Mutawakkil 'ala' Allah Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad²². The practice of receiving recognition from the Abbasid Khalifah of Egypt was actually started by Muḥammad bin Tughluq²³. "Fīrūz Shāh proudly records his belief in the necessity of obtaining recognition from the Abbasid Caliphs as well as the fact that he received letters patent

15. A. Karim : Corpus, p.49.

16. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin No.63, p.156.

17. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Inscriptions, vol.IV, p.38.

18. A. Karim : Chittagong University Cabinet, p.12.

19. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin Nos.47,50, PP.153-154; Botham: Shillong Cabinet, p.153.

20. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin Nos. 37,38, p.152.

21. Al-Imām stands for Khalifah, cf A. Karim : Chittagong University Cabinet, p.12.

22. Thomas : The Chronicles, PP. 274-277, 298; H.N. Wright : The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi, PP.172-174.

23. A.Karim : Chittagong University Cabinet, p.14.

granting him 'absolute authority, and the lieutenancy of the Caliphate with the title of the Chief of the Sultāns'²⁴. The arrogation of such an authority by the Sultān of Delhi was a real menace to the Sultan of Bengal. In this situation, Sikandar Shāh went one step further and forestalled his adversary of Delhi by assuming the title of Al-Imām or Khalīfah for himself²⁵. He did this for establishing his legal claim to the throne of Bengal²⁶. It is difficult at present with the available materials, to guess whether this assumption of the supreme title by the Sultān, was popular among his subjects. In this respect it may be assumed that the Sultān could not do it without the consent of the 'Ulamās of the country. But still there is reason to think that there was some sort of reaction against Sikandar Shāh's assumption of the title of Al-Imām or Khalīfah. It is evident that Sultān Sikandar Shāh was not in good terms with Shaikh 'Alā' al-Haq and ultimately he, on political grounds, banished him from Panduāh to Sunārgāon²⁷. Anyway, the assumption of the title of Al-Imām or Khalīfah by the Sultān points to his sovereign status.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh took the titles of Al-Sultān²⁸ and Al-Sultān al-Aẓam (the great Sultān)²⁹. He is also found to take the title of Al-Imām³⁰. In the inscription he is referred to as Sultān-us-Salātīn (the Sultān of Sultāns)³¹. Thus it is clear that he also maintained sovereign status.

24. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.36.

25. A. Karim : Chittagong University Cabinet, p.14.

26. Because no monarchy considered itself legally established without recognition by the Commander of the Faithful - I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.24.

27. 'Abd al-Haq : Akhbar al-Akhiyar, p.148.

28. A. Karim : Corpus, p.58.

29. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin No.67, p.157.

30. A. Karim : Corpus, p.58.

31. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Inscriptions, vol.IV, p.43.

Saif al-Din Hamzah Shāh also assumed the titles of Al-Sultān³², Sultān al-Salātin (the Sultān of Sultāns)³³ and Al-Imām al-Ādal al-Bājal (the just and generous leader)³⁴. These titles of Saif al-Din Hamzah Shāh prove that in spite of his weak position he maintained the show of regality in his titles. Thus the analysis of the titles of the early Iliyās Shāhi Sultans shows that they had undisputed sovereignty from the very beginning of the Sultānate of Bengal and they gradually enhanced their position to increase the confidence of the local people.

Though the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultans assumed the regal titles, they at the same time, recognized the theoretical sovereignty of the Khalīfah and showed great respect to the institution of the Khilāfat.

At the commencement of Islām, the Prophet was the chief of the Muslims in temporal and spiritual concerns, as he was the ruler, judge, law-giver, priest and general of the faithful followers of Islam. After his death Hadrat Abū Bakar became the leader of the Muslims as his Khalīfah. In this way the conception of Khalīfah and the Khilāfat came into being and ultimately the Khalīfahs took leadership of the Muslims both in temporal and spiritual field. During this period it is established that as Islām is indivisible, so also the Khilāfat is indivisible. But with the rise of the independent Muslim state in the outlying areas at the weak point of the Abbasid Khalīfahs,

32. A. Karim : Corpus, P.66.

33. Ibid; Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad : T.A., vol.III, p.265; Firishtah : T.F., pt. II, p.297.

34. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl. I.M.C., II, coin No.115.p.54.

this theory of indivisibility of the Khilāfat does not hold good. Muslim Jurists then passed the opinion that things which are not prohibited by the Khalifahs are permissible. As a result the independent status of the Muslim States was recognized. In this circumstance also, the legal power of the Khalīfah remained unchallenged, because to avoid internal feuds among themselves, the Muslim rulers of the different parts sought recognition from him. It is seen that powerful ruler like Maḥmud of Ghazni, who could threaten the Khalīfah, and the mighty Saljugs who ruled the largest empire of their day, could not ignore the Khalīfah's legal position. "Nizāmī-i-Arudī has put the legal position well when he explains that a monarch is a lieutenant of the caliph to administer the outlying parts of the commonwealth which can not be easily governed by one authority from the centre. Just as the Prophet is the vicegerent of God and the caliph the vicegerent of the Prophet, the monarch is the vicegerent of the Caliph"³⁵. Besides, most of the independent rulers considered it expedient to call themselves the deputies of the Khalīfah, because, it did not at all mean any reduction in their power, but on the other hand, it gave their rule a legal sanction. Moreover, the Muslim jurists believed that no monarchy considered itself legally established without recognition by the Khalīfah³⁶.

But with the fall of Baghdad in the thirteenth century, the conception of the Khilāfat had undergone a great change. During the fourteenth century, due to the changed political condition of the Khilāfat, the position

35. I. H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, PP.24,26.

36. Ibid, p.24.

of the Khalīfah was relegated to that of a figure head. It was in this political milieu that the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns of Bengal were flourishing.

A study of the coins issued by the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns of Bengal reveals that there were two strands in their attitude towards legal sovereignty of the Khalīfah :

- (i) coins without the name of the Khalīfah but still declaring faith in Khilāfat.
- (ii) coins claiming khilāfat for the Sultān himself.

In the first type of their relation with the Khalīfah it is found that all the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns declared their belief in the legal power of the Khalīfah by assuming the titles like Yamīn al-Khilāfat (right hand of the Khilāfat)³⁷, Nāsir-i-Amīr al-Mu'minīn (helper of the commander of the faithful)³⁸, Yamīn-i-Khalīfat Allāh (right hand of the vice-regent of God)³⁹ and Yamīn-i-Amīr al-Mu'minīn (right hand of the commander of the faithful)⁴⁰.

The second type of their relation marks an epoch-making event in Bengal. It comes in with Sikandar Shāh. In the earlier years of his reign Sikandar Shāh followed his father i.e. he issued coins declaring himself Yamīn al-Khilāfat (right hand of the Khilāfat) and Nāsir-i-Amīr al-Mu'minīn (helper of the commander of the faithful). He also took the title of Yamīn-i-

37. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, PP.150,152; A.Karim : Corpus; p.42.

38. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, PP.150,152,156,160; A.Karim : Corpus, PP. 42, 49-50, 58,66.

39. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, P.152; A.Karim : Corpus, PP.49-50,58,66.

40. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, P.158; A.Karim : Corpus, PP.58,66.

Khalīfat Allāh (right hand of the viceregent of God)⁴¹. Sikandar Shāh also inscribed the names of the first four rightful Khalīfahs on his coins⁴². But from 764 A.H./1362-1363 A.D. he himself categorically assumed the title of Al-Imām or Khalīfah. This is of special interest to the students of Bengal history⁴³. Ghiyath al-Din Aẓam Shāh declared himself Nasir-i-Amīr al-Mu'minīn (helper of the commander of the faithful), Yamīn-i-Khalīfat Allāh (right hand of the viceregent of God) and Yamīn-i-Amīr al-Mu'minīn (right hand of the commander of the faithful)⁴⁴. In some of his coins he also inscribed the names of first four rightful Khalīfahs⁴⁵. But he is also found to assume the title of Al-Imām⁴⁶. His son Saif al-Dīn Hamzah Shāh also followed his father and took the title of Al-Imām al-'Ādal al-Bājal (the just and generous leader)⁴⁷.

The above analysis of the coins shows that the attitude of the early Ilyas Shāhī Sultāns towards the Khilāfat underwent a slight change from the tradition of the rulers of the preceding period. Before the foundation of the independent Sultānate of Bengal, 'Iwāḍ Khaljī, Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbak, Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs, Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz and his sons recognised the legal authority of the Khalīfah. They inscribed the name of the Khalīfah on their

41. A. Karim : Corpus., p.58.

42. Botham : Shillong Cabinet, coin No. 12, p.154.

43. For details see Supra, P.

44. A. Karim : Corpus, p.58.

45. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin No. 74, p.158.

46. A. Karim : Corpus, p.58.

47. Ibid, p.66.

coins⁴⁸ and declared themselves Nāṣir-i-Amīr al-Mu'minīn (helper of the commander of the faithful). Some of them also inscribed the Qalimah on their coins⁴⁹. Here it would not be out of place to mention that the Delhi Sultāns of the Tughluq and Sayyid dynasty are of the opinion that no monarchy could be lawful without a recognition from the Khalīfah. They also believed that any monarch who reigned without an express decree from the Abbasid Caliphs was an usurper⁵⁰. In view of this belief, they recognized the legal authority of the Khalīfah. They received investiture of Sultān's office from the Khalīfah⁵¹ and inscribed his name on their coins⁵² and included his name in the Khutbah. They also declared themselves Nāṣir-i-Amīr al-Mu'minīn (helper of the commander of the faithful). But in actual practice they were independent of the Khalīfah.

But they early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns gave up the practice of inscribing the name of the Khalīfah on their coins and mentioned instead legends like 'Yamīn al-Khilāfat' etc. etc. It is also observed that Iliyās Shāh and Sikandar Shāh discontinued reference to the Khalīfah in the inscriptions. They did not inscribe the Qalimah in the inscriptions⁵³. These facts led Edward Thomas to

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48. (a) 'Iwād Khaljī - J.A.S.B., vol.42, pt.IV, 1873 A.D., coin Nos. 4,6,7, PP. 354, 356-357.
 (b) Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbak - H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin No.6, p. 146.
 (c) Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs - H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin No.7, P.147.
 (d) Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz - H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin No.9, P.147.
 (e) i. Shihāb al-Dīn Bughrā Khān - H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin No.13, p.148.
 ii. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur Shāh - H.N. Wright Catalogue, vol.II, coin No. 14, p.148.
49. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II. coin Nos. 1,2, and 4, PP. 145-146.
 50. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, PP. 33-34.
 51. Baranī : T.F.S., PP.492-494, 598; Afif : T.F.S., PP.274-276.
 52. Thomas : The Chronicles, PP. 207-216, 249-253, 274-277, 304-309,311, 316.
 53. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 10-13.

say that the tenor of the inscriptions was usually of independent conception especially in the "refusal to adopt the ever recurring Kalimah" and the "mutations of titles assigned to the lieutenants of the Prophet on the earth whose names they did not care to learn"⁵⁴. But this view of Edward Thomas is not correct. Because ignoring numismatic records he made such statement. In fact, numismatic records show that Sikandar Shāh and Ghiyāth al-Din Aẓam Shāh inscribed the names of the first four rightful Khalīfahs on their coins. Invocation of the names of the first four Khalīfahs on their coins implies respect towards them. Hence, the allegation of Thomas levelled against the Sultāns of Bengal does not hold good. Actually, the omission of the name of the Khalīfah in the coins and inscriptions was not due to disregard of the Sultāns of Bengal towards the Khalīfah. The reason behind this was that the real Khilāfat had ceased to exist after 1258 A.D. and the Khalīfah at Cairo was just a puppet at the hands of the Mamluk Sultāns of Egypt. In these circumstances, the Sultāns of Bengal considered it useless to inscribe the name of the Khalīfah who had neither power nor status. So, they simply maintained the tradition by inscribing legends like Nāṣir-i-Amīr al-Mu'minin (helper of the commander of the faithful) etc. on their coins. These facts indicate that they accepted the theoretical sovereignty of the Khalīfah and they had respect towards the Khilāfat. But this acceptance of the suzerainty of the Khalīfah was only in name. The assumption of the various titles by the Sultāns only reveals their mental attitude towards the Khilafat though for all practical purposes they were in-

54. J.A.S.B., vol. 36, Pt.I, 1867 A.D., P.10.

dependent. In order to give a legal status to their recently acquired independence, the early Iliyās Shāhi Sultāns invoked in their coins their connection with the Khilāfat, though in practical terms, they possibly did not have any relationship with the Khilāfat.

Muslim law, which is based on the Qurān and the Hadīth⁵⁵, was prevalent and it was the principal law in the period under review. For this reason, the 'Ulamās played a vital role in administration. They acted as adviser to the Sultāns in the affairs of the Sultānate and they considered it their duty to keep the Sultāns on the right path. The letters of Shaikh Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī give testimony to this fact⁵⁶. Though Muslim law was prevalent and the 'Ulamās played an important role in the affairs of the Sultānate, the local laws and customs were not ignored altogether. In fact, the early Iliyās Shāhi Sultāns ran the administration with the help of the local people. They considered the local people to be their partners in the affairs of the Sultānate. As a result the administration appears to be liberal in character. This is proved by the fact that the local people, especially the Hindus were being appointed in higher posts in the administration⁵⁷. The earliest reference to the appointment of non-Muslims to the key positions of the state may be traced in the letters of Haḍrat Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī addressed to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh of Bengal⁵⁸. The local people also played an important role in the army of Hājī Iliyās. Ḍiyā al-Dīn Baranī gives us a detailed account of the local soliders under Hājī Iliyās. According to him the well-known pāiks of Bengal used

55. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.42.

56. J.B.R.S. Vol. 42, 1956 A.D., PP. 178-195.

57. Firishtah : T.F. Pt. II, P.297.

58. J.B.R.S. vol.42, 1956, PP.186-187.

to call themselves 'Abū Bangāl' (Father of Bengal) and they promised before Iliyās Shāh that they would sacrifice their lives for him (Iliyās)⁵⁹. Yahyā mentioned the name of one of their leaders as Sahdeo who was of great help to Hājī Iliyās⁶⁰. 'Afīf used the terms lashkar-i-Bangālah for the army of Iliyās Shāh⁶¹. In the inscription of Nepal, the Bengal army is termed as vangala-bala⁶². These indicate that the composition of the army was not confined to the Muslims alone, it was a mixture of Muslims and non-Muslims. Baranī's reference to 'pāikān-i-Ma'rūf' suggests that they were not merely mercenary soldiers recruited temporarily, rather they belonged to hereditary warrior families with past tradition. Yahyā's reference also indicates that Sahdeo belonged to old aristocracy. In Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan, there is an indirect reference to these warrior families⁶³. That the local people were keenly associated with the administration is proved by the fact that they identified the cause of the Muslim Sultān with their own⁶⁴. This contention also finds support in the letters of Hadrat Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī addressed to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh.

Another important aspect of the early Iliyās Shāhī administration was that it allowed to continue some traits of the previous administrative system of Bengal. It is found that the Hindu Zamīndārs were allowed to govern their territories only on payment of yearly taxes. The declaration of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq, which he proclaimed during the period of his Bengal expedition, reveal the existence of local Zamīndars⁶⁵.

59. Baranī : T.F.S., p.593.

60. T..M.S., p.125.

61. T.F.S., PP.114-118.

62. J.B.O.R.S., 1936, p.93.

63. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., Dān Khando, 2nd edn., P.47.

64. Baranī : T.F.S., P.593.

65. J.A.S.B., 1923 A.D., PP.280 ff.

In the running of the administration, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns valued the sentiments of the local people and customs. Accordingly, Bengali language and talents were patronised and encouraged. If the Sultāns did not follow this policy, it would not be possible for the poets of the period in question and of the later period to attain fame for their works.

Another important side of the administration was that there was no persecution for religious differences. No where it is recorded that the people were harassed on religious ground. It is worth mentioning here that when Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī advised Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh not to appoint any Hindu to the key-position of the state, the Sultān did not comply with his request⁶⁶. It is also found that Sultān Sikandar Shāh, considering the political ideas of Shaikh 'Alā' al-Ḥaḡ as detrimental to the interest of the Sultānat, banished him from the capital⁶⁷. Besides, there was no imposition of Jiziya on the non-Muslims. Further, the system of punishment during the period under review was also humane. The Chinese accounts give testimony to this fact⁶⁸.

Position and Power of the Sultan : During the period of our investigation, the Sultān and the state could not be distinguished, that is to say the Sultān was the State. There was no limit to his authority or duties. Infact, he was all in all and the pivot of the entire administrative system. He used to appoint officers to help him and relieve himself by delegating to faithful persons a portion of his authority. He centralised all departments under his own personal

66. J.B.R.S., vol. 42, 1956, p.187.

67. 'Abd al-Ḥaḡ : Akḥbār al-Akḥiyār, p.148.

68. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., P.117.

control. There was no customary or statutory body to whose advice the Sultān was bound to listen or whose assistance he was obliged to utilise in administering the empire. Everything depended upon the personality of the Sultān. The Muslim State, in the words of J.N. Sarkar, "depended for its existence on the absolute authority of the monarch"⁶⁹. The truth of this observation will be made clear by an analysis of the various duties performed by the Sultāns of Bengal.

The Sultān was the head of the executive. Hence, he managed all affairs with the assistance of such ministers and officers as he might choose to appoint. He had no regular council of ministers, no cabinet in the modern sense of the term. In this respect he may be compared with the Mughal emperors⁷⁰.

The Sultān was the chief law-giver and the final court of appeal. The title Al-Sultān al-Ādal (the just Sultān) indicates that the Sultān was the custodian of justice.

The Sultān was the supreme commander of the army. The Sultānate being primarily military in character, its dependence upon the army is obvious. The Sultān did not think it wise to delegate the command over the army to generals whose loyalty was often questionable. Hence, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns were not a mere ornamental head of the army. The Sultān had to pay more attention to the army than to the problems of every-day administration. Often he himself was a good general and took an active part in the conduct of warfare. We find that Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh himself took the field and led the army in the battles⁷¹. His title of Sikandar al-thānī (Alexandar the Second)⁷² also

69. J.N. Sarkar : Mughal Administration, p.16.

70. Ibid, PP.17-18.

71. Baranī : T.F.S., P.586 ff, Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad : T.A., vol.III, P.263; Firishtah : T.F., Pt.II, P.296.

72. Thomas : I.C.B., Coin No. 14, P.62.

hints at his military accomplishments. From the titles it also appears that the Sultān was the highest living exponent of the faith⁷³. Thus it is clear that the Sultān had to bear the heavy burden of the Sultānate almost single handed. He was not restrained by any of those checks which are usually associated with constitutional monarchy.

Though the Sultān of Bengal enjoyed absolute and unlimited power, he had to submit to certain well-marked modifications in actual practice. In the first place, the Sultān was surrounded by a group of nobility (not hereditary) whose support and co-operation he always needed⁷⁴. In fact, the Sultān had to ensure the co-operation of the nobles for successful running of the administration. He always tried to please and pacify the nobility rather than antagonise it. It was not easy for the Sultān to impose royal will on the nobles. For, some of the nobles had great strength and influence in the society. They were in a position to limit the absolute authority of the Sultān. Secondly, with a view to stabilizing their authority over Bengal, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns had to honour the sentiments of the local people and local customs. These considerations restrained the Sultāns of Bengal from applying their autocratic authority⁷⁵. Thirdly, the power of the Sultān was also limited by the supremacy of the Sharia and the influence of the 'Ulamā'⁷⁶. The titles of the Sultāns and the legends like Al-Sultān al-Ghāzī (the Sultān who is the champion of the Faith); Al-Mujāhid fī Sabīl al-Rahman (the warrior in the path of Merciful), Al-Mūwayyadu ; Batāyyīd al-Rahman (one strengthened by the support of the Merciful), Al-Nāsir al-Dīn Allāh (the helper of God's Faith), Al-Wāthiq

73. See Infra, P. 131-132.

74. See Infra, P. 142-143.

75. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.72.

76. Ibid; I.II. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.42.

batāyyīd al-Rahman (the confident by the support of the Merciful) and Ghawth al-Islām Wa al-Muslimīn (the help of Islam and the Muslims)⁷⁷ lead us to believe that the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultans were respectful to the Muslim law and could not pass any law which was not in conformity with the Sharia. These titles and legends also indicate that the Sultāns of Bengal had profound respect for the Sharia. It is also found that at the time of need, the Sultāns consulted the 'Ulamā about the affairs of the State and usually they respected their advice and opinion⁷⁸. For, the learned Muslim theologians and lawyers wielded considerable influence on the Muslim masses. But there are also instances to show that at the time of necessity, the Sultān acted according to his own will. It is related in the Akḥbār al-Akḥiyār that when Sultān Sikandar Shāh considered the political ideas of Shaikh 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq as detrimental to the interest of the country, he banished the Shaikh from Panduāh to Sunargāon⁷⁹. Another instance of the same attitude may be cited when Mawlāna Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī advised Sultān Ghiyāth al-Din Aẓam Shāh not to appoint the unbelievers to the posts of responsibility, as it was against the principle of Islām, the Sultān, despite his great devotion to Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī, did ignore his advice.⁸⁰

Much of the success or failure of the Sultānate depended upon the personality of the Sultān. A strong and powerful Sultān could bring under his control the powerful nobles and 'Ulamā, but under a weak Sultān the nobles and high officials exercised immense influence and they even attempted to

77. A. Karim : Corpus, PP. 188-190; H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, PP.143, 150-160.

78. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.72.

79. 'Alī al-Ḥaqq : Akḥbār al-Akḥiyār, p.148.

80. J.B.R.S., vol.42, 1956, Pt.II, PP.186-187.

establish their independent Kingdoms. In the absence of a rigid and written law of succession, no Sultān felt safe on the throne of Bengal. During the life time of Sultān Sikandar Shāh, his son rose in rebellion⁸¹.

The Sultān's Darbār (court) : The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultān of Bengal held his darbār (court) in the royal palace. It is known from the Chinese account that the royal palace was well-protected and was heavily guarded by the army. The Sultān used to sit on a high throne inlaid with precious stones. He also maintained a magnificent darbar in a luxuriously decorated hall. Fei-sin says, "The dwelling of the King is all of bricks set in mortar, the flight of steps leading up to it is high and broad. The halls are flat-roofed and white-washed inside. The inner doors are of triple thickness and of nine panels. In the audience hall, the pillars are plated with brass, ornamented with figures of flowers and animals, carved and polished. To the right and left are long varendahts on which were drawn up (on the occasion of our audience) over a thousand men in shining armour and on horseback outside, filling the courtyard, were long ranks of (our) chinese (soldiers) in shining helmets and coats of mail, with spears, swords, bows and arrows, looking martial and lusty. To the right and the left of the King were hundreds of peacock feather umbrellas and before the hall were some hundreds of soldiers mounted on elephants"⁸². The majesty of the Sultān and magnificence of his court can also be gleaned from the court ceremonials and the entertainments and presents of the Sultān to the Chinese envoys. It is learnt from the Chinese accounts that the Chinese envoys

81. See Supra, P. 99 ff.

82. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 121-122, 126.

were received in the court amidst grand ceremonies and ettiquettes. Two officials with silver staffs and two other officials with gold staffs led the chinese envoys alternately to the royal presence and offered salutations at intervals. Regarding the entertainment, Huang Sing ts'eng writes, "Carpets are spread on the floor and the King entertains the Chinese mission with a feast of both smoked and roasted beef and mutton, rose water and sweetened water of different kinds of perfumes". According to Fei-sin, "The King entertained the imperial envoys at a banquet and our soldiers were given many presents. When the banquet was over, the King bestowed on the envoys gold basins, gold griddles, gold flatons and gold bowls; all assistant envoys receiving the same articles in silver and each of the lower officials a golden bell and long gown of white hemp and silk. All soldiers of the escort got silver money⁸³.

The maintenance of such a splendid court shows a spirit of competition in the minds of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns of Bengal. Actually, they wanted to outshine the Sultāns of Delhi and other neighbouring rulers in pomp and splendour of the court. Political considerations also induced the Sultāns to maintain a magnificent court, because the independent Sultānate of Bengal came into being against the authority of Delhi. So, in order to win support and confidence of the people, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns adopted the expedient of surrounding themselves with great pomp and ceremonials to demonstrate their majesty and might. Thus they made their capital and court the most splendid and resplendent⁸⁴.

83. Ibid., PP. 121-122, 126-127.

84. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. I, PP. 244-245.

The darbār was attended by the greater number of nobles, amīrs and high officials of the state. A good deal of administrative work was carried out here by the Sultān.

The Royal Household : The diversity of administration and requirements of a spectacular ceremonial necessitated the presence of many officials and servants of different ranks in the royal household. They had to be carefully selected, appointed and marshalled. Their order of precedence was cautiously determined and maintained. The dignity of the Sultān required that every thing should work smoothly and with precision. All this required a large number of servants, officers, heralds, personal attendants, body guards, palace workers etc. Besides this, a few departments of the State were part of the palace organisation. The Royal Household was an important part of the administration of the Sultānate. Of the functionaries of the Royal palace, the Hājibs were very important. They managed the court formalities. The Hājibs were placed under a chief Hājib. We do not know the designation of the chief Hājib. But in Delhi there was an officer called Amīr-i-Hājib or Bārbek⁸⁵ who was the master of ceremonies at the court and whose duty was to marshal the nobles and officials in accordance with the precedence of their rank⁸⁶. A similar post may have existed in Bengal as well. The Hājibs were of different grades. This is evident in the account of Fei-sin. He mentioned, "Two men bearing silver staffs and turbaned heads came to usher (us) in On reaching the middle of the hall, they halted and two other men with gold staffs led us" to the royal presence⁸⁷. Though Fei-sin did not mention the designations of these ceremonial

85. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 24,61; Afīf : T.F.S., P.42.

86. I.I. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.61.

87. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., P.121.

functionaries, their nature of work indicates that they were Hājibs of different grades. Two officials bearing silver staffs were Hājibs and the other two officials bearing gold staffs were possibly khās Hājibs whose ranks were higher than Hājibs. There was also a Hājib who was called Hājib-i-faṣl. It was his duty to make inventories of all presents received by the Sultān as is known from the set up of the Sultānate of Delhi⁸⁸.

The Hājibs conducted all the visitors to the Sultān and nobody could come to royal presence without being introduced by them. It is known that when Qāḍi Sirāj al-Dīn sent his piyādah (peon) to summon Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh, it was the Hājib who carried the peon to the Sultān. Sometimes the Hājibs used to act as envoys of the Sultān. It is proved by the fact that when Sultān Sikandar Shāh was besieged in Ikdālah fort, he sent his Hājibs to Sultān Firūz Shāh Tughluq with a present of five elephants⁸⁹. A Naqib was attached to the court. It was his duty to announce the coming of the Sultān to the court and the names of visitors at the presentation ceremony⁹⁰. He also proclaimed orders of the Sultān.

The Sultān had a number of bodyguards. From the later Persian works, it is known that the guards of Husain Shāh replaced the pāiks who together with their chiefs were playing important role in the preceding period⁹¹. This indicates that the bodyguards of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultān were known as pāiks. The pāiks were placed under a chief bodyguard whose title was probably Chatrī as is evident from the example of the Husain Shāhī period⁹². There was

88. I.I. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.62.

89. Salīm : Riyāḍ, PP. 100-107.

90. M.A. Rahīm : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.75.

91. Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad : T.A. vol.III, PP.268-270; Firishtah : T.F. Pt.II, PP. 299, 301-302; Salīm : Riyāḍ, PP. 119-120.

92. Keśab Chatrī was the bodyguard of 'Alā'al-Dīn Husain Shāh cf. Brindavandasa: Caitanya Bhāgavata, P.350; Kṛṣṇadasa Kaviraj : Caitanya caritamṛta, P.76; J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B., vol.II, P.151.

another officer called Silāhdār. The term Silāhdār suggests that he was the armour bearer of the Sultān and was necessarily attached to the royal person. With a body of armed soldiers which formed the outer circle of royal bodyguards, he (Silāhdār) waited upon the Sultān when he gave public audience or rode out⁹³. The Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī furnishes us with the fact that Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh, before his accession to the throne, was the Silāhdār of Bahrām Khān, the imperial governor of Sunārgāon under Muḥammad bin Tughluq of Delhi⁹⁴. There was also the provision of guards for the protection of the female quarters.

Though there is no direct evidence of the existence of minor officials, it is likely that such officers did exist in the royal household, but under what nomenclature we do not know. It is noticed in the Sultānate of Delhi that there were large number of minor officials organised according to their duties, for example, Kitābdār (Librarian), Chāshnīgīr (Supervisor of the Kitchen), Sharābdār (responsible for drink), Mashālahdār (responsible for the lights), Farrāsh (responsible for furniture and tents), Tashtdār (ewer-bearer who helped the Sultān in his ablutions), Dawātdār (Keeper of the royal writing case), āghāchī (personal attendant), Dabīr-i-Sarā (Registrar of the palace), Khazīnadār (Keeper of the privy purse) Sar-chatrdār (chief umbrella bearer), Amīr-i-tuzuk (looked after the royal insignia), Qūrbeg (responsible for the Sultān's arms), Malik-ul-ḥukamā (royal physician)⁹⁵ etc. In the Bengal inscriptions of the later period we find the following officials : Sharābdār-i-Ghair Maḥalī, Jāmdār-i-Ghair Maḥalī, Jangdār, Dastūr⁹⁶ etc. Sharābdār-i-Ghair Maḥalī was

93. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.63.

94. Yaḥyā : T.M.S., P.104.

95. Minhāj : T.N., PP. 232, 242, 248-249, 251, 254, 261, 265;
Baranī : T.F.S., P. 126, 183, 241, 454-455, 527.

96. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., PP. 21, 23, 53, 57, 108.

the cup-bearer of the Sultān outside the palace. Jāmdār-i-Ghair Mahali was the Keeper of ward-robe outside the palace. These facts indicate that there were Sharābdār and Jāmdār inside the palace as well. Sharāb means anything to drink and Sharābdār was the royal cup-bearer in charge of drink, may be of water or wine⁹⁷. The Chinese record shows that there was no system of drinking wine in the court of Bengal, because it was held to be a breach of decorum but they used to drink Sharbat or sweetened water⁹⁸. So it is quite logical to infer that there were officials to serve the Sharbat. In the royal household of Delhi, there was an official named Sharābdār who was responsible for drink served by Sāqi-i-Khās⁹⁹. Jāmdār was in charge of royal ward-robe¹⁰⁰. The Jangdār was a picked soldier who belonged to the royal bodyguard¹⁰¹. The Dastūr was most probably the Tashtdār, the ewer-bearer who helped the Sultān in his ablutions¹⁰². In the Tārīkh-i-Firishtah we find another minor official named Darwān. Darwāns were the gate-keepers of the palace. It appears that they sometimes took part in the court politics¹⁰³.

Though the royal family enjoyed great prestige they seem to have exercised remarkably little influence in politics. We do not know any thing about the titles of the queens. In the Sultānate of Delhi, the senior queen was styled Malikah-i-jahān¹⁰⁴. There is also little reference to the power they may have exercised behind the scenes. During the period in question only one queen is found to meddle in the affairs of the Sultānate. She is the first

97. J.A.S.P., vol.III, P.80.

98. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., P.122. But such a piece of information from a Chinese account does not probably preclude the possibility of drinking privately.

99. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.65.

100. J.A.S.P., vol.III, P.80.

101. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., P.23; M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.76; Also cf. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.63.

102. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.76.

103. Firishtah : T.F., Pt. II, P.299.

104. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.65.

wife of Sultān Sikandar Shāh. This queen, out of envy and jealousy, tried to poison the ears of the Sultān against Ghiyāth al-Dīn who was superior to his other brothers. But the Sultān did not pay any heed to her advice. Instead he put the reins of authority entirely in the hands of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. It is also said that because of her interference in the affairs of the Sultānate, Ghiyāth al-Dīn had to rise in rebellion against his father¹⁰⁵. But for this single instance, early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate seemed to have remained remarkably immune from petticoat intrigue and wire-pulling. In so strenuous a period, only a man's strong hand could steer the ship of the state. The princes were given a good general and literary education, the Sultānate produced a number of cultured princes¹⁰⁶. They also received military training and were soon trusted with commands in the army or with governorships. Other royal relations were treated according to their antecedents and the temper of the Sultān and his supporters.

The Sultān had a number of slaves attached to the royal palace. It appears that the slaves used to serve the Sultānate in various capacities and played an important part in the administration. We find that during the reign of Sultān Sikandar Shāh one slave of the court received the title of Zarrīn Dast (golden hand) for his beautiful hand writing¹⁰⁷. It is also found in the writings of Ghulām 'Alī Āzad Bilgrāmī that Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh sent his personal servant Yāqūt 'Anānī to Makkah and Madīnah with a huge sum to be

105. Salīm : Riyād., PP.102, 107.

106. Sikandar Shāh's son Ghiyāth al-Dīn Āzam Shāh etc.

107. A.H.Dani : Bibliography., P.12.

distributed among the inhabitants of both the holy places and also to establish a madrasah and to open a sarai in the holy city of Makkah after his name¹⁰⁸. The slaves were first given minor household offices, and if they showed promise, they were gradually promoted to higher posts according to their merit, no office in the state being considered too high for them. As a result of this policy, it is gleaned from the history of the later period that the slaves became an integral part of the government machinery. Besides, they attained so much power that they ultimately succeeded in establishing their own rule in Bengal¹⁰⁹.

Though we have no direct reference to the existence of commissariat, a big institution like the imperial household obviously required a large commissariat. In the Sultānate of Delhi we notice the existence of a large commissariat which was divided into a number of departments known as Kārkhānahs¹¹⁰. These Kārkhānahs were factories to manufacture articles for court use. The Chinese references¹¹¹ to the life of the courtiers of the Sultānate of Bengal lead us to believe that the royal household had a large commissariat.

The royal household played significant role in the actual administration of the Sultānate. The royal body guard and picked household troops not only kept the nobles under discipline but also fought the battles of the empire whenever the need arose, the Hājibs commanded armies and acted as general staff. The Kārkhānahs manufactured the goods required by the army and other

108. Bilgrāmi : Khazānah-i-Āmirah, Quoted by A.Karim : Social History, P.48.

109. A. Karim : Social History, PP. 31-32.

110. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.69.

111. Annals, vol.1, 1945 A.D., PP.117-134.

departments of the state and the palace served as the training ground for future administrators and statesmen. The royal court was the greatest patron of learning and fine arts and it was instrumental in promoting culture. Thus, it can be said that politically, socially and culturally the royal court at Panduah was the heart of the Sultānate.

The Nobles : The nobles occupied an important position in the court and played a vital role in the administration. They considered themselves the backbone of the Sultānate. In fact, the throne of the Sultān largely depended on their support and loyal service. Because, they were all great military persons and held a position of great influence in the State and society. So, in order to establish firmly the independent Sultānate of Bengal and for withstanding the enmity of the Sultāns of Delhi, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns naturally tried to mobilise the support and co-operation of the nobles.

The nobles used to take the titles of Khān¹¹², Malik and Amīr¹¹³.

The highest among the nobles bore the title of Khān which signified the uppermost grade of nobility. As a special distinction some of them were given the title of Khān al-Aẓam¹¹⁴. Next in rank came the title of Malik, and lastly that of Amīr¹¹⁵. Epigraphic records of the preceding and the succeeding periods of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty warrant us in surmising explicitly that the nobles used to receive high honourary titles like Khān al-Aẓam al-Muʾazzam al-Mukhāṭib, Khāqān al-Muʾazzam, Khān Muʾazzam, Khān Aẓam wa Khāqān Muʾazzam Bahlvi al-ʿAṣr wa al-zamān, Khān Majlis ʿAlī, Khān Aẓam wa al-Muʾazzam, Majlis ʿAlā,

112. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., PP.12-13.

113. Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad : T.A., vol.III, PP.264-265; Firishtah T.F., Pt.II, P.296; Salīm : Riyāḍ., P.99.

114. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., PP. 12-13.

115. H.S. Bhatia (ed) : Political, legal and Military History of India, P.117.

Mijlis al-A'zam al Mu'azzam al-Dastūr al-Sa'ī, Majlis al-Majālis, Majlis al-Mu'azzam al-Mukarram, Khān A'zam Khāqān Mu'azzam, Malik al-Mu'azzam, Al-Wāthiq bil-Mulk al-Mannān Khān al-Mu'azzam and Sahib al-Saif wa al-Qalam¹¹⁶. From these evidence we may infer that the nobles under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns also took such high sounding honourary titles. The high sounding titles also indicate that there were different grades of nobles in each group of Khān, Malik and Amīr. The title of Khān was generally given by the Sultān on an officer for some distinguished service or in recognition of some meritorious work. The Malik was a title conferred usually on the Iqtādārs (governors) and higher officials. This title was also used by the princes¹¹⁷. In a generic sense the title Amīr may be applied to all the civil and military office holders of the State¹¹⁸. The official status of a noble was determined in relation to the office at court, title and the Iqtā', the titles of honour and the assignments of revenue respectively. There was no fixed rule for the award of offices at court or the distribution of titles of honour.

The nobles influenced the government as administrators, generals and sometimes as kingmakers. But their influence is nowhere best illustrated than in determining the succession to the throne. Thus, we find that Iliyās Shāh is required to take consent of the nobles at the time of his accession to the throne of Lakhnautī¹¹⁹. When he died, the nobles and the generals, on the third day, placed Sikandar Shāh on the throne of Bengal¹²⁰, and after the death

116. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 13,17,21,23-26,28-29,31-37; Shamsuddin Ahmad : Inscriptions, vol. IV, PP. 12-14.

117. M.A. Rahīm : S.C.H.B., Vol.I, P. 255.

118. H.S. Bhatia (ed) : Political legal and Military History of India, P.117.

119. Firishtah : T.F., pt.II, P. 296.

120. Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad : T.A., vol.III, P.264; Salīm : Riyād, P. 100.

Sikandar Shāh, the Amīrs and the chiefs of different groups of people conferred the title of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn to his son and put him on the throne¹²¹. On his death, the nobles also raised his son on the throne, giving him the title of Sultān al-Salātīn¹²². These facts show that, though the choice of the nobles was confined to the royal house, it was necessary to take consent of the nobles at the time of one's accession to the throne. This practice was deep rooted and gained the status of a political concept¹²³. Actually, the condition was such that no Sultān of Bengal could feel secure unless he was accepted and supported by the nobles.

The nobles also acted as the advisers of the Sultān. Besides, during the period of foreign attack or at the time of internal chaos and conflicts, they were engaged in repulsing the invasion or in establishing peace and order in the country. It is known from Diya al-Dīn Baranī and Shams-i-Sirāj Afīf that Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh consulted his courtiers and took counsel when Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi attacked Bengal¹²⁴. Afīf also mentions that Sultān Sikandar Shāh, after consulting his courtiers, sent a clever confidential agent to Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq¹²⁵.

The nobility was primarily military and official in character. The nobles usually supported the Sultān in power, but at times usurped his functions, and if a ruling Sultān grew weak and effete they stepped into his shoes and founded a new ruling dynasty of their own. Thus we find that Rājā Gaṇeśa

121. Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad : T.A., vol. III, P.265.

122. Ibid.

123. J.A.S.P., vol. III, 1958 A.D., PP.81-82.

124. Baranī : T.F.S., P.589; Afīf : T.F.S., p.112.

125. Ibid, PP. 153-154.

exercised his influence considerably in the reign of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh and Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh and ultimately displaced the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty by stratagem and founded his own dynasty¹²⁶.

The nobility does not seem to have had any hereditary nature. It was based more on merit than on blood. It appears from the later Perisan works that most of the nobles started their career from the lowest rank and by dint of their merits they obtained the status of Amīrs, and a few of them rose to the royal dignity. It is seen that Rājā Gaṇeśa started his career as a petty officer in the revenue department. From this position he rose to the important office of Wazīr¹²⁷.

The nobility was not restricted to the Muslims only. We come to know from the Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī that Sahdeo was the commander of the army of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh. It is also noticed that Rājā Gaṇeśa obtained a very high position in the court and exercised enormous authority in the affairs of the Sultānate.

Though it is very difficult to ascertain the nature of income of the nobles, it seems that those who lived in the capital used to get salaries and others living outside the capital, enjoyed the jagirs. This contention is proved by the fact that when Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi led his expedition towards Bengal in 754 A.H./1353 A.D., he made a promise in his proclamation to increase what the nobles received from their fiefs, villages,

126. See Supra, P. 123 ff.

127. Firishtah : T.F., Pt. II, P. 297.

lands and salaries¹²⁸. Besides we know that the somewhat feudal basis of Bengal administration under the Palas and the Senas does not seem to have undergone any appreciable modification in the early period of Muslim rules¹²⁹. Bakhtiyār Khaljī divided his Kingdom into a number of divisions known as Iqtā' and placed one military chief in charge of each Iqtā'¹³⁰. This type of government was at work even long afterwards. In the Husain Shāhī period, the nobles also were enjoying jāgīr. Hence, it may be said emphatically that the Iqtādārī¹³¹ or a similar system was prevailing in the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate of Bengal.

The Ministers and the high officials : Though the Sultān was all in all for all practical purposes, he could not manage the task of administration single handed. He needed the assistance of efficient ministers and high officials. Accordingly the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns appointed some ministers and high officials and entrusted them with the responsibility of different departments like finance¹³², judiciary¹³³, military affairs¹³⁴ etc.

The ministers played an important role in the administration, and it may be said that, next to the Sultān, were the ministers. 'Afīf informs us that the ministers of Sultān Sikandar Shāh advised the Sultān to make peace with Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq and through their efforts an agreement of amity was concluded and presents were exchanged between the two Sultāns¹³⁵. This indicates a very important position held by the ministers in the court.

128. J.A.S.B., 1923, P.280.

129. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P.98.

130. Minhāj : T.N., PP. 156-158.

131. Iqtā' means country or certain portion of a country. Dār means holder. Hence, Iqtādārī means the practice of holding of a country or a certain portion of a country.

132. Firishtah : T.F., Pt. II, P.297.

133. Salīm : Riyād, PP.107-108.

134. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., P.118; Yahyā : T.M.S., P.125.

135. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 153-154.

The chief minister was called the wazīr. He was an inseparable officer of the court of the Sultān of Bengal. Regarding the importance of his position, it has been aptly said that "No empire can be stable or prosperous without a wazīr", and that "sovereignty and dominion could not attain the pinnacle of their height without the help and co-operation of a Wazīr"¹³⁶. These assertions point out that the wazir was the most important figure in the administration. The nature of responsibility of the post of wazīr required great technical knowledge, wisdom and experience. The Sultān therefore, took great care in choosing his wazīr.

The relationship between the Sultān and the wazīr varied according to the character and capabilities of the Sultān. If the Sultān was strong, the wazīr acted as a mere adviser of the Sultān. He could never influence his master's policy except by arts of gentle persuasion and veiled warning. On the other hand, if the Sultān was weak, he utilised him as a puppet. It is found that Rājā Gaṇeśa became supreme in administrative and revenue functions during the late phase of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty¹³⁷. The nature of his power indicates that he exercised unlimited authority like some wazīrs of the Sultānate of Delhi.

The Dīwān-i-wizārat was the office of the wazīr. He acted as the head of all the departments. He kept a vigilant eye on the works of each department. In fact, no branch of public administration was outside his purview. But his immediate concern was finance. Akhbār al-Akhiyār gives us information that

136. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.78.

137. Firishtah : T.F., Part II, P.297.

Azam Khān the elder brother of the famous Shaikh Nūr Qutb 'Ālam was the wazīr of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh and he was responsible for the administration of revenue and treasury¹³⁸. Firishta also mentions that Rājā Gaṇeśa assumed supreme control over both administrative and revenue functions. He also advised the Sultān and participated in his advisory council. We do not have any reference to the assistants of the Wazīr of the Sultān of Bengal. But we find that the wazīr of the Delhi Sultānate was assisted by a nāib-wazīr (Deputy Wazir), an accountant-general (mushrif-i-mumālīk) and an auditor-general (mustaufī-i-mumālīk) at the higher level. Besides, he was also assisted by four secretaries (the chief mushrif, the chief mustaufī, the nāzir and the waqūf) with a staff of three hundred clerks¹⁴⁰. It is likely that the wazīr of the Sultān of Bengal was also assisted by similar officials. There is a reference to Malik Ḥusām al-Dīn Abū Rezā, who was the auditor-general (mustaufī-i-mumālīk) of Qadar Khān, governor of Lakhnautī during the reign of Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq¹⁴¹.

Besides the wazīr and his ministry (Dīwān-i-Wizārat) others forming the pivot of the state administration were Dīwān-i-Risālat, Dīwān-i-Inshā and Dīwān-i-Ārid. The Dīwān-i-Risālat dealt with diplomatic and foreign correspondence and kept in close touch with the envoys sent to and received from foreign rulers¹⁴². The Dīwān-i-Inshā dealt with royal proclamations and despatches. Every royal order was first drafted in the department of the

138. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq : Akḥbār al-Akḥiyār, P.152.

139. T.F., Pt. II, P.297.

140. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, PP.84-85.

141. Yahyā : T.M.S., P.104; Badauni : Muntakhab, P.230.

142. According to I.H. Qureshi, the Dīwān-i-Risālat dealt with religious matters pious foundations, stipends to deserving scholars and men of piety. This along with the Dīwān-i-Qadā were mostly looked upon as the branches of a department (I.H. Qureshi : The administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.85) Others propose that it dealt, as the term suggests, with foreign and diplomatic correspondence (A.B. Habibullah : Foundations of Muslim rule in India, PP. 223-224).

Dīwān-i-Inshā, and after taking the royal approval it was copied in a register and then despatched. The chief of this department was Dabīr-i-Khāṣ. He occupied a position of great trust and confidence in the court. Besides discharging the function of correspondence, he wrote farmans, legislations and orders of the Sultān. The nature of his job required of him to be a well read person, expert in the art of composition and a master of style and diction. Baranī informs us that Shams al-Dīn Dabīr who gained fame in the art of composition and writing and worked as the Secretary of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban, was the Dabīr-i-Khāṣ of his son Nāṣir al-Dīn Bughrā Khān, governor of Bengal¹⁴³.

The Dabīr-i-Khāṣ was assisted in his work by a number of Dabīrs, Kātibs and Kār-i-farmāns. The Dabīrs were writers, Kātibs were copyists and Kār-i-farmāns were probably responsible for the despatch of farmāns¹⁴⁴. On the basis of the Devikot Inscription¹⁴⁵ of Sikandar Shāh it can be said that the Kātib was sometimes honoured with titles like 'Zarrīn dast' or golden hand for his skilful writing in different styles.

The Dīwān-i-Ārid dealt with army matters. Ārid-i-Lashkar was the head of this department¹⁴⁶. He was the counterpart of the Ārid-i-Mumālīk of the Delhi Sultānate who acted as the controller general of the military department.¹⁴⁷

143. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 95.

144. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.74; M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shāhī Bengal, P.100.

145. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 11-12.

146. The minister for war was different from the commander-in-chief who was not a permanent figure in administration but was appointed for every campaign (Habib : Third Oriental conference - Madras, PP. 316-317).

147. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.85; M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.74.

It is known from the Persian works that 'Alī Mubārak was the 'Ārid-i-Lashkar of Qadar Khān, governor of Lakhnautī¹⁴⁸. The 'Ārid-i-Lashkar was concerned with the mustering of the army and supply of war material. He was the keeper of the military register and was also the pay-master of the royal forces. High ranking military officers were appointed as Sipah-Sālār¹⁴⁹, Sar-i-Lashkar, wazīr Lashkar and Mīr Bahr of the army¹⁵⁰. References of military ranks, such as sar-i-khail, amīr, malik and khān are available in the different sources.¹⁵¹

Though we do not have any direct reference to the existence of the above mentioned departments in the administrative set-up of Bengal of the period under review, still there are reasons to believe that those departments did exist in Bengal. In this respect the advice given by Bughrā Khān to his son Kaiqubād is very pertinent. He asked his son "to select four wise and experienced men from amongst your officers and consider them the four pillars of your government. Place all public affairs in their hands. Entrust one of them with the Dīwān-i-wizārat and raise his status above others. Give the Dīwān-i-Risālat to the second and believe in his words and advice. To the third assign the Dīwān-i-'Ārid and ask him to look after the management of the army. Give the Dīwān-i-Inshā to the fourth and leave him to reply to the petitions of the provincial governors and officers to the best of his knowledge and judgement. Keep the all four equally near to yourself and make them your advisers in all political affairs, of which they know the difficulties

148. Yahyā : T.M.S., P.105. Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad : T.A. vol,III, P.261; Badā'ūnī : Muntakhab; , P.230.

149. Annals., vol. I, 1945 A.D., P.118.

150. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 21, 23, 34-36.

151. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 12-13, 21; Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad : T.A., vol. III, PP. 264-265; Firishtah : T.F. Pt. II, P.296; Salīm : Riyāḍ; , P.99.

and dangers. Do not throw the business of the government into disorder by entrusting everything to one man. Do not let any one of your ministers or your courtiers have too much influence over yourself or the administration. Further, any scheme you may have thought of and every order you pass concerning the business of any of the ministers, and all confidential secrets of the state must be discussed in the presence of all the four ministers. Though the position of the wazir is higher than the position of other ministers, it will not be prudent for you to favour any of the four pillars of your kingdom to such an extent as to wound the feelings of others and alienate their heads"¹⁵². This advice of Bughrā Khān leads us to believe that he also introduced his administration in Bengal in accordance with his above belief. Possibly this administrative set-up also continued in the early Iliyās Shāhī period.

In addition to the four ministries there were a number of departments which were non-political. The main department was that of justice presided over by the Qādī. Ghulām Husain Salīm mentioned that Sirāj al-Dīn was the chief Qādī in the reign of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh¹⁵³.

The officer, known as the Kotwāl, was also an essential officer attached to the court. He was the head of the Police. He was in charge of maintaining peace and order in the city. It was also his duty to keep the Sultān informed of all daily occurrences in his jurisdiction.

The officers mentioned above formed the central administration under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate of Bengal.

152. Baranī : T.F.S., P.153; also cf. M. Habib : Third Oriental Conference - Madras, PP. 314-315.

153. Riyāq, P. 107.

The question of succession in the early Iliyās Shāhi Sultānate : There was no definite law of succession to the throne of the Sultānate of Bengal under the early Iliyās Shāhi Sultāns. Such absence of the law of succession often meant anarchy and it introduced the law of the survival of the fittest, and the fittest was the one who could drive away all other claimants to the throne. Thus, it is found that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was compelled to settle the question of succession by taking recourse to the sword even in the life time of his father Sikandar Shāh¹⁵⁴. But if we survey the history of succession in the Sultānate of Bengal, we find that though there was no written law of succession, sometimes customs and conventions were considered strong forces and were followed.

(i) Hereditary claims : The principle of succession was based on hereditary claims and it was adhered to as far as possible. According to the hereditary claims, the first claimant of the throne was the son of the Sultān. Among the sons of the Sultān, the fittest son could ascend the throne. It is seen that the nobles also were in favour of placing on the throne a scion of the royal dynasty than any one else. It is observed that when Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh died, the nobles placed on the throne his eldest son Sikandar Shāh¹⁵⁵. After Sikandar Shāh's death, the amirs and the chiefs of the different groups placed his most competent son on the throne¹⁵⁶. When Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh departed from the world, the amirs raised his son on the throne¹⁵⁷.

154. Salīm : Riyāḍ, P.101 ff.

155. Ibid, P.100; Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vol.III, P.264; Firishtah:T.F., Pt. II, P. 296.

156. Nizām al-Dīn : T.A., vo. III, p.265.

157. Ibid.

(ii) Change of Dynasty : When such legal descendents were not available, a change of dynasty was allowed as in the case of Shihāb al-Dīn Bāyazīd Shāh¹⁵⁸. The nobles allowed the change of dynasty.

(iii) Nomination by the ruling King : While determining the succession of a person to the throne, nomination by the ruling king was also an important factor. The Sultān usually nominated his son who was receiving training in administration and state craft under the Sultān himself and about whose talents and abilities the Sultān was fully aware. Thus, it is found that Sultān Sikandar Shāh, in spite of the ill-words of his first wife, put the reins of authority entirely in the hands of Ghiyāth al-Dīn who possessed a most amiable disposition and surpassed all his other brothers in learning and accomplishments. Even before his last breathe, Sikandar Shāh said, "My life's work is over and the Kingdom is welcome to you"¹⁵⁹.

(iv) Election of the new Sultān by the nobles : The nobility played a very important part in the succession question in the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate. It is found that Iliyās Shāh took the consent of the nobles at the time of his accession to the throne of Lakhnautī¹⁶⁰. It is also revealed from the later Persian works that the nobles used to place the new Sultān ceremoniously on the throne of Bengal¹⁶¹. I.H. Qureshi praised the principle of election by the nobles¹⁶². For, election of Sultān by the nobles could provide some able Sultāns of Bengal.

158. Stuart : History of Bengal, P.116.

159. Salīm : Riyāḍ, P. 104.

160. Firishtah : T.F., pt. II, P.296.

161. Nizām al-Dīn: T.A., vol. III, PP. 264-265; Salīm : Riyāḍ, P.100.

162. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.56.

The above discussion points out that there was no definite law of succession. Though this absence had the usual drawbacks, sometimes it allowed the right person to come to the right place. This is proved by the fact that because of the absence of a definite rule of succession, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh who was superior to this other brothers, was able to occupy the throne of Bengal. Secondly, it is revealed that the nobles played a very significant role in the succession question. Thirdly, it is also observed that the Sultān had a say in nominating the ablest among his sons.

Finance : Finance is the source of administration whether it is run by a king or oligarchy or any form of Government. So the Muslim political thinkers and administrators have always recognised the importance of a sound state of finance and accordingly they gave special attention to the organisation of this vital affair. Similarly, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultans of Bengal organised the main features of its financial administration on the lines laid down by the Muslim tradition¹⁶³. In following this tradition they also tried to adjust the same with the local conditions. The reasons behind this policy of adjustment were as follows . First, the Sultān of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty needed the co-operation of the local people in the consolidation of their power. Secondly, they did not want to disturb the tradition and introduce any experiment in the revenue system of Bengal.

163. We find the Principles which governed the revenue tradition of ^{the} Muslims in the writings of Abū Yūsuf. According to him, the State demand should be fair, not exorbitant, it must in no case exceed one half of the produce of the ryot. The assessment of revenue could either take the form of division of the actual produce between the government and the cultivator, or it could be done by the method of the measurement of land. The local revenue practices were to be respected, if these were not contrary to the Muslim law and were found convenient to ryots and the state. The ryotaari i.e. the system of direct connection between the state and ryots in the revenue organisation, was to be preferred; the farming of revenue and other intermediate agencies were to be avoided as far as practicable (W.H. Moreland : The Agrarian System of Muslem India, P.14.)

The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate of Bengal had three main sources of revenue : (1) Al-Ghanīmah, (2) Al-Kharāj and (3) Customs.

(1) Al-Ghanīmah : The spoils of war are called ghanīmah. Legally all booty should be collected and a fifth set apart for the state, the rest i.e., four-fifths being aquitably distributed among the soldiers. The portion or share of the booty that went to the state was called Khums. When the booty was distributed a cavalryman was given twice and sometimes thrice as much as a foot soldier¹⁶⁴. Khums was also a tax on mine or treasure in rigid sense. The state was entitled to one fifth of any mine or treasure trove discovered by a man or body of men¹⁶⁵.

Al-Ghanīmah formed an important source of revenue of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate of Bengal. It is recorded in the Riyād al-Salātīn that Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh brought vast booty including elephants from Jajnagar (Orissa)¹⁶⁶.

Here it is to be noted that with the passage of time the practice of observing Islamic principles regarding the ghanīmah seems to have been discontinued and gradually a practice grew up in the Sultānate of Delhi that a fifth was distributed among the soldiers and four-fifths kept in the treasury. Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq's 'Ulamā considered it illegal and the Sultān re-established the old system¹⁶⁷. We do not know anything about the practice of dividing ghanīmah in the Sultānate of Bengal. Probably the Sultāns of Bengal followed the contemporary example of the Delhi Sultānate.

164. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.99.

165. Abū Yūsuf : Kitābul-Kharāj, P.12; S.A.Q. Husaini : Administrattion under the Mughuls, PP. 87-88.

166. Salīm : Riyād., PP. 95-96.

167. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.99.

(2) Al-Kharāj : The kharāj was a land tax. During the period in question, it was the main source of revenue of the Sultānate. It is noticed in the Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī that when Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī Mardān Khaljī took the insignia of royalty, the neighbouring raes began to send Kharāj to him¹⁶⁸. Sultān Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbak issued coins from the Kharāj of Nadiya and Umardan¹⁶⁹ and Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs also issued coins from the Kharāj of Bang¹⁷⁰. It is recorded in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of 'Afīf that Zafar Khān, son-in-law of Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh realised the Kharāj from the outskirts of Sunārgāon¹⁷¹. It is also found in the proclamation issued in the course of his first invasion of Lakhnautī that Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq promised remission of Kharāj to the Zamīndārs or land owners¹⁷². Further, Firishta's writings show that the raes used to send Kharāj regularly to the State treasury during the reign of Hamzah Shāh¹⁷³. All these facts indicate that land tax (Kharāj) constituted an important source of revenue of the Sultānate in Bengal.

For the assessment of land revenue, land was classified into four heads : (1) Tribute paying land, (ii) Land under revenue contractors, (iii) Al-Iqtā' or Jāgīr land and (iv) Khālīṣah land.

(i) Tribute paying land : This class of land was left in the hands of its original holders on condition of paying tribute. The holders of tribute paying land were known as Zamīndārs. In the proclamation of Sultān Fīrūz

168. Minhāj : T.N., P.160.

169. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, II, P.146; A.Karim : Corpus, P.177.

170. J.A.S.B., 1922, P.410.

171. 'Afīf : T.F.S., P.138.

172. J.A.S.B., 1923, P.280 ff.

173. Firishta : T.F., Part II, P.297.

Shāh Tughluq, we find that on the eve of his first Bengal expedition the Sultān asked the Zamindars of Bengal to abandon the cause of Ḥājī Iliyās. Here it is to be mentioned that in Bengal the influence of the Zamīndārs was so much that the Sultān of Delhi had to take recourse to placate them by promising remission of their revenue¹⁷⁴. Baranī writes that many Hindu Zamīndārs fought in the side of Ḥājī Iliyās¹⁷⁵. 'Afīf refers to the Zamīndārs of Bengal¹⁷⁶. Firishtah also speaks of the Zamīndārs of Bengal¹⁷⁷. It is found that Rājā Gaṇeśa, Zamīndār of Bhaturia¹⁷⁸, acquired so much power in the state that he succeeded in ousting Iliyās Shāhī dynasty. Kula Panjikā also refers to several Zamīndārs who joined Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq in his Bengal expedition against Ḥājī Iliyās¹⁷⁹. These instances to Zamīndārs prove the existence of the Zamīndārī system and show the preponderance of the same in Bengal in the early Iliyās Shāhī period.

From a minute examination of the history of Bengal, it appears that the Zamīndārī system was simply the continuation of the Sāmanta system of the pre-Muslim period. It is noticed in the pre-Muslim period that the local Kings of the conquered territories were allowed to continue their rule in their respective areas as feudatory princes. These feudatory princes were styled variously as Rājan, Rājanyak, Rānak, Sāmanta, Mahāsāmanta etc. They remained loyal as long as the central government had proved to be strong. But with a show of weakness of the central government, most of them asserted

174. J.A.S.B., 1923, P.280 ff.

175. Baranī : T.F.S., P.593.

176. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 114-118.

177. Firishtah : T.F., Part II, P.297.

178. Salīm : Riyāḍ, P. 110.

179. N. Basu : Baṅger Jātiya Itihāsa Pt. III, P.61.

their independence. Besides, those who acknowledged the suzerainty of kings were virtually independent for all practical purposes¹⁸⁰. This feudal type of Bengal administration does not seem to have undergone any appreciable modification in the early period of Muslim rule¹⁸¹. In fact, Sāmanta system of the pre-Muslim period seems to have continued in the Muslim period with a change in thier name, i.e., feudatory prince of the pre-Muslim period came to be known to us as Zamīndār in the Muslim period¹⁸².

Land under revenue contractors : This class of land actually belonged to the Khālīṣah¹⁸³. In order to collect revenue., this land was given to the contractors known as Ijāradārs¹⁸⁴. That the Ijāradārī system existed in Bengal during the period under review can be reasonably inferred from the evidence found in Bengali literature of the later period. It also appears that the Ijāradārs came to be known as Zamīndārs in the later period¹⁸⁵.

The Ijāradārs were the contracting parties who used to pay a fixed amount to the royal treasury out of what was collected from the peasants. There is a reference in the Caitanya Caritamṛta that the government granted one Hiranyadasa a sanad for Satgāon territory on his agreeing to pay twelve lakhs of rupees as State revenue and he collected twenty lakhs from the people¹⁸⁶.

180. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol. I, PP. 274-275.

181. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 98.

182. Cf. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P.112.

183. See Infra, P.

184. W.H. Moreland : Agrarian system of Moslem India, P.190.

185. Originally the name Zamīndār was applied to small Hindu rajas who submitted to the Muslim rulers and paid tribute (Peshkash). Later on the name included also revenue farmers who became permanent and hereditary in this office by regular collection and payment of Government revenue. W.H. Moreland : Agrarian system of Moslem India, PP. 205-206, 279.

186. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāj : Caitanya Caritamṛta, P. 293.

This suggests that probably the Ijāradārs were allowed to conduct the revenue administration as they pleased. But they did not have the right of hereditary succession to the estates, which could change hands from time to time¹⁸⁷. It is evident from other sources that the Muslim rulers of Bengal generally granted contracts to Hindu officers for the collection of revenue¹⁸⁸. If these contractors paid the government revenue regularly, they were allowed to hold their land permanently. Such revenue farmers were honoured with the name of Zamīndārs¹⁸⁹.

The Sultāns of Bengal collected the revenue mostly through Ijāradārs¹⁹⁰. Because, they found collection through Ijāradārī system most convenient and economical. Besides, there were certain factors for the Sultāns of Bengal to prefer this system. Firstly, they did not want to disturb the tradition and introduce an experiment in the revenue system of Bengal. Secondly, they needed the co-operation of the Hindu chiefs in the consolidation of their power. So, they did not oust the Hindu chiefs who submitted and promised to pay tribute and remain loyal to the Sultānate of Bengal.

Jāgīr land : Jāgīr means bestowing lands. It was a common practice among the Sultāns of Delhi who followed the suit of the Buwayhids, the Mamlūks and the Saljūgs¹⁹¹. In Bengal also, Jāgīr lands were quite extensive. For, a large number of officers, civil and military, were paid their salaries in Jāgīr.

187. Mukunda Rāma : Caṇḍikāvya, ed. by K. Banerjee, PP. 293-294; Cf. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P.113.

188. M.A. Rahim : Rise of Hindu Aristocracy in Bengal, J.A.S.P., vol. VI, PP. 104-118.

189. M.R. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P.114.

190. Ibid, P. 112.

191. S.A.Q. Husaini : Administration under the Mughuls, P. 107.

From the beginning of the Muslim rule, Jāgīrdārī system was in vogue in Bengal. We find that Bakhtiyār Khaljī parcelled out his conquered territories among the soldiers¹⁹², and the system continued under the succeeding periods. The proclamation of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi, issued on the eve of his Bengal expedition, shows that the Jāgīrdārī system was in existence in Bengal¹⁹³. There is reference to the existence of Jāgīrdārī system in Bengal in the Memoirs of Babur¹⁹⁴. Jāgīrdārs took necessary steps for the collection of revenue in their respective jagirs.

The Khālīṣah land : Certain portion of the Sultānate was reserved to produce cash income for the central government¹⁹⁵. It was called the Khālīṣah land. It belonged to no individual and as such it was the property of the public treasury. It was under the direct supervision and control of the government.

The revenue of the Khālīṣah land was collected in two ways : through contractors or agents about which we have discussed earlier and through government officials like Shiqdār and Sar-i-Gumāshṭah¹⁹⁶. As the scales of revenue were determined by the central government, the Khālīṣah land under the government officials came under the revenue administration of the Sultān.

(3) Customs : It constituted another source of income for the Sultānate of Bengal. Generally customs duties were realised at the river stations and also at the different ports and towns of the country. It is recorded in the Chinese account that customs duties were collected at the port of Chittagong¹⁹⁷.

192. J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B. vol. II, P.13.

193. J.A.S.B., 1923, P.280.

194. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P.115.

195. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 282; cf. S.A.Q. Husaini : Administration under the Mughals, P. 104.

196. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 14,22.

197. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P.120.

We also find in the contemporary Bengali literature that there were many custom houses in the country for the collection of taxes¹⁹⁸. This contention also finds support in the accounts of the foreign travellers of the later period. According to Barbosa, there were many towns both up the country and on the coast where receivers of customs and revenue were appointed¹⁹⁹,

Besides, there were some minor duties which may be termed as tolls or excise duties. Bengali literature of the period shows that there were Hātkar (taxes payable in hats or markets), Pathkar (taxes payable for traversing a path or road) and Ghātkar²⁰⁰ (taxes payable at the ferry ghat for crossing the river or canal). It appears from the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan that these taxes were collected through Ijāradārī system²⁰¹.

Zakāt and Jiziya : It is found in the writings of the jurists that Zakāt and jiziya were important sources of revenue for the Muslim State. Accordingly we noticed in the Sultānate of Delhi that the Sultāns included these taxes in the list of regular State demands²⁰². But in the Sultānate of Bengal, we do not find any reference to the existence of Zakāt and jiziya.

198. সর্বত্র বাটে রাখা গেল রূপিয়া. (Rādhā in all Kutghāts or customs houses, there is an arrangement for imposing my taxes) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Dan Khando, P. 21. Kutghat means a station where import and export goods were classified and taxes were collected in accordance with the quantity of the goods. It is similar to the modern custom house.

199. Hakluyt Society, II, PP. 135-138.

200. (a) হাটের বাটের দান চাহে ভীনে ভীনে (Tax collector demands Hātkar and Pathkar separately).

(b) উচিত ঘাটদান দেহ ন রাখা. (Oh; Rādhā, pay actual ghāt tax) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Dan Khando., P. 89.

201. (a) বাটদান হাটদান নইলো রাজঘরে (I took the settlement from the government to collect Pathkar and hātkar) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Dān Khando, P. 20.

(b) তোরা না জানসি মোরো বাহাদান
এ দান সব-আফারেন.

(Do not you know that I am the chief tax collector ? All these taxes are of mine) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., P. 17.

202. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, PP. 95-98.

The 'Zakāt' an obligatory tax to be paid by the Muslims, is expected to be in vogue among the Muslim population of Bengal, though we do not have any mention of it in the available sources. So far as the Jiziya or poll-tax is concerned it may be said that the conditions which prevailed in Bengal from the beginning of the Muslim rule to the period under discussion did not allow the Sultāns of Bengal to impose Jiziya upon the non-Muslims. It is seen in the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period that Bengal was always considered as a problematic zone to the Delhi government. At that time, Bengal was ruled mostly independently. In fact, it was free from all central control at that time for all practical purposes. It is evident that the Sultāns of Delhi imposed Jiziya upon the non-Muslims. But it is not certain how far they could impose Jiziya in Bengal as in other parts of the Delhi Sultānate. The existing relationship between Bengal and Delhi²⁰³, and the absence of any evidence regarding the imposition of the Jiziya lead us to believe that the Delhi authority could not impose the Jiziya upon the non-Muslims in Bengal. During the early Iliyās Shāhī period also there is no evidence of the imposition of the Jiziya.

In order to form a clear idea about the non-imposition of Jiziya during the period in question certain problems to which the Sultānate of Bengal was exposed to are to be considered. It is observed that as a result of the establishment of the independent Sultānate of Bengal, the inflow of the immigrants stopped. Hence, to run the administration, the Sultāns of Bengal had to appoint the local people in the service of the State. They also realized that without the co-operation of the local people it was not possible to maintain the independence of Bengal against the authority of Delhi. This realisation forced the Sultāns of Bengal to seek co-operation of the local people.

203. See Supra, P.

Secondly, as Bengal is a land of rivers and its climatic condition was not suitable for the Turks who were skilful horsemen, cavalry became ineffective particularly for more than half of the year. So, the Sultans of Bengal were compelled to lean on the local people. Thirdly, though initially the local people, especially the upper class ones, lost their position in the society, they, within a short time, regained their position and exercised immense influence in politics as well as in the society. Different sources given testimony to this fact²⁰⁴. All the factors mentioned above must have prompted the Sultāns of Bengal to be realistic and as such possibly they did not think it wise to impose the Jiziya upon the non-Muslims.

Revenue Units : It is very difficult to give a clear picture of the revenue units of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate. The historians of the period do not specifically mention anything about the units for the purpose of revenue collections.

The Persian works show that in the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period Bengal was divided into a large number of divisions known variously as Khittah²⁰⁵, Iqtā'²⁰⁶ and Iqlīm²⁰⁷ in accordance with the area and importance of the place. Of these divisions, Iqtā' and Iqlīm which roughly correspond to district and province respectively, are found to be the administrative units of the kingdom of Lakhnawatī. But nothing is known about the Khittah division. We know that Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī parcelled out his conquered lands and distributed

204. Annals., vol.I, 1945 A.D., P. 122; Barani : T.F.S., P. 593; 'Afīf : T.F.S. p.118; Yahyā : T.M.S., P.125, f.n.5; J.A.S.B., 1923 A.D., P.280 ff; J.B.R.S., vol. 42, 1956 A.D., PP. 183-186; Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad : T.A., vol.III, p.250; Firishtah : T.F., Pt.II, p.297; Salīm : Riyāḍ., P.117; S.K. Sen : Bānglā Sāhityer Itihāsa, PP. 84-85.

(Footnotes continued in the next page)

it among the military commanders who administered their respective units independently²⁰⁸. We do not have any direct reference to any name applied for these units. It is mentioned in the Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī that Bakhtiyār Khaljī issued coins and caused the Khutbah to be read in each Khiṭṭah of his Kingdom²⁰⁹. From this expression it may be inferred that probably the units distributed among the commanders were styled as Khiṭṭah. The independent status of the Khiṭṭah holders suggests that they were liable to pay homage and tribute only to their master. Hence, it may be concluded that Khiṭṭah was a revenue unit at that time.

Practically the same method of division seems to have continued under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns, with the addition of a few more units. These were Iqlīm, Arṣah, Thānā, Shahr, Qaṣbah and Maḥal²¹⁰. Of these, Iqlīm, Arṣah, Thānā and Shahr constituted administrative units²¹¹. In one of the inscriptions of Bārbak Shāh, it is found that a Qaṣbah was placed under an officer who bore the title of Sar-i-Gumāshṭah or the chief revenue officer²¹². This suggests that Qaṣbah unit was a revenue unit at that time. It is generally believed that Khiṭṭah or Qaṣbah was the earlier terms for a Parganah²¹³. The Arabic

205. Minhāj : T.N., P. 151.

206. Ibid, PP. 146-152.

207. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 93.

208. J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B. vol. II, P.13.

209. Minhāj : T.N., P. 151.

210. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 114-116.

211. See Infra, P.

212. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P.22.

213. S.A.Q. Husaini : Administration under the Mughals, P. 117; W.H. Moreland : The Agrarian System of Moslem India, PP.18-19.

term Mahal was a synonym of Paraganah²¹⁴. So, it appears that Qasbah and Mahal possibly denoted the same unit, and denoted an aggregate of many villages²¹⁵. It is also noticed in the contemporary Bengali literature that a revenue unit was in existence in Bengal known as Biṣ²¹⁶. Though we do not know the exact position of Biṣ with its hierarchical status, it appears that it roughly corresponds to the Khiṭṭah unit²¹⁷. The reference of Mahal is found in some inscriptions of the fifteenth century²¹⁸. That the Mahal or Parganah units existed during the period in question is gleaned from the Memoirs of Babur²¹⁹. Abū'l Fadl also gives a list of 688 Mahals or Parganahs in Bengal proper in the reign of Mughal Akbar²²⁰. Here it is to be noted that in the reign of Akbar, only a portion of North Western Bengal formed part of the Mughal Empire and the whole of Eastern Bengal was in the possession of Zamīndārs. How then could Abū'l Fadl mention Parganah divisions of the whole of Bengal ? He must have copied these from the records of its previous rulers. This proves that Parganah units did exist in the pre-Mughal period.

Revenue officials : There is no detailed account of the revenue organization of Bengal in the early Iliyās Shāhī period. We only know that at the initial period of Muslim rule in Bengal, the conquered lands were parcelled out among the army officers who administered their respective assignments. Baranī informs us that the eldest son of Sultān Balban used to come to the court every year with the treasure (Khazānah) and presents.²²¹ From this we may infer

214. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.203, f.n.6.

215. W.H. Moreland : The Agrarian System of Moslem India, p.18-19.

216. কংসের বিষয় আরও হইবে প্রসিদ্ধ (I have been appointed chief tax collector at Biṣ of Kangsa) - Candidāsa : S.D.K., Dān Khando, p.22.

217. A.K.M. Yaqub Ali : Pundra O Pundra Vardhan Bhukti - in Bangladesh Itihās Parisad Patrikā, No. I-III, 1385 (B.S), p. 24.

that probably this was the practice followed by all the Muqtāʿs (governor) of the Sultānate. We also notice that Sultān Balban of Delhi appointed a Khawajāh (the synonym for a provincial Dīwān) to every one of the important Iqtāʿs. The Khawajāh was generally an expert accountant who submitted detailed statements to the Sultān or his Wazīr. It was on the basis of the Khawajāh's statement that the wazīr settled the accountants with the Muqtāʿ.²²²

During the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period Bengal administration was probably a close copy of the administration of the Sultānate of Delhi.²²³ Hence, it is quite reasonable to think that some of the north Indian features of revenue administration had reached the early Iliyās Shāhīs through the administrative machinery set up by the pre-Iliyās Shāhī rulers.

It appears from the early Muslim records that each administrative unit of Bengal had a Finance department presided over by the wazīr.²²⁴ It is found in the account of Ibn Baṭūṭah that Mutaṣarrif was the revenue collector of Ṣadī, an aggregate of a hundred or large number of villages.²²⁵ As Ṣadī and Parganah represented the same revenue unit²²⁶, it may be inferred that the revenue collector of Parganah was also known as Mutaṣarrif. Baranī mentions of Mutaṣarrif as a revenue officer of the locality. He also refers to 'Āmil

218. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 23,37.

219. Baburnamah (Elliot Sushil Publication), p.49.

220. Abu'l Fadl : A.A., vol. II, Eng.tr. Jarret, P.141.

221. Baranī : T.F.S., P.69.

222. S.A.Q. Husaini : Administration under the Mughals, P.117.

223. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shāhī Bengal, P.91.

224. Firishtah : T.F. pt.II, P.297; A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP.21, 23, 28, 35-37.

225. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.208.

226. Ibid, P.203.

as a local revenue officer. His references of Mutasarrif and ‘Āmīl, however represent them as one and the same officer with different designation.²²⁷ This shows that Baranī applied the terms Mutaṣarrif and ‘Āmīl as synonyms. I.H. Qureshi confirmed this contention and concluded that they denoted the same officer, the revenue collector of Parganah.²²⁸ Besides ‘Āmīl, Baranī mentions a large number of revenue officers employed in each Parganah : the Mushrif, the Muḥaṣṣil, Gumāshṭah, Sarhangs and other clerical staff.²²⁹ The Mushrif was the Inspector who actually saw the crops and determined the government's share; it was his duty to adjudicate impartially between the state and the peasant.²³⁰ The Muḥaṣṣil received the payment made in cash or kind by the peasants. A Gumāshṭah is an agent; the Sarhangs, like the modern chaprāsīs (peon), served peasants or Muqaddams with official orders or summonses.²³¹ In the Bara inscription of Bārbak Shāh we find that there was an officer who bore the title of Sar-i-Gumāshṭah.²³² This leads us to believe that the revenue officers mentioned above, were also in existence in Bengal. The early Muslim records also connect Qānūngū and Kārkun with the revenue affairs of localities.²³³ The Qānūngū was the keeper of revenue practices and regulations, assessment records and land statistics of the Parganah.²³⁴ The records of the past assessment and present land statistics kept by the Qānūngū were essential for the assessment of revenue and preparation of the rent-roll of the current year. The rent-roll was authenticated by the Qānūngū.²³⁵ Abu'l Fadl also refers to the Qānūngū as a refuge of husbandmen.²³⁶ This implies that he was

227. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 431, 487-489.

228. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.208.

229. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 288-289.

230. The Mushrif was also known as the Amīn (The holder of a trust) or the Munṣif (a Revenue Judge) -I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.209.

the representative of the people to safeguard their interests. He was thus a semi-government officer to take care of the interests of both the government and ryots. Kārkun was a writer in the revenue department of the Parganah who kept the accounts.²³⁷ The Karkun is found to continue as an officer in the revenue administration of Bengal as late as the time of Murshid Quli Khān.²³⁸ From the writings of Abū'l Faḍl it is gleaned that he kept record or register of assessments of revenue of the Parganah. Abū'l Faḍl further mentions that the Kārkun also kept records of daily receipts of revenue.²³⁹ It is found in Bengali literature that there were revenue collectors under the titles of Dānī and Mahādānī²⁴⁰ which mean tax-collector and chief or special tax-collector respectively,²⁴¹ and it is also clear that the people were acquainted with these revenue officials²⁴². We also find another revenue officer of the Parganah who bore the title of Chaudhurī.²⁴³ According to M.A. Rahim, the Chaudhurī, like the Qānūngū, was a semi-government officer.²⁴⁴ Ibn Baṭūṭah mentions that the Chaudhury was the headman of the Hindus in the Ṣadī.²⁴⁵ This indicates that he was a Hindu chief, a representative of the Hindus of the Ṣadī or Parganah in revenue matters. The references to the Chaudhurī in the Tārīkh-i-Sher Shāhī show that he shared with the Qānūngū and other revenue officers the responsibility of measurement of land and collection of revenue.²⁴⁶

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231. Baranī : T.F.S., 288; I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, PP. 208-209.
 232. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P.22.
 233. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, PP.208-209.
 234. Abū'l Faḍl; A.A., vol.II, Eng.tr.by Jarret, P.72.
 235. J.N. Sarkar : Mughal Administration, P.191.
 236. Abū'l Faḍl : A.A., vol.II, P.72.
 237. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.209.

(Footnotes continued in the next page)

Revenue affairs of the villages were managed by the Muqaddam, the Khūt and the Patwārī. The Muqaddam was the head man of the village through which the government dealt with the peasant.²⁴⁷ In other words, he was a middleman who collected the revenue on behalf of the state. In return he was paid special concessions²⁴⁸. The Khūt (revenue farmer) was also another middleman who was associated with the revenue affairs of the villages. According to Moreland, the Khūt was a Hindu chief subject to the Sultān²⁴⁹. He was simply an agent who helped the government in the assessment and realization of revenue from the villages.²⁵⁰ It is mentioned in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of Baranī that the Muqaddam and the Khūt enjoyed great concessions from the beginning of Muslim rule and lived a life of ease and comfort.²⁵¹ The Patwārī or village accountant kept the revenue records of the villages.²⁵²

Thus it may be said that in the early Iliyās Shāhī period, the Sultān himself stood at the top of the revenue department. Next to him, the wazīr managed the revenue affairs in each administrative unit. There were also a large number of revenue officials who managed the revenue affairs of the Parganahs and villages.

238. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P.105.

239. Abū'l Fadl : A.A., vol.II, PP. 48-49.

240. (a) আছি দানী হ'আ মোরে গাঈ গাহাদানে (To-day being a tax-collector you demand taxes from me) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dan Khando, p. 33.

(b) তেজি না জানগি নোজি গাহাদানী (Do not you know I am the chief tax-collector) Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.17.

241. M.A. Hai and Anwar Pasa (ed) : Baru Candīdāser Kāvya, PP. 20, 231.

242. (a) এবে বাটে গাহাদানী সব লোকে জানে
- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.53.

(b) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd end., P.71. বাটে দানী হ'আ তেজি করসি সংঘট

243. I.H. Qurēshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.,208.

244. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.108.

Assessment of land revenue : Though contemporary materials on the assessment of revenue are extremely meagre, the evidence of the existence of the Zamīn-dārī, Ijāradārī and Jāgīrdārī system²⁵³ and the references to the government revenue official in the inscription²⁵⁴ and to the Pāñjī (list of tariff) in Bengali literature²⁵⁵ lead us to believe that there was an elaborate arrangement for the assessment of revenue in Bengal. The revenue statistics given by Abū'l Fadl in the Ayn-i-Akbarī²⁵⁶ confirm this contention.

245. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.208.

246. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P.108.

247. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.207.

248. S.A.Q. Husaini : Administration under the Mughals, P.118.

249. W.H. Moreland : Agrarian system of Moslem India, PP. 225, 226.

250. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.207.

251. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 291.

252. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, p.207.

253. See Supra.

254. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., P.22.

255. (a) সব কুট ঘাটে রাধা ঘোর বাহাদান / হএ নহে দেখ রাধা পান্ধী পরগান
(Rādhā, in all custom houses duties are being imposed. If you do not believe, see the tariff) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Dān Khando, P.21.

(b) শুনত সুন্দরি রাধা পান্ধীর বাখান
(The beautiful Radha listen to the description of the tariff) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., P.44.

(c) হাটের বাটের দান চাহে ভীনে ভীনে / মিছা পান্ধী ঘেলি বোলে লিখন প্রমানে
(He is demanding Hātkar and Pathkar separately; Opening the list of tariff vainly he is telling that it is true as true as it is written in the tax-book) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., P.89.

256. Abū'l Fadl : A.A., vol.II, Eng. tr. Jarret, P. 141.

It is observed that there were at least three methods of assessment prevalent among the early Muslims - sharing, appraisement and measurement.²⁵⁷ These methods were also found in existence in India when the Muslims conquered the same land.²⁵⁸ Thus there was a continuity of tradition in the matter of land revenue, the conquerors not only refrained from disturbing the older methods but found these in accordance with their own ideas. Now the question is : What were the methods of assessment in Bengal during the period in question ? In this respect we get a little information in the writings of Abū'l Faḍl. He says, "the division of grain between the government and the husbandman is not here customary. The harvests are always abundant, measurement is not insisted upon, and the revenue demands are determined by an estimate of the crop."²⁵⁹ This statement of Abū'l Faḍl indicates that the method of appraisement only was in practice in Bengal. But this view does not seem to be valid. For, so far as the period under review is concerned, uniformity in the assessment of revenue all over the country was probably rare. Although the statement may be true of the areas under the direct control of the Sulṭānate, the system may not have been applicable to the lands which were under the Zamīndārs, Ijāradārs and Jāgīrdārs. Besides, we find in the account of Ibn Baṭūṭah that the cultivators of villages on either side of the blue river used to give to the government half of the crops they produced.²⁶⁰

257. S.A.Q. Husain : Administration under the Mughals, P. 126; also cf. W.H. Moreland : Agrarian system of Moslem India, PP.7, 243-247.

258. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.105.

259. Abū'l Faḍl : A.A., vol. II, Eng. tr., P.134.

260. Ibn Batutah : The Rehla, P.241.

In Bengali literature of the fifteenth century, there was also a reference to the term Taqsim²⁶¹ which relates to the apportionment of produce.²⁶² All these point to the prevalence of the system of division of crop in some parts of Bengal. This method was known as Ghallābakhsh. Perhaps, this method was not widely in practice in Bengal. For, this method of collection of revenue in crops at the harvest time was costly and inconvenient to the government, as it entailed the appointment of a large staff and making provision for a large number of godowns and transports. Possibly for this reason Abu'l Fadl mentioned that the system of sharing was not customary in Bengal. However, to obviate the inconveniences of the system of sharing, the method of appraisal was followed as we notice in the Āyn-i-Akbarī. In this system experts were appointed who, from their long experience of crop conditions, could make a guess of the probable produce of the land, just by observing crops while these were still standing in the field. The revenue was then fixed on the basis of this guess work.

It is very difficult to say whether the method of measurement for the assessment of revenue was in vogue in Bengal or not. According to Abū'l Fadl, the method of measurement was not insisted upon.²⁶³ But we do not have adequate reason to believe that it was totally absent in the country. In the pre-Muslim period, it is seen that the method of measurement for the assessment of revenue was in practice in Bengal.²⁶⁴ It is also fairly well-established

261. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn., P.76.

262. W.H. Moreland : Agrarian system of Moslem India, Appendix-E, PP.243-247.

263. Abū'l Fadl : A.A., vol. II, Eng., tr., P. 134.

264. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol.I, p.

lished that the revenue system under the Pālas and the Senas does not seem to have gone through any noticeable change in the early period of Muslim rule. Mukunda Rāma informs us that Shiqdār was measuring Kāthās to a Kudā without listening to the painful entreaties of the subjects.²⁶⁵ This shows that the Mughal officers were bringing about changes in the existing system of measurement, causing hardship to the people. Hence, though we do not have sufficient materials, it is quite reasonable to think on the basis of the above facts that the method of measurement must have continued in the early Iliyās Shāhī period.

Thus, it may be said that all the methods known to the people of the Sultānate of Delhi were also prevalent in Bengal. Of the three methods, namely sharing, appraisement and measurement, the method of appraisement was mainly in practice in Bengal.

State Revenue Demand and its collection : Nothing is clearly known as to the rate or rates of revenue or the government share of the produce of the ryots. We have just noticed that there was no uniform system of assessment for the collection of revenue in Bengal during the period under discussion. So, it is quite reasonable to think that the scales applied to different localities might have naturally differed. The accounts given by Ibn Baṭūṭah and Wang-ta-Yuan also prove this contention. According to Ibn Baṭūṭah, the villagers living by the blue river were subjected to the payment of half of their crops as taxes together with some other contributions.²⁶⁶ On the other hand, the

265. Mukunda Rāma : Candī Kāvya, vol. 1, P.22.

266. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Reḥla, P. 241.

Chinese records mention the rate of revenue as one fifth of the produce.²⁶⁷ These facts indicate that there was no uniformity in the rate of revenue demand which was likely to vary from place to place in accordance with the productivity of the soil and the nature of crops produced in different seasons. From the rates of revenue mentioned above we can also infer that the state's share to be taken from the people ranged from a fifth to a half during the period under review. Regarding the rates of custom duties, we have also little information. It is known from the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan that the tax collector at the ferryghat demanded sixteen Pan per pot from a milk-maid²⁶⁸. Though we can not ascertain the rate of duties or governments share from this example, the repeated references to tariff,²⁶⁹ lead us to believe that certainly there was a list of the rates of custom duties.

We do not know clearly whether the tax was payable in cash or kind. During this period in Delhi, both the systems were prevalent.²⁷⁰ Referring to the payment of taxes in Bengal, Abū'l Fadl says, "The demands of each year are paid by instalments in eight months. They themselves bring muhrs and rupees to the appointed place for the receipt of revenue".²⁷¹ This statement shows that cash payment was prevalent. Bengali literature of later period

267. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., p.99.

268. ঘূত দধি দুধ ঘোল চোফার / ভান্ড মাথে ঘোল পণ দান আকার

(Ghee, curd, milk, butter-milk are yours and sixteen Pan taxes per pot are of mine) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Dān Khandō, P.48. It is difficult to give the exact meaning of Pan. Traditionally we know that four cowries make a Gandā (an aggregate of four) and twenty Gandas make a Pan. Thus sixteen Pan is equivalent to $4 \times 20 \times 16 = 1280$ cowries

269. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., PP.17, 21, 44, 71, 89.

270. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli, P.110.

271. Abū'l Fadl : A.A., vol. II, Eng.tr., P.134.

also contain evidence of payment of revenue in cash.²⁷² Ibn Baṭūṭah's information that "half of their harvests was collected as taxes"²⁷³ indicates that the payment of taxes in kind was also in existence. Besides, though the Sultāns and their agents would always prefer the collection of revenue from the ryots in cash, they might have given them the option of paying in kind. In giving option to pay taxes in kind, probably they were induced by the limited use of coins which we notice in the period in question.²⁷⁴ The references to the revenue officials, discussed earlier, in the different sources²⁷⁵ leave little doubt that there was an elaborate machinery for the collection of taxes.

Army : From the very beginning of the Muslim rule, the army played a significant role. For, it was the army which invaded, conquered and established a Muslim Kingdom in Bengal. Keeping this fact in mind, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns also rightly realised the importance of the army and accordingly gave due attention to the army. Hence, the early Iliyās Shāhī administration seems to be half military and half civil.²⁷⁶ Epigraphic records show that in the administrative set-up, the administrators were empowered with both military and civil powers.²⁷⁷ The military character, therefore, was a fundamental fact in the administration of the early Iliyās Shāhī period.

272. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāj : Caitanya Caritamṛta, P.293; M.A. Rahim Rise of Hindu aristocracy in Bengal, J.A.S.P. vol. VI, 1961, PP. 104-118.

273. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology., P.142.

274. M.R. Tarafdar : Musain Shāhī Bengal, P.151; Annals, I, 1945 A.D., P.123.

275. See Supra, P. 175-179.

276. Cf. J.A.S.P., vol.III, 1958, P.93.

277. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., PP. 21,23,35,37.

There were several factors which contributed to the military character of the administration. Firstly, the army was at the root of the Sultānate. Because, it was with the help of the army that Ḥājī Iliyās defeated the ruler of Lakhnautī and captured the throne. And he had to consolidate his power in Bengal by utilizing his military forces. He also had to maintain a large army for the continuation of his rule. Secondly, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate was established against the authority of Delhi. So, the Delhi authority could not remain a silent spectator towards the independence of Bengal and it was very clear that they would attack Bengal at their opportune moment. For this reason, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns felt the necessity of maintaining a large army to protect the independence of Bengal. Thirdly, the Sultāns of Bengal also had to keep a vigilant eye on the eastern border territories like Kāmrup, Tippera and Ārākān. Sometimes, they attacked eastern border territories in order to extend the boundary of the Sultanate and to establish their influence towards the east. Hence, there were constant conflicts between the Sultans of Bengal and the rulers of eastern territories. Fourthly, the Muslim rulers of Bengal had to rule over the non-Muslims who were majority in number. So, in order to keep their position secure they felt the necessity of maintaining a large army.

During the early Iliyās Shāhī period the army consisted of four classes : (1) royal body-guards, (2) troops of the capital, (3) troops employed in the service of the provincial governors and nobles and (4) recruits in times of war.

The Chinese records show that the Sultān of Bengal maintained a gorgeous troop of body-guards. It is seen in their accounts that "there are long rows of over a thousand soldiers in shining armours riding on horses in the right and left varendahs of the palace. Besides, there are warriors in bright helmets and armours with swords, bows and arrows in their hands standing there as guards, looking martial and lusty".²⁷⁸ Troops of the capital formed the permanent standing army of the Sultānate. From the accounts of the Chinese envoys it is learnt that the Sultān maintained a permanent standing army.²⁷⁹ This also finds support in the Persian works.²⁸⁰ In order to maintain law and order in the provinces and to quell local rebellion, the Sultān placed troops in the service of the provincial governors and nobles. The inscriptions show that the rulers of the administrative units generally bore the title of Sar-i-Lashkar wa wazīr.²⁸¹ This title led us to infer that troops were really employed in the service of the provincial governors. Though there is no direct reference to the recruits employed in times of war, the circumstantial evidence leads us to believe that the Sultān specially recruited the army in times of war. It is recorded in the writings of 'Afīf that Iliyās Shāh met Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi with two lakhs of infantry.²⁸² It will be unwise to think that all of them were part of a standing permanent army.

278. Annals, vol, 1, 1945, PP. 121, 126.

279. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology, P. 171.

280. 'Afīf : T.F.S., P.114.

281. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., PP. 21, 23, 35, 37.

282. 'Afīf : T.F.S., P.114.

The land force of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate consisted of the cavalry, infantry and elephants. Baranī mentions that Iliyās Shāh possessed a large force of these three elements.²⁸³

During the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period the cavalry formed the backbone of the military establishment. It was the cavalry headed by Bakhtiyār Khaljī which had been responsible for the invasion, conquest and ultimate foundation of a Muslim Kingdom in Bengal. The cavalry also played a vital role in the conquest of north and west Bengal. Similar importance was also given to the cavalry during the early Iliyās Shāhī period. It is mentioned in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of 'Afīf that Iliyās Shāh met Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq with ten thousand cavalry.²⁸⁴ But, though the importance of the cavalry in the army was recognised, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns of Bengal did not confine their organization to the traditional pattern. Bengal is a riverine country and is submerged in water for about half the year. These natural features hampered cavalry manoeuvring, while these facilitated the guerrilla tactics of the footmen. Hence, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns attached greater importance to the development of the infantry. The foot soldiers were called paiks. Most of them were local people. The pāiks were noted for their training, courage and fighting qualities. For meritorious deeds in fighting the paiks earned for themselves the name of Abū Bangāl (the father of Bengal).²⁸⁵

283. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 591.

284. T.F.S., P. 114.

285. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 593. It appears from Baranī's writings that the pāiks of Bengal were not strong enough. They, in fear, put their fingers into their mouths when faced with the brave soldiers and archers of the army of the victorious. But in reality, this view does not seem to be true. For this contention see : 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 114-118; Yahyā : T.M.S., P.125.

'Afīf mentions that Iliyās Shāh was ready to meet Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq with two lakhs infantry.²⁸⁶

Then there were the elephants which were highly valued by the Sultāns of Bengal. For, it is evident that the war elephants were of great advantage in fighting in watery places because of their mobility in marshes and rivers. Besides, elephants were available in large numbers in the forest of Bengal.²⁸⁷ The Sultāns of Delhi never missed an opportunity to seize elephants from Lakhnautī and sometimes their governor in Lakhnautī also sent elephants as presents to them. The elephants were considered so important that the Delhi historians carefully recorded each and every occasion when elephants were sent²⁸⁸. Thus the obvious advantage of war-elephants in fighting and its availability in Bengal induced the Sultāns of Bengal to maintain an elephant corps. 'Afīf records that an elephant force was included in the army of Iliyās Shāh.²⁸⁹ References in Bengali literature also prove the existence of elephant force in the Bengal army.²⁹⁰

The navy also formed an important part of the army. The people of Bengal were expert in boat making, sailing as well as in naval warfare. The author of the Masālik al-Absār recorded glowing tribute for the ship-building workmanship and the boatmanship of the Bengali people of his time. Speaking of their skill in rowing and of the speed of their boats, he says, "There are in Lakhnautī two hundred thousand small but swift moving boats. If one were to shoot an arrow at the foremost one of them, it will fall on the

286. 'Afīf : T.F.S., P.114.

287. Abūl Fadl : A.A., vol.I, Eng.tr.,P.135.

288. J.A.S.P.,vol.III, 1958, PP. 97-98.

289. T.F.S., P.114.

290. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, PP. 32, 75,79,82.

middle one of them on account of their fast speed".²⁹¹ The importance of the navy in the riverine country like Bengal was first realised by Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī. He organised a flotilla of war-boats.²⁹³ After him, the naval force made continuous progress under the succeeding rulers particularly under Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral, Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh and Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh who succeeded in making it into a most effective instrument of warfare in Bengal. The writings of Ibn Baṭūṭah reflect the naval strength of Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh and the decisive role the navy played in the warfare in Bengal.²⁹⁴ It is found in the description of 'Afīf that Iliyās Shāh's fleet came forward to oppose the Delhi forces under Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq at every convenient point, such as the confluence of the Gogra and the Ganges, the Gandak and the Ganges, but it had to give way at each of the places and finally to retire to the Kusi along with the army. Here they made a very determined stand and all the efforts of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq to dislodge them were futile.²⁹⁵

It also appears from the writings of Abūl Fadl that the Bengalis make boats of different kinds for purposes of war, carriage or swift sailing. For attacking a fort they are so constructed that when run ashore, their prow overtops the fort and facilitates its capture.²⁹⁶ The skill of the Bengalis in shaping and organising their war-boats in a most scientific manner was the secret of their success against their opponents, who had little expertise in these matters.

291. Ibn Fadl Allāh al-Umarī : Masālik al-Absār, Eng.tr.by A.Rashid, P.17.

293. J.A.S.B., vol.III, 1958 A.D., P.95.

294. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and chronology., p.137.

295. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP.110-115; J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B., vol.II, P.106.

296. A.A., vol.II, Eng.tr., P.134.

The Sultān was the head of the army. Sometimes he himself led the army in battles. Iliyās Shāh himself led his army against Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq.²⁹⁷ Sikandar Shāh also took the field against his rebel son Aẓam Shāh²⁹⁸. On the other hand, the Sultān sometimes appointed individuals to lead the army. It is noticed in the reign of Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh that one Sikandar Khān Ghāzī was sent to conquer Sylhet.²⁹⁹ This practice is also seen in the later period.³⁰⁰ Sometimes princes were also asked to lead the army.³⁰¹

Though there is no direct reference to the existence of the Ministry for war, it can reasonably be inferred that it must have existed in some form. We find 'Alī Shāh as 'Ārid' of Qadar Khān, the imperial governor of Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq.³⁰² At that time in Delhi, the 'Ārid-i-Mumālīk' was the head of the Ministry for war known as Dīwān-i-'Ard.³⁰³

The 'Ārid' was responsible for the administration of the army and the maintenance of its strength and efficiency. He made provision for equipment, horses and ration. The commissariat was under his control. In times of peace 'Ārid' was the highest military official and was wholly responsible for the fitness and order of the army. During peace time, in military affairs he was only second to the Sultān. In times of war his position was second to the commander-in-chief appointed for the time.

297. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 586 ff.

298. Salīm : Riyāḍ, PP. 101-104.

299. A.H. Danī : Bibliography, P.7.

300. J.A.S.B., 1874, PP. 215 ff.

301. A.Karīm : Bānglār Itihāsa, P.506.

302. Yaḥyā : T.M.S., P.105.

303. I.H. Qureshī : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.137.

The Chinese accounts mention that the commander of the army was called Pa-sse-la-eul. Rockhill restored this term as Sipah Sālār - army leader.³⁰⁴ In Bengali literature the commander of the army is called the Senāpati.³⁰⁵ Contemporary inscriptions do not supply any reference to the terms applied to the army officials. The later Iliyās Shāhī inscriptions give us four terms namely, jangdār, Sar-i-Khail, Sar-i-Lashkar and wazīr-i-Lashkar.³⁰⁶ A minute analysis of the inscriptions shows that the title jangdār was perhaps given to those soliders who attained prominence by their bravery. A Sar-i-Khail commands ten horsemen.³⁰⁷ One of the inscriptions of Bārbak Shāh records that Sar-i-Khail Ulugh Ajmal Khān was put under Sar-i-Lashkar Iqrār Khān.³⁰⁸ We do not know the exact position of Sar-i-Lashkar. The literal meaning of this title indicates that he was the chief of the troops. But a close examination of the titles of an administrator of administrative units available in the inscriptions,³⁰⁹ leads us to believe that he had manifold responsibilities. He was both a civil and military administrator. In the Sultānate of Delhi, Sar-i-Lashkar-i-Mulk was the same as 'Ārid-i-Mumālīk'³¹⁰ or Minister of the army. In Bengal we get only Sar-i-Lashkar and 'Ārid'. The analysis in respect of these two titles, shown above, indicates that Sar-i-Lashkar was not the same as 'Ārid'. Sar-i-Lashkar was the military administrator of an administrative unit; while Ārid was in charge of the military department of the Sultānate of Bengal. This leads us to infer that the 'Ārid' was a higher officer in status than Sar-i-Lashkar. Only one inscription of the later

304. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., P.118.

305. আর এক সেনাপতি নাম যে ওসমান
- Joyenuddin : Rasul vijaya, P.25, also see PP.35,41.

306. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., PP. 21,23,35,37.

307. Baranī : T.F.S., P.145.

308. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., P.21.

309. Ibid., PP. 21,23,35,37.

310. J.A.S.P.vol.III, 1958, P.96; See also Journal of Indian History, Madras, vol. XIV, 1935, P.107.

Iliyās Shāhī period refers to the term wazīr-i-Lashkar.³¹¹ It is very difficult to ascertain his position. Some one may think that wazīr-i-Lashkar was a mistake for or an abbreviation of the term Wazīr wa-Sar-i-Lashkar, mention so frequently in the inscriptions of the later Iliyās Shāhī period.³¹²

'Afīf describes the soldiers of Bengal as Lashkar-i-Bangālah.³¹³ This indicates that the ordinary soldier was given the title of lashkar. This fact also finds support in Bengali literature in which the ordinary soldiers are mentioned as lashkar.³¹⁴ Infantry soldiers were known as Jangī, the elephant soldiers were called Gaza Pātoār or Pātoār in Bengali literature.³¹⁵

It is recorded in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of Baranī that Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd Bughrā Khān while describing the army organization to his son Kaiqubād, the Sultān of Delhi, mentioned it thus : A Sar-i-Khail commands ten horsemen; a Sipah Sālār, ten Sar-i-Khail; an Amīr, ten Sipah Sālār; a Malik, ten Amīrs; and a Khān, ten Maliks.³¹⁶ According to this calculation, a Khān was the leader of 100000 soldiers. This system was in vogue in Central Asia.³¹⁷ But we are not sure, whether this system was in practice in Bengal or not.

311. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., P.36.

312. Ibid, PP. 21, 23, 35.

313. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 117-118.

314. কথ হাজার লস্কর আছে জএকুণ গোচর

- Joynuddin : Rasul vijaya., P.26.

315. (a) সহস্র বিংশতি জংগী দেখি ভয়ঙ্কর

(b) শূর দরু তুলি এএ গজপাটোয়ার

(c) বব সহস্র গজ ধরে পাটোয়ার

- Joynuddin : Rasul Vijaya., PP. 32, 75. Gaza means elephant and Pātoār means an adept (one fully skilled in anything). Hence Gaza Pātoār stands for one who is an expert in conducting war with the help of elephant.

316. Baranī : T.F.S., P.145.

317. A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa., P.508.

We do not know anything about the organization of the navy from the chroniclers, who only mention that the Sultāns of Bengal utilised war boats in times of war.³¹⁸ Besides, it is known from only one inscription of the later Iliyās Shāhī period that one Akhund Sher was called Mīr Bahr (Admiral).³¹⁹ This title indicates the existence of other subordinate officers.

Strategy and tactics : The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns of Bengal were well-known for their skillfulness in the art of warfare. They planned the strategy and tactics of war in such a way so that they might get the maximum advantages of the geographical and topographical features of Bengal. It is found that the Muslim rulers of Bengal utilised the strategic position of Teliagarhi pass as a first line of defence against any attack from Northern India. They also put the navy on patrol to check the river route. By adopting this strategy the army of Bengal checked the advance of the Delhi forces on several occasions. Taking note of this fact it is noticed that Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq avoided the Taliagarhi route and came to Bengal via Tirhut.³²⁰

Another feature of their strategy was that the Sultāns of Bengal tried to avoid, as far as possible direct conflict. They tried to outwit their enemy. They often took shelter in some forts which were inaccessible to the invaders. These forts were protected by natural barriers all around and were also well-provided with food and necessities to stand a long siege. Thus, it is seen that on the approach of the Delhi forces under Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq, Iliyās Shāh and his son and successor Sikander Shāh took shelter

318. Salīm : Riyāḍ, P.134.

319. A.H. Dani : Bibliography. P.34.

320. Baranī : T.F.S., P.589.

in the inaccessible Ekdālah fort in the year 1353 and 1358 respectively.³²¹ On both the occasions, Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq failed to achieve his goal and ultimately thought it wise to come to a compromise with the rulers of Bengal.

Another remarkable aspect of the war tactics of the sultans of Bengal was the construction of forts in strategic places as a measure of defence as well of offence. In this respect mention may be made of the famous Ekdālah fort which, according to 'Afīf, was an island³²². According to Baranī, it was surrounded by water on one side and by jungle on the other.³²³ The trench round the fort was twenty yards broad and inside the trench there was a mud wall.³²⁴ These made the Ekdālah fort impregnable and this impregnability protected two Sultans of Bengal. The policy of constructing forts in strategic places was also followed by the later Sultāns of Bengal.³²⁵

Digging ditch around a fort or any other place in order to check the advance of the enemy was another war tactics of the Sultāns of Bengal. Bengali literature contain instances of such tactics.³²⁶

As a war strategy and tactics, the art of ambushing and surprise attacks was also commonly resorted to. The topographical features of Bengal favoured the guerila tactics of the Bengali soldiers, who would lay in ambush for the enemy troops in strategic points on the way and discomfit them by a surprise attack. When Sultān Balban led his campaign in Bengal with a force

321. Ibid, PP. 588-589; 'Afīf : T.F.S., P. 149.

322. T.F.S., PP. 112, 149.

323. T.F.S., P. 589.

324. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 151-152, 160.

325. Abūl Faḍl : A.A., vol.II, Eng.tr. Revised Edition by J.N. Sarkar, p.150.

326. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, p.64.

of more than two lakhs Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral took the road to the forests and bushes in order to wear out the Sultan and his army. For about two years Balban and his huge army moved from North Bengal to East Bengal and then to West Bengal in search of the rebel governor of Bengal. His soldiers were terribly tired of the long tedious campaign through the waters, jungles and the trackless way and in despair gave up almost all hope of capturing him. It was by sheer luck that at last they knew of the whereabouts of Tughral from a trader. After this they secretly and swiftly fell upon Tughral's camp and killed him. Iliyās Shāh also once launched a surprise attack upon the retreating forces of Delhi.³²⁷

Regarding the array of the forces we have little information. Bengali literature shows that the cavalry were stationed in the front. They were followed by the elephant soldiers. Then were arrayed the infantry. The same source also shows that the infantry soldiers were arrayed in rows in accordance with their weapon or weapons. In battle array, the commander-in-chief stood in front of the army. It also appears that the army was divided into several divisions.³²⁸ Barani mentions that after coming out of Ekdālah with his elephants, cavalry and infantry, Iliyās Shāh arrayed his elephants in front in the deserted place and in battle array he stood in front of the army.³²⁹ These, on the whole, suggest that the disposition of the forces was traditional - that is, there were the advance guard, the centre, the right wing, the left wing and the rear guard or reserve. The Sultān was in

327. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 28, 590, 591; Afif : T.F.S., P.114.

328. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya., PP. 25, 28, 32, 34, 39.

329. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 591.

the centre. Before and behind him were archers and the wings were on either side. In front stood the elephants protected by iron plates, with towers on their backs carrying soldiers and archers. The elephants were preceded by four lines of infantry and archers with gaps for the cavalry to side out and give battle to the enemy.³³⁰

The army of the Sultān consisted of both Muslim and non-Muslims soldiers. The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns were aware of the fact that their existence largely depended upon the co-operation of the local people. Hence, the Sultāns adopted a liberal policy towards the local people and recruited them in the army in a large number. By adopting this policy of local recruitment the Sultāns of Bengal were able to foil the scheme of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi.

Of the Sultans of the early Iliyās Shāhī dynasty, Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh was probably the first to make a large recruitment of local people to his army. Baranī gives a description of Iliyās Shāh's army. According to him, "The well-known pāiks of Bangalah, who, for years, gave themselves the name of Abū Bangāl (the Father of Bengal) and claimed to be (heroic) men, took promise before Iliyās, the bhang-eater to sacrifice their lives (for him); and standing in front of his (array of) horses, together with the Rāīs of the rivergirt Bangālāh, they bravely threw about their arms and legs. In the time of battle, when faced with the brave soldiers and archers of the army of the victorious, (they) put their fingers (in fear) into their mouths, lost

330. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.149.

their sense, threw away swords and arrows from their hand, rubbed their foreheads on the ground, and fell to the swords of the enemies". In another place, he writes, "That Iliyās, the ruler of Lakhnautī who has taken possession of that country by force, at this time has gathered together the pāiks (foot soldiers) and Dhānuks (bowmen) from the river-girt Bangālah and invaded Tirhut without any reason".³³¹ Afīf also speaks of his Lashkar-i-Bangālah (Bengali soldiers)³³² and Yahya gives the name of one of his commanders Sahdeo and records about his "equipage, attendants and countless Bengalis".³³³ These facts lead us to believe that the early Iliyās Shahī troops consisted largely of local people. In the pre-Iliyās Shahī period the rulers of Bengal recruited their soldiers mostly from the immigrants who poured into Bengal at different times. But after the establishment of the independent Sultānate of Bengal and the resultant enmity with Delhi the inflow of the Muslims to Bengal from different places, virtually stopped. In these circumstances, the Sultāns had to look towards the local people not only for the recruitment of soldiers, but also for running the administration as a whole.

Though the army of the Sultānate of Bengal consisted of diverse elements such as the Muslims (both immigrants and local) and the non-Muslims, the army was inspired by the cause of the Sultan for whom they waged wars. It is evident that when Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq attacked Bengal, the Bengal army ardently took up the cause of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh and fought bravely and unitedly against the Delhi forces.³³⁴

331. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 586, 593.

332. T.F.S., PP. 117-118.

333. Yahyā : T.M.S., P.125.

334. Baranī : T.F.S., P.593.

Size and efficiency of the army : The size of the army of the Sultān varied from time to time. It is mentioned in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhi of 'Afīf that Iliyās Shāh met Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq in the battle field with ten thousand cavalry, two lakhs infantry and fifty elephants.³³⁵

The soldiers of the Sultān were efficient and highly skilled in war. Diyā al-Dīn Baranī, the contemporary historian, spoke very highly of the gallantry and fighting qualities of the soldiers of Iliyās Shāh.³³⁶ From the writings of Yahyā also it appears that the Bengali soldiers under Iliyās Shāh fought bravely for the cause of their native land.³³⁷ Thus, with the support of the brave Bengali soldiers and generals Iliyās Shāh successfully defied the imperial forces of Delhi and established his authority throughout Bengal and even over the neighbouring areas. One Katmandu inscription shows that he devastated and burnt even a distant territory like Nepal.³³⁸

It is very difficult to give a picture of the pay and emoluments of the Bengali soldiers. In the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period Khiṭṭahs were distributed among the army officers who ruled their respective areas in accordance with their will. This indicates that the army officers were paid by assignement of land revenue. We also find in the Memoirs of Babur that "Parganas have been assigned from early times to defray the expenses of each department, the treasury, the stable, and the royal establishments. No expenses are paid in any other manner".³³⁹ From these facts it may be inferred that the early

335. 'Afīf : T.F.S., P. 114.

336. Referred to earlier, see Supra, P.188.

337. Yahyā, T.M.S., 125.

338. Bengal Literary Review, 1957 A.D. vol. III, pt.I, P.17; Sukhomay Mukhopadhaya : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, P.22.

339. Baburnamah (Elliot Susil publication), P.49.

Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns probably gave certain territories to the army officers and soldiers in fiefs in payment of their salaries. But the method of payment in kind i.e. in fiefs was not the only method of payment at that time as it is evident from the account of the Chinese envoys who record that the army received salary and ration.³⁴⁰ This statement of the Chinese envoy clearly shows that cash payment was also in vogue at that time. Probably the army officers and soldiers of the capital were paid in cash. That the army received salary is also alluded to by Firishtah who mentions that Sultān Shams al-Dīn Muẓaffar Shāh wanted to cut the salary of the infantry and cavalry to minimise expenditure which made them revolt against him.³⁴¹ As it is not convenient to pay the irregular troops in kind i.e. in fiefs, it would not be unwise to think that these irregular troops might have received their salaries in cash. The soldier's pay must have varied from time to time.

Military dress and weapons of war : The soldiers used to wear various kinds of military dress. The Chinese account shows that they wore helmets and coats of mail or armours.³⁴² Śīratrān, Top and Tāj were three different names for helmets.³⁴³ The names in vogue for armours in Bengali literature were Barma, Qābāi, Qabach and Zirāi.³⁴⁴ The cavalry soldiers caprisoned their horses carefully.³⁴⁵ Similarly elephants were also clad in plates of steel and large

340. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., P.118.

341. Firishtah : T.F., II, P.301.

342. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D. PP. 121, 126.

343. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, PP. 25, 26, 33, 46, 58.

344. Ibid, PP. 25, 26, 32-33, 46, 58, 67.

345. Ibid, PP. 26, 47.

scythes were attached to their tusks. On being dressed properly, the cavalry soldiers were armed with spears, swords, and bows and arrows.³⁴⁶ They also used shield and sifar.³⁴⁷ The foot-soldiers were also provided with various kinds of weapons like shield, swords, spears, bows and arrows, hammers, bludgeons etc. etc. In Bengali literature these weapons of war are termed variously. It is found that shield was called Carma³⁴⁸ dhal, and khetaka.³⁴⁹ Shield was chiefly made of the hide of rhinoceros and buffaloes.³⁵⁰ It was of various sizes and shapes. Carma was a small shield. Of the bludgeons, we find three names : Bhuṣandi, Bhindipāla and Gadā.³⁵¹ Bhuṣandi was an octagon headed club or bludgeon. It had broad knots, a broad body and a good handle for the fist. Bhindipāla was a crooked shape club. Its head which is bent and broad is one cubit long and it is one hand in circumference.³⁵² Gadā was a short thick stick with a heavy end. Muśāl³⁵³ and Mudgar³⁵⁴ were two kinds of hammers. The Mudgar is small at the foot-end. It has no face and is three cubits long. It has a good handle, is round, black-coloured, and is a hand in circumference. It is whirled around and fells things to the ground. Not only the soldiers but the war-elephants too wielded the weapon with their trunks.³⁵⁵ Spears were called Śul, Śel and Tirac.³⁵⁶ Śul was a spear with

346. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., PP. 121, 126.

347. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, PP. 25, 32, 34, 46, 49, 53, 58.

348. Ibid, PP. 32, 34, 53.

349. Mukunda Rāma : Caṇḍikāvya, PP. 75, 267.

350. T.C.Dāsgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P.72.

351. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, PP. 25, 34, 38-39, 49, 53, 67.

352. T.D. Dāsgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 71-72.

353. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, PP. 32, 67.

354. Mukunda Rāma : Caṇḍikāvya, P.94.

355. T.C.Dāsgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P.74.

356. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, PP. 34, 46, 48, 49, 53, 59, 67, 70.

three points or prongs. It is also known as Trisul. Śel was another kind of spear. Its size was about two cubits in length, one end of it was made of metal. It had a long handle with small belts all over excepting the part reserved for holding. The course it took when thrown was curvilinear and not straight.³⁵⁷ We also find many names of swords - e.g., Kharga, Kṛpān, Asi, Chamchām, Kamarim etc.³⁵⁸ Bows also were known by many names such as Dhanu, Śarāśan, and Gāndib.³⁵⁹ Vaṇ, Śar, Cakravāṇ, and Tīr³⁶⁰ were the different names of arrows. The elephant soldiers also were armed with bows, arrows and other weapons.³⁶¹ The use of bows and arrows by all groups of soldiers shows that these weapons played a prominent part in the warfare of Bengal. Besides the above mentioned weapons, another indigenous implement which proved to be very convenient and effective in fighting was the bamboo sticks.³⁶² Soldiers with long bamboo sticks could fight with greater advantage from a distance against the swordsmen whose superiority lay in fighting at close quarters. Besides its use in fighting, long bamboo stick were also used in rowing the war-boats. Bengali literature of the later period,³⁶³ suggests that a large number of soldiers fought with this indigenous weapon.

A careful analysis of the materials at our disposal shows that the foot soldiers were divided into different groups on the basis of the weapons they used. In the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī of Baranī, there is a special mention of the dhānuk's (bowmen) in the army of Iliyās Shāh.³⁶⁴ We also get reference

357. T.C. Dāsgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 69, 73.

358. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, PP. 25, 32, 34, 39, 47, 53, 54, 58.

359. Ibid, PP. 34, 46, 52.

360. Ibid, PP. 25, 34, 47, 49, 52, 58.

361. Ibid, PP. 33-34.

362. T.C. Dāsgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, f.n.I. P.69.

363. Bansibadan : Manasāmaṅgala, Banga Sahitya Paricay Pt.I, PP.316-317.

364. Baranī : T.F.S., P.586.

to the dhānukies (bowmen) in Bengali literature.³⁶⁵ The same source also refers to a large number of soldiers who fight with Gadā (bludgeon).³⁶⁶ It is found that often soldiers used more than one weapon and they took their respective arms according to their choice. Besides the cavalry and elephant soldiers, the foot-soldiers sometimes used 'Rath' for their movements in the time of war.³⁶⁷

War music : War music played a significant part in the army. Music kept the soldiers alert and helped to maintain their war spirits. So, as in modern times, instrumental music accompanied an army in the early Iliyās Shāhī period. It is evident from Bengali literature that the soldiers got themselves ready on hearing the war music played for the purpose.³⁶⁸ When all arrangements were complete and the army was about to set out, the pompous war music started playing martial tunes with different kinds of musical instruments. It is also observed that when the soldiers of the two parties met instrumental music was played.³⁶⁹ It appears from Bengali literature that the military music consisted of the following instruments : Nāgrā or Nākrā, Dhāk, Damā or Dāmāmā, Dunduvi, Dagar, Dhol, Mrdanga, Kara, Khanjari, Tablā, Murāj, Vīṇa, Sārindā, Tamburā, Darikāsi, Venu, Bansī, Śingā, Sānāi, Jhānjari, Dohari Mohari, Kāṅgsya, Kartāl,³⁷⁰ Rāyvīṇā, Rudravīṇā, Gandhavīṇā,³⁷¹ Jagajhampa and Bheri.³⁷² Of these instruments, Nāgrā, Damā or Dāmāmā, Dhāk, Dunduvi and Bheri were

365. (I) ধানুকি ধানুকি যুদ্ধ অস্ত্র বয়িষণ

- Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, p.39.

(II) Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P.368.

366. সহস্র সহস্র বীর নাচে গদা ধরি

- Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, p.39.

367. Ibid, PP. 25, 32, 33, 34; Rath is a four-wheeled carriage. In ancient time, it was in common use. In medieval period also we find its use in the warfare.

368. Makunda Rāma : Candīkāvya, P.94.

369. Joyenuddin : Rasul Vijaya, PP. 28, 34, 69.

370. Ibid, PP. 28, 34, 35, 69.

371. Makunda Rāma : Candīkāvya, P.264.

372. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P.79, f.n.I.

Kettledrums and all these were played with a pair of short sticks. A peculiar kind of Kettledrum was known as Jagajhampa which was suspended with a cord from the neck of the man who played on it with a pair of cane sticks. Feathers of birds were used to decorate Jagajhampa. It had always been a favourite instrument of music with the Muslims. Dhol is another kind of drum which was hung on the neck of a person by a cord who beats it with his right hand on one side and with a stick on the other. A special type of drum having only one side to play on was known as Kārā which, too, was suspended from the neck of a player with a cord who struck it with both his hands. Mṛdanga was an egg-shaped drum. Another kind of a shallow drum with skin and bells or jingles was known as Khanjari.³⁷³ Among the lyres mention may be made of Rāyvīṇā, Rudravīṇā, Gandhavīṇā, Vīṇā, Sārindā and Tamburā. Rudravīṇā was made of wood partly covered with leather. It had six strings, which were not metallic but were made of hair. A piece of fish-scale was required for plucking the strings. Tamburā had six or eight strings which were made of metal. Its strings were arranged in pairs. Venu was a kind of flute. Among flutes of different types it was the longest. Another kind of flute was known as Bānsi. It was made with a particular species of bamboo. Its upper end was generally kept closed and the lower end open. It had one main opening to blow it with mouth and six other openings for the fingers to play on. Another type of wind instrument was known as Śingā. It was chiefly made of bell-metal. Śingā was generally used to give direction to the troops in the battle-field. Sāṇāi was another kind of wind instrument consisting of a long tube. Kāṅsya was another kind of musical instrument. It was made of bell-metal and resembles

373. Ibid., PP. 81-82.

a plate. It was struck with a stick as a signal. Another instrument closely resembling a Kāngsya was known as Jhānjari. It was also used in battles to give signals from a distance. Kattāl or Kartāl was a basin-like musical instrument of brass, beaten together in pairs.³⁷⁴

Administration of Justice : The Sultāns of the early Iliyās Shāhī period were upright judges. They were the dispenser of justice in the realm. Epigraphic and numismatic sources record that Iliyās Shāh took the title of Al-Sultān al-Ādal (the just Sultān).³⁷⁵ Sikandar Shāh and Saif al-Dīn Hamzah Shāh also assumed the titles of Al-Imām al-Aẓam al-Ādal (the great and just leader) and Al-Imām al-Ādal al-Bājal (the just and generous leader) respectively.³⁷⁶ From these titles we may infer that the Sultāns were great lover of justice. Firishtah informs that the Sultān used to call the leading Ulamās to the court and advise them about the right judgement. The Sultān also threatened them with punishment if they failed to do justice. It is also said that the Sultān himself tried the cases in which the Qādīs failed.³⁷⁷

It appears from the later sources that the Sultāns applied the laws of Sharīāt.³⁷⁸ The Sultān as the chief enforcer of the law and head of the Sultānate exercised three functions which concerned the administration of justice in several respects. He was the defender of the faith³⁷⁹ and the arbitrator in the disputes of his subjects; he was head of the bureaucracy;

374. Ibid, PP. 80, 83-85.

375. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., P.81; A.Karim : Corpus, P. 188.

376. Ibid, P.187.

377. T.F., Pt.II, P.298.

378. A.Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, P.510.

379. A.Karim : Corpus, P.188.

he was the commander-in-chief of the forces. In his first capacity he dispensed justice through the Dīwān-i-Qaḍā. It is found in the Sultānate of Delhi that the Sultān, as the head of the bureaucracy, administered justice through the Dīwān-i-Maẓālim. This court of Maẓālim dealt with the complaints against officials. It was presided over by the Sultān. In the absence of the Sultān, the Amīr-i-Dād presided over the court of Maẓālim.³⁸⁰ We have no direct reference to such courts in Bengal. But there are references in Bengali literature that the merchant warned the revenue collector by threatening him to lodge complain to the King.³⁸¹ This leads us to believe that an institution similar to the court of Maẓālim may have existed in Bengal.

The highest court in the realm was the Sultān. Usually he decided the difficult cases. We find in the Akhbār al-Akhiyār that when Sultān Sikandar Shāh had observed Shaikh 'Alā' al-Ḥaq's influence to be detrimental to the state he ordered the Shaikh to leave the capital.³⁸² Further we notice in the later period that Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh ordered for the execution of one Shāh Ismā'īl Ghāzī, because, it was reported that the latter made an offensive and defensive alliance with the Rājā of Kāmrup.³⁸³ There are references in Bengali literature to show that the Sultān used to hear complains from his subjects and decided the cases himself.³⁸⁴

380. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, PP.157-158.

381. তোফে বাটে মাহাদানী মোহোঁ আইহন রানী / বল কৈলৈ জানায়ি বোঁ রাজা

(You are the chief tax collector, I am also the queen of Ihon. If you apply force, I shall complain against you to the King).

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Dān Khando, P.49.

382. 'Abd al-Ḥaq : Akhbār al-Akhiyār, P.143.

383. J.A.S.B., 1874 A.D., PP. 215 ff.

384. (a) রাজা কংসাসুরে মোঞ করিবোঁ গোহারী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Dān Khando, P.27.

(b) যাইবোঁ রাজদুআরে কংসে করিবোঁ গোচরে

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., P. 58.

(c) রাজা কংসে করিবোঁ গোআরী / তবে কাহন লজাঁ যাবোঁ ঘরী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., P.22.

Under the Sultān, the chief judicial officer was the Qāḍī.³⁸⁵ We do not have any reference to the gradation of judicial officers. But the existence of Piyādah or peon³⁸⁶ leads us to believe that there were a number of cadre of judicial officers. It is noticed in the early Iliyās Shāhī period that the rule of law was predominant in the society, where even the Sultāns subjected themselves to the sacred law and the decision of the Qāḍī. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh will remain a shining example for recognising the supremacy and independence of the judiciary. It is said that once on a hunting excursion the Sultān's arrow accidentally struck the son of a widow. The widow appealed to Qāḍī Sirāj al-Dīn for relief. The Sultān, being summoned to the court, humbly appeared and paid the penalty as decided by the Qāḍī. At the end of the trial the Sultān told the Qāḍī that if he had failed to do his duty he would have been beheaded. The Qāḍī retorted with a smile that if His Majesty had not submitted to his orders he would have scourged him.³⁸⁷ This is a great example of justice and the rule of law.

The Qāḍī supervised the judicial machinery and heard appeal against the judgements of the lower courts. He was assisted in his work by the Ulamās or by the learned people.³⁸⁸ A Qāḍī commanded great respect. Purity of character was considered as an indispensable qualification for a Qāḍī. Qāḍī's independence was respected but the Sultān could dismiss the Qāḍī if he was unworthy of his office. This contention finds support in the Riyād al-Salātīn.³⁸⁹

385. J.A.S.P., vol. III, 1958 A.D., P.100.

386. Salīm : Riyād, P. 107.

387. Ibid.

388. Vijaya Gupta : ManasāmaṅgaLa, PP. 54-61; A.Karim : 'The Sādāt, 'Ulamā and Mashāikh in the pre-Mughal Muslim Society of Bengal' - in Islam in Bangladesh, ed. by Rafiuddin Ahmed, P. 43.

389. Salīm : Riyād, PP. 107-108.

Beside the capital, Qādīs were also appointed in towns and villages.³⁹⁰ The Qādī commanded great reverence. The local governors and officials helped the Qādī in maintaining the dignity of law. The Qādīs were directly appointed by the Sultān and they were independent of the governors. References in Bengali literature of the later period show that the Qādīs, though they were judges, protected the law, punished heresy and handled religious disputes.³⁹¹

The chinese records show that there were two kinds of punishment - one was beating by bamboos and the other was banishment, which was the highest punishment.³⁹² The system of imprisonment was also prevalent. It is seen that Muḥammad Shīrān Khaljī put Alī Mardān Khaljī under the custody of the Kotwāl Hājī Bābā Ispāhānī.³⁹³ Probably the punishment of execution was also not absent. Because it is known that Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh ordered the execution of one Shāh Ismā'īl Ghāzī, for it was reported that the latter made an offensive and defensive alliance with the Rājā of Kāmrup.³⁹⁴ It may be inferred that the capital punishment was probably limited to the charges of treason.

Administrative units : Till the establishment of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate of Bengal, it is very difficult to give a clear picture of the administrative units. At that time, the administration of Bengal by Iqtā' unit was in vogue.³⁹⁵ But in course of time, with expansion of the Muslim power in Bengal, the political expediency of administration by Iqtā' receded.³⁹⁶

390. A. Karim : Bānglār Itihāsa, P. 511.

391. Vijaya Gupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 121-145.

392. Annals, vol.I, 1945, P.117.

393. Minhāj : T.N., P.157.

394. J.A.S.B., 1874, PP. 215 ff.

395. Minhāj : T.N., PP. 156-158.

396. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P.78.

and as a result of it, there developed a pattern of administrative units in Bengal.

For the efficiency of administration, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns divided Bengal into a number of administrative units. But these units were not homogeneous administrative units with uniform administrative system in them. The reason behind this non-homogeneous nature of the units and non-uniform administrative system was that the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns, owing to their pre-occupation with the task of defending the country against the Delhi authority, could not pay due attention to rearrange the distribution of administrative units on a uniform basis.

The administrative units were called 'Iqlīm'³⁹⁷ and 'Arṣah'³⁹⁸ or 'Mulk'³⁹⁹ in accordance with its importance and size. The large administrative units were known as 'Iqlīm' while the smaller units were called 'Arṣah'.⁴⁰⁰ According to A.H. Dani, the administrative units of East Bengal were known as 'Iqlīm' and those in South West Bengal were called 'Arṣah'.⁴⁰¹ But on a close examination of the inscriptions and coins Abdul Karim argued in favour of revision of A.H. Dani's view.⁴⁰² Actually, it is not a fact that 'Arṣah' was not in use in East Bengal. In the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī we notice the name of 'Arṣah Bangālah',⁴⁰³ which is certainly situated in East Bengal.

397. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, coin No. 42, 153; A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P.110.

398. Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl., I.M.C., II, coin No. 109, P.53; A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P. 109.

399. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, coin No. 38, P. 152.

400. J.A.S.P., vol.III, 1958 A.D., P.89.

401. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P.115.

402. J.A.S.P., vol. III, 1958, P. 88.

403. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 93.

Besides, Sylhet inscription of Fīrūz Shāh⁴⁰⁴ and a coin of Sikandar Shāh⁴⁰⁵ give us the names of 'Arṣah Srīhat' and 'Arṣah Kāmrū' which were indentified with sylhet and Kamrup respectively. We also get the name of 'Arṣah Chatgaon'.⁴⁰⁶ These prove beyond doubt the existence of 'Arsah' in Eash Bengal.

A.H. Dani also held that the territorial division of 'Iqlīm' exactly corresponds with 'Arṣah'.⁴⁰⁷ This view, too, does not hold good. For, we find a clear distinction between 'Iqlīm' and 'Arṣah' in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī in which it is found that Iqlīm Bangālah is bigger than 'Arṣah Bangālah'.⁴⁰⁸ The fact that the territorial division of Iqlīm is bigger than 'Arṣah' is also proved by the fact that Iqlīm Muāzzamabād comprises a vast tract from Sunār-gāon in the south west, stretching towards East and North East upto at least Sylhet,⁴⁰⁹ as against this no 'Arṣah' seems to be so big.

Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay surmised that the Iqtā' of the preceding period came to be known as Iqlīm during the early Iliyās Shāhī period.⁴¹⁰ This view also seems to be wrong. For, there are references in the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī to show that the term Iqlīm was in use in the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period. Moreover, it is found that Sultān Balban of Delhi appointed Iqtādārs in Iqlīm Lakhnautī.⁴¹¹ This indicates that Iqtā' is a portion of Iqlīm unit. On the other hand, the application of the term Iqlīm during the early Iliyās Shāhī

404. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P.7.

405. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, coin No. 38, P. 152.

406. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, P. 142.

407. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P. 115.

408. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 92-93. Baranī used the word 'Arṣah' to mean only that portion of Bangālah which was already conquered by Sultān Balban, whereas his 'Iqlīm Bangālah' was the vast territory of Bangālah that was yet to be conquered.

409. J.A.S.B., 1873, P. 235; J.A.S.P., III, 1958, P. 87.

410. Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, p. 308.

411. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 92-93.

period shows that the term Iqlīm was used for a large administrative unit, while smaller units were called 'Arṣah'. A close study of the area of the administrative units leaves the impression that Iqtā' and 'Arṣah' were possibly synonymous. Blochmann is of the opinion that the term 'Arṣah' means more than a parganah and that it is equivalent to the Mughal term Sarkār.⁴¹² But this contention seems to be untenable. For, technically 'Arṣah' of the early Iliyās Shāhī period is of wider significance than the Sarkār of the Mughals. The territorial extent of an 'Arṣah' might have corresponded to that of a Sarkār. But it is to be remembered here that the Sarkār was a part of the Mughal province; while the 'Arṣah' was a distinct administrative unit of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate of Bengal.⁴¹³ 'Arṣah' is also known as Mulk. This is evident from the expression Mulk Chāwalistān 'urf 'Arṣah Kāmrū appearing on a coin of Sikandar Shāh.⁴¹⁴ We also find a reference to Muluk in Bengali literature.⁴¹⁵

It is very difficult to give a correct list of the administrative units of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate. In the Āyn-i-Akbarī, we find that Bengal was divided into nineteen Sarkār.⁴¹⁶ The Sarkārs called Purniah, Audamber, Sharīfābād, Sulaimānābād, Satgāon, Mandaran and Tājpur comprised the Western Bengal from North to South. The Sarkārs Lakhnautī, Bārbakābād, Mahmūdābād, Khalīfatābād, Panjra and Ghorāghāt covered the central Bengal, the Sarkārs of Eastern Bengal were Bāzuhā, Fathābād, Baklā, Silhat, Sunār-gāon and Chāt-gāon.⁴¹⁷ These Sarkārs are also found in the rent-roll of

412. J.A.S.B., 1870, P. 295.

413. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., P. 114; H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, coin Nos. 56, 84, PP. 155, 159.

414. Ibid, coin No. 38, P. 152.

415. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 8.

416. Abūl Faḍl : A.A., vol. II, PP. 142-155.

417. J.R.A.S., 1896, p.90.

Todar Mall which was prepared in 1582 A.D. on the basis of what he had found in existence. Hence, H. Blochmann holds the view that the Sarkārs represent the administrative and fiscal units of Bengal of the pre-Mughal period.⁴¹⁸ This view does not seem to be tenable. Because, Todar Mall's rent-roll represents only an ideal picture of Bengal. This is proved by the fact that the Sarkār Chāt-gāon which has been included in Todar Mall's rent roll, was not conquered during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir. This fact also nullifies the contention of Blochmann that during the period of the independent Sultāns (739-944 A.A./1338-1538 A.D.) the extent of Muhammadan Bengal was the same as what is found in 1582 A.D. In fact, a close study of the conquest of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns reveals that the extent of the early Iliyās Shāhī Bengal was greater than what is mentioned in the account of Abū'l Faḍl. But we cannot altogether ignore the account of Abū'l Faḍl. For, numismatic sources of the period give us the names of some of the Sarkārs mentioned in the Āyn-i-Akbarī. Fīrūzābād, Sunārgāon, Satgāon, Shahr-i-Naw, Mu'azzamābād, Kāmrup and Jannatabād appear as mint towns in the coins of the early Iliyās Shāhī period.⁴¹⁹ Generally, for minting of coins, important divisional towns were selected by the Muslim rulers.⁴²⁰ Hence, it may be inferred that the mint towns were the head quarters of the of the administrative units of the period in question. Numismatic sources

418. H. Blochmann : Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal, PP. 5,7.

419. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, PP. 150-161; Botham : Shillong Cabinet, PP. 146-157; Botham and Friel : Suppl. Shillong Cabinet, PP. 128-141; Lanepoole : Coins of the Muhammadan States of India, PP. 15-16; Thomas : I.C.B., PP. 62-63; A. Karim : Corpus. PP. 42, 49-50, 58, 60, 70, 74.

420. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P. 79.

also show that Fathābād and Chātgāon were under the control of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns.⁴²¹ From these evidence it appears that the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate was divided into the following administrative units : (I) Fīrūzābād , (II) Sunārgāon or Muḥazzamābād, (III) Satgāon, (IV) Shahr-i-Naw, (V) Jannatabād or Chātgāon, (VI) Kāmrup and (VIII) Fathābād. Of these administrative units, the first four units are found to exist during the reign of Iliyās Shāh,⁴²² which in turn leads us to believe that the Sultānate of Bengal under Iliyās Shāh was divided into four administrative units with the headquarters at Fīrūzābād, Satgāon, Sunārgāon and Shahr-i-Naw, of which the first three roughly corresponded to North and North-West Bengal, South and South-West Bengal and North-East Bengal respectively⁴²³. The identification of Shahr-i-Naw has so far been difficult.⁴²⁴ During the reign of Sultān Iliyās Shāh these mint towns were variously known as al-balad, Hadrat and Hadrat Jalāl.⁴²⁵ Though these terms were not to be found in the administrative terminology, these epithets show that all of those towns were big towns of great importance.

421. N.K. Bhattasali : Coins and Chronology., P. 63.

422. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, PP. 150-151; Botham : Shillong Cabinet., PP. 146, 150, 151; Shamsuddin Ahmed : Suppl. I.M.C., II, PP. 43-46; A. Karim : Corpus., P.42.

423. P.P.H.C., 1955, P.209, f.n.I.

424. J.A.S.B., 1867, P. 65; J.A.S.B., 1873, P.214.

- According to Sir James Bourdillon, Shahr-i-Naw is situated on the bank of the river Ganges and possibly it was a small town of Gauḍa. Nicolaji Konti, the Venetian traveller, who visited Bengal in the beginning of the fifteenth century, mentioned a town, Shernob by name, in his account. Rakhal Das Bandopadhyay holds the view that this Shernob may be identified with Shahr-i-Naw. cf. Bāṅgālār Itihāsa vo. II., P. 98.

425. A. Karim : Corpus, P. 42.

After his accession to the throne Sikandar Shāh turned his attention to reorganise the administrative system of Bengal. Considering the distance, area and the importance of Eastern Bengal, he divided it into four administrative units namely, Sunārgāon, Fathābād, Chāt-gāon and Kām-rū. Later on, Sunārgāon unit was given the new name of Iqlīm Mu'azzamābād and its headquarters was transferred to Mu'azzamābād. Iqlīm Mu'azzamābād included territories of western Tippera and Eastern Dhaka and Mymensingh and Western Sylhet Districts.⁴²⁶ Possibly Fathābād comprised Maḥmūdābād, Khalīfatābād, and Baklā, while Chāt-gāon included South Eastern part of East Bengal. The administrative unit Kām-rū, identified with Kāmrup, lay very far to the North East beyond the furthest limits even of the great administrative unit of Sunārgāon. So far the administrative set-up of North, West and South Bengal was concerned, Sikandar Shāh maintained the previous units. Thus it appears that Fīrūzābād, Satgāon, Shahr-i-Naw. Mu'azzamābād or Sunārgāon, Fathabad, Chāt-gāon and Kām-rū were the administrative units of Sultān Sikandar Shāh. Of these units, Mu'azzamābād is called Iqlīm,⁴²⁷ while Satgāon, Shahr-i-Naw, Chāt-gāon and Kām-rū are known as 'Arṣah'.⁴²⁸ From the contemporary sources we do not know the administrative terminology used in respect of Fathābād. But in slightly late Bengali literature of the fifteenth century Fathābād is known as Muluk.⁴²⁹ Here it is to be mentioned that the administrative terms like 'Iqlīm' and 'Arṣah' came to be used before the names

426. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P.82.

427. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, coin No. 42, P.153; Botham : Shillong Cabinet, coin No. 13, P. 155.

428. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, II, coin Nos. 38, 56, PP. 142, 152, 155; J.A.S.B., vol. 36, Part I, 1867 A.D. coin Nos. 24, 29, PP. 65-66; Shamsuddin Ahmed : Suppl. I.M.C., II, coin No. 69, P. 48.

429. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 8.

of the administrative headquarters from the reign Sikandar Shāh.⁴³⁰ Numismatic sources show that there were only four mint towns in the reign of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh.⁴³¹ This leads us to infer that possibly Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh reduced the number of administrative units incorporating Shahr-i-Naw with Fīrūzābād unit and Fathābād and Kāmrup with Mu'azzamābād unit. The same sources point out that during the reign of Sultān Saifal-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh there were only three administrative units namely Fīrūzābād, Satgāon and Mu'azzamābād.⁴³² We do not know anything about the causes of reducing the number of administrative units. It may be suggested that the prevailing political conditions arising out of the rise of Gaṇeśa may have compelled the later Sultāns of the early Iliyās Shāhī period to reduce the number of administrative units.

The officials working in the different administrative units are not mentioned in any record. In the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period, when Bengal was a province of the Delhi Sultānate, its administration was a replica of the central administration of the Sultānate of Delhi.⁴³³ So when the independent Sultānate of Bengal under the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns came into being, it is quite reasonable to think that its provincial government was a replica of the central government.

430. Cf. A.Karim : Corpus., PP. 42, 49-50.

431. Ibid, P. 58.

432. Ibid, P. 66.

433. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, PP. II; See also M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 91.

It is revealed in the inscriptions of the later Iliyās Shāhī period that the Iqlīm which seems to have been the largest administrative unit, was placed in charge of an officer who had the title of Jāmdār-i-Ghair Mahalī wa Sar-i-Lashkar wa Wazīr. The officer in charge of Iqlīm was also called Sultānī.⁴³⁴ We do not know the exact nature of his functions. In order to get an idea of his functions it is necessary to explain his titles. The title Sultānī indicates that the officer in charge of the Iqlīm represented the Sultān and was the head of his administration. His other title has three parts : Jāmdār-i-Ghair Mahalī, Sar-i-Lashkar and Wazīr. The literal meaning of the first part of the title is the bearer of the cup outside the palace.⁴³⁵ This suggests that he was the most trusted officer of the Sultān. For, As a precautionary measure against poisoning through drinks, this post was given to one who enjoyed the full confidence of the Sultān. The second part of the title clearly shows that he was the chief of the army. As the highest military officer his duty was obviously to maintain the soldiers who were placed under him with a view to utilizing their services in times of war. The last part Wazīr indicates that he was the head of the entire machinery of the government.⁴³⁶ Thus the analysis of the title leads us to infer that the ruler of the Iqlīm unit was the head of the military and civil administration. Hence, his functions were multifarious. We find in the Sultānate of Delhi that the governors of some large and important provinces were allowed to exercise special powers. They

434. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P. 35.

435. Ibid, P. 21.

436. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultānate of Delhi, P.80.

also enjoyed considerable freedom of action in various fields of administration.⁴³⁷ In Bengal the ruler of the Iqlīm unit was a trusted officer of the Sultān. So, quite reasonably, it may be said that the ruler of the Iqlīm unit, which seems to have been the largest unit, also exercised and enjoyed similar powers and position as that of the governors of the large provinces of the Delhi Sultānate.

In the Sultānate of Delhi the office of the provincial governor was not hereditary. He was appointed by the Sultān, and could be transferred and dismissed at will.⁴³⁸ Possibly the same system in all its essential details was followed in Bengal. Here also, the officer in charge of the Iqlīm unit was appointed by the Sultān and he was subject to transfer and recall after some years. Even he could be dismissed at any time. In fact, the tenure of his office depended on the Sultān's good will. He drew no salary from the imperial exchequer. He drew from the public revenues of his unit which was previously sanctioned as his remuneration. From the gross amount of the local revenues, besides his own remuneration, he took money to meet all the necessary expenses and remitted the rest to the central government.

The Tribeni inscription of Bārbak Shāh shows that the 'Arṣah unit was placed under an officer who also bore the title of Jāmdār-i-Ghair Maḥalī wa Sar-i-Lashkar wa Wazīr,⁴³⁹ which is seen in the case of the officer in charge of Iqlīm. These facts indicate that there was no definite rule for the appointment, and the same officer bearing the title of Jāmdār-i-Ghair Maḥalī wa Sar-

437. A.B.M. Habibullah : 'Provincial Government under the Memeluke Sultans of Delhi', I.H.Q., vol. XIX, 1943 A.D., PP. 258, 260.

438. Ibid, PP. 255-256.

439. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P. 21.

i-Lashkar wa Wazir could be placed either in the Iqlim unit or in the 'Arṣah unit. It is noticed in the Satgāon inscription that the title of the officer in charge of the 'Arṣah unit was Sar-i-Lashkar wa Wazir.⁴⁴⁰ Thus, we find two types of title for the officer in charge of the 'Arṣah unit : Jāmdār-i-Ghair Maḥalī wa Sar-i-lashkar wa Wazir and Sar-i-Lashkar wa Wazir. A close study of these titles indicate that the officer in charge of the 'Arṣah unit who bore the first title was higher in status than the officer who simply bore the title of Sar-i-Lashkar wa Wazir. Besides, the difference found in the titles also indicates that the officer having the title of Jāmdār-i-Ghair Maḥalī exercised unlimited powers, while the officer without having this title exercised limited powers. There were examples of these two types of administrators in the Sultānate of Delhi.⁴⁴¹

Sometimes the rulers of the Iqlim and the 'Arṣah were entrusted with additional duties. For example, the ruler of Iqlim Muḥẓamābād was also placed in charge of Thānā Lāud. Similarly the town of Lāoblā was attached under the administration of 'Arṣah Sājilā Mankhbād.⁴⁴²

For the judicial administration, a Qādī was appointed in each administrative unit. There is mention of a Qādī at Satgāon in an early inscription of the Muslim period.⁴⁴³ As to the existence of other officers under the ruler of an administrative unit we have very little information. But since he was in effect a miniature Sultān, the repeatation of the Sultān's main departments in his unit, may perhaps be presumed.

440. Ibid.

441. I.H.Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.79.

442. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 21, 35.

443. Ibid.

There are epigraphic evidence to show that officers were appointed for the administration of Shahr, Qaṣbah and Thānā.⁴⁴⁴ Shahr means a city.⁴⁴⁵ The chief officer of the city was designated as Wazīr.⁴⁴⁶ But it was not a separate administrative unit. Its administration was placed under the control of the rulers of the bigger units like the Iqlīm and the 'Arṣah adjacent to it. In support of this contention, it may be mentioned that the cities of Maḥmūdābād and Lāoblā were put under the rulers of Iqlīm Mu'azzamābād and 'Arṣah Sājilā Mankhbād respectively.⁴⁴⁷ Qaṣbah was an unfortified town smaller than a 'Shahr' or city.⁴⁴⁸ It was put in charge of 'Sar-i-Gumāshtah'.⁴⁴⁹ Qaṣbah was also a component part of bigger units.⁴⁵⁰ Thānā was a small military police station.⁴⁵¹ Epigraphic sources give us the names of only two Thānās : Lāoblā in West Bengal and Lāod in East Bengal. Their geographical position shows that they were frontier military outposts. The chief of the Thānā was designated as 'Sar-i-Lashkar'. The inscriptions indicate that very often the Thānās were placed under the control of the bigger units adjacent to them.⁴⁵²

The smaller unit after Iqlīm and 'Arṣah' was the 'Maḥal'. The Arabic term Maḥal was a synonym of the Parganah unit.⁴⁵³ It is observed that the Parganah unit was in existence in Northern India in the 14th century. Similar

444. Ibid, PP. 21-37.

445. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.203,f.n.7.

446. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P. 28.

447. Ibid, PP. 21, 35.

448. I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.203,f.n.7.

449. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P.22.

450. J.A.S.P., vo. III, 1958, P. 89.

451. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, p.83.

452. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, PP. 35, 37, 116.

453. The Sarban inscription uses the word 'Pratigana' in Sanskrit (I.H. Qureshi : The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.203, f.n.6) - Parganah is thought to be the Muslim variation of this term (M.A.Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.II, P. 96, f.n.4).

evidence is also found in Bengal.⁴⁵⁴ In some inscriptions of the later Iliyās Shāhī period there is mention of 'Maḥals'⁴⁵⁵ That the Maḥal or Parganah unit was in existence during the earlier Sultānate period of Bengal can be deduced from the accounts of Abūl Faḍl. He mentioned 688 Maḥals or Parganahs in Bengal proper in the reign of Akbar.⁴⁵⁶ Though Bengal was not wholly conquered by Akbar, Abūl Faḍl has given the list of Parganah units of the whole of Bengal. This indicates that Abūl Faḍl must have copied these from the records of its previous rulers.

A 'Maḥal' is an aggregate of many villages. But it is difficult to ascertain whether the 'Maḥal' was an administrative unit or a revenue unit. According to M.A. Rahim, the 'Maḥal' was primarily a revenue unit.⁴⁵⁷ From the accounts of Ibn Baṭūṭah and Baranī, it appears that the 'Maḥal' was placed under 'Mutaṣarrif' or 'Āmil'.⁴⁵⁸ With the passage of time in order to enforce revenue regulations and to maintain law and order, some responsibility for civil administration were attached with the officer in charge of Maḥal. A Mosque inscription of Bārbak Shāh dated 16th Safar, 865 A.H./1st December, 1460 A.D. records that a few 'Maḥals' were put under an officer who had the title of Jangdār wa Shiqdār.⁴⁵⁹ Mention of Shiqdār is also found in the Mandra Mosque inscription dated 830 A.H./1426 A.D.⁴⁶⁰ The title of the officer in charge of a few 'Maḥals' indicates that the office carried with it

454. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P. 96.

455. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P. 23.

456. Abūl Faḍl : A.A., vol. II, Eng. tr. P. 141.

457. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. II, P. 96.

458. I.H. Qureshi: The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P.208;

Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 431, 487-489.

459. A.H. Dani : Bibliography., P. 23.

460. Ibid, P. 14.

military and executive duties. There is no reference to Shiq of the period in question. Probably a few 'Maḥals' were combined into a Shiq. Thus it appears that the Shiqdār holds a higher position in status than the 'Āmil' who was placed over a Maḥal.

In conclusion it may be said that the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns for efficient running of the administration divided Bengal into a number of administrative untis. The large administrative unit was known as 'Iqlīm', while the smaller units were called 'Arṣah' or Mulk. This 'Arṣah and Iqtā' of pre-Iliyās Shāhī period were synonymous. We have references to the administration of some cities which were known as 'Shahr' and 'Qaṣbah'. These cities were not separate administrative untis but formed component parts of bigger units like Iqlīm or 'Arṣah. It is also noticed that there were some military outposts known as 'Thānās' in the Sultānate of Bengal, and very often the 'Thānās' were placed under the control of the bigger units adjacent to them. It appears that the smaller unit after Iqlīm and 'Arṣah was the 'Maḥal', an aggregate of many villages. Primarily it was a revenue unit. But, later on, in order to enforce revenue regulations and to maintain law and order, some responsibility for civil administration was also attached to it.

Economic conditions

Contemporary Bengali literature along with the narratives of Ibn Batutah and the Chinese envoys who visited Bengal in the fourteenth and in the early fifteenth centuries respectively, have left us quite valuable accounts about the economic condition of the country. These accounts together with the later Bengali literature, narratives of the travellers of the later period, Persian literature, coins and inscriptions greatly help us in forming an idea about the economic condition of the people of Bengal in the period under review. With a view to having a clear picture of the same, the subject may be studied under the following heads : (a) Rural settlements, Rural classes and Urban settlements, (b) Agriculture and Stockbreeding, (c) Crafts and Industries, (d) Trade and Commerce and (e) Currency system.

(a) Rural settlements, Rural classes and Urban settlements :

From time immemorial, the vast population of Bengal, except for a small minority, has lived in the villages. Hence, village was always the basic unit of economic organization and was the backbone of Bengal's economy. Even now, the vast landscape of Bengal is dominated by villages. There were both small and large villages. The small villages seem to have been known as patakas¹ and the large villages were called gramas. The size of the villages varied from time to time and from place to place.

1. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 354.

We do not know the exact pattern of the rural settlements of the early Iliyās Shāhī period. From the meagre materials at our disposal, it appears that the rural settlements do not have any uniform pattern. Some of the villages contained organized units of human groups; while others in all probability, possessed some scattered population. Bengali literature shows that the Brahmins, Kāyasthas, Vaidyas, Muslim Weavers and others² lived in compact groups in the particular area of the village allotted to each of them. In ancient Bengal also, references are available to show that the rural settlements were of nucleated type and there were no scattered homesteads as at present³. But in some parts of East and North Bengal, we notice a different pattern of the rural settlements. In these regions we find a picture of isolated habitations. Minhāj gives testimony to this fact.⁴ Probably the availability of land, the widely inundated topography of the country, the individualistic nature of the people and the nomadic habits of the tribal folks led to the development of individual, dispersed settlements as against their compactness and nucleation.⁵

Besides habitations, rural settlements contained roads and paths, rivers, rivulets, canals and drainage channels (nālā), tanks, forests and jungles. There were arable land and fallow land.⁶ Fallow land was being brought under cultivation with the gradual increase of population.⁷ The

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2. Vijaya Gupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 9. 135, 138, 454, 462; also cf. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 125.
 3. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol. I, P. 643.
 4. Minhāj : T.N., PP. 152, 154.
 5. Cf. N. Ahmed : Economic Geography of East Pakistan, P. 72.
 6. Mukunda Rāma : Kavikaṅkan Candī, vol.I, P.22.
 7. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 99.

repeated mention of the herdsmen in Bengali literature⁸ tends to suggest that some land was set apart for pasture. This pasture land was known as go-cara or gocāraṇbhūmi. It was usually located in a corner of the village or along its boundaries.⁹ The Chinese accounts also suggest that there were extensive pastures in Bengal.¹⁰ Some villages had local markets or hats where people used to go to buy and sell the necessities of life. The villages along the trade routes had bāzārs.¹¹ In the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Caṇḍīdāsa we find a number of references to village market. It is noticed that Rādhā along with other milk-women used to go to the market of Mathura to sell milk, curd, butter-milk and ghee.¹²

Villages had a number of groups of people, formed on the basis of various professions. These professional groups comprised peasants; weavers; fishermen; gold-smiths; iron-smiths; tin-workers; carpenters; tailors; betel-leaf sellers; flower sellers; oilmen; bakers; dyers; bowmen; sellers of spices, scents and drugs; washermen; potters; hāzām (who performed circumcision); milkmen; ojhās (snake-charmers who cure snake bite as well as village quacks); dealers in conch-shells; wood-cutters; ghaṭaks (match-makers); astrologers; shield makers; sailors; musicians, dancers; shepherds and others.¹³ Of these groups, the cultivators formed the majority in number. They worked hard¹⁴ and cultivated a large number of crops. We have no information about the actual position of the peasants. In the Sultānate of Delhi,

8. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., PP. 5, 20, 36, 70, 73 and so on; Vijaya Gupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 115-120.

9. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol. I, P. 643; N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 355.

10. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 125.

11. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 382.

12. S.K.K., - see Dan Khando and Nauka Khando.

13. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., PP. 33, 41, 45, 54, 56, 61, 116, 135; Vijaya Gupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 367-369; K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, P. 193.

14. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 99.

it is found that cultivation was based on individual peasant farming, and the size of land cultivated by them varied greatly, from the large holdings of the Khūts and muqaddams (headmen) to the petty plots of the balāhars or village menials.¹⁵ Bengali literature of the later period shows that there were big farmers and landless farmers or labourers in the villages.¹⁶ It is also noticed that in between these two classes there was another class of agriculturists who were supervisors of the landless labourers.¹⁷ From these observations, it may be said that during the early Iliyās Shāhī period also the cultivators had various economic positions.

Next to the cultivators, the weavers and the producers of different cloths formed an important section of the population. Bengali literature points out that the Muslim weavers were quite numerous and that the weaver community was economically self-sufficient.¹⁸ Besides the cultivators and the weavers, the remaining groups of the people mentioned above seem to have constituted other professional economic classes.

Above these classes stood the rural aristocracy. It is very difficult to give a pen-picture of the composition and power of this class. In the Sultānate of Delhi, it seems that rāīs, rānās, and chaudhurīs belonged to the rural aristocracy, and the word Zamīndār was used as a blanket term for the entire superior rural class.¹⁹ It may be said on the basis of the pro-

15. C.E.H.I., vol. I, P. 48.

16. Vipradāsa : Manasā-Vijaya, PP. 63-66; Vijaya Gupta : Manasā Maṅgala, P.155.

17. Vipradāsa : Manasā-Vijaya, PP.63-66; cf. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 138.

18. Vijaya Gupta : Padmā Purāṇa, PP. 135, 138; Vipradāsa : Manasā Vijaya, P.80. cf. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 157.

19. C.E.H.I., vo. I, PP. 55-58.

clamation of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq, issued on the eve of his expedition to Bengal in 1353 A.D. that the Zamīndārs formed the rural aristocracy in Bengal. In this proclamation, the word Zamīndār appears to include people like muqaddams, mafrozis, maliks etc.²⁰ Muqaddams were identical with khūts.²¹ Mafrozis were those to whom the government granted control over land.²² Malik was a term used rather freely for any person with any superior saleable right over land, though the linguistically allied terms milk and amlak referred to revenue-grants.²³ Thus it seems that Zamīndārs tended to form a comprehensive category embracing all kinds of superior right-holders.

In the villages the Brahmins held high position. They adopted teaching as a profession and maintained the Vedic way of life. But they did not confine themselves to teaching profession only. Some of them held high government posts and were even engaged in agriculture.²⁴ It is apparent from the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Caṇḍīdāsa that the Kshatriyas were possibly the warrior

20. J.A.S.B., 1923 A.D., P. 280.

21. C.E.H.I., vol. I, P. 58. The Khūts or headmen were the holders of large holdings (C.E.H.I., Vol.I, P.48). Though originally muqaddams and Khūts did not belong to the rural aristocracy, they ultimately formed a new superior rural class. Because, with the passage of time, the existence of an intermediary class in the country side was essential for its own appropriation of a large amount of agricultural surplus in the form of land revenue. This superior class could not be created out of nothing; it had to absorb elements of the older aristocracy, while perhaps admitting some from the village headmen (Khūts and muqaddams). The Chaudhurī seems to have been the first representative of this new emerging class.

22. Baranī : T.F.S., PP. 58, 106.

23. C.E.H.I., Vol. I, P. 58-59.

24. Cf. Shahanara Hussain : The Social Life of Women in early medieval Bengal, P. 21.

group of people²⁵. Most probably the Kāyasthas were in the clerical service.²⁶ The Vaidyas were expert in medical science. The people of these four classes formed the notable section of the Hindu population.

There is no direct reference to the middle class. But it seems that this class did exist in the society.²⁷ The middle class was composed of merchants and traders. This classification was made on the basis of the economic strength of different groups.

In contrast to the vast rural areas, it appears from various sources, that there were also towns of considerable size and importance. In these towns, people had gathered with the object of associating themselves with administration, trade and commerce and deriving benefit out of them. Some of these towns also tended to serve as industrial or religious centres. Ibn Baṭūṭah and the Chinese envoys had seen the large and impressive towns and cities of Bengal and have left their accounts in their writings.²⁸ Of these cities and towns Pāṇḍuāh, Gauḍa, Sunārgāon, Muḥazzamābād, Satgāon, Fatehābād, Chātgāon and Ikdālah were important.

Pāṇḍuāh was the capital city of Bengal during the early Iliyās Shāhī period.²⁹ It was situated 20 miles north-east of Lakhnantī at junction of the Mahānandā and a former bed of the Ganges.³⁰ Chinese accounts give us

25. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., P. 47.

26. Vijaya Gupta : Padma Purāna, P. 9.

27. See Infra, P.275.

28. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, PP. 234-235; Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., PP. 117, 121, 124, 130.

29. Salīm : Riyād, P. 96; Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., PP. 121, 124, 130.

30. Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 17, M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 128.

a vivid picture of the richness and luxury which characterized the life at Pāṇḍuāh. It is recorded in one of the Chinese accounts that "the city walls are very imposing, the bāzārs well arranged, the shops side by side, the pillars in orderly rows, they are full of every kind of goods. The dwelling of the King is all of bricks set in mortar, the flight of steps leading upto it is high and broad. The halls are flat-roofed, and white-washed inside. The inner doors are of triple thickness and of nine panels. In the audience hall the pillars are plated with brass, ornamented with figures of flowers and animals, carved and polished. To the right and left are long varendahs.³¹ Chinese accounts also record the luxurious condition and way of life obtaining among the upper classes in the metropolitan city of Panduah.³² Huang Sing Ts'eng's records also show that Pāṇḍuāh and its suburbs were "large and elegant".³³

Apart from serving as political centre the city of Panduah having more or less easy communication with the different parts of the country contributed considerably to the commercial life of Bengal.³⁴ Pāṇḍuāh was also a holy city.³⁵ For nearly a century and a quarter (739-860 A.H.) Pāṇḍuāh served as the capital of Bengal. Most probably it lost its status as the capital towards the end of Mahmud Shāh I's reign.³⁶ But there is hardly any reason to believe that the prosperity of the city completely vanished immediately after or within a few decades of the transfer of the capital

31. Fei-sin's Account, tr. by P.C. Bagchi in Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 121; For similar descriptions of Panduah, see also Yen Ts'ong Kien's Account in Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 130-131.

32. See Infra, PP. 298.

33. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 124.

34. Ibid, PP. 99-134.

35. Salīm : Riyād, P. 135.

36. J.A.S.B., 1909 A.D., vol. V. No.7, PP.205, 218. The causes of this transfer of capital from Pāṇḍuāh are largely connected with the physical changes of the locality.

to Gauḍa by the later Iliyās Shāhī rulers, and even afterwards the city was known as Haḍrat Pāṇḍuāh to distinguish it from the southern Pāṇḍuāh in Hugli district.³⁷

Gauḍa or Lakhnautī was also an important city of Bengal. It was situated at the junction of the Ganges and the Mahānandā (lat. 24°53', long 83°14').³⁸ During the early Muslim period, i.e., from the time of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī's occupation to its supersession by Pāṇḍuāh, it maintained its status as the capital of Bengal. In the later Muslim period, it was again the capital city from 1456 to 1564 A.D.

Though Gauḍa ceased to be the capital city of Bengal during the period in question,³⁹ it did not lapse into wilderness; rather its importance continued. In fact, at that time Gauḍa was known as a great centre of trade and commerce and had trading link with different parts of the country. It also kept in touch with such strategic points as the passes of Teliagarhi and Sikrigali at the Rājmaḥal hills.⁴⁰ About the prosperity and population of Gauḍa Joao de Barrows⁴¹ gives us following information : "The streets are broad and straight and the main streets have trees planted in rows along the walls to give shade to the passengers. The population is so great and the streets so thronged with the concourse and traffic of people, specially of such as come to present themselves at the King's court, that they cannot force their way past one another. A great part of this city consists of stately and well-wrought buildings".

37. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 129; J.A.S.B., 1909, vol.V, No.7, P. 218.

38. J.N. Sarker(ed) : H.B., vol. II, P. 167.

39. As Gauḍa stood on the bank of the river, it was repeatedly attacked by Fakhr al-Dīn of Sunārgāon. For this reason, 'Alī Shāh shifted his capital from Gauḍa to Pāṇḍuāh.

40. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P. 128.

41. Quoted by Abid Ali in Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 43.

Sunārgāon was another historic city of importance in Bengal. It is situated about 15 miles to the east of Dhaka.⁴² It first came into prominence as a mint town of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Fīroz Shāh; became the capital city of Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh and his son Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ghāzī Shāh from 1338 A.D. to 1352 A.D. when it was termed Hadrat Jalāl.⁴³ But after its incorporation with the Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate, it lost its status as capital. With this loss of status,⁴⁴ the town of Sunārgāon did not die out altogether. Even the term Hadrat Jalāl (used for Sunārgāon) continued in the reigns of Iliyās Shāh and Sikandar Shāh.⁴⁵ In fact, as it stood on the bank of the river close to the confluences of the Lakhia, the old Brahmaputra and the Meghna Sunargaon occupied a strategic position and as such might have continued as an important centre of trade.⁴⁶ In the accounts of the Chinese traveller Kuo Ch'ung-li who visited Bengal in between 1409 and 1411 A.D., Sunārgāon appears as a part of Pang-ko-la (Bangalah).⁴⁷ The Chinese records show that Sunārgāon was a walled place with tanks, streets, bāzārs and it was an important commercial centre.⁴⁸ Ralph Fitch testified to the commercial importance of Sunargaon in the following words, "Great store of cotton cloth goeth from hence, and much rice, wherewith they serve all India, Ceylon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and many other places".⁴⁹ Besides, in the 14th century, Sunārgāon seems to have been renowned for holy and learned men, where swarmed pīrs and faqīrs, traditions giving the place 150 gaddis or seats of faqīrs.⁵⁰

42. A.S.I.R., vol. XV, P. 137. It appears from Todar Mall's settlement that the boundaries of Sunārgāon were the Brahmaputra on the west, Silhat on the north, and the then independent principality of Tiparah on the east (J.Wise : Notes on Sunārgāon, Eastern Bengal, J.A.S.B., 1874 A.D., vol. XLIII, No. I, P. 86).

43. A. Karim : Corpus, PP. 36, 158.

44. The removal of the seat of government from Sunārgāon was largely connected with the physical changes in Lower Bengal, mainly the diversions of river courses (J.A.S.B., 1909, vol.V, No.7, PP. 221-222).

45. A.Karim : Corpus, PP. 42, 50.

46. Cf. A.S.I.R., vol. XV, P. 137.

(Footnotes continued in the next page)

Chātgaon, situated at the mouth of the sea was another city and harbour for foreign trade. From the ancient time it was a flourishing centre of trade and commerce.⁵¹ In fact, it was the "Porto Grande" (The great port) of Bengal. Ibn Baṭūṭah came to Bengal (1345-1346 A.D.) through this sea-port of Chātgaon.⁵² The Chinese embassies to the court of Bengal in the early fifteenth century also passed through this port.⁵³ In the later centuries also Chittagong maintained its position as the great centre of trade and commerce. According to Da Barros, "Chatigaon is the most famous and wealthy city of the Kingdom of Bengal, by reason of its port, at which meets the traffic of all that eastern region"⁵⁴ Abūl Faḍl wrote that it is "a large city which is a great emporium being the resort of Christian and other merchants"⁵⁵ It is also known from the writings of Campos that all the Portuguese commanders that came to Bengal first entered Chittagong.⁵⁶ Chittagong owed its importance to several factors, chief amongst which were the convenience of its harbour for shipping of every kind,⁵⁷ its easy access and its position near the mouth of the Meghna which was the principal route to the royal capital of Gauda.⁵⁸ Numismatically it is seen that during the reign of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh Chātgaon was a mint town. This indicates that it served as the headquarters of an administrative unit.⁵⁹

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47. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bāṅglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, PP. 319-323; Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 117, 121.
 48. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 123, 130.
 49. J.A.S.B., 1874, vol XLIII, No. I, P. 87.
 50. Ibid, P. 85.
 51. W.H.Schoff : Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, London, 1912, PP. 47-48; R.C.Majumdar : History of Ancient Bengal, P. 344; J.W. Mc Crindle (ed) : Ancient India as described by Ptolemy, P. 195; A.Karim : 'Samandar of the Arab Geographers', J.A.S.P., Dec. 1963, P. 13; Journal of Royal Aisatic Society of Great Britain and Iceland, vol. XXVII, 1895, P. 525.
 52. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, P. 235.
 53. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 117, 120, 123, 130.
 54. E.B.D.G., Chittagong, 1908 A.D., P. 26.
 55. Ibid.

(Footnotes continued in the next page)

Mu'azzamābād was also an important city of Bengal. Numismatic and epigraphic sources give testimony to this fact. The coins of the early Iliyās Shāhi Sultāns show that Mu'azzamābād was a mint town⁶⁰ which indicates that it was also the headquarters of an administrative unit. Inscriptions also show that it served as an administrative unit.⁶¹ Mu'azzamābād is identified with Mu'azzampūr, a few miles away from Sunārgāon. It came into prominence as an administrative headquarter during the reign of Sultān Sikandar Shāh and gradually it developed to such an extent that within a short time it attained the same status as that of Sunārgāon.⁶²

Satgāon was also one of the ancient cities of Bengal.⁶³ In the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period it was the seat of the governor⁶⁴ and a mint town.⁶⁵ We get a description of Satgāon as a flourishing business centre from the writings of Mukundarāma⁶⁶ and of the foreign travellers of the sixteenth century.⁶⁷ Vipradāsa also described religious sanctity and economic affluence enjoyed by Saptagrām.⁶⁸ These lead us to believe that Satgāon had also

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56. J.J.A. Campos : History of the Portuguese in Bengal, P. 21.
 57. C.R. Wilson : The Early Annals of the English in Bengal, vol.I, P.132.
 58. E.B.D.G. Chittagong, P. 26; For details on the port of Chittagong - see The Dhaka University Studies, vol. XXXIX, Part A, December, 1983, PP. 36-45.
 59. A. Karim : Corpus; PP. 161-162. Generally the Muslim Sultāns established their mints at the headquarters of an administrative unit.
 60. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, coin Nos. 42 and 74, PP. 153, 158; Botham : Shillong Cabinet, coin No. 13, P. 155.
 61. A.H. Dani : Bibliography; PP. 35-36.
 62. A.Karim : Corpus, P. 160.
 63. Bengal Past and Present, 1909, P.18.
 64. Yahya : T.M.S., P. 104; H. Blochmann : Contributions to the geography and History of Bengal, Calcutta, 1968, P.4.
 65. A. Karim : Corpus, P. 46.
 66. এই সব সহরে যত সেদাগর বৈসে
 কত ডিঙা লয়া তারা বাণিজ্যে আইসে ।।
 সপ্ত গ্রামের বণিক কোথায় না যায়
 ঘরে বসে সুখ মোক্ষ নানা ধন যায় ।।

commercial activities even during the early Iliyās Shāhī period. Satgāon retained its position upto the middle of the sixteenth century. As the river bed near Satgaon dried up, it had to yield gradually place to Hughly. Joaode Barros confirms this contention when he writes in his book that he found that port not so convenient for the entry and departure of ships.⁶⁹

Another important city of Bengal was Ekdālah. It was a centre of administration both in the earlier⁷⁰ and later period.⁷¹ Stretching from the Baliya river on the east to the Chiramati river on the west, the city of Ekdalah was protected by a continuous moat having links with the rivers, and also it had approaches to Devkot and Pāṇḍuāh along land routes.⁷² Baranī writes that Ekdalah was inhabited by such groups as upper class people, students, sūfīs, ascetics, strangers and foreigners.⁷³ In the history Bengal Ekdalah appears to have been a city of great strategic importance. In fact, it was a fortified city and it is known to us for its impregnability. This is proved by the fact that Sultān Firūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi failed to capture

67. Caesar Frederick writes, "In the port of Satgāon every year they lade thirtie or five and thirtie ships great and small with rice, cloth of Bombast of divers sorts, Lacca, great abundance of sugar, Mirabolans dried and preserved, long popper oyle of Zerzeline and many other sorts of merchandise" - Purchas : His Pilgrims, X, P. 114.

68. Vipradāsa : Mansā Vijaya, PP. 142-143.

69. De Barros : Da Asia, Quoted by M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shahi Bengal, P.145.

70. Minhāj : T.N., Eng. tr. P. 591, f.n.

71. Ekdala was also the capital of the Sultānate of Bengal in the Husain Shāhī period.

72. J.A.S.B., 1874, No. 4, PP. 244-245.

73. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 590.

it twice.⁷⁴ Though we do not know anything about the economic conditions of the people of Ekdalah, considering its administrative and military importance it is quite reasonable to think that it had also some commercial importance.

Here one thing is to be mentioned that the great rivers like the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna with their numerous tributaries have always been a great factor in determining the economic position of the towns. The rivers with their tributaries serve as drainage channels, eliminate up to a great extent the need for artificial irrigation; ensure an abundant supply of fish and above all act as a great fertilizing agency for a large part of the country. Most of these rivers, being navigable far inland throughout the year, also provide cheap and convenient means of transport and communication. For this reason, all flourishing cities, trade centres or big villages are situated on the banks of these rivers and any changes in their courses are responsible for the making and unmaking of many of prosperous cities and thriving trade centres. Thus it may be said that it is the history of these rivers of Bengal that a chronicle of its past civilization can be built up.

(b) Agriculture and Stockbreeding :

As at present, Bengal in the medieval period was predominantly an agricultural country and likewise agriculture was the main profession of the people. In other words, in Bengal agriculture is considered the primary

74. 'Afif : T.F.S., PP. 118-124; 152-155. Also See Infra, PP. 63-95.

source of wealth and its fundamental importance in the economic life has been the most characteristic feature of its history for many centuries. It not only provides most of the food requirements and gives employment to the great majority of its people, but it also furnishes certain raw materials which constitute the basis of the economy in commerce and industry.

A careful study of the materials at our disposal shows that a high place was given to agriculture. In the Śūnya Purāṇa of Rāmāi Paṇḍit, we notice that a Hindu god adopted the profession of agriculture.⁷⁵ It suggests that even the people of noble birth did not dislike agriculture as a profession. Vipradāsa speaks of the cultivators having various economic positions in the society.⁷⁶ Mukunda Rāma also mentions that the poet, though a Brahmin by caste, lived by personally doing the work of cultivation.⁷⁷ It also appears from the Bengali sayings that agriculture is the most suitable occupation for a self respecting person.⁷⁸

Agricultural produce depends largely upon the physical features and climatic condition of a country. The rich alluvial plains of Bengal, washed by the waters of the three main rivers and their numerous tributaries, pro-

75. Rāmāi Paṇḍit : Śūnya Purāṇa, PP. 182-194.

76. Vipradāsa : Manasā Vijaya, P. 63.

77. "সহর সেলিমবাজ তাহাতে সজ্জন রাজ
নিবসে মিউগী গোপীনাথ
তাঁহার তালুকে বসি দামিন্যায় চাষ চষি
নিবাস পুরস্কৃত হয় সাত"।।

- Mukunda Rāma : Candikāvya, Calcutta University edn., P. 22.

78. T.C.Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P.223. T.C. Dasgupta quotes from the cāṣā Pālā by Rāmeswar that "Although it is said, trade gives wealth still there can be no denying the drawbacks of trade, the reason being that in trade people require much capital and take recourse to fraud. Into service, one should not enter, if one has the sense of self respect in him. Beggary procures no wealth. Evidently it is then agriculture which is the most suitable occupation for a self respecting person".

duced a variety of grains, fruits and flowers. Moreover, Bengal is also copiously watered by monsoon rains. As a result, the plains of Bengal were known to be the most fertile region on earth. The contemporaries and the foreign visitors were struck by its plenty and prosperity. Ibn Baṭūṭah was moved so much at the sight of greeneries and corn fields on both sides of the Meghna that he observed, "By the river water wheels, gardens and villages on the right as well as on the left, as in Egypt by the Nile.... We sailed on this river for 15 days by villages and garden, as if we were going through a market place"⁷⁹. The accounts of the Chinese envoys also confirm the Moorish traveller. According to Wang Ta Yuan who compiled the Tao Ye Che leo most probably in the winter of 1349-50, "The seasons of Heaven have scattered the wealth of the earth over this Kingdom, the riches and integrity of its people surpass, perhaps, those of Ch'iu Chiang (Palembang) and equal those of Chao wa (Java)". He further said that Bengal was a country of luxuriant fields which yielded three crops a year.⁸⁰ Fei Sin, another Chinese envoy also recorded that the soil was fertile and produces are in abundance, for they have two crops every year. They do not weed or hoe their fields.⁸¹ Bengal's fertility was so proverbial that Abū'l Faḍl too, wrote that the same plot yielded three crops a year.⁸² These accounts thus speak of the fertility of the soil of Bengal which resulted in good agricultural production.

79. Ibn Baṭūṭah : *The Rehla*, Extracts translated and published in N.K. Bhattasali's *Coins and Chronology.*, PP. 142-143.

80. *Annals*, I, 1945, P. 99.

81. *Ibid*, P. 123.

82. Abū'l Faḍl : *A.A.*, vol.1, Eng. tr., P. 130.

The crops grown in our period were numerous and no doubt, partly the same as those still produced in different parts of the country. Paddy was the principal agricultural product of Bengal. It was cultivated from a remote antiquity as the staple food-crop of the people.⁸³ Ibn Baṭūṭah in his accounts states that Bengal is a vast country and abounds in rice.⁸⁴ The Chinese records also show that Bengal produced paddy in abundance.⁸⁵ There were large varieties of paddy. In the Śūnya Purāṇa, Rāmāi Paṇḍit states that the species of paddy are no less than thousand in number. He mentions some of them, which are as follows : Zowdhān, chichirā, āmlo, ālācit, feferi, sonā kharki, duggā bhog, aṣangakal, Muka Har, Kālā mugar, Nāgār juān, tulā sāli, Asati, Bakkari, gotam palol, pānguisia, bhadda mukhi, tul sadhan, dudhuras, gujura, boali, dar, hati panjar, bura matta, hatia, hutia, Koa, til sāgari, latā mau, mau kalas, khejur chari, pabbat jirā, gandha tulsi, dalaguri, bandi, bans gaja, sitasali, hukuli, harikāli, kusum māli, rakta sāl, candan sāl, rajdal, Urasali, bindyā sāli, lāusāli, ajansiali, kalakattik, megi, khirkamba, pachal, rasjao, kamad, khudda, dudurāj, bhajana, bankai, mula, pipira, kakaci, madhablata, begun bici, kotameta, raogar, toyana, arbor, kongorbhog, jalarangi, kanakcur, lal, kāmini, solpana, parchabhog, budhi, ajanlakshmi, bānsmati, pasi, kangad, gandhamālati, ampaban, gayābali, pathra, masilot, jhingāsāl, samadhuna, suasan, tangar, hari, mahipal, banksal, mangolan, bankcur, puan, biri,

83. Epigraphia Indica, vol. XXI. PP. 83, ff.; T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 225-226, 239, 240-242; For details also see Kamrunnesa Islam : Aspects of Economic History Bengal, PP. 30-31.

84. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, P. 234.

85. Annals;, vol.I, 1945 A.D., PP. 99-133.

geri, gopal, hura, banskata and maric.⁸⁶ Abū'l Faḍl also echoes the same when he writes, "If a single grain of each kind were collected, they would fill a large vase".⁸⁷

Sugarcane was another important agricultural product of Bengal.⁸⁸ It was produced in large quantity. Like paddy, several varieties of Sugarcane were cultivated in Bengal from very early times.⁸⁹ Later sources also refer to the export of sugar in large quantity. Barbosa writes, "sugar of a very good quality is made in this city They load many ships with it (sugar) and export it for sale to other parts".⁹⁰ The Italian merchant Verthema, who visited Bengal in the early part of the sixteenth century (in 1503 A.D.), also noticed its sugar production.⁹¹

We have references to a large number of other crops grown in Bengal in our period. The Chinese records mention the production of wheat, mustard, pulses, sesamum, ginger, red millets, glutinous millets and beans.⁹² Maize, chilli, turmeric and betel-leaf are mentioned in the sayings of Khanā.⁹³ It is said about the cultivation of maize that "if you want to earn money and become rich, then sow maize in the month of Caitra (March-April)".⁹⁴

Apart from cereals a number of vegetables and fruits were also cultivated. The following vegetables are mentioned in the records of the Chinese envoys : Onions, garlicks, cucumbers, egg-plants, brinjal etc.⁹⁵ Arum, arum

86. Rāmāi Paṇḍit : Śunya Purāṇa, PP. 191-194.

87. A.A., vol. II, Eng. tr., P. 134.

88. Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 125.

89. J.B.O.R.S., 1918 A.D., PP. 432-438; N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālir Itihāsa, Ādi Parva, PP. 168-169, 171-172; Cf. Kamrunnesa Islam : Aspects of Economic History of Bengal, PP. 33-34.

90. S.Purchas : His Pilgrims, vol. II, P. 145.

91. J.N. Dasgupta : Bengal in the sixteenth century, P. 117.

92. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 119, 123, 125; Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bāṅglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, P. 324.

93. T.C.Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 241-248.

94. Ibid, P. 233, f.n.I.

95. Annals vol. I, 1945 A.D. PP. 119, 123, 125.

indicum, tricho-santhes dioeca, radish etc. are mentioned in the sayings of Khanā.⁹⁶ Of the various types of fruits Candīdāsa makes references to mango, black-berry, jack-fruit, banana, orange, pomegranate, guava, walnut, grape, lemon, olive, hog-plum, myrobalan, emblic myrobalan, avrrhoa carambola, melon etc.⁹⁷ The Chinese accounts record the production of mango, jack-fruit, banana, pomegranate, cocoanut, melons etc.⁹⁸ Abū'l Faḍl also refers to the abundance of fruits in Bengal.⁹⁹

Bengal also produced jute. The mention of jute plant is found in a work known as Prākṛit Pingalā.¹⁰⁰ Plenty of references to jute crop and jute cloths are available in Bengali literature of the Muslim period. In the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Candīdāsa, we find that Kṛṣṇa kept the jute plant under water for twelve Pahar. After that period he lifted up the jute-plant from water. Then he dried up the fibre of jute-plant and with this fibre he twisted a cord.¹⁰¹ The same source also points out that women used jute sadi.¹⁰² The compiler of the Varnaratnākara mentions that women put on varieties of jute sadi.¹⁰³ It is also observed in the Mānikcānd Rājār Gān¹⁰⁴ and in the Padmā Purāna¹⁰⁵ of Vijayagupta that the common women of the society

96. T.C.Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 241-248.

97. Candīdāsa : S.K.K. Brndāban Khando, PP. 95-96.

98. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 119, 123, 126, 132.

99. A.A., vol. II, Eng. tr., PP. 135-137.

100. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 173; also cf. S.S.M. Cattapadhyay : Bāṅglār Sāmājīk Itihāser Bhūmika, P. 125.

101. বালিচা কাটিয়া কাছনিকিঁ মাঝ জলে খুইল / বার পহর হখিলেঁ
তাহার তুলিল/সুখায়া বাছিয়া পাট করিল সুসর/চালী গুণ দড়ী গাফাইল দাগোদর

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Bhār Khando, PP. 77-78.

102. ঘুচ দখি দুখেঁ পসার সোয়া / বিনিনোঁ পাটের সাড়ী
- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 37.

103. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 537.

104. T.C.Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 282.

105. Vijayagupta : Padmā Purāna, P. 296.

used jute saḍis. The records of Bengali literature get corroboration from the writings of Abūl Faḍl.¹⁰⁶ Thus it may be asserted that there is positive evidence of jute crop and jute-manufactures in Bengal from the fourteenth century. Bengali literature also refers to the export of jute cloths to the neighbouring countries.¹⁰⁷

Another valued agricultural product was cotton. We have evidence of its cultivation in different sources. Kautilya refers to Karpasika - a variety of cloth made of indigenous cotton in Vanga.¹⁰⁸ It is referred in one inscription of Vijayasena that the ordinary villagers were familiar with seeds of cotton.¹⁰⁹ The early Caryāpadas refer to its cultivation.¹¹⁰ The Chinese also record that Bengal produced cotton.¹¹¹ Referring to the people of Bengal Marco Polo writes, "They grew cotton in which they derive great trade"¹¹².

It appears from the description of Candīdāsa that Bengal was a land of excellent flowers. He mentions varieties of flowers : Seoti, Mālati, Dulāli, Tagar, Bakul, Seāli (Sefalika), Asoka, Kesara, Cāmeli, Campā, Jahā, King-suka, Kanaka, Ketaka, Nāgeswar, lotus etc.¹¹³ In the Āyn-i-Akbarī, we also find that flowers were in plenty in Bengal.¹¹⁴

106. A.A., vol. II, Eng. tr. P. 136.

107. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, PP. 272-273.

108. Kamrunnesa Islam : Aspects of Economic History of Bengal, P. 38.

109. N.G. Majumdar : Inscriptions of Bengal, vol. III, P. 48.

110. Atindra Majumdar : Caryāpada, Caryā - 50, PP. 218-219.

111. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 99, 123, 132.

112. Marco Polo, vol. II, P. 115.

113. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., PP., 7, 9, 15, 32-33, 54, 66, 94-95, 101-103.

114. Abūl Faḍl : A.A., vol. II, Eng. tr., P. 135-137.

Trees which supplied medicines or fruit such as Āmlaki¹¹⁵ Haritaki etc.¹¹⁶ were also known to have been cultivated in Bengal.

Another important product used mainly for construction of houses and manufacture of household articles was bamboo.¹¹⁷

Bengal reared mulberry trees and silk worms. The first notice of this product is found in the records of the Chinese envoys.¹¹⁸ Here it is to be noted that as late as in the middle of the fourteenth century, Ibn Baṭūṭah does not refer to silk among the products of Bengal.¹¹⁹ Probably it was first introduced from China in the Muslim period.¹²⁰ Abūl Faḍl refers to the production of silk in Ghoraghat.¹²¹

No description of the tools employed by the peasants are available. But there are no grounds for supposing that they were in any essential particulars different from those employed in ancient Bengal. Literary sources, specially the song of Siva by Rāmāi Paṇḍit gives a list of the different agricultural implements used in Bengal. It mentions the plough and the yoke drawn by cows, scythe, ladder, rice husking pedal and others.¹²²

115. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., P. 95; Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 126.

116. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., P. 95.

117. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 237.

118. Ma Huan : Ying-Yai Sheng-lan, "The over all survey of the ocean's shores", tr. by T.V.G. Mills, P. 163; Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 126; Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bāṅglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, P. 325.

119. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, PP. 234-235.

120. Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. IV, PP. 206-207; K.M. Ashraf : Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan, P. 95.

121. Abūl Faḍl : A.A., vol. II, Eng.tr., P. 136.

122. Rāmāi Paṇḍit : Śunya Purāṇa, P. 184; Cf. Vipradāsa : Manasā-vijaya, P. 63.

In view of the paucity of materials at our disposal, it is indeed very difficult to draw any comprehensive picture of the agricultural practice as it prevailed during the period in question. However, old Bengali literature, specially the sayings of Dāk and Khanā,¹²³ besides giving details of cultivation, contain many adages which embody the agricultural wisdom of the people. Thus we find such expressions as "cultivation should be personally done by the owner of the soil. He should himself plough the land, aided by his son. In case the son being not available for the purpose the brother should step into his place. No third person should be relied on in the matter". Again, "in agriculture he who works himself is sure to get much profit, while he who simply does the work of supervision gets only half the profit. But he who is lazy enough to stay at home and enquire about his cultivation from there as a third person is sure to lose in the concern".¹²⁴ There was also

123. Dāk is not a name of a person as was believed earlier. It is a Tibetan word which means wisdom. Enamul Huq is of the opinion that Dak is the name of one of the classes of Buddhist Tantrik saint. It seems that Daker Bacans were composed in between the 7th and 9th centuries. As Bengal is predominantly an agricultural country, 'words of wisdom' or adages on agriculture have been running in usage from ancient time. These adages are called Khanār Bacan. These are nothing but the advice relating to agriculture and astronomy. Similar words of wisdom are found in all agricultural countries of the world. So long, it was thought that Khanā was the name of a woman. She was well-educated and Mihir was her husband. In this connection many popular usages are in vogue. Recently it is known that Khanā is not the name of a particular women; rather it appears that the practical knowledge on agriculture turns to be known as Khanā. There is another explanation of the origin of the name of Khanā. The lower class women of the Koc tribe of Assam and Bengal used to engage themselves in agriculture (at present similar families are found in China). They knew many adages on agriculture. The general names of these female peasants are khanā and it is no wonder that their words are being termed as Khanār Bacan (Qazi Din Muhammad (ed) :Lok Sāhitye Dhāndhā O Pravād, PP. 1,4).

a saying that the house which did not contain a 'dhenki' was branded as forsaken by good luck.¹²⁵

Bengali literature records that astrological belief had a great influence upon the minds of the people. In fact, they cultivated lands mostly with the aid of astrological observations. It is not exactly known how or whence this knowledge has come into the possession of the Bengali peasants, but T.C. Dasgupta surmised that the tradition points to a foreign origin.¹²⁶ Anyway, a few specimen are quoted below by way of illustration :-

(a) When according to astrological calculations, in any particular year, Saturn occupies the highest position and Mars in next to him, then agriculture will not flourish that year;¹²⁷

(b) If the planet Mercury be ascendant and Venus be next to him then no doubt the fields will be overful with crops.¹²⁸

These aphorisms are only two out of many in which directions about agriculture are given in the technical phraseology of astrology.

Like astrological foretellings, the people were also very found of weather forecasts which were based on, more or less, practical observations and as a consequence the results were surprisingly accurate. The cultivators

124. বাপ বেটার চাষ চাই ।
তা অভাবে মোদের ভাই ।।
খাটে খটায় লভের গাঁথি ।
তার অর্ধেক কাখে ছাঁতি ।।
ঘরে বসে পুছে বাত ।
তার ঘরে হা ভাত ।।

- Khanār Bacan

- Qazi Din Muhammad (ed) : Lok Sāhitye Dhāndhā Ō Provād, PP. 6-7.

learnt the sayings of Khanā and quoted those sayings so frequently in everyday life that they became expert in the study of weather. A few examples of aphorisms about the weather forecast are given below for a clear understanding :-¹²⁹

- (a) When in the beginning of the Bengali year Baisākh, the wind blows from the north-east, you may be sure of heavy rains (that year) - says Khanā.
- (b) The rainbow in the western sky will bring draught but the rainbow in the eastern sky will fetch rains.
- (c) If there be heat in the month of Pausa (December-January) and more cold in the month of Baisākh (April-May), then there will be heavy rains in the beginning of Asadh (June-July).
- (d) The frequent croaking of frogs is a sure sign of immediate rains.

125. ঘাহার ঘরে নাহি টেকি ঘুঘল ।
সে বহুখির নাহিক কুশল ॥

- Dāker Bacan. - T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 223.

126. Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 224.

127. শান রাজা মঙ্গল পাত্র / চষ খোড় কেবল মাত্র - Khanār Bacan,
T.C. Das Gupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P.225.

128. বুধ রাজা পুত্র মন্ত্রী যদি হয় / শয্য হবে ক্ষেত্রপুরা নাহিক সংশয়
- Khanār Bacan, T.C. Das Gupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 226.

129.(a) বছরের পয়লা ঈশানে বায় / হবেই বর্ষা কম খনায়

(b) পশ্চিমে ধনু নিত্য খরা / পূবের ধনু বর্ষে ঝড়া

(c) গৌষে গরমি বৈশাখে জাড়া / প্রথম আঘাতেই তরবে গাড়া

(d) বেঙ ডাকে ঘন ঘন / শীঘ্র বৃষ্টি হবে জান

- Qazi Din Muhammad (ed) : Lok-Sāhitye Dhāndhā O Prāvāḍ, PP. 10-11.
- Khanār Bacan

It is also interesting to note that customs and superstitions of the country played a vital role in agriculture. The cultivators used to follow the traditional belief regarding the sowing of seeds. We may ignore these belief outwardly. But a careful analysis of the change of weather conditions and seasons clearly indicates that the days recommended by Khanā for sowing have generally some bearing on it. The peasants believe that 'he who cultivates the soil in the days of the full moon and the new moon is sure to suffer misery. His cows suffer from rheumatism, and scarcity prevails in his house'. Similarly they know that the sowing of paddy is recommended throughout the month of Śravan (July-August) and the first twelve days of the month of Bhādra (August). They also know that the pulse kalai is to be sown either in the last four days of Bhādra (August-September) or within the first four days of Āswīn (September-October).¹³⁰ In this way the cultivators used to sow the seeds of various crops. Besides it is observed that the peasants, in order to get good crops and to fulfil their desire,

130. (a) অমাবস্যা পূর্ণিমায়ে যে ঘরে হাল ।
তার দুঃখ রয় চিরকাল ॥
তার বলদের হয় বাত ।
তার ঘরে না থাকে ভাত ॥

(b) শ্রাবণের পুরো ভাদ্রের বারো
ধান্য রোপন যত পারো

(c) ভাদ্রের চারি আশ্বিনের চারি
ফলাই বুনি যত পারি

- Khanār Baṇan

- Qazi Din Muhammad (ed) : Lok - Sāhitye Dhāndhā O Pravāḍ, PP. 6-8.

go to the field on an auspicious day and on the way, they do not speak anything inauspicious. On reaching the field they enter the field by the eastern side and begin ploughing from thence.¹³¹ Similarly they believe that at the time of harvest they should start from the southern side.¹³²

As agriculture was the main profession of the people, they naturally knew well how to manure the soil properly for growing good crops and cure them of any malady detrimental to their natural growth by applying various indigenous methods within their easy reach. The sayings of Khanā bear testimony to this fact.¹³³ Generally manuring was done by burning straw of long stemmed paddy in the fields. Cowdung and ashes were commonly used as manure. Sometimes, straw was ploughed into the land for increasing the fertility of the soil. It is also a popular belief that what was injurious to human life was conducive to the preservation of plantlife.¹³⁴

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131. শুভমুখে করবে যাত্রা ।
 পথে না হয় অশুভ বার্তা ।।
 মাঠে গিয়া আগে কর দিক বিজ্ঞপন ।
 পূর্ব হইতে করবে হাল চালন ।।
 মনের আশা পূরিবে সকল ।
 ক্ষেত ভরা হইবে ফসল ।।

- Khanār Bacan

- Qazi Din Muhammad (ed) : Lok Sāhitye Dhāndhā O Pravād, P. 6.

132. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 228.

133. Ibid, PP. 237-241.

134. মনুষ্য মরে যাচে, গাছলা সারে তাচে - Khanār Bacan
 - T.C. Das Gupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 236-237.

During the period in question animal husbandry was also very popular in Bengal. It was in an advanced stage at that time and, so to say, it added to the prosperity of the peasants. The basic livestock of the peasant was cattle, used for ploughing, transport and various dairy products. The repeated mention of the herdsmen in Bengali literature.¹³⁵ tends us to believe that possibly villagers employed cow-herd, who drove the cattle to the pastures and waste land beyond the ploughed fields and returned with them at dusk.

Other domestic animals included the camel, horse, mule, water-buffalo, the marine goat, fowls, ducks, pigs, geese, dogs and cats.¹³⁶ According to Ibn Batūṭah, the domestic animals included the buffalo, sheep, cattle, hens and pigeons.¹³⁷ The reference to the existence of camel in this riverine territory is interesting. That camels were known to Bengal is also evident from the Caryāpadas.¹³⁸ It is also seen that Sher Shāh used camel in transporting the wealth of Gauda to Rohtasgarh on the eve of Humayun's invasion of Bengal.¹³⁹ As camels are unlikely to be found in the humid plains of Bengal, it is likely that they were imported into Bengal from the west. Horses were chiefly used in warfare. They were also used as vehicles of the well-to-do class in Bengal. Horses were mostly imported from outside.¹⁴⁰

135. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. 6,9,36,48,69,70.

136. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 119.

137. Ibn Batūṭah : The Rehla, PP. 234-235.

138. Cf. R.Ā. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol. I, P. 617.

139. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., Vol. I, P. 389.

140. Cf. Kamrunnesa Islam : Aspects of Economic History of Bengal, P. 41.

Elephants were also known in Bengal and is mentioned in different sources. The Caryāpadas refer to elephants.¹⁴¹ They were used both for fighting¹⁴² and as aristocratic means of conveyance.¹⁴³ Besides their military importance elephants were also used by the rich for hunting and riding.

(c) Crafts and Industries :

Village manufacture and Cottage industries : Though agriculture was the basis of the economy of Bengal, a number of crafts and industries were known to have been practised during the period in question and these played an important part in the life of the people. These crafts and industries were carried on a small scale using agricultural raw materials and the expertise was in most cases hereditary. As a result, the quality of the products was excellent, and they were of high artistic value.

Among house hold industries, the most important were those of weaving and spinning of cotton.¹⁴⁴ The various process of weaving and spinning were the same as are employed in the villages of Bengal to-day. Shoe making, making of agricultural implements and small arms, such as bows and arrows, were other minor cottage industries.¹⁴⁵ The black-smiths had a busy time. The process of melting iron-ore and its use for the manufacture of various articles was well-known. Gold-smiths and silver-smiths used to make beautiful

141. Atindra Majumdar : Caryāpada, caryā No.9, PP. 156-157.

142. 'Afīf : T.F.S., P. 118.

143. Vijaya Gupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 368.

144. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 119-120, 125-126.

145. Cf. H.S. Bhatia (ed) : Political, Legal and Military History of India, vol. 4, P. 260.

ornaments of various designs. They had attained great skill in the art of jewellery. The innumerable references to the use of ornaments of various kinds in Bengali literature¹⁴⁶ give testimony to this. Inlay work had also become very popular and all classes of women were fond of using ornaments with inlay-work. A class of craftsmen also worked conch-shell into various ornaments.¹⁴⁷ Metal workers make various kinds of utensils, different types of vessels, jugs, large plates of brass and copper, bells, lamp stand, betel-leaf boxes etc.¹⁴⁸ The manufacture of unrefined sugar (guḍ), oils, liquors, spirits and scents were also important rural industries. The manufacture of spirits and liquors is very old in Bengal. The Chinese sources inform us that liquors and spirits were manufactured from cocoanut, rice, aquatic plant kajang and from "t'ung seeds",¹⁴⁹ and they were openly sold in the market¹⁵⁰ Variety of oils were manufactured through the process of oil-press (ghani or ghan) which is still in use in rural Bengal.¹⁵¹ Various kinds of scents were prepared. A class of scent merchants known as gandha banik existed in society.¹⁵² Rose water was prepared in abundance. It was commonly used for sprinkling on firendly gathering and social and cultural assemblies for its cooling and refreshing effects. In the Chinese accounts we have references to rose water used in the banquet given in honour of the Chinese envoys by the Sultān of Bengal.¹⁵³ There was a class of drum-makers and makers of other musical instruments.¹⁵⁴ Other modest industries consisted

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146. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd end., PP. 7, 13, 18, 19, 26-63, 71, 73;
Sagīr : Yusuf-Zolekha, PP. 8-10, 23, 33, 37, 75, 85, 100, 129, 155,
159-162, 232.
147. K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, P. 2-4.
148. Ibid.
149. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 119, 125.
150. J.R.A.S., 1895, P. 531.
151. K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, P. 203.
152. Vijayagupta : Padmā Purāna, P. 368.
153. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 127, 131.
154. K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan., P. 204.

of the making of ropes and baskets, earthen pots, fans etc. Though there were many village manufactures and cottage industries, their production was limited. Social status and limited opportunities of village craftsmen discouraged them from making progress beyond certain limits.¹⁵⁵

Urban industries : There were no big factories or manufacturing concerns on large-scale in the modern sense of the term.¹⁵⁶ Generally the producers of commodities in towns arranged with the dealers and merchants in capital towns for the supply of their finished goods or articles. These dealers and merchants distributed them for sale to others. Sometimes they themselves carried on internal and external trade of these finished goods. In some capital cities enterprising business people employed many craftsmen to manufacture articles and goods commonly on demand. They often personally supervised the manufacturing process.

Among the urban industries the most important were textile, sugar, metal-work, stone and brick works, paper and ship-building.

Textile industry : The textile was the most prominent industry of Bengal. A large proportion, perhaps the majority of the industrial population was engaged in this branch of economy. Textile industry included the manufacture of cotton, woollen and silken cloth.¹⁵⁷ Jute fabrics also seem to have constituted another variety of textile goods.¹⁵⁸

155. H.S. Bhatia (ed) : Political, Legal and Military History of India, vol. 4, PP. 259-260.

156. K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, P. 205.

157. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 125, 132.

158. Abū'l Fadl : A.A., vol. II, P. 51.

We have earlier seen that cotton was extensively grown in Bengal. References of jute crop are also found in Bengali literature of the fourteenth centuries. Bengal reared mulberry trees and silk-worms also. These together with the harbour facilities of Bengal and its relations with the outside world helped Bengal in building up an extensive textile industry.

Varieties of cloth of different qualities, colour and sizes were manufactured in Bengal. Chao-ju Kua¹⁵⁹ and Mahuan¹⁶⁰ list cotton goods as one of the important manufactures of Bengal. The quality of Bengal textile products was excellent. Its fine cotton cloth called 'muslin' was famous all over the world. It was made out of the local product. Amīr Khāusru was warm in the praise of the 'muslin' of Bengal. He writes, "It was so fine and light that a hundred yards of this muslin could be wrapped round the head and one could still see the hair underneath". He also observes that one could fold a whole piece of this cloth inside one's nail, yet it was large enough to cover the world when unfolded.¹⁶¹ This is confirmed by Abū'l Faḍl, who wrote, "The Sarkār of Sunārgāon produces a species of muslin very fine and in great quantity". He also mentioned that the Sarkār of Bārbakābād produced a fine cloth called Gangājal (Ganges water).¹⁶² Bengali literature also refers to this variety of cloth.¹⁶³

The Chinese envoys spoke very highly of the cotton manufacture of Bengal and gave a detailed account of the various types of cotton cloths.

159. Hirth and Rockhill (ed) : Chao Ju Kua, P. 97.

160. J.R.A.S., 1895, PP. 531-532.

161. K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, P.208, f.n.3.

162. Abū'l Faḍl : A.A., vol. II, P. 51.

163. কোন প্রতিদেয় বোড়ি পরে গঙ্গাজল মাড়ি
- Bansi Dāsa : Manasāmangala, Quoted by T.C. Das Gupta in Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 282, f.n.3.

They mentioned the following six kinds of cotton stuff, but the indigenous names beyond 'sanabaf' and 'cantar', are hard to restore :¹⁶⁴

- (i) Pi-pu or Pi-po was a kind of cloth of different colours which was according to one account over three feet broad and fifty-seven feet long and according to another over two feet broad and fifty-six feet long. It was fine and glossy like painted stuffs.
- (ii) Man-che-ti was a ginger-yellow cotton stuff which was four feet broad and over fifty long. It was closely woven and strong.
- (iii) Sha-na-pa-fu was a kind of cotton gauze. It was five feet broad and thirty feet long. It was like pongee.
- (iv) Ki-pai-lei-ta-li was also a cotton gauze. It was three feet broad and sixty feet long. This cloth was loosely woven and it was of coarse quality.
- (v) Sha-ta-eul was a stuff used for turbans. Its measurement is given in one source as five inches broad and forty feet long and in another as two and half feet broad and four feet long. It resembled the Chinese san-so.
- (vi) Ma-hei-ma-lei (malmal) was a stuff four feet broad and twenty feet long. On one side it was covered with a nap half an inch long. It was like tu-lo-kin of China.

164. Annals., vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 120, 123, 125; Mahuan : Ying-Yai Sheng-lan, Eng. tr., by J.V.G. Mills, PP. 162-163; C.f. C.E.H.I., vol. I, P. 79.

Ibn Baṭūṭah also has incidentally referred to the cotton fabrics of Bengal.¹⁶⁵ European travellers also mention the cotton products of Bengal. In the words of Barbosa, "There is much cotton in this country. They manufacture many kinds of stuffs, extremely fine and delicate; coloured for their own use and white for trade to all parts". He continued that a kind of sash named Sirband, made in Bengal, was much esteemed by Europeans for the head-dress of ladies and by Persians and Arab merchants for use as turbans. Arab merchants were similarly fond of using Bengal Sinabaffs for shirts.¹⁶⁶ In speaking of the varieties of fine cloth, Verthema has referred to some varieties, such as bairam, namone, lizati, caintar, douzar and sina-baff. He also observed that nowhere in the world he found such abundance of cotton cloth as in Bengal.¹⁶⁷ The finest varieties muslins were very expensive and they were mostly manufactured for the members of the court or for export to foreign countries. In literary sources coarse cotton cloths are referred to as Khuan, Khauami or Khami.¹⁶⁸

Jute, though perhaps not cultivated as extensively as in modern times, must also have supplied raw material for some varieties of textiles. There is positive evidence of jute crop and jute manufactures in Bengal from the fourteenth century, if not earlier.¹⁶⁹ Candīdāsa refers to the jute śādī in his Kāvya.¹⁷⁰ Bengali literature also refers to the export of jute cloths to the neighbouring countries.¹⁷¹ In the late medieval Bengali

165. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla., P. 235.

166. H.S. Bhatia (ed) : Political, Legal and Military History of India, vol. 4, P. 264.

167. K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, P. 97.

168. T.C.Das Gupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 268, ff.

169. See Supra, P. 239-240.

170. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd end., P. 37, Vijayagupta also refers to jute śādī (Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 296).

171. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 272-274.

literature we find the names of jute śādīs namely - kāla pāt śādī, āgun pāt śādī, kāncā pāt śādī etc.¹⁷²

Silk cloths were manufactured in Bengal.¹⁷³ Candidasa gives several references to silk cloths.¹⁷⁴ Later Bengali literature also refer to different varieties of silk.¹⁷⁵ It appears that Sarkār Ghoraghat was quite famous for its silk products.¹⁷⁶ Woollen cloths are also found in Bengal and there are some references to it in different sources.¹⁷⁷

The textiles were produced in sufficient quantity and it is said that Bengal exported very large quantities of cotton and other goods to various countries.

There is no direct reference to the art of dyeing in Bengal in our period. But it appears in the contemporary Bengali literature and the accounts of the Chinese visitors that the people, irrespective of sex, were fond of bright colours and were habituated in wearing coloured cloths.¹⁷⁸ So it can be inferred that dyeing industry must have existed in Bengal. The textile industry also provided incentive to other allied industries like embroidery, good thread work etc.

Metal work : Next in importance to the textiles was the metal industry which continued to make progress during the period in question. The metal workers of Bengal handled various metals like iron, brass, copper, bronze,

172. D.C. Sen : Pūrva Vaṅga Gītikā, vol.II, pt.II, PP. 225-226.

173. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 120.

174. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. 5,9,28,29,35,51,103,112, 133,154,161.

175. T.C.Das Gupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 280-281.

176. Abūl Fadl : A.A., vol.II, P.51.

177. Annals., vol.I, 1945 A.D., P. 123, 132; D.C. Sen : Pūrva Vaṅga Gītikā, vol. II, Pt. II, PP. 225-226.

178. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. 3,29,41,73; Annals., vol.I, 1945, P. 125.

gold, silver etc. with great skill. They manufactured agricultural implements and other articles of daily use like basins, cups, knives, scissors, cooking utensils etc. Goldsmiths and silver-smiths made excellent gold and silver ornaments of various designs and beauty. Lavish display of beautiful charming articles of gold and silver, of jewellery and pearls in the courts of the rulers and the use of costly ivory in the decoration of furniture and palaces of the rulers indicate an advanced condition of the artistic work in precious metals. They also made great advancement in the manufacture of inlaid ornaments and embroidered work.¹⁷⁹ The Chinese record that all the pillars of the palaces were ornamented in brass.¹⁸⁰ The Bengali artisans were also renowned for their workmanship in ivory carving and wood work.

Stone and Brick works : The Bengali artisans and masons displayed great skill in stone and brick works.¹⁸¹ It is evident from the Devikot Inscription of Sultān Sikandar Shāh that the writing of that inscription was done by an employee of the court who earned the title of "Zarrīn Dast" (golden hand) for his good calligraphy.¹⁸² In fact, the early Iliyās Shāhī inscriptions with their styles of writing eloquently speak of the artistic skill of the stone carvers. Bricks and stones were largely used in constructing buildings, palaces and mosques. Chinese accounts mention that the dwelling of the King was all of bricks set in mortar. The same sources also mention that the King sat on a high throne inlaid with precious stones.¹⁸³ The

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179. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd end., PP.7,13,18,19,26-73; Sagīr : Yusuf-Zolekhā, Quoted by Ahmad Sharif - Bāngālī O-Bangla Sāhitya, P. 354.
 180. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P.124.
 181. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., FP. 18, 19, 63, 67.
 182. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P. 12.
 183. Annals, I, 1945 A.D., P. 121.

Sultāns and nobles were fond of architecture and they employed many masons and stone carvers to construct their buildings, palaces, mosques etc. As a result, masons and stone-cutters were always in great demand in Bengal.

Sugar Industry : Another important industry of our period was sugar. Sugar-cane was extensively cultivated in Bengal from a very early period.¹⁸⁴ The Chinese records of our period show that sugarcane production was quite extensive in Bengal.¹⁸⁵ Ibn Baṭūṭah has also incidentally referred to the sugar production of Bengal.¹⁸⁶ In fact, sugar manufacture developed into an important industry in the Muslim period. From the writings of Barbosa, it is learnt that white sugar of a very good quality is made in Bengal and many ships were loaded with it for export to other countries.¹⁸⁷ Varthema also speaks of the abundance of sugar production of Bengal.¹⁸⁸

Paper Industry : Paper industry was also an important feature of the economy of Bengal at that time. In one account of the Chinese envoys it is said that the Bengal paper was white and that it used to be made out from the bark of a tree. The paper was as smooth and glossy as deer skin. In another account it appears that paper was made of mulberry tree.¹⁸⁹

Ship-building : Ship-building seems to have developed into a considerable industry in Bengal from early times. In the Muslim period it received further impetus in view of the growing need for naval warfare and unprecedented stimulus to the riverine and sea-faring commercial activities.

184. J.B.O.R.S., 1918 A.D., vol. IV, P. 437; N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 130.

185. Annals., vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 119, 123, 125.

186. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, P. 235.

187. Hakluyt Society, vol. II, PP. 145-146.

188. J.N. Dasgupta : Bengal in the sixteenth century, P. 117.

189. Annals., vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 120, 125.

The extensive forests of Bengal facilitated the progress of the ship building industry.¹⁹⁰ It is mentioned by Abūl Fadl that the dense forests of the Sarkār Bazuha used to supply long and thick timbers with which excellent masts could be made.¹⁹¹

For the purpose of communications and trade - both internal and external - and for naval warfare in the riverine country, the Bengali artisans manufactured varieties of boats, big and small. The contemporary records confirm this fact.¹⁹² The author of Masālik al-Abṣār mentioned that many of the ships of Bengal had mills, ovens and bāzārs. He also observed that ships were so large that the passengers of the same vessel came to know each other only after some time. Regarding the speed of the boats he further observed that if an arrow was shot at the foremost one of two hundred moving boats it would fall on the middle of one of them on account of their fast speed.¹⁹³ That the Bengali artisans built swift-sailing boats is supported by the writings of candīdāsa, who expresses that "the boat began to move like a shooting star".¹⁹⁴

Later European travellers also testify to the fact that Bengal manufactured varieties of boats, big and small.¹⁹⁵ Later Bengali literature are full of references to the glorious tradition of ship-building industry in Bengal. These sources also show that the Bengali merchants built very big and swift-sailing boats for carrying business, which definitely included sea-faring trade.¹⁹⁶

190. There are references in Candīdāsa's : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Naukā Khando, P.64.

191. A.A., vol.II, P.51.

192. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.64; Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, P.236; J.R.A.S., 1895, i. 530.

193. Quoted by M.A.Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.I, P.394.

194. S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.74.

195. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bāṅglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn. P.333; J.N.Dasgupta : Bengal in the sixteenth century, P.117.

196. Vijaygupta : Padmā Purāṇa, PP.241-244; Bansīdāsa : Manasāmaṅgala, P.288;

It is interesting to note certain customs and rules which were followed by the artisans in building a vessel. The first work to be done was a ceremony known as 'Dāṇḍār Pātan' on an auspicious moment. After this ceremony, the actual work of construction was to begin. First a measurement of the vessel was taken.¹⁹⁷ Then the keel was to be carefully constructed with which strong pieces of timber were joined with the help of iron nails. Next, the 'Galui' (prow) was to be built. The deck, pātātan (pieces of timber joined to the keel) and the shed were also made. After these, the construction of helm and rudders and decoration-work completed the building of a vessel. Vivid description of the construction of a vessel is also available in later Bengali literature.¹⁹⁸ From these descriptions it can safely be inferred that the ship building industry made a tremendous progress during the period under review.

Mat making was also another important industry.¹⁹⁹ Mat often resembled woven silk.²⁰⁰ Bengali literature makes frequent mention of 'lohitpāti' or red mat and 'sitalpāti' or cool mat.²⁰¹ The fine mats were listed as articles of luxury and were in great demand among the wealthier section of the society.

197. দুভঞ্জন বুঝি কৈল দান্ডার পাতনে ।।

চারি পাট চিরা নান্য দিন যোথ মাপে ।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Naukā Khando, P. 64.

198. Vijaygupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 241-244; Bansīdāsa : Manasāmaṅgala, P. 286; Mukunda Rāma : Caṇḍīkāvyā, edn. by Kumar Bandopadhyay, PP. 221-222.

199. Annals., vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 132.

200. Abū'l Fadl : A.A., vol. II, P. 50.

201. Mukunda Rāma : Caṇḍīkāvyā, ed. by Kumar Bandhopadhyay, P. 259.

(d) Trade and Commerce :

Bengal was famous for its commercial activities from early period of its history. Its alluvial soil watered by the Ganges and its offshoots has proved to be fertile with a consequent abundance of nature's gifts and here merchants came from diverse countries to partake of her bounty. The high antiquity of its trade and commerce, both internal and external, is borne out by a large number of indigenous and foreign sources and many of its products were known and admired in different parts of the ancient world. This glorious commercial tradition of Bengal received further impetus from the great surplus of the agricultural and manufactured articles and from the new maritime spirit brought about by the Muslims during the early Iliyās Shāhī period.

For the convenience of our discussion, the subject will be discussed under two heads - (i) internal trade and (ii) external trade.

(i) Internal trade : The internal trade of the country was carried on chiefly by means of permanent hāts or markets. The contemporary records refer to the markets where commodities of everyday use were brought and sold.²⁰² These markets are held usually at centres within easy reach by land or water. In the rural areas, hāts or markets were held on fixed days - once, twice or thrice a week.²⁰³ But in cities, towns and in other important places of the country, markets sat daily.²⁰⁴ There were also special big markets where extensive and very big deals in commodities were made by trading classes and

202. Ibn Batūṭah : The Rehla, PP. 234-235; Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. 20, 22, 70, 72; Annals., vol. I, 1945, PP. 121, 123.

203. S. Purchas : His Pilgrims, vol. IX, P. 34; C.E.H.I., vol. I, P. 325.

204. নিমিতি দ্বিধি বিধে আঁওঁ গম্বুজা হাটে
S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 20.

- Caṇḍīdāsa :

brokers. In these markets the main business was done through regular shops.²⁰⁵ Besides, there were petty shopkeepers and dealers who carried on their business in moveable stalls. Ibn Batutah saw rice being sold in the streets of Bengal.²⁰⁶ In small towns and villages craftsmen preferred to sell their finished goods and articles direct to the consumers in the market.²⁰⁷ The purchase and sale of all kinds of cattle usually took place in cattle fairs which were occasionally organised.

Capital towns like Fīrūzābād, Sunārgāon, Muāzzamābād, Satgāon, Shahr-i-Naw, Jannatabād or Chātgāon, Kāmrup, Fathābād etc. were centres of inland trade. Brisk inland trade was carried in these towns. The chinese accounts inform us that the country had a big trade. The market place in the capital was full of different types of shops where all sorts of things were available. In the course of his trip by boat from Sylhet Ibn Batutah noticed hāts and bāzārs at every turn of the river.²⁰⁹ This impressed him very much and he said that he felt as if he was going through a market place. He also noticed innumerable boats on the river. He also saw many ships in the sea-port of Chittagong. Regarding the prosperous conditions of the market Ibn Batutah says, "nowhere else in the world had he seen such comfortable abundance of rice as he did in Bengal". He also mentions that cow, buffalo, hens, lamb and pigeons were sold in the market. Rose-water, ghee and oil were among

205. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P.130.

206. Ibn. Batutah : The Rehla P. 234.

207. Ibid., P. 244.

208. Annals, I, 1945 A.D., PP. 121, 123, 130.

209. Ibn Batutah : The Rehla, Extracts translated and published in N.K. Bhattasali's Coins and Chronology, P. 143.

the commodities he saw being sold. He also refers to the cloth market and slave market.²¹⁰ Thus it appears internal trade of Bengal was in a fairly flourishing condition at that time.

Usually the duration of the market was limited to day time. The markets sit in the morning and business transactions were carried on upto the noon. Candīdāsa mentions that Rādhā used to start from her house before the sun rise to sell her commodities in the market. Once she was late due to the inconvenience of ferry boat for which she was found lamenting by saying that keeping herself alone, all of her companions had crossed the river. It is high time and the hāt (market) will be closed very soon.²¹¹

The intra-local trade of the towns and cities was necessarily more complex and varied than that of the country side. It is the custom in India, when they build a public edifice, to surround it with a large market-place. Hence, most major towns had several markets or bāzārs, one of which was the chief or great bāzār. But the bulk of the urban commerce was inter-local rather than intra-local for the commodities on sale in the urban markets were mostly the products of other places, near or far. Again, most urban markets not only catered to the needs of local consumers, wholesale and

210. Ibn Batūṭah : The Rehla, PP. 234-236.

211. (a) শেষ পহর রাতি কুয়িলী কড়ি গাএ ।

তভোঁহো চিআইতে আজী বা নাগিন গাএ ।।

দখি যিকে জা আজি মথুরার রাজ ।

তবে সুইহে কেহেন এতেন বেআজ ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 66.

(b) আমাক ছাড়াই পাগ সব সখি গেলা ।।

হাট উন্মুড়িবে প্রচুর তৈল বেলা ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 72.

retail, but acted as emporia and entrepôts whence dealers from other places secured their supplies.²¹²

The inter-local trade - both the country to town and inter-town flow of commodities - was essentially a short distance version of the inter-regional trade. The villages around a town are often described as being dependent on the latter. The collection of revenue in cash generated a pressure to sell; the towns providing the necessary demand were dependent on the villages for the supply of not only primary products but most of the manufactured goods they consumed. A striking feature of the inter-local trade was the extreme responsiveness of food supply to market demand.²¹³

The inter-regional trade in the period was not predominantly an exchange of highly-priced luxury products. The trade in food stuff and wide range of textile products, some of which surely cannot be described as luxuries, were the most important components of the inter-regional trade of the period. No evidence is yet available on the volume of the inter-regional trade and commerce.

The merchants of the period were heterogeneous in terms of their functions and wealth. There were big traders. They enjoyed considerable influence with the administration. The fortunes of the great trading families were generally short lived; their failures were political rather than commercial.

212. C.E.H.I., vo.1, P. 327-327 and 339. Those markets which sit daily are usually called bāzārs. On the other hand, hāts are held on certain days of the week. Markets are of two types - retail market and wholesale market. Wholesale market is also known as mandī.

213. Ibid., P. 327.

Less affluent and powerful than the great merchants, there were other independent traders trading with their own and borrowed capital. The range of their activities were relatively limited, but still on a large scale. They employed their own agents and sometimes had a dealer network. The typical small merchants operated within a limited area and their functions were often, but not always, specialized. Nor were their activities always confined to a particular locality. The peasant too, at times acted as trader carrying his produce to the local market or the town.²¹⁴

There were brokers. Their functions were also specialized. Each class of goods had its separate brokers. But the line of demarcation between merchants and middlemen was not always clear. There are references to dalals being 'accustomed with and appointed by the Government' to particular lines of business in different parts of Bengal.²¹⁵

The social base of the trading community was confined to a small group of castes - banyas and others. Great Muslim merchants were mostly of foreign origin and often settled in Bengal permanently. The traditional merchantile castes of Bengal appear as small traders. Thus it appears that the various classes of merchants represented not only differences in the scale of commercial activity, but a certain measure of specialization.

Bengal is a riverine country and as such amongst all forms of transport, waterways dominated the scene. These waterways may be divided into two categories. Big and deep rivers which are navigable throughout

214. Cf. C.E.H.I., Vol. I, PP. 340-341.

215. Ibid., P. 342.

the year and capable of carrying craft of various sizes, formed the first category; while the second category included the smaller and shallower rivers and streams which are navigable in some cases through out the year and in others only during the monsoon and for small country boats.

Apart from the waterways, there were a number of roads and pathways running all over the country. Important towns were linked with roads. Bullock carts and buffalo carts were used as transport for men and goods to cover short distance. Because of the typical river ridden surface of a large part of the country ferries must certainly have been an important feature of road transport.

It is not possible to form any accurate or even tentative estimate of the volume of internal trade of Bengal. It may be said with confidence that Fīrūzābād and other headquarters of the administrative units were the focus of the internal trade of their respective territories and displayed considerable commercial activity. Hence it may be inferred that the volume of internal trade, as a whole, was large.

(ii) External trade : Foreign travellers have also referred to the glory of the maritime commerce which Bengal enjoyed during the period under review. The Chinese records show that the rich built ships in which they carried on commerce with the foreign countries.²¹⁶ Bengali literature of the later period also mention that Bengal enjoyed enormously favourable foreign trade.²¹⁷

216. J.R..A.S. 1895 A.D., P. 530.

217. Vijaygupta : Padma Purāna, PP, 241-245; 254-278; Bansīdāsa : Manasāmaṅgala, PP. 318-339, 396-399; Mukunda Rāma : Caṇḍikāvya, ed. by Kumar Bandopadhyay, PP. 191, 193-202.

The commercial activities led to the development of several ports and towns in Bengal. The accounts of the Chinese envoys record that "Tsa-ti-Kiang" (Chatigaon) was at the mouth of the sea. Merchants from foreign countries came from out side and anchored there. They assembled and divided the profits of their merchandise at that place.²¹⁸ Considering commercial importance, the Portuguese called it the 'Porto Grande'.²¹⁹ Abūl Faḍl mentioned Chittagong as a flourishing sea-port and the resort of the Christian and other merchants.²²⁰

Satgāon was another great emporium of foreign commerce.²²¹ It figures quite prominently in medieval Bengali literature.²²² The Portuguese used to call it 'Porto Pequeno' or small port. Satgāon continued to enjoy such a unique position down to the middle of the sixteenth century.²²³ In the account of Ibn Baṭūṭah Sunārgāon figures as an important port where the merchants of China and Java came with their ships for trade.²²⁴ The Chinese records corroborate the evidence of Ibn Baṭūṭah. In one Chinese account Sunārgāon appears as a great centre of business where all goods were collected and distributed.²²⁵ It continued to be a flourishing port even to the later part of the sixteenth century.²²⁶

The materials at our disposal²²⁷ show that there were two principal sea-routes at that time for overseas trade. One route led in the south-

218. Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 128.

219. M.R. Tarafdar : Iḥṣān shāhī Bengal, P. 145.

220. Abūl Faḍl : A.A., vol. II, P. 51.

221. See Bengal Past and Present, 1909. A.S. Purchas : His Pilgrims, X, P. 182.

222. Vipradāsa : Manasā Vijaya, P. 142; Brindābandāsa : Caitanya Bhāgavata, Antya Khando, P. 381.

223. Joao de Barros : Da Asia, extracts in the Book of Duarte Barbosa, II, appendix I, P. 244. Eng. tr. appended in

224. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, /Bhattachali's Coins and Chronology, P. 143.

225. Annals, I, 1945 A.D., P. 130.

eastern direction touching the countries like Burma, Arakan, Pegu, Ava, Siam, Malacca, Sumatra, Sunda, Java, the Spice Islands, Celebes, Borneo and Champa and extending upto China. The other route led in the south-western direction passing Orissa, Coromandel, Ceylon and Malabar coast, and reaching Arabia and Abyssinia via the Persian Gulf and the Arabian sea. Entering Bengal at the point of Chittagong, sea going ships could perhaps go as far as Sunargaon, following the course of the river Meghna. Ibn Baṭūṭah and the Chinese envoys who visited Bengal in the fourteenth century and in the early fifteenth century respectively followed this route.²²⁸ The routes show that the products of Bengal were reaching the countries lying on them. Ibn Baṭūṭah sailed in a Chinese junk (a big merchant ship) which was bound for Java from Sunārgāon.²²⁹ This suggests that China, Burma, the Malayan Islands, Ceylon and other countries had direct commercial connections with Bengal. It is evident from the accounts of the Chinese envoys that China had trade relations with Bengal in the early fifteenth century.²³⁰ Marco Polo, who visited southern India, referred to the existence of Bengal's trade with that part of India.²³¹ In Bengali literature there are references to great sea-borne trade with Southern coast, Ceylon and Gujrat.²³² Foreign travellers of the 16th century also mentioned Bengal's trade relations with

226. S. Purchas : His Pilgrims, X, P. 185.

227. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, PP. 235, 241; Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 117-120-121, 123, 128, 133; Hakluyt Society, II, PP. 148-215; Varthema : The Travels of Varthema, Eng. tr. by John Winter Jones, Hakluyt Society, 1863, P. 212; C.E.H.I., vol. I, PP. 130, 134, 142, 143, 148-150.

228. M.R. Tarafdar : Husain Shāhī Bengal, P. 144.

229. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, Eng. tr. appended in Bhattasali's Coins and Chronology, P. 143.

230. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 99-133.

231. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 173.

232. Vijaygupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 235-253; Vipradāsa : Manasā Vijaya, PP. 150, 155, 164-166, 140, 142; Bansīdāsa : Manasāmaṅgala, PP. 318-339, 396-399; Mukunda Rāma : Caṇḍikāvya, ed. by Kumar Bandopadhyay, P. 191.

India, Ceylon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra, the Malayan Islands, Burma, Coromandal coast, Arabia, Persia and Abyssinia.²³³ Thus it is clear that the market for Bengal goods extended from Abyssinia to China.²³⁴

A careful examination of the materials at our disposal on Bengal's overseas trade shows that the exports of Bengal included textile goods, rice, sugar, ginger, pepper, lac, mirabolans, oil, butter, dry fish, pulses, fruits, betel-leaves, betel-nut, onion, garlic, camphor, aloe-wood, goats, sheep, pigeon, jute stuff, radish turmeric, salt, joani, harital, glass etc. Of these textile goods were exported in great volumes and the export of rice occupied the second important position in Bengal's foreign trade. It is also revealed from the later sources that sugar was also exported in large quantities.²³⁵

On the other hand, it also appears from the various sources that Bengal imported gold, silver, satins, silk, blue and white porcelain, iron, musk, vermillion, quick-silver, grass mats, corals, ruby, diamond, ivory, sankha, sandal-paste, pearl etc.²³⁶

It is very difficult to give an accurate idea of the volume of foreign trade in the absence of any reliable data regarding imports and exports. Hence, it is not also easy to say for certain whether Bengal enjoyed a favourable balance of trade or not. It appears from the Chinese

233. Hakluyt Society, II, PP. 136-147; S.Purchas : His Pilgrims X, P. 185.

234. C.E.H.I., vol.I, PP. 130, 134, 142, 143, 148-150.

235. Hakluyt Society, vol, II, P. 145; The Itinerary of Varthema, tr.by J.W. Jones with a discourse on Varthema and his travels in Southern India by R.C. Temple, 1928 A.D., P. 79.

236. Annals, I, 1945 A.D., P. 123; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 267-274; Vipradāsa : Manasā Vijaya, P. 149, Bansīdāsa : Manasāmaṅgala, PP. 380-390, 392-393.

records that the foreigners paid for the commodities of Bengal mostly in gold diamond and other precious metals.²³⁷ This contention finds support in Bengali literature of the later period.²³⁸ As a result, there was a large flow of wealth into Bengal which may point to the fact that the balance of trade was in favour of Bengal at that time. M.R. Tarafdar also thinks so, and writes, "Depending on the evidence of the continuous supply of gold, silver and also bronze it is presumed that the balance was generally in favour of south-east Bengal at least for some time"²³⁹ Thus Alexander Dow remarks²⁴⁰ that 'till the establishment of British rule and the commercial monopoly of the East India Company, Bengal was considered as a sink where gold and silver disappeared without the least prospect of return' may not be completely verbose.

Here it is to be mentioned that during the period in question, Eastern trade was in the hands of the Arab, Persian and Chinese merchants.²⁴¹ These traders were maintaining sea-route communication between Bengal and the Persian Gulf and were carrying the products of Bengal to the east as far as China and also to Arabia and Abyssinia. Ibn Baṭūṭah testifies to the great influence wielded by traders from the northern side of the Persian Gulf. It also appears from his account that most of these traders were Muslims²⁴². Their influence in the navigation of the Eastern seas was so

237. Annals, I, 1945, P. 123.

238. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 268, 269, 271, 272; Vipradāsa : Manasā Vijaya, P. 149.

239. M.R. Tarafdar : "Trade and Society in Early Medieval Bengal", The Indian Historical Review, vol. IV, No.2, 1978, P. 279.

240. Alexander Dow : Indoostan, P. CXII.

241. M.R. Tarafdar : Jusain Shāhī Bengal, P. 146; I.H.R., vol. IV, No.2, 1978, P. 85.

242. C.E.H.I., Vol. I, PP. 134, 137.

predominant that the sea-borne trade of Bengal had completely gone out of the reach of the local traders and it was being thoroughly controlled by them. As a result, possibly foreign ships crowded the ports of Bengal.

(e) Currency System :

The Chinese records show that silver coins called tankah and sea-shells or cowdis were widely in circulation in Bengal in the period of our investigation.²⁴³ It may be mentioned here that though coins were in use in Bengal from the third century B.C., it ceased to exist in the time of the Pala and the Sena Kings.²⁴⁴ Minhāj mentioned that when the Muslim conquerors entered Bengal, they did not find gold or silver coins there. At that time only the cowdis were in circulation to act as the medium of exchange in every kind of transaction, small or big.²⁴⁵ But with the establishment of Muslim power in Bengal coins appear to be issued again.²⁴⁶

During the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period, Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwāḍ Khaljī, Daulat Shāh bin Maudud, Malik Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Yūzbak, Rukn al-Dīn Kaikāūs, Shams al-Dīn fīrūz Shāh and his three sons - Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmud, Shihāb al-Dīn Bughdah Shāh and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur, Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh and 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī Shāh issued coins.²⁴⁷ The issues of these Muslim rulers of Bengal are mostly of silver; gold coins

243. Annals, vol.I, 1945 A.D., PP. 117, 125, 131-132.

244. N.R.Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, PP. 194-197.

245. Minhāj : T.N., Eng. tr., PP. 555-556.

246. J.V.R.M., vol.4, 1975-76 A.D., P. 34.

247. Ibid; H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, PP. 145-150; Shamsuddin Ahmad : Suppl.I.M.C., II, PP.37-43; A.Karim : Corpus., PP.34-50; 137-143; J.N.S.I., vo. XVII, Pt.II, 1955 A.D., PP.86-91.

are known only of Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh and Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh.²⁴⁸

The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns issued numerous silver coins minted from different towns of Bengal.²⁴⁹ This abundance of coins suggests that there was a considerable increase in the volume of trade and commerce as also of foreign trade in this period.

From among the so far known 947 silver coins of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns, we get mint names from 510 coins.²⁵⁰ A close observation shows that out of the 510 coins, 356 were issued from Fīrūzābād. The rest of the coins were issued from Sunārgāon, Shahr-i-nau, Mu'azzamābād, Satgāon, Jannatabād, Chāwalistān and Chāt-gāon. The following tables are given incorporating the details of the coins of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns :

Table No. 1

of Sltān	Total No. of coins issued	<u>Names of Mint</u>							
		Fīrūzā- bād	Sunār- gāon	Shahr- ī-Nau	Mu'azzam- ābād	Sat- -gaon	Chaw- ali	Jannata- bad	Chat- gaon
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Shāh	310	157	33	15	-	9	-	-	-
Shāh	286	108	11	5	22	10	1	-	-
al-Dīn	297	76	-	-	14	19	-	7	1
Shāh	54	15	-	-	4	3	-	-	-
	947	356	44	20	40	41	1	7	1

248. P.L.Gupta : Coins., P.97; Journal of the Bānglādes̄h Itihās Samiti, vol.II, 1973, P. 8.

249. A. Karim : Corpus., PP. 42-66.

250. Ibid., A.Karim : Chittagong University Cabinet, PP. 38-49.

Table No. 2

The maximum weight of the coin or coins issued by each of the Sultāns of the early Iliyās Shāhī period is shown in the following table :

Name of the Sultān	Maximum weight	Date	Mint
Iliyās Shāh	168.5984 grains	753 A.H.	Shahr-i-nau ²⁵¹
Sikandar Shāh	168 grains	759 A.H.	Sunārgāon ²⁵²
Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh	174 grains	-	Fīrūzābād ²⁵³
Saif al-Dīn Hamzah Shāh	165 grains	-	Fīrūzābād ²⁵⁴

Table No. 3

The minimum weight of the coin or coins issued by each of the Sultāns of early Iliyās Shāhī period is shown in the following table :

Name of the Sultān	Minimum weight	Date	Mint
Iliyās Shāh	157 grains	-	Shahr-i-nau ²⁵⁵
Sikandar Shāh	148.95302 grains	-	Fīrūzābād ²⁵⁶
Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh	145.52704 grains	-	- 257
Saif al-Dīn Hamzah Shāh	154.36977 grains	-	- 258

251. A. Karim : Chittagong University Cabinet, P. 39.

252. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol. II, P. 156.

253. Ibid., P. 157.

254. Ibid., P. 160.

255. Ibid., P. 152.

256. A. Karim : Chittagong University Cabinet, PP. 44-48.

257. Ibid., P. 48.

258. Ibid., P. 49.

The Chinese records show that all large business transactions were carried on with coins, but for small purchase the people of Bengal used sea-shells or cowḍis.²⁵⁹ This fact may be explained by the extreme cheapness of commodities which is also reflected in the accounts of Ibn Baṭūṭah. Actually, at that time the commodities of daily use were so cheap that the cowḍis which represented money of the lowest denomination, could be used most conveniently in day-to-day affairs. This rendered the use of coins quite unnecessary for small business transactions. The system followed in counting cowḍis was like this : 4 cowḍis make a gandā, 5 gandās a buḍi, 4 buḍis a paṇ, 16 paṇs a Kāhan and 10 kāhans a rupee.²⁶⁰ According to this calculation a rupee is equal to 4 x 5 x 4 x 16 x 10 or 12800 cowḍis.

The general prevalence of cowḍis in the currency system of Bengal had also rendered the minting of lower denominational coins quite unnecessary. For this reason, we do not find any remarkable attempt on the part of the Sultāns of Bengal to issue coins of lower denomination excepting Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh and Sultān Sikandar shāh. Of them Iliyās Shāh is found to mint half-rupee pieces from the mint town of Fīrūzābād.²⁶¹ The reason behind this issue of half-rupee coin was probably to facilitate the monetary transactions of the people of the metropolitan city of Pāṇḍuāh. In this respect they appear to have been influenced by the fractional coinage of the Sultāns of Delhi.

259. J.R.A.S., 1895 A.D., P. 530; Annals., vol.I, 1945 A.D., PP. 117,125, 131-132.

260. Abūl Fadl : A.A., vol.I, Eng.tr., P. 138; also cf. M.R. Tarafdar : Ihusain Shahi Bengal, P. 151.

261. Botham : Shillong Cabinet, P. 150, Nos. 33-34; Botham and Friel : Suppl. Shillong Cabinet, PP. 132-133, Nos. 2/89 and 2/90.

Gold coins were issued in small numbers during the Muslim period. The reason behind this was not the scarcity of gold in Bengal, for it is evident from the accounts of the Chinese envoys that gold was coming into this country as a result of its flourishing foreign trade. Since the cheapness of commodities facilitated the people of Bengal to transact their daily business with cowries conveniently, the Sultāns of Bengal did not feel it necessary to issue gold coins for transactions. Consequently they issued it for serving special commemorative purposes. We find that Shams al-Dīn Iliyās shāh and Sikandar Shāh issued gold coins for commemorating their accession to the throne of Bengal.²⁶²

General Observation on the Standard of Living

It is very natural that the different groups of people in the society had different 'standards' in keeping with their respective status and resources. Foreign travellers who visited Bengal during the later part of the 14th and the early part of the 15th centuries, present a picture of a small group in the ruling class living a life of great ostentation and luxury. They do not refer to the condition of the common people in details. Indigenous sources also often dwell on the luxurious life of the upper classes and occasionally refer to the privations of the ordinary people. The sharp contrast between the standards of living of the ruling classes and the common people was, of course, not peculiar to Bengal; it existed in a greater or lesser degree everywhere, including Europe.²⁶³

262. H.N. Wright : Catalogue, vol.II, P.150; A. Karim : Corpus, P. 51; J.A.S.B., 1889 A.D., PP. 32-33; J.N.S.I., vol. XVI, 1954 A.D., P.129.
 263. Cf. C.E.H.I., Vol. I, P. 458.

The upper classes : The upper classes in early Iliyās Shāhī Bengal consisted of the Sultān with their relatives, the nobles, the high officials and the wealthy merchants in the towns. The Sultāns of Bengal lived in extraordinary splendour and magnificence. Their courts and capital Panduah were famous for wealth and unusual prosperity. The Chinese records show that the Sultāns resided in luxurious and comfortable palaces of lofty and magnificent structures. The same source also points out that the Sultāns were accustomed to well-fitted, expensive and varied dresses. They were also fond of rich and varied dishes.²⁶⁴

The nobles are also extremely opulent and delight in luxury. They usually followed the fashion set by the court. They lived in palacial mansions. Their houses were built of bricks, some of them in three storeys and in grand style.²⁶⁵ Next to the household, the nobles spent lavishly on their table. They generally tried to imitate the ways of the Sultāns and cultivated their tastes, even to the point of developing a relish for the dishes favoured by the latter. The nobles also did not lag behind the Sultāns in spending lavishly on their dress. The high officials and the other wealthy persons also lived lavishly and luxuriously. They were also fond of rich and varied dishes. In the matter of clothes, they were in the habit of wearing costly and varied dresses.²⁶⁶ Both men and women of the upper classes were accustomed to adorning different parts of the body with jewellery. The members of the upper classes also spent large sums of money on marriages and other festivals. They provided patronage to the fine arts, especially to music.²⁶⁷

264. Annals., vol.I, 1945, PP. 117, 121-122, 124.

265. Ibid, P. 117.

266. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 131.

267. C.E.H.I., vol.I, PP. 469-471.

The middle classes : The middle classes included the professional men, skilled craftsmen, petty officials and the people of moderate income. In general, the members of the middle classes appear to have been fairly prosperous. They led their life moderately but on ceremonial occasions they used to spend much. A close observation shows that the middle classes were by no means quantitatively inconsequential in medieval society. They had important positions in the urban as well as in the rural sectors, and were considered 'genteel' as distinct from the commoners.²⁶⁸

The Commoners : But it seems that masses, the bulk of the population, were poor and did not have enough to satisfy their needs. The commoners lived in simple and low houses, instead of lofty and elevated buildings. They were accustomed to live in houses with thatched roofs. These houses were made by roping bamboos together upon a plinth of mud excavated at the site.²⁶⁹ Their houses were often scrubbed with cow-dung²⁷⁰ and do not appear to have been well-equipped.

The standard food of the commoners, no doubt, lacked the richness and variety of that of the higher classes. The usual food of the commoners appears to have been rice, fish, pulse, śāg and other vegetables prepared in a very simple way.²⁷¹ A favourite dish with them was brinjal curry and rice left over-night in cold water and taken next day.²⁷²

268. Ibid., P. 466.

269. Ibid., P. 460.

270. Travels of Marco Polo II, P. 341.

271. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. 141-142, 184.

272. Sujan Rai : Khulasat-ut-Tawārīkh, ed. by Zafar Hasan, P. 47.

The standard of dress among the commoners was distinct from that of the aristocrats. They did not possess adequate clothes to put on and went about barefooted.²⁷³ In the words of Abū'l Fadl, the common people of Bengal 'for the most part went naked, wearing only a cloth (lungi) about the loins'.²⁷⁴ As their clothes were scanty and living accommodation inadequate, they suffered miserably in winter.

Thus it is clear that the fruits of Bengal's prosperity were not enjoyed by all people on a just basis. There was the contrast between the opulence, pomp and luxury of the Sultāns, nobles, high officials and the wealthy merchants on the one side, and the extreme misery and poverty of the common people on the other. Wealth was the monopoly of a few who were extremely opulent and rolled in luxury. But the vast masses of the people were affected by pinching poverty. This condition of the common people may also be gleaned from the accounts of Ibn Baṭūṭah who had referred to the selling of people in the markets. This selling of people indicate the impoverished condition of the peasantry which must have induced them to sell their sons and daughters in the market. But as the demands of the people of the lower classes were very few and things of every day use were quite cheap,²⁷⁵ they possibly managed to escape starvation.

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273. Ahmad Sharif : 'Solo Śatoker Sāhitye Vidhrta Samāj O Sanskr̥ti - Bāṅglā Unnayan - Board Patrikā, vol. I, No. I, 1376 (BS), P. 71.
274. Abū'l Fadl : A.A., vol. I, Eng. tr., P. 389.
Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla., P. 235. It is also gleaned from his writings that the people in general were under the pressure of high price of the commodities. This fact indicates that the condition of the people was not so prosperous as is supposed to be.
275. An idea of the cheapness of necessities is obtained from the accounts of Ibn Baṭūṭah, cf. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla., PP. 234-235.

Chapter - VI.

Social life

It is rather a difficult task to build up a comprehensive picture of the social life of the people of the period under review. The Persian works excel in the narrative of political events but hardly refer to the social life and activities of the people. In Bengali literature, only two 'kāvyas' namely Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Baru Caṇḍīdāsa¹ and Yusuf Zolekhā of Shah Muhammad Sagīr² are contemporary which contain some references to the social life of the people of Bengal. Both the Kāvyas have some drawbacks. Caṇḍīdāsa's kāvya is partial in the sense that it refers only to the Hindu society; while Yusuf Zolekha has an unusual drawback in the sense that in it a foreign story has been depicted in a local setting. Caṇḍīdāsa, in his Kāvya, though concentrated

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1. Scholars hold conflicting views with regard to the period of composition of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Baru Caṇḍīdāsa. According to Sukumar Sen, it was written in the sixteenth century. Biman Bihari Mazumdar also thinks that the 'Kāvya' of Caṇḍīdāsa was written after the second decade of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay holds the view that it was written in the latter half of the fifteenth century. But Muhammad Shahidullah was of the opinion that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Baru Caṇḍīdāsa was composed in between the year 1340 A.D. and 1440 A.D. On further close examination, Ahmed Sharif emphatically expressed the opinion that it was written before 1425 A.D. For details see : (I) Ahmad Sharif : Bāṅgālī O Bāṅglā Sāhitya, PP. 315-316; (II) M.A. Hai and Anwar Pasha (ed) : Baru Caṇḍīdāser Kāvya, P. XN.
 2. Shah Muhammad Sagīr wrote his Yusuf Zolekhā kāvya under the patronage of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh (Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekha PP. 3-4). Though there is a lot of controversy about the period of its composition Ahmad Sharif, on a careful examination, strongly feels that Sagīr composed his kāvya in the early fifteenth century under the patronage of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh. For details see : Ahmad Sharif : Bāṅgālī O Bāṅglā Sāhitya, PP. 339-363; Muhammad Enamul Huq : 'Bāṅglā Bhāṣār Prācinatama Muslim Kavi' in Māhe Naw, August, 1951, PP. 42-44.

on amorous play, has given us some valuable information about the social life of Bengal and Sagīr, while depicting the story of Egypt has also indirectly described the social life of Bengal.³ Besides, fortunately for us, we have some itineraries of foreign travellers which provide a good backdrop to the information gathered from Bengali literature. Of the itineraries, the Rehla of Ibn Batūṭah,⁴ the Tao-Yi-Che of Wang Ta Yuan,⁵ the Ying Yai Sheng Lan of Ma Huan and Kuo Ch'ung Li⁶ and the Sing Ch'a Sheng Lan of Fei Sin⁷ are worth mentioning. There are other Chinese itineraries compiled in later period mostly on the basis of these earlier Chinese records. When we read these accounts carefully we get a tolerably satisfactory picture of the social life of the people. Besides, we have some stray references to the social life of the preceding period. Also there are a number of the Bengali Kāvyas of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries which throw a flood of light about the society. Here, it is to be remembered that the culture and traditions prevail, to a great extent, upon the society for centuries together. So what is found in Bengal before the fourteenth century

3. Ahmad Sharif : Bāṅgālī O Bāṅglā Sāhitya, P. 352.

4. The Moorish traveller visited Bengal and lived there for a few months in 1345-1346 A.D.

5. Wang Ta Yuan compiled the book Tao Yi Cheleo most probably in the winter of 1349-50 A.D. He visited many of the localities described by him for purposes of trade and heard accounts of many places of the world.

6. Majority of the people know that Ying Yai Sheng Lan was compiled by Ma Huan. Hence, its account on Bengal is popularly known to us as the account of Ma Huan. But as a matter of fact, Ma Huan compiled only one portion of the above mentioned book. The rest of the book was compiled by Kuo Ching li. On a minute examination, it is found that Ma Huan visited Bengal during the first half of 1432 A.D. (J.V. Mills : Ying Yai Sheng lan, Cambridge, Hakluyt Society, 1970, P. 35). It is also apparent that Ma Huan did not visit Bengal earlier and did not record his account on Bengal. In fact, the so-called Bengal account of Ma Huan was compiled by Kuo Ch'ung li most probably in between 1409 A.D. and 1411 A.D. For details see - Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bāṅglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd. edn. PP. 319-322.

7. Sing Ch'a Sheng Lan was compiled by Fei Sin in 1436 A.D. It is an account of Hau hien's visit to Bengal in 1415 A.D.

may reasonably be expected to continue in the fourteenth and the early fifteenth centuries. Similarly, the social pattern found to be in vogue in the latter fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, may also be taken to give us some idea of the conditions of the period under review. Moreover, Bengal had a link directly or indirectly with north and north-western India for a long time. Hence, it is not unwise to think that there was a cultural relationship between Bengal and upper India.⁸ Thus, inspite of the scantiness of materials, a fairly good picture of the social life of the people of the early Iliyās Shāhī period can be visualised from an analysis of the above mentioned sources.

During the early Iliyās Shāhī period, the population of Bengal consisted mainly of two communities - the Muslims and the Hindus.⁹ It will be a fair assumption that of these two groups, the Hindus were more numerous than the newly arrived and converted Muslims. The Chinese accounts show that the customs of the two groups of people were different.¹⁰ In fact, at that time, the Muslims and the Hindus tried to maintain separate identity. As a result, the social life of both the groups began to develop in two parallel lines dividing the Bengali society into two distinct entities. Actually, at that time, religion of the two groups constituted the basis of the whole social structure of the country. Hence an attempt is made to describe the Muslim society and the Hindu society separately.

8. Cf. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 555.

9. Annals, vol.I, 1945, P. 117. These two groups are primarily mentioned in the Chinese accounts. But it may fairly be assumed that the Buddhists also formed a part of the population, though they may have formed an insignificant part and did not attract the attention of the foreigners.

10. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 122.

Muslim Society

Those who founded the Muslim society in Bengal initially were all immigrants. They belonged to different nationalities like the Arabs, Turks, and Persians¹¹ and poured into Bengal in continuous waves as governors, administrators, generals, soldiers, teachers, missionaries, traders and fortune seekers.¹² All the immigrants came under the banner of Islam, but they also brought with them their own ways of life, and as far as practicable tried to keep a homogeneity of their group. On the other hand, with the passage of time, the number of local converts increased. These local converts, though accepted Islam, could not altogether change their ways of life. With the foundation of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultanate in Bengal, these people came into close contact with the Muslim immigrants. This contact and the resultant fusion among the foreign and indigenous Muslims formed the basis of the Muslim society in Bengal during the period under review.

During the early Iliyās Shāhī period, the composition of the Muslim society was very simple. The Sultān was the leader of the people and the head of the society, enjoying the highest status. It was his duty to ensure peace and protection to his people and provide subsistence for their happiness and progress. The people, both the Muslims and the Hindus, looked to him for protection and they implored his help to check injustice and for the redress of their grievances. There are references in Bengali literature to show that the people regarded the Muslim rulers as the head guardian of their social

11. See Supra, P. 28-29.

12. Cf. Abdul Karim : 'The Sādāt, Ulamā and Mushāikh in the pre-Mughal Muslim Society of Bengal' - in Islam in Bangladesh, ed. by Rafiuddin Ahmed, P. 31.

life in general.¹³ In fact, as a ruler as well as the leader of the society, he set the standards of socio-cultural behaviour. Along with the Sultān, his sons, brothers and other relatives also topped the key position in the hierarchy of the society. But it consisted of a very small section of the gentry, enjoying great personal prestige and invidious privilege. Many of them were recipients of honours, titles, posts, landed assignments and special privileges.¹⁴

To the Muslim society in particular, the Sultān had some special duties. He was the leader of the social life of the Muslims. It was his duty to maintain the purity of his faith and to maintain the solidarity of the Muslims and promote their progress - spiritual, intellectual and material. He presided over the social functions of the Muslims and provided help for the development of Muslim society in every possible way. That the Sultān of Bengal of the period in question was conscious of his responsibilities to the Muslim society may be seen in his keen interest in the affairs of the Muslims. It is noticed that the Sultāns of Bengal established and patronised the religious and cultural institutions such as mosques, Khānqahs and Madrasahs and extended patronage to the ʿUlamāS, Shaikhs, preachers and teachers for the development of the Muslim society.¹⁵ On the other hand it is also seen that the Sultan of Bengal never resorted to hamper or hinder in any way the interests of the Hindu community.¹⁶ The Hindus were granted perfect freedom in their religio-social affairs. The Sultans also patronised the

13. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. PP. 18, 31, 58; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, quoted by S.K. Sen in Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa, P. 150.

14. Salīm : Riyāḍ, P. 100.

15. See Supra, PP. 26-27.

16. S.H. Askari : 'The correspondence of two 14th century Sūfī Saints of Bihar with the contemporary Sovereigns of Delhi and Bengal' in J.B.R.S. vol.42, 1956, P. 187.

Hindu intellectuals and helped the development of the social and cultural institutions of the Hindu subjects.¹⁷

The Chinese accounts testify to the fact the Sultāns of Bengal lived in great majesty and splendour. It is found in the account of Fei-sin that "the dwelling of the King is all of bricks set in mortar, the flight of steps leading up to it is high and broad. The halls are flat roofed and whitewashed inside. The inner doors are of triple thickness and of nine panels. In the audience hall, the pillars are plated with brass, ornamented with figures of flowers and animals, carved and polished. To the right and left are long varendaḥs on which were drawn up (on the occasion of our audience) over a thousand men in shining armour, and horseback outside, filling the courtyard were long ranks of (our) Chinese (soldiers) in shining helmets and coats of mail with spears, swords, bows and arrows, looking martial and lusty"¹⁸. The Chinese accounts also give us an idea of the majesty of the King and the splendour of his court by referring to the ceremonials and dignitaries attached to the royal person.¹⁹ That the Sultāns of Bengal led a magnificent life is also gleaned from the entertainments and presents offered by the Sultān to the Chinese envoys. The accounts of the Chinese envoys record that carpets were spread on the floor and the King entertained the Chinese mission with a feast of both smoked and roasted beef and mutton, rose water and sweetened water with different perfumes. The King entertained

17. See Supra P.82-83, 138-139.

18. Annals, vol. I, 1945 A.D., P. 121.

19. Ibid.

the Imperial envoys at a banquet and the soldiers of the envoys were given many presents. When the banquet was over, the King bestowed on the envoys gold basins, gold girdles, gold flatons and gold bowls; all assistant envoys received the same articles in silver and each of the lower officials a golden bell and long gown of white hemp and silk. All soldiers of the escort got silver money. After this the King handed over a case of gold in which was placed a memorial for the Emperor (of China), written on a leaf of gold and the envoys received it from him with due respect in the audience hall, together with various gifts to the Emperor.²⁰

In the social ladder below the Sultān and the members of the royal family, were the nobility. They were an important section of the aristocracy of the society. They exercised a potent influence in the State as military generals, administrators and also, at times, as king-makers. The nobles served the State loyally under the strong rulers. But at the slightest weakness of the Sultān, they appeared in the limelight of the affairs of the State and tried to dictate the Sultan in every possible way.

The life of the nobility represented luxury and refinement. They tried to imitate the example of their rulers in pomp and splendour. They lived in palatial buildings, tastefully decorated both inside and outside. Every noble maintained a big establishment of glittering retinues and attendants who accompanied their lord when he visited the court. The upper class Muslims also had their occasional social gatherings which were rendered quite lively by music and dance. On such occasions they invited musicians and girl dancers whose colourful dress and dazzling ornaments added much to the pomp and grandeur of the festivities.²¹

20. *Ibid*, PP. 122, 127.

21. *Ibid*, PP. 99-134.

Besides the nobility, there were other groups of people in the upper class. The reference to such groups is found in the Inshā-i-Māhrū²² which contains a proclamation by Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq issued in the name of the people of Lakhnautī on the eve of his expedition against Hājī Iliyās in 1353 A.D. In the proclamation, the people are grouped as follows :

- (i) The Sādāt, 'Ulamā, Mashāikh and others of similar nature;
- (ii) The Khāns, Maliks, Umārā, Ṣadrs, Akāber and Ma'ārif and their train and suite;
- (iii) Zamīndārs, Muqaddams, Mafruzmān, Madkān and such like and
- (iv) Hermits, Sains and Gabrs.

Of these groups, the first three classes belonged to the Muslims population, while the last group indicated the non-Muslim section of the society.²³ The arrangement of precedence of the different groups found in the proclamation of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq is significant. It shows that the Sādāt, 'Ulamā and Mashāikh were given precedence over the officials and they held a position of great reverence and influence in the society. A similar reference to the upper class Muslim population is also found in Bengali literature of the fifteenth century.²⁴

The Sādāt or the Sayyids claimed themselves to be the descendants of the Prophet and as such they were looked upon with veneration and respect by the general people. The Muslim rulers also gave them high positions and granted them lands and allowance as a mark of honour. The Tabaqāt-i-Nāsirī and the Inshā-i-Māhrū give testimony to this fact.²⁵ The Sayyids

22. Extract translated in J.A.S.B., 1923, PP. 279-282.

23. A. Karim : Social History, PP. 148-149; M.A. Rahim: S.C.H.B. vol.I, PP. 254-255.

24. Vipradāsa : Manasā Vijaya, P. 143; For details see - A. Karim : 'The Sādāt, 'Ulamā and Mashāikh in the pre-Mughal Muslim Society of Bengal - in Islām in Bangladesh, ed. by Rafiuddin Ahmed, PP. 33-34.

25. Minhāj : T.N., PP. 161-162; Inshā-i-Māhrū, Extract translated in J.A.S.B. 1923 A.D. 280

came to Bengal at different times, settled here and engaged themselves in various professions. That the Sayyids held pre-eminent position in the society is revealed by the fact that a Sayyid dynasty ruled over Bengal for long forty five years (1493 A.D. - 1538 A.D.).²⁶

The 'Ulamās denoted the Muslims who possessed the knowledge, learning and science in the widest sense. As they possess the knowledge of Islamic traditions, canon law and theology, they considered it their obligatory duty to inculcate those on the mind of the people and to watch that the Sultān, the head of the social order, did not transgress the Shari'at. The anecdote recording the Sultān's (Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh) presence before the court on the warrant from Qādī Sirāj al-Dīn and his submission to his orders shows that the Sultān was fully aware of and had respect for the Shari'at.²⁷ As the 'Ulamās were learned in the religious sciences, they were appointed as Qādīs and other officers. It is observed that Sultān Shams al-Dīn Yusuf Shāh, considering the vital role of the 'Ulamās in the society, used to admonish them not to side with anybody in discharging religious matters.²⁸

The Shaikhs were also well versed in Islamic sciences. In this sense, they were also 'Ulamās, but they were those 'Ulamās who attain and train others in attaining spiritual development.²⁹ Their khānqahs were the centres of intellectual and spiritual life. They made significant contri-

26. The Husain Shāhī rulers claimed themselves to be descendants of the Prophet - J.N. Sarker (ed.) H.B., vol.II, PP. 142-163.

27. See Supra, P. 108-109.

28. Firishtah : T.F., vol. II, P. 298.

29. A. Karim : Social History, PP. 151-152.

bution to the development of Muslim society in Bengal. The Shaikhs, by their character and achievements, exerted a great influence on the mind of the people and thereby on the society. Each of them had a large following under them. They imparted instructions, influenced the ruling class and converted the local people to Islām.³⁰ The careers of Shaikh 'Alā' al-Haq and Hadrat Nūr Qutab 'Ālam show that they played a prominent part in shaping the society.³¹ We have also some documents wherein we find leading Shaikh advising the Sultān of Bengal in the matter of administration. These documents are some letters from Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī, a disciple of Shaikh Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā manerī of Bihar addressed to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh. The letters show that the Sultān was in correspondence with the Mawlānā seeking his advice. The letters are full of advice to the King on religious matters. In one letter, the Mawlānā dwelt upon the undesirability of appointing the non-Muslims to the superior posts of Governors and Ministers. He says, "An infidel may be entrusted with some work but he should not be made 'Wālī' (Chief Supervisor or Governor) so that he may have control over and impose his authority on the Muslims The vanquished unbeliever with heads hanging downward exercise their power and authority and administer the lands which belong to them. But they have also been appointed (executive) officers. Such things should not happen".³² This proves that the Shaikhs played a great part in giving support to the Muslim monarchy in Bengal as their counter parts did in the Delhi Sultānate.³³ The influence

30. Ibid, PP. 124-139.

31. 'Abd al-Haq : Akhbār al-Akhiyār, PP. 147-148, P. 152.

32. S.H. Askari : The correspondence of two 14th century Sūfī Saints of Bihar with the contemporary sovereigns of Delhi and Bengal in J.B.R.S., Vol. 42, Pt. II, 1956, PP. 186-187.

33. A.Karim : 'The Sādāt, 'Ulamā and Mashāikh in the pre-Mughal Muslim Society of Bengal' in Islam in Bangladesh, ed., by Rafiuddin Ahmed, P.42.

of Shaikh Nūr Qutb 'Ālam, is also clearly visible in his interference in the affairs of Bengal. When Rājā Gaṇeśa, after his usurption of power, perpetrated oppression on the Muslims including the Muslim shaikhs and divines, Nūr Qutb 'Ālam was compelled to write a letter to Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jaunpūr imploring his assistance. At that time, Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī was also encouraged to lead an expedition against Rājā Gaṇeśa of Bengal by Mīr Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī, a discriple of Sayyid 'Alā' al-Ḥaq who was then in Jaunpūr.³⁴ On his approach Rājā Gaṇeśa became frightened, humbled himself before Shaikh Nūr Qutb 'Ālam, begged him to pardon his offences to remove Sultān Ibrāhīm's domination over the country. The Shaikh demanded that the Rājā should turn a Muslim. The Rājā agreed but his wife forbade him. The Rājā then brought his son Jadu and requested the Shaikh to convert him. The Shaikh converted the Rājā's son who was made the King with the title of Jalāl al-Dīn. The Shaikh then requested Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī to leave Bengal.³⁵ This shows the great influence of the Shaikh in the contemporary socio-political affairs.

The official aristocracy belonged to the second group of the upper class. They bore the titles of Khān, Malik, Amīr, Ṣadr, Kabīr and Ma'ārif. The title of Khān was conferred by the ruler on an officer for some distinguished service or in recognition of some meritorious work. An analysis of the inscriptions³⁶ of the contemporary and later periods shows that there are different grades in the rank of Khān, such as, Khān al-Aẓam, Khān al-Muḥazzam, Khān al-Aẓam al-Mu'azzam, Khān al-Aẓam al-Mu'azzam al-Mukarram,

34. Bengal : Past and Present, 1948, PP. 32 ff; Salim : Riyād, P. 112.

35. A. Karim : Social History, PP. 105-106.

36. A.H. Dani : Bibliography; PP. 96-99.

Khān Majlis etc. Malik is another title borne generally by the Iqtādārs (Governors) and higher officials. The later inscriptions show that this title also had different grades.³⁷ Sometimes, this title was also assumed by the princes.³⁸ The higher officials and army commanders were distinguished with the title of Amīr.³⁹ The Ṣadr was probably the chief of the department of justice.⁴⁰ The Kabīr and Ma'ārif do not signify any particular office or title. Probably they implied the aristocratic class.⁴¹

The third group of the upper class as mentioned in the Proclamation of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq were the Zamīndārs, Muqaddams, Mafruzmān, Madkān and such like. The Zamīndārs were the landlords.⁴² They also formed a powerful aristocracy of the society and exercised a great influence on the politico-economic as well as socio-cultural life of the period in question. The Muqaddam was the superior revenue officer in a village.⁴³ As the village headman and collector of Government revenue from the villagers he had immense influence in the society. With regard to the position of the Mafruzmān and Madkān, we do not know anything from the sources of the period.

37. Ibid.

38. A. Karim : Social History, P. 153.

39. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., Vol. I, P. 255.

40. I.H. Qureshi : Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi, P. 85.

41. A. Karim : Social History, P. 153.

42. The Zamīndārs had their origin from the beginning of Muslim rule in Bengal. Soon after the Muslim conquest of Bengal, Bakhtiyār Khaljī distributed the conquered lands among his army officers (J.N. Sarkar [ed] : H.B., vol. II, P. 13). This system continued afterwards in Bengal. With the passage of time, the holders of land in Bengal were known as Zamīndārs. Of course, the origin of a few Zamīndārs is traced from Hindu time. In the process of evolution of politico-social life in Muslim Bengal, new Zamīndārs emerged in place of the old.

43. Inshā-i-Māhrū, Extract translated in J.A.S.B., 1923, P. 280, f.n.1.

Next to the nobles and upper class Muslims, there was a class of Muslims who have been termed as the middle class.⁴⁴ They are the people who worked with their brain for their livelihood. They were educated and intelligent and used their brain either in the pen or in some arts and crafts. By their enlightenment and professions, these people were distinct from the commoners who earned their bread by means of manual labour. Hence the people consisting of the smaller Government officers, the clerks, the physicians, the teachers, preachers, poets and musicians who worked with their brain formed the so-called middle class of that time. The artists, skilled artisans, architects and manufacturers were also included in this middle class. It was a time when arts were appreciated and there was good demand for the articles of fashion and luxury. The luxurious and splendid living of the nobles and the upper class people of the society hint at this. However, this stimulated high class and costly productions promoted the skill of the artisans of all professions. They were naturally handsomely paid for their skilled labour and were thus in a position to lead a decent life. These people also enjoyed a position of influence in the society. In Bengali literature, there are references to 'hāldārs' (howladers) or small land lords and farmers among the Muslims. They were an influential section of the middle class. It is found in the Padma Purāṇa of Vijayagupta that 'Abdula, a 'hāldār' and a brother-in-law of Husain, is a very proud man. He keeps constant company with Husain and all the Hindus are frightened away

44. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., Vol. I, P. 262. The term middle class has a distinct connotation if we use the term in its modern sense. But here its use is rather loose and general.

from him.⁴⁵ This expression of Vijayagupta clearly shows that the 'hāldār' had great influence in his locality. There were a number of Muslim merchants who, according to the accounts of the foreign travellers, were very wealthy and lived in luxury.⁴⁶ On the basis of their wealth and luxurious living, the big merchants would deserve to be enrolled in the upper class of the society. But because of their lack of political influence, they cannot be said to have formed a part of the aristocracy of that time.⁴⁷ There were also Muslim calligraphists holding quite high position in the society.⁴⁸

Leaving aside the privileged and the middle class, the rest of the Muslims were commoners. This section of the people had particularly no direct voice in the administration. Petty cultivators, artisans, and manufacturers, various classes of labourers, singers and dancers formed this class.⁴⁹ Petty government officials were also included in this group. The common people among the Muslims generally preferred to enter the army or to take up some clerical job in the government.⁵⁰ It is known from the Persian works that Iliyās shāh had a large number of 'pāiks' (foot soldiers).⁵¹ The nobles also kept a large establishment of retinues. The government officers were also provided with a large force of horsemen, 'pāiks' and piyādas. The piyādas were indispensable to the government officers. Their duty was to serve the

45. এক বেটা হালদার নামে আবদুল্লা ।

বড় অহঙ্কার করে হুসনের পাশে ।।

অহর্নিশ থাকে বেটা হুসনের পাশে ।

তাহার ডরে হিন্দু সব পলায় তরাসে ।

- Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 121.

46. Annals, Vol. I, 1945, PP. 96-134.

47. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., Vol. I, P. 263.

48. A.H. Dani : Bibliography, P. 12.

49. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 113, 118.

50. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. I, P. 265.

51. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 593; Afif : T.F.S., PP. 114-118; Yahyā : T.M.S., P. 125.

summons⁵² and arrest the accused persons.⁵³ Besides, from the writings of Shah Muhammad Sagīr,⁵⁴ Vijayagupta⁵⁵ and Mukunda Rāma,⁵⁶ it may be inferred that during the period in question there existed different professional groups of people in the Muslim society like Maniru (a dealer in precious stones), Bhat (Panegyrist), Jolā (weaver), Ojhā (snakecharmer), Golā (correctly Goālā : milkman), Mukeri (bullock drivers), Pithāri (baker), Kābāri (fish seller), Sānākār (loom maker, painter), Tīrkar (bowmaker), Kagti or Kāgchā (paper manufacturer), Rang-Prez (dyers), Hāzām (who performed circumcision), Kasāi (seller of beef), and Darzi (tailor). Mukunda Rāma⁵⁷ refers to other classes of people like Gaysāl or Garsāl (converted Muslim), Kānā or Kāl (beggar who begged alms in the night) and Qalandars who wandered day and night. It is also known from the writings of Vijayagupta⁵⁸ that in the Muslim society there was a class of sailors who were noted for their sea-faring activities.

The other element of the Muslim population was the class of the domestics and slaves. Their number was considerably large. They constituted an important part of the high-class Muslim society and household. Every Sultān and noble and every well-to-do man, whether in state service or in business, owned a number of slaves and servants of both sexes and of different nationalities and they were employed in household work and in numerous

52. Salīm : Riyād, P. 106.

53. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, PP. 129-132.

54. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 19, 49, 69.

55. Vijayagupta : Padmā Purāna, PP. 135, 138, 142.

56. Mukunda Rāma : Kavikankan Candī, ed. by Abinas Candra Mukhapadhyay, Calcutta, 1344 (B.S.), P. 103; M.A. Hai and Anwar Pasa (ed.) : Kālketu Upākkhyān, 3rd. edn. P. 94; Mukunda Rāma : Kavikankan Candī, ed. by V.K. Datta, P. 68.

57. Mukunda Rāma : Kavikankan Candī, ed. by V.K. Datta, P. 68; also Cf. M.A. Hai and Anwar Pasa (ed.) : Kālketu Upākkhyān, P. 94.

58. Vijayagupta : Manasāmaṅgala, P. 144.

Kārkhānas. When Ibn Baṭūṭah visited Bengal he found plenty of slaves being sold in the markets. He writes : 'a pretty slave girl, fit to serve as mistress for a gold dīnār, which is equal to two and a half gold dīnārs of Morocco (maghrib). At this rate I purchased a slave girl named Ashura who was extremely beautiful. And one of my companions bought a good looking boy of tender age named Lulu for a couple of gold dīnārs'.⁵⁹ Shah Muhammad Sagīr also mentioned that a large number of attendants of both sexes were attached to the royal household.⁶⁰ Hence it may be inferred that slaves of both local and external origin were employed. During the period under review, it is also seen that the slaves were taken into the social order of their masters and they shared the ideas and contributed towards the growth of a homogeneous culture and exercised a positive, sometimes powerful, influence on the direction of the government. The contention finds support in the foundation of the Ḥabsī rule in Bengal which lasted from 1484 A.D. to 1493 A.D.⁶¹

The Muslim women of Bengal enjoyed a dignified status in the society. It appears from the Chinese accounts that the upper class Muslim women attended the darbār (court) of the Sultān.⁶² They also recorded that "the women wear a short shirt, wrap around them a piece of cotton, silk or brocade in their ears they wear ear-rings of precious stones set in gold. Around their necks they hang pendants, and they do up their hair in knot behind.

59. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, P. 235.

60. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 6, 147-148, 218.

61. A. Karim : Social History, P. 32.

62. Annals, Vol. I, 1945 A.D., PP. 120-132.

On their wrists and ankles are gold bracelets and on their fingers and toes rings".⁶³ In the Yusuf Zolekhā, we find that the Muslim women attended the functions of the royal family.⁶⁴ Besides, it is also noticed that the Muslim women were habituated to dress and adorn themselves richly.⁶⁵ These facts obviously point to the elevated position enjoyed by the Muslim women. It may not be unreasonable to think that in keeping with the injunction of the Qur'ān and the Hadīth women in Bengali Society enjoyed a position of dignity. We have a number of instances in the later period of talented and intelligent women playing important role in the affairs of the State.⁶⁶ But the picture that we get is that of the upper classes of the society. About the lower strata of the society nothing definite is known.

Marriage was the momentous phase in the life of every Muslim, male or female of Bengal. There was no age restriction in respect of marriage among the Muslims. It appears from the writings of Shah Muhammad Sagīr that efforts were made to arrange the marriage of girls soon after their attaining maturity.⁶⁷ It also appears from Bengali literature of the later period that it was the custom to have the boys and girls married at an early age.⁶⁸ Shams-i-Sirāj also testified that early marriage of girls was encouraged.⁶⁹ Arranged marriages were prevalent in the society. It is on record in Bengali literature of the later period that the father or any relation of the bridegroom used to go to the bride's father with the marriage proposal and if the two parties agreed, a date was fixed for the marriage.⁷⁰

63. Ibid, P. 122.

64. Sagīr : Yusuf-Zolekhā, PP. 200-201.

65. Ibid, PP. 7-9, 23, 37, 85, 100-101, 123, 159-161, 197, 231-232.

66. Tabātabāi : Siyar, vol. I, Eng. tr., PP. 275-281-282, 340-341;

Siyar, vol. II, PP. 11-13, 66.

67. Sagīr : Yusuf-Zolekhā, PP. 10, 26-28, 220, 230.

68. Bahrām : Laila Majnun, PP. 567-568, 587.

69. 'Afīf : T.F.S., P. 292.

70. Bahrām : Laila Majnun, P. 568.

Usually, the girls and boys had very little choice in the selection of their respective life partners. But for the validity of marriage the consent of the girl was essential from the religious point of view. Sagīr mentions that the Muslim girls, specially of the upper class, had the option of making a choice of their husbands.⁷¹ It is also known from a literary source of the later period that occasionally, the educated girls could make a choice of their husbands. A Bengali work has in record that an educated woman named Mallikā declared that she would marry a person who would defeat her in the literary debate. Many learned men came and had debate with her; but all of them were defeated by her in the competition. At last, Yusuf Gadā, a vastly learned man, won the laurel of the literary competition and Mallikā chose him as her husband.⁷² But it must be said that such cases were rare. During the period under review, the practice of giving dowry was also prevalent among the Muslims.⁷³ But it was not so much binding as it was found in the Hindu society. Among the Muslims, the bridegroom gave dowries to the bride. Bahram records that Majnun's father proposed to give for his son rich dowries which comprised valuable gold, diamond ornaments, large number of slaves and many domestic animals.⁷⁴ The bride's father also occasionally made presents to the bridegroom and his party.⁷⁵ But it was not binding on him.

The practice of having more than one living wife was in vogue among the Muslims. Sultān Sikandar Shāh had two wives.⁷⁶ It is also mentioned in

71. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, P. 28.

72. Gadā Malliker Puthi, Quoted in Prācin Puthir vivaraṇa, ed. by A. Karim vol. I, Pt. II, 1320 (B.S.), P. 90.

73. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, P. 209.

74. Bahram : Laila Majnun, P. 568.

75. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, P. 209.

76. Salīm : Riyād, PP. 100-105.

the Padmā Purāṇa of Vijayagupta that the Qādī had three wives.⁷⁷ Custom of divorce also prevailed among the Muslims. Muslim law and customs permitted divorce with certain limitations, and both men and women have the right to divorce. Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai mentioned that Zinatun Nisa refused to live with her husband Shuja al-Dīn, Deputy Governor of Orissa, as she could not tolerate his excessive proneness to women. She lived separately at Murshidabād while her husband was in Orissa.⁷⁸ This indicates that the Muslim women were conscious of their rights. Remarriage of the divorced wives⁷⁹ and widows⁸⁰ were also in vogue in the Muslim society. A specific time was observed by widows, before which they were not remarried.⁸¹

Purdah system⁸² was prevalent among the Muslim women. The author of the Tārīkh-i-Fīrūz shāhī mentions that when Sultān Fīrūz Shāh besieged the fort of Ekdālah "all the ladies and respectable women went to the top of the fort and when they saw him they uncovered their heads and in their distress made great lamentations"⁸³ In the Chinese accounts, we also find mention of veils of sundry colours in the list of products of Bengal.⁸⁴ It seems that, generally the Muslim women of the upper and well-to-do classes observed 'Purdah'. But the women of the poorer sections did not wear shroud or veil and did not live in seclusion, rather they moved the lapel of their saris or other head dresses slightly over their faces when they passed a stranger, their faces and their arms were otherwise quite

77. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 141.

78. Tabatabai : Siyar, I, Eng. tr., P. 275.

79. Vijayagupta : Padmā Purāṇa, P. 143.

80. Vijayagupta : Manasāmaṅgala, PP. 59-60.

81. Ibid.

82. According to the injunctions of Islām, the Muslim women are required to cover their Chatar i.e. to cover their whole bodies except the face, hands (below the wrist) and feet (below the ankles). This system of keeping the Chatar covered is known as Purdah system in Islām.

83. 'Afif : T.F.S., PP. 118-119.

84. Annals, Vol. I 1945 . P. 123.

exposed.⁸⁵ It is also known from the accounts of the Chinese travellers that the upper class Muslim women did not use veil to cover their faces and they did not live in seclusion strictly and whenever necessity arose they came out of their houses.⁸⁶ This contention find support in their narratives about their beauties, dress, ornaments etc. In one of the descriptions we find that the women wear a short shirt, wrap around them a piece of cotton, silk or brocade. They do not use cosmetics, for they have natural fair complexion; in their ears they wear ear-rings of precious stones set in gold. Around their necks they hang pendants, and do up their hair in knot behind. On their wrists and ankles are gold bracelets and on their fingers and toes rings.⁸⁷ Thus, if the Muslim women used to cover their faces, and live in seclusion strictly, then how could the Chinese envoys make comments about their beauties and fashions ? The evidence of the later period also show that the Muslim women were not shut up within the four walls of their houses. They could move out of their houses.⁸⁸ So, one may conclude that observance of 'Purdah' did not really mean complete seclusion of women folk. Veils may have formed a part of the dress used by the ladies of the upper classes.

Though it is difficult to narrate the exact nature of the character of the Muslim society, it appears from a close analysis of Bengali literature of the later period that during the early Iliyās Shāhī period, the Muslim

85. K.M. Ashraf : Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan, P. 139.

86. Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 122.

87. Ibid, PP. 122, 124.

88. Hakluyt Society, vol. II, P. 148; J.N. Sarkar : Short History of Aurangzeb, P. 278; Tabātabāi : Siyar, PP. 11-13, 418; J.N. Sarkar : Bengal Nawabs, P. 153.

society was noted for its religious character and the Muslims regulated their way of life in accordance with the injunctions of Islam. It is found in the Caṇḍī Kāvya of Mukunda Rāma that the Muslims "rise early in the morning and spreading a red Pāti (mat), say their prayers five times a day. Counting on the Solemani (Sulaimani) beads, they meditate on the Pir and Pekambar (Prophet) and illuminate the seat of the Pir. Ten or twenty of them sit together to decide cases. They always recite the Qur'ān and the Kitāb (religious book).⁸⁹ The same author also points out that the Muslims are very wise and they never give up fasting even to the last breath.⁹⁰ This religiousness among the Muslims is also corroborated by others. Vipradās mentions in his book that the Sayyad, Molla and Qādī always consult the Qur'ān and the religious book. They also recite the name of God and Qalima and always made references to the Qur'ān and religious book. They give the 'qalima' to the Hindus and teach them Islam. They always teach ablution and prayer and are devoted to the Maktabs.⁹¹

The Muslims are known to have possessed some admirable qualities. The Chinese envoys praised their honesty and sincerity. Kuo Ch'ung li record that the Muslims are open and straight forward in their dealings.⁹² Huang Sing ts'eng also writes in his Si Yang Ch'as tien lu that the Muslims of Bengal are good tempered, rich and honest. Similar view is also expressed in the Sing ch'a Sheng Ian.⁹³ Bengali literature of the later period also reveal that the Muslims of Bengal were distinguished for several excellent

89. Mukunda Rāma : Kavikaṇkan - Caṇḍī, ed. by Kshudiram Dasa, P. 195.

90. Mukunda Rāma : Kāṭketu Upākhyān, ed. by M.A. Hai and Anwar Pasa, P.92.

91. Vipradāsa : Manasā Vijaya, P. 67; Maktab : A Muslim Primary School.

92. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bānglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn. P. 323.

93. Annals; vol. 1, 1945, PP. 122, 124.

qualities. Regarding the Muslims of Bengal Mukunda Rāma says that they are wise and enlightened; hypocrisy or trickery is unknown to them.⁹⁴

Abūl Faḍl also writes that the Muslims of Bengal are submissive and duly pay their rents.⁹⁵ These facts show that sincerity and honesty were the prominent traits in the character of the Muslims of Bengal.

Dress : During the period under review, the Muslims of Bengal had their distinctive dresses, which varied with their social status. The upper class Muslims wore costly rich costumes. The poorer classes, on the other hand, were conditioned habitually to cut their dress requirements to a bare minimum in conformity with their socio-economic status and ability.

The Sultāns of Bengal wore attractive and elegant looking dresses. The Muslim aristocrat also did not lag behind the sultans in spending lavishly on their dress. In fact, they were also in the habit of wearing well fitted expensive and varied dresses. According to the Chinese account, the upper class Muslims wore a white cotton turban and on their bodies a long gown with a round collar and held around them by an embroidered sash.⁹⁶ The writings of Shah Muhammad Sagīr also show that the upper class Muslims used turban on their heads and wore costly dresses.⁹⁷ Referring to the costumes of the Muslims of Bengal, Barbosa says, "The respectable Moors of this city go dressed in long morisco shirts reaching to the instep, white and slight texture, and underneath some clothes wrapped round below the waist; and over the shirt a silken sash round the waist; and they wear fine cotton caps on their heads".⁹⁸ In the Chinese account

94. Mukunda Rāma : Kālketu Upākhyān, ed. by M.A. Hai and Anwar Pasa, P. 92.

95. Abūl Faḍl : A.A., Eng. tr. by Jarrett, P. 134.

96. Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 117.

97. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 38, 39, 75, 129, 181, 183, 199, 202.

98. Duarte Barbosa : A description of the coasts of East Africa and Malabar, Eng. tr. by E.J Stanley, Hakluyt Society, P. 180.

it is found that the use of caps was reserved for the Sultān and the nobles of the court.⁹⁹ The upper class Muslims were accustomed to use Moja (socks)¹⁰⁰ and well designed shoes as well as leather slippers.¹⁰¹

A careful analysis of the account of Barbosa shows that the Muslims who belonged to the group below the Muslim aristocrats used to wear short white shirts half way down the thigh and drawers and very small head wraps of three or four turns; all of them are shod with leather, some with shoes, others with sandals very well worked sewn with silk and gold thread.¹⁰² It also appears from the writings of Vijayagupta that the usual dress of the middle class Muslim people was a ijār (trouser), shirt and turban on head.¹⁰³ Shah Muhammad Sagīr mentions that boys occasionally used 'Pagrī' (turban) as a head dress.¹⁰⁴

The common people particularly the cultivators and labouring class used to wear 'tahband' (cloth worn around the waist) or lungi, nimā (small half shirt) and cap.¹⁰⁵

The usual dress of the Muslim Sūfīs appears to have been a Jubba (a robe coming down to the knees), Dastar (turban) or Kulah. Khirkā or Gudri (a garment of pitched quilt) was also very popular among them.¹⁰⁶ Shaikh Jalāl Tabrizī is reported to have come to Bengal in black attire with turban on head and a bowl and 'aṣā' (stick) in hand.¹⁰⁷

99. Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 117.

100. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 127.

101. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 117, 122, 131.

102. Duarte Barbosa : A description of the coasts of East Africa and Malabar, Eng. tr. by E.J. Stanley; P. 181, J.N. Dasgupta : Bengal in the sixteenth century, P. 116.

103. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, PP. 122, 126.

104. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, P. 63.

105. Ahmad Sharif : 'Solo Satoker Sahitye Vidhrta Samaj O Sanskriti' in Bānglā Unnayan Board Patrikā, ed. by Ashraf Siddiqui, vol. I, No. I, 1376, P. 50; D.C. Sen: Pūrva Bāṅga Gītikā, P. 14.

106. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 78-79; 'Abd al-Haq : Akhbār al-Akhiyār; PP. 26, 76, 78.

107. Halayudha Miśra : Śekh Subhodaya, P. 127.

The Chinese accounts show that the male singer and dancers used to wear a shirt with black and white patterns held round their waists by a scarf with a fringe of coral and amber.¹⁰⁸

The Muslim women of the upper class were splendidly attired. In the account of Fei-Sin, it is recorded that the Muslim women of the upper classes wore a short shirt and wrapped around them a piece of cotton silk or brocade. They also put on scarfs of coloured cotton or silk with embroideries.¹⁰⁹ Sagīr's description of the Muslim women's dress clearly show that they dressed themselves richly and wore silk sari and Kāñculī.¹¹⁰

The common women wore ordinary sari and a bodice. The Chinese accounts refer to the dancing girls who used to wear lined cloth in light red colour with decorations of flowers. They also wrapped the lower part of their body with coloured silken sash.¹¹¹

Toilets : The Muslims of both the sexes used to use various kinds of toilets.

It was a common practice among them to dress their hair.¹¹² But the Muslim women paid greater attention to do their hair than men. They dressed their hairs in knot over their heads ¹¹³in various beautiful manners. This knot was popularly called khonpā. Of the various types of khonpās, kānāri khonpā appears to be popular one. They also made their hairs into tresses like 'Benī'. Among many articles of toilet flowers occupied an important position. The ladies were quite fond of flowers and made use of them for various purposes. They specially stuck flowers on their head and wore them as ornaments.¹¹⁴

108. Annals; vol.I, 1945, P. 118.

109. Ibid, PP. 122, 132.

110. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 7, 34, 37, 85, 100-101, 123, 160-161, 197, 217, 232.

111. Annals, vol.I, 1945, P. 125.

112. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 7, 37, 99, 159.

113. Annals, vol.I, 1945, PP. 122, 124.

114. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 50, 83, 99, 159, 161, 175, 198, 227, 230, 231, 232, 234.

The Muslim men and women used to take baths both for cleaning themselves from dirt and also for getting religious merit. It seems that they considered it as a part of their toilet.¹¹⁵ The Muslim men and women used to apply oil. Probably they thought that oil makes them healthy. They also used perfumed oils.¹¹⁶ They also used to anoint themselves with sandal paste. Besides numerous perfumes and scented articles like Kasturi (musk), Kumkum (a kind of red powder), Āgar (aloe-wood), karpūr (camphor) etc. were in common use.¹¹⁷

The Muslim women used to apply collyrium to enhance the beauty of their eyes. They reddened their lips by chewing betel leaves. They adorned their forehead with vermillion and Candan Tilak (a mark of sandal paste). The Henā was used to give red colour to hands and feet. They also put on garland of flowers round their neck.¹¹⁸ The Muslims men used to trim their hairs and used to have regular hair-cuts.¹¹⁹ They regularly shaved their moustaches but they preferred to keep beards.¹²⁰ The use of Darpan (mirror) was also common.¹²¹

Ornaments : Both Muslim men and women used ornaments of beautiful designs and patterns. The upper class Muslims used gold ornaments studded with precious jewels. They wore jewels like emeralds, diamond, ruby, cornelian and various kinds of pearls. The use of ornaments was possibly common on ceremonial occasions.¹²²

115. Ibid, PP. 74, 200, 227.

116. Ibid, P. 37.

117. Ibid, PP. 14, 100, 104, 159, 212, 231.

118. Ibid, PP. 6, 7, 79, 100, 159, 163, 230, 231-232.

119. Annals, vol.1, 1945, P. 117.

120. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, Pr. 123, 126, 145.

121. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, P. 72.

122. Ibid, PP. 8-9, 23, 37-38, 83, 85, 100, 129, 155, 159-162, 217, 227, 231.

Bengali literature contain references to various ornaments used by the Muslim ladies. They adorned their bodies with a variety of ornaments. They adorned their heads with Sinthe Pānthe¹²³ and Tiaras.¹²⁴ They put on different sorts of ornaments on the ears. Of the ear-rings kundal seems to be very popular among women of well-to-do classes. They also decked their noses with the ornament known as Nath.¹²⁵ Women adorned their necks with 'Hār' (necklace)¹²⁶ usually made of gold, diamond and pearl. In Bengali literature, these necklaces are mentioned as Hem Hār, Hīrā Hār, Muktā Hār and Gajomoti Hār. Sometimes gold necklace was studded with jewels. Muslim women wore another kind of ornament round their necks known as Hansuli.¹²⁷

Among the most important ornaments of arms, wrists and fingers, mention may be made of Tār (an armlet) for the upper arm and Balayā (bracelet), Curis (bangles) and kaṅkaṇ (bracelet of gold and pearls) for wrist, various kinds of finger-rings like Angurī were used for arraying the fingers. The upper class women were accustomed to use of finger-rings of jewels and diamonds, and sometimes they used rings on their ten fingers. They put on an ornament called kiṅkiṇi around their waist and Nupūr or Jingling anklets in their feet. Mal was another kind of anklet used by women. They also used ring on their toes. On their feet they also wore shoes.¹²⁸

The dancing girls used to adorn themselves with special kinds of ornaments. They hang pendants and necklaces of either five coloured precious stones or coral or amber on both the neck and the shoulders and blue and

123. Ibid, P. 227. Sinthe Pānthe consists of three gold strings, two of which run from ears end joined at the centre by another which goes straight along the hair parting.

124. Annals, vol.I, 1945, P. 132. Tiara may be compared with modern Tickli (ornament of forehead).

125. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 9,100,159. Nath is a ring shaped ornament worn generally on the left nostril.

126. Annals, vol.I, 1945, PP. 122, 124, 132.

127. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 9,23,37,155,159,162,217,231, Hānsuli is a half moon shaped ornament put round the neck.

(Footnotes continued in the next page)

red precious stones on their wrists. The male dancers and singers also wore coloured beads and fastened bracelet of beads on their wrists.¹²⁹

Food and drink : The Muslims in general, used to pay careful attention to their daily food. But among different groups of people, different standards of food habit existed in keeping with their respective status and resources.

The Sultāns and the nobles were habituated to take varied and rich food. The Chinese accounts record the rich variety of food offered in a banquet in honour of the Chinese envoys by Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh thus : the King entertains the Chinese mission with a feast of both smoked and roasted beef and mutton. After the meals were over, they offered water mixed with rose juice and honey for drink. Sometimes only rose water and sweetened water of different kinds were offered. The Chinese accounts also indicate that the Sultān usually dined in the company of their nobles and courtiers.¹³⁰ This sort of exclusive community dinner might have been possible largely owing to the inherent spirit of brotherhood in Islam and also as a result of diplomatic grandeur, for long convivialities brought the nobles closer in the Sultān's company and thereby to some-extent kept them out of mischief.

The well-to-do classes of the Muslim society generally tried to imitate the ways of the Sultāns and cultivated their tastes, even to the point of developing a relish for the dishes favoured by the latter. It is observed from the various sources that the wealthy Muslims used to have on

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128. We get mention of these ornaments in Sagīr's Yusuf Zolekhā and the Chinese accounts. Cf. Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 8-9, 23, 37, 85, 100, 159, 231, 232; Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 122, 124, 132.
129. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 118, 125.
130. Ibid, PP. 122, 127, 131.

their table Bhāt (cooked rice), bread, varieties of meat consisting of beef, mutton, goat, fowl and duck prepared with spices. They took both smoked and roasted meat. Their food also included varieties of fishes and vegetables, milk, ghee, butter, curd, honey, sugar etc. formed the principal adjuncts to the diet.¹³¹ The upper class people had a special liking for a particular kind of food known as khicuri. It was a preparation of rice and pulse usually with ghee or oil.¹³²

Varieties of ācārs (pickles) made of cucumber, radish, limes, green chillies etc. were the distinguishing features of the Muslim food. The Hindus did not know its preparation and did not use this type of relish in their meals. Nowhere in the description of the feasts and meals of the Hindus is found any reference of such pickles.¹³³

Different kinds of fruits formed part of the menu of the upper class Muslims. In fact, fruits were a favourite dessert with them. The records of the period speak of many kinds of fruits - such as mango, banana, jack-fruit, pomegranates, melons, prunes, sugar-cane etc. They also took varieties of sweets, among which sandes seems to have been very popular.¹³⁴

Though the use of wine, bhāṅg (an intoxicating hemp) and other intoxicants were prohibited in Islam, its violation was wide and frequent among the upper class Muslims. According to the Chinese accounts, there were four kinds of wine in Bengal - one was made from coconut, the second from rice, the third from the aquatic plant called kajang and the fourth

131. These food items are referred to in Bengali literature and Chinese accounts. Cf. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 123, 174, 176, 187-188, 195, 202-203, 206, 236; Vijayagupta : Manasāmaṅgala, P. 56; Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 114, 125, 127; Vijayagupta : Padmā Purāṇa, P. 139.

132. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol. I, P. 291.

133. Ibid, PP. 290-291.

134. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 123, 177, 187, 202, 206, 225, 236; Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 114, 119, 123, 125, 132.

from Tung seeds. But the same source records that on festive occasions drinking of wine was prohibited on the ground that it might lead to trouble and it was a breach of decorum. It is further mentioned that after meals sweetened rose water (sharbat) and water mixed with rose juice and honey were supplied for drink.¹³⁵ Thus the accounts of the Chinese envoys may be taken to suggest that the use of wine among the Muslims was not public, nor could they drink on festive occasion. Possibly someone drank it privately. The Chinese accounts also suggest that the drinking of Sharbat (sweetened water) was the custom prevalent among the Muslim aristocrats.

The upper class Muslims usually took breakfast in the morning,¹³⁶ two chief meals - one at noon and another at night - and snaks in the afternoon. The breakfast consisted of a variety of fruits and sweets, besides bread and butter, milk or curd. They enjoyed a rich luncheon consisting of a large variety of eatables spread over a number of items. Similarly dinner was also a rich meal. Thus richness and variety seem to have been the characteristic features of the food of the richer sections of the Muslim society.

We do not have any reference to the standard food of the commoners in the available sources. Surely, it lacked the richness and variety of that of the higher class Muslims. It may be observed from the meagre narratives that rice, fish, pulse and vegetables were the food items of the common people.¹³⁷ The main drink of the people was water. It is not

135. Annals, vol.I, 1945, PP. 119,122,125,131.

136. Ibid, P. 118.

137. Annals, vol.I, 1945, P. 119; Vijayagupta : Mansāmaṅgala, PP. 60-61.

definitely known whether the commoners were accustomed to wine.

Court Scene : Khāns, amīrs, officials, distinguished persons and people showed great respect for the Sultān. The Chinese accounts give us some idea of the etiquette followed in the court of the Sultāns of Bengal. "To the right and left of the King were hundreds of peacock feather umbrellas and before the hall were some hundreds of soldiers mounted on elephants. The King sat cross-legged in the principal hall on a high throne inlaid with precious stones and a two-edged sword lay across his lap"¹³⁸ Picture of a highly magnificent court of the Bengal Sultān is also depicted in contemporary Bengali literature.¹³⁹ The Chinese records show that the Sultān used to present robes of honour to the amīrs, khāns, officials etc. The Sultān as well as the nobles and the high officials used to offer presents to each other. The Sultān also used to receive presents from foreigners who paid visit to him in the court and in return the Sultān gave articles worth several times higher in value. The King bestowed on the envoys gold basins, gold griddles, gold flatons and gold bowls; all assistant envoys receiving the same articles in silver and each of the lower officials a golden bell and long gown of white hemp and silk. All soldiers of the escort got silver money.¹⁴⁰

The Chinese accounts also reveal that ceremonials and forms followed and preceded the royal person. The Sultān was surrounded by splendidly attired body guards and trained attendants. The Wazīrs, amīrs and other high officials stood on two sides of the royal throne in places allotted

138. Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 121.

139. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 29-30, 139, 185-186.

140. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 121, 131.

to them. Besides the wazirs, there was a staff of court functionaries to discharge duties connected with the ceremonials and forms of the court. Foreign guests were received in a particular manner in the court. Regarding the reception of the Chinese envoys, Sing Ch'a Sheng lan records "Two men bearing silver staffs and with turbaned heads came to usher (us) in. When we had taken five steps forward they made salutation. On reaching the middle of the hall they halted and two other men with gold staffs led us with same ceremony as previously upto the presence of the Sultān"¹⁴¹

Social Ceremonies : It is very difficult to give a picture of the social ceremonies of the Muslims, for contemporary materials relating to it are extremely meagre. But on the basis of the later sources it may be fairly assumed that the Muslims observed a number of social ceremonies and festivals. A few of these need special mention. The birth of a child, particularly of a son, was an occasion of great rejoicing in the society.¹⁴² The very first thing done was to call the Azān in the ears of newly born child. This was followed by the Chatti ceremony on the sixth day after the birth of the child. The next ceremony associated with the birth of the child was the aqiqa. In this ceremony, the hair of the newly born child was shaved off and sheep or goat was sacrificed to commemorate the naming of the child and the meat was distributed among the relations and poor. Well to do persons often entertained guests with feast. When the child completed four years, four months and four days Bismillāh Khānī festival was performed. With a solemn ceremony of prayers, blessings and rejoicings the child was presented to the teacher to begin reading in the name of God. The child

141. Ibid, PP. 121, 127.

142. Bahrām : Laila Majnun, P. 18; Mirza Nathan : Baharistan vol.I, Beng.tr. by Khalequeddin Chowdhury, P. 222.

was thus initiated to education. Another important ceremony was circumcision of the child. On this occasion the child was brought out in gorgeous dress and a feast was offered to relatives and others and the circumcision of the child was performed.¹⁴³

As marriage is a very important and interesting phase in the life of every Muslim, it was attended with great festivities and was celebrated with spectacular ceremonies. When the two parties came to an agreement with regard to marriage, magni ceremony (betrothal ceremony) was celebrated. At that time a date was fixed for the marriage which was called lagan. From this time, the preparation for the marriage began. Two or three days before the marriage day another formal function called gai halud (turmeric ceremony) was performed.¹⁴⁴ Ibn Baṭūṭah writes, "Two days before the wedlock, the bride and bridegroom are seated separately in their respective houses, each on a small-wooden platform and a paste of turmeric and mustard oil is applied to their hands and forehead by their friends and particularly their sisters and sisters-in-law. The next ceremony described in the Rehla was a kind of contest between the parties held at the bride's house as the bridegroom's party arrived to carry the bride. Ibn Batutah writes, "when the bridegroom's party arrive at the bride's house, they are warmly received, but it has become a convention to create difficulties in their way indirectly and even to put puzzling questions to the bridegroom."¹⁴⁵

On the occasion of the marriage, the houses of the bride and bridegroom were tastefully decorated and brilliantly illuminated. The marriage ceremony was performed in the bride's house. Wedding songs were sung and

143. K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, P.145; M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., vol.I, P. 189,P. 281-282.

144. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, P. XLVII.

145. Ibid.

reed pipes and flutes and varieties of musical instruments were played to mark the rejoicings of this great festival in the houses of the bride and bridegroom. The women folk of the houses of the neighbours and relations would assemble in the bride's house and they used to enliven the occasion with their wit and humour. Many humorous rites and superstitious formalities were associated with the marriage festivity.¹⁴⁶ After the marriage ceremony, the guests were treated to a sumptuous feast. The marriage in the upper class families was celebrated with great pomp, show and splendour. It was an occasion of festivities, dance, music, song etc.¹⁴⁷ Sometimes marriage festivities continued for several months.¹⁴⁸

Ibn Baṭūṭah mentions another feature of the Muslim marriage in his Rehla which goes under the name of arusimushaf or Shah-nazar.¹⁴⁹ Shah-nazar is the first ceremonial meeting of the bride and bridegroom before the wedlock.

The Muslims also observed certain death ceremonies. Ibn Baṭūṭah mentions that on the third day after the burial, the grave was covered with silk cloth and flowers and the people assembled round it holding copies of

146. Bahram : Laila Majnun, P. 87.

147. Sagīr : Yusuf Zolekhā, PP. 38-39, 49, 94, 158, 161, 230.

148. J.N. Sarkar : Bengal Nawabs, PP. 117-118, 153.

149. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, P. XLVIII. In respect of the Hindu marriage ceremonies, we also get almost similar descriptions. (See Infra, P.). From this it may be inferred that the Muslims, particularly the converted Muslims, continued the local customs which are not against the principles of Islām. In other words, it may be said that with the passage of time the Muslims adapted themselves with the local customs. In this way local customs and behaviours influenced the Muslim society of Bengal.

the Qur'ān in parts which they recited. The recital over, the heir of the deceased distributed rose-water with betel.¹⁵⁰ He further says, "It was a custom among the Muslims to place the shoes of the departed one on a pillow beside his or her grave and Muslims 'provided' for their dead in the same way as they did during their lifetime". This custom is observed for their deceased by many of the Indian Muslims on a small scale every tenth day after the death and on a much larger scale on the fortieth day called Chaliswan when the poor are fed in the name of the deceased.¹⁵¹ The Chinese accounts speak of the practice of mourning ceremony after death. You T'ung mentions that after the death of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Azam Shāh, "officials were sent to attend the mourning ceremony of the dead King".¹⁵² But he did not give details of the ceremony.

Amusements and entertainments : The Muslims of the time had their own occasions of rejoicing and entertainment. The Chinese record that convivial parties were common among the upper class Muslims in which visitors were entertained with music and dances.¹⁵³ There is an indirect reference to the fact that sometimes the Sultans sat in assembly with nobles in which games, music and dances were common features.¹⁵⁴ Actresses and dancing girls attired in glittering dresses and ornaments and with decorations of flowers took part in these court shows.¹⁵⁵ The Chinese envoys highly appreciated the Bengali music and dancing and observed, "The Bengalis are good singers and dancers to enliven drinking and feasting".¹⁵⁶

150. Ibn Batūṭah : The Rehla; P. XLVIII.

151. Ibid, P. XLIX, f.n. I.

152. Annals, vol.I, 1945, P. 133.

153. Ibid, P. 124.

154. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 92.

155. Annals, vol.I; 1945, P. 124.

156. Ibid, P. 118.

There was a class of musician called Ken-siao-lu-nai. They used to go to the houses of the wealthy people and the high officials and played their musical instruments every morning. One beat a small drum, another a big one and the third blew a pi-li (flageolet). Their music began in a low and slow tone but ended swiftly and in a high pitch. There was a class of tiger tamers in Bengal who went about the market places and villages with a tiger held by an iron chain and amused the people by playing with it.¹⁵⁷

Games and sports were a favourite recreation of the time. The upper class people were fond of playing 'Chaugan'.¹⁵⁸ Bengali poet Alaol also refers to this interesting game.¹⁵⁹ Besides, swimming, boat racing and wrestling were popular amusement of the time.¹⁶⁰

The religious festivities of the Muslims were a few in number : the 'Id al-Fitr', 'Id al-Azha', 'Shab-i-Barat' and 'Muharram'. Though references to these festivals are not available in the sources at our disposal, there is no reason to think that the Muslims of Bengal did not observe those festivals during the period under review. Because, as Islām is a simple religion, its ceremonials remained the same throughout the Muslim period. Besides, as Bengal was under the rule of the Delhi sultanate for a long time, it is quite natural to ponder that the Muslims of Bengal also followed the examples of

157. Ibid, PP. 118-119.

158. Chaugan is a Persian game. It was played with a crooked stick (chau) in the field (gan). It was played on horse-back with a stick and ball like the game of polo. There were goal posts and goal keepers and ten riders in each side. Each party would try to drive the ball through the goal posts of the other with the help of the stick (M.A. Rahim: S.C.H.B., vol. I, P. 195).

159. Alaol : Padmāvatī, PP. 121-122; Syed Ali Ahsan : Padmāvatī, PP. 536-538. The Persian word Chaugan is also used in Bengali.

160. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., Vol. I, P. 296.

the Muslims of Delhi. There are references to show that the above mentioned religious festivals were celebrated by the Muslims of the Delhi Sultanate with great solemnities and festivities.¹⁶¹ In the later sources, we have references to the observance of the 'Id al-Fitr,¹⁶² 'Id al-Azha¹⁶³ Shab-i-Barat¹⁶⁴ and Muharram¹⁶⁵ in Bengal. Later sources also show that the Muslims of Bengal and Gujrat observed the birthday of the Prophet in a magnificent manner.¹⁶⁶ These sources refer to its observance only in the later period and it cannot be confirmed whether this ceremony was celebrated in the period of our investigation as well.

Hindu Society

The Hindu society, at the top, was divided into four castes; the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaiśya and the Śudra. We find references to these divisions in Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Caṇḍīdāsa¹⁶⁷. There are social barriers among the castes so that one could not have any social interaction with the other and rigid caste rules and taboos were being observed.¹⁶⁸ Their observance led to many social categories, sub-castes and mixed castes. Though the Hindus of the four castes differed much from each other, they lived in the same village or town.

161. Minhāj : T.N., Eng. tr. by Elliot, PP. 619-620; Ibn Batutah : The Rehla; PP. 60, 62-63; Afif : T.F.S., PP. 365-367; K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, PP. 205-207.

162. Mirz Nathan : Bahrīstan; vol.I, Eng.tr. by M.I. Borah, P. 110.

163. Tabatabai : Siyar; vol.II, P.119; Mirza Nathan : Bahārīstān, vol.I, Beng.tr. by Khaleque Dad Chowdhury, PP. 159,203, J.N. Sarkar : Bengal Nawabs, P.8.

164. Bengal Past and Present. 1948, P.II;

165. Mirza Nathan : Baharsitan; vol.I, Eng.tr.by M.I. Borah, P.150; Mukunda Rāma : Candīkāvya, ed.by Kumar Bandopadhyay, P.344.

166. K.P. Sen : Bāṅglār Itihāsa (Nawābī Āmal) P.70; M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B. vol.I, PP. 276-277.

167. S.K.K., 2nd edn. Dān Khando, PP. 18, 47; Bhar Khando, P.80.

168. Ibid, Bhār Khando, P. 80.

The Brahmin : The Brahmin was assigned the highest place in the Hindu society. In the words of Manu, the Brahmin, since he sprang from the mouth, the most excellent part, is by right the chief of this whole creation.¹⁶⁹ It is believed that there is no greater crime on earth than slaying a Brahmin. Religion was his exclusive monopoly. He not only administered to the religious needs of the people, but stood like an intermediary between God and man. But with the lapse of time many changes had crapt in. Being hard pressed by the necessities of life, the Brahmin adopted professions other than what was prescribed by the Śāstra.¹⁷⁰ At the advent of the Muslims the position of the Brahmin further deteriorated. Muslim rule and their social ideals greatly relieved the lower class people from the domination of the Brahmin and accorded them many rights and facilities to improve their life and status in the society. As a result, the Brahmins were to face competition from the Hindus of other castes in intellectual, political and social life. That there were such apprehensions of competition in the society is seen in Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan where Kṛṣṇa is found to say, "do not utter such words, Rādhā ! the Sudra, becoming powerful, would surpass the Brahmins."¹⁷¹ However, the Brahmins continued to maintain their position of precedence in the Hindu society, and the mention by Caṇḍīdāsa of a belief in the society that if any one who gave pains to the Brahmins, would also be in distress by the curse of God ¹⁷² clearly allude to the precedence enjoyed by the Brahmin.

169. Quoted by Henry Beveridge in "A comprehensive History of India", vol.II, P.6.

170. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : Il.B., vol.I, P. 584.

171. না বোল না বোল রাধা হেনস বচন
প্রবল হৈআ পুড়ে লংচিব ব্রাহ্মনে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Bhār Khando, P. 80.

172. অনবু জয়মে পুরন ব্রাহ্মনে
দিগৌ নানা দুখভবে ।

তেজাবনে বিধি দুখগন
লৌখন পাঠীহারে ।।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K. 2nd edn. Dān Khando. P. 18.

Anyway, due to changed condition of their position, the Brahmins had to take non-Brahminical professions like agriculture and trade etc. and these professions decided their actual status in the society. Thus, the Brahmins were divided into several sections on the basis of their occupations and they also lived in separate quarters of the villages or towns.¹⁷³

The Kshatriyas : The Kshatriyas came next in the scale of social hierarchy. But Nihar Ranjan Ray is of the opinion that in ancient Bengal, below the Brahmin class, all varnas were considered to be the hybrid caste or mixed caste. According to him, it does not seem that the Kshatriyas were accepted as a well ordered varna at any time in Bengal. He is also of the opinion that the arrangement of caste in Bengal consisted of the Brahmin and the Śudra (including the Kshatriya and the Vaisyas) and the Antyaja.¹⁷⁴

But the coming of the Muslims and their political domination changed the prevalent position of the society. Under their rule, the people availed themselves of the equal opportunities opened by the Muslims for all people. Among the people, the Kshatriyas, being a clever and intelligent people, soon distinguished themselves in the society. In fact, the Muslim rule was a period of the rise of the Kshatriyas to a position of great importance in the society. We find in Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan Kṛṣṇa expressing his pride of being born in the Kshatriya family and the son of a brave father Śrī Vasul,¹⁷⁵ who probably distinguished himself as a brave warrior. The development of Bengali literature in the 15th and 16th centuries shows that the Kshatriyas,

173. Mukunda Rāma : Candikāvya, ed. by Kumar Bandopadhyay, PP. 198-200.

174. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, PP. 277-278, 303, 315.

175. কবিরাজ কৃষ্ণ চন্দ্র কবি / বীর চিত্র প্রবন্ধ
- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 47.

under the liberal and fostering atmosphere of the Muslim rule, took to learning in right earnest and made their mark in the literary and intellectual field.¹⁷⁶ Thus, it is reasonable to think that the Kshatriyas under the early Iliyās Shāhī period, began to exert considerable influence and occupy position of importance in the society.

The Vaiśyas and the Śudras : The Vaiśyas and the Śudras were assigned a lower place in the social hierarchy. They were very near to each other. The Vaiśyas were mostly cultivators and traders. The Vaiśya cultivators lived in one quarter and the trading Vaiśyas of various categories settled in their neighbourhood. There were also various classes of manufacturers and artisans among them.

The Śudra is a servant of the Brahmin, taking care of his affairs and serving him.¹⁷⁷ The Śudras were deprived of all sacred knowledge. But the advent of the Muslims shook up this conception. There is an indirect reference to it in Caṇḍīdāsa's Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan.¹⁷⁸ The Śudras were either cultivators or labourers. They were divided into many sub castes and mixed castes. persons belonging to the anulom group (that is born of higher caste males and lower caste females) and persons of protiloma group (that is born of lower caste males and higher caste females) gave rise to the mixed castes in the society.¹⁷⁹ Many sub-castes among the Śudras had primarily originated from the professions they followed.

176. S.K. Sen : Bāṅglā Sāhitver Itihāsa, P. 223.

177. Alberuni's India, vol.II, (Sachau), P. 136.

178. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Bhār Khando, P. 80.

179. Cf. R.C. Majumder (ed) : I.B. vol.1, p.566.

Below these castes were the Antyajās¹⁸⁰ who rendered various kinds of services to all the castes in the society. They included Cāmārs, doms, candāls, khatiks (butchers) etc. They performed dirty work like cleaning of the towns and villages and other menial services. They were considered as one sole class distinguished only by their low professions. They were untouchables who lived on the outskirts of the town or village.¹⁸¹ Socially, they were down trodden. General social conception was that their mere touch or even falling of their shadow on a person of high caste would make him impure. It would pollute his daily life. One had to perform penances if one got polluted by a candāl or Antyaja and one had to take bath immediately with cloths on to purify oneself.

A close study of Bengali literature of the contemporary and near contemporary period shows that during the period under review, there were several classes of the people of different castes which were formed on the basis of different professions. They were as follows : Gandhavaṇik (seller of spices, scents and drugs) Tantu (weaver), Karmakār (black-smith), Mālākar (flower seller), Jāliā (fisherman), carpenters, fuller, (washerman), Karāti (sawyer), Kārikar (artisan), Suvarṇavaṇik (dealer in gold), Barai (dealer in betel-leaves), Not (dancer), Goala (milkman), Kumbhakar (potter), Ojhās (snake-charmer who also cured snake bites), Bādiā (snake charmer), Napit (Barber) Teli (oilman), Tāmbulik (betel-leaf seller), Saṅkhavaṇik (dealer in conch shells), Kamsakar (brazier), cultivator, wood cutters, Ghaṭak (match-maker), astrologers, juggler, basket and shield maker, sailor and hunter of wild animals.¹⁸²

180. Alberuni's India, vol.I (Sachau), P.101; N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālir Itihāsa, P. 315.

181. Alberuni's India, vo.I, (Sachau), P.101.

182. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 367-369, Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K. 2nd edn. PP. 33,41,45,54,56,61,116,135; Vijaygupta : Manasāmaṅgala. PP. 4,71-76, 152-155.

Thus it may be said that during the early Iliyās Shāhī period the Hindu society was divided into a number of castes, sub-castes, mixed castes of different groups who rendered different services to the society. Since the establishment of Iliyās Shāhī rule inaugurated a period of tolerance towards the local people, the Hindu population in Bengal may be said to have found opportunity of playing vigorous part in the socio-economic activities and hence the proliferation of these castes and sub-castes in Hindu society in this period may be a fair assumption.

Role of the Hindus in politics : With a view to assessing the role of the Hindus in politics, it is necessary to study their position in the contemporary society.

Initially the Muslim rulers of Bengal did not appoint any non-Muslims to the key positions of administration. This situation changed and it is seen that with the foundation of the independent Sultānate of Bengal, the flow of fresh Muslim migrants was stopped. As a result, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns of Bengal felt the added necessity of obtaining the co-operation of the local people in running the administration. So, they were compelled to follow a very liberal policy towards the non-Muslims. Accordingly, they began to appoint their officials, particularly high officials, on a large scale from among the local people in the civil and military departments.

The earliest reference to the appointment of non-Muslims to the key positions of the state is found in the letters of Haḍrat Muḥaffar Shams

Balkhī addressed to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh of Bengal.¹⁸³ According to Firishtah, Rājā Gaṇeśa was one of the amirs of the dynasty.¹⁸⁴ The non-Muslims were also recruited in the army and the navy. Diyā al-Dīn Baranī gives us a detailed account of local soldiers under Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh. His reference to pāikān-i-Ma'rūf and 'Abū Bangāl'¹⁸⁵ suggests that they were not merely mercenary soldiers recruited temporarily, rather they belonged to hereditary warrior families with past tradition. It is also known from the Tārīkh-i-Mubārak shāhī that Sahdeo was one of the commanders of the army of Iliyās Shāh.¹⁸⁶ 'Afīf terms the army of Iliyās Shāh as "Lashkar-i-Bangālah" (Bangalee army)¹⁸⁷ and a contemporary Nepali inscription applies the term Vangala-bala¹⁸⁸ meaning the Bāngālee army. These no doubt indicate that the army of Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh was a mixture of Muslims and non-Muslims of local origin.

During the period under review, the non-Muslims also enjoyed economic security. Bengali literature,¹⁸⁹ Persian works¹⁹⁰ and the accounts of the foreign travellers¹⁹¹ bear adequate testimony to this fact. It is observed that Bengal was, as it is now, a fertile land and it enjoyed agricultural prosperity. The visitors to Bengal were struck by its plenty and prosperity. The industrial pursuits of the people also point to the same situation.¹⁹²

183. S.H. Askari : "The correspondence of two 14th century Sūfi Saints of Bihar with the contemporary sovereigns of Delhi and Bengal", J.B.R.S., vol. 42, 1956, PP. 177-195. This letter has been discussed in details in the section on Political History - See Supra. P. 116-117.

184. Firishtah : T.F. vol.II, P. 297.

185. T.F.S., P. 593.

186. Yahyā : T.M.S., P.125.

187. T.F.S., PP. 114-118.

188. J.B.O.R.S., 1936, P. 93.

189. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., PP. 5,13,15,37,46,118.

190. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 114-118; Inshā-i-Māhrū, extract translated in J.A.S.B., 1923, PP. 280 ff; Firishtah : T.F., vol.II, P. 297.

(Footnotes continued in the next page).

It is also noticed that the non-Muslims were engaged in trade and commerce both in small and large scale.¹⁹³ The non-Muslims were also land holders during our period.¹⁹⁴ It is also on record that the 'Rāēs' of different parts sent kharāj (land tax) to Sultān Saif al-Dīn Hamzah Shāh.¹⁹⁵ 'Afīf refers to the Zamīndārs of Bengal,¹⁹⁶ and in the Inshā-i-Māhrū,¹⁹⁷ we have mention of the Zamīndārs and Muqaddams.

A careful study of the facts also shows that the cultural and religious life of the non-Muslims was left undisturbed. For political reasons, the Muslim Sultāns encouraged local aspirations. As a result, we find the vernacular language was patronized by the Muslim Sultāns of Bengal. The Chinese accounts record that Bengali language was in universal use.¹⁹⁸ This leads us to believe that the independent Muslim Sultāns were not only liberal but took keen interest in local culture. That the atmosphere was conducive to the literary pursuits of the people is evident from the fact that the Hindu poet Candīdāsa flourished and wrote his famous kāvya Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan during the early Iliyās Shāhī period.¹⁹⁹

It is quite reasonable to think that the non-Muslims, having attained such position as to occupy high posts like commander and wazīr in the military and civil administration, would play important role in the politics

191. Ibn Batutah : The Rehla, extract tr.in Coins and Chronology of N.K.Bhattachali, PP.142-143; For Chinese travellers see Annals, vol.I, 1945. PP.99-132; For European travellers see M.L. Dames (ed) : The Book of Durate Barbosa, vol.II, PP.135-148; J.N. Dasgupta : Bengal in the sixteenth century, PP. 116-118.

192. For details see Infra.248-258.

193. Baranī : T.F.S., P.89; Candīdāsa : S.K.K., PP.14,16,20,22,28,29,33,36,42,45,46,55,66,67,68,70,71,75,78,86,89; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, PP. 235-278; Vipradasa : Manasa Vijaya, PP.150,155,158,164; M.L.Dames (ed) : The Book of Durate Barbosa, PP.135-148; J.N.Das Gupta : Bengal in the sixteenth century, P.117; Brindavana Dāsa : Cantanya Bhāgavata ed. by M.K. Ghosh, PP. 70,71, 380-381.

194. J.A.S.P., vol. IV, 1959, PP. 94-95.

195. Firishtah : T.F., vol.II, P.297. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 114-118.

196. 'Afīf : T.F.S., PP. 114-118.

197. J.A.S.B., 1923, PP. 280 ff.

198. Annals, I, 1945, P. 117.

199. For date see Ahmad Sharif : Bāngālī O Bānglā Sāhitya, PP. 315-316.

of the time. That the non-Muslims exerted a great influence and were associated in the conduct of government is evident from the letters of Ḥaḍrat Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī in which the saint is found to admonish the Sultān of Bengal not to take into intimacy those outside the ranks, not to make unbelievers and strangers the confidants and ministers. To those who argued that the non-believers were appointed for the sake of expediency, the saint replies that it was not expediency but the cause of trouble and sedition. Finally he says that "an infidel may be entrusted with some work but he should not be made wālī (chief supervisor or Governor) so that he may have control over and impose his authority on the Muslims".²⁰⁰ Later authorities reveal that the Sultān did not or rather could not act according to the advice of the saint and one Kans or Gaṇeśa gained ascendancy in Bengal, so much so that he supplanted the ruling dynasty. According to Firīḡhtah, Gaṇeśa was one of the amīrs of the dynasty and became supreme over administrative and revenue affairs.²⁰¹ Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Bakhshī mentions him as a Zamīndār who acquired power and domination over the kingdom of Bengal,²⁰² while it is known from the Riyāḍ al-Salāṭin that Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh was killed by the strategem of Rājā Gaṇeśa.²⁰³ From these facts it is clear that Gaṇeśa was a man of position, and a key position at that, in the state, which made it possible for him to supplant the ruling dynasty. That the non-Muslims exercised a great influence in the society is also revealed by the fact that they were placated even by Sultān Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq who promised them remission of their revenue and illegal taxes and dues.²⁰⁴ He further promised increment of stipend to Hindu

200. S.H. Askari : "The correspondence of two 14th century Sūfī Saints of Bihar with the contemporary sovereigns of Delhi and Bengal", J.B.R.S. vol.42, 1956, PP. 177-195.

201. T.F., vol. II, P. 297. 202. T.A. vol.III, P. 250.

203. Salīm : Riyāḍ, P. 117.

204. J.A.S.B., 1923, PP. 280 ff.

Sādhus²⁰⁵ and thus, tried to win them over to his side. These promises were held out in order to weaken Iliyās Shāh which in effect means that Iliyās Shāh's strength lay in the support of the local Hindu gentry.

It also appears that the Hindu soldiers played a significant role in Bengal politics. We come to know from Ḍiyā al-Dīn Baranī that the well known pāiks of Bengal promised before Iliyās that they would sacrifice their lives for him (Iliyās).²⁰⁶ This attitude of the paiks is significant, because it indicates that they were politically conscious and they, in order to become free from foreign domination, took up the cause of Iliyās Shāh. The Hindu predominance in the court is also suggested by the oldest Chinese account of the official banquet given in honour of the Chinese ambassador at Pāṇḍuāh. It is said "(At the banquet) eating beef or mutton was forbidden nor could they drink wine for fear of trouble and because it is a breach of decorum, but they drank sweetened rose water." This does not look like a Muslim banquet. Why should beef and mutton be forbidden in a truly Muslim banquet? Evidently Hindus must have exercised so much power that the ceremonial behaviour of the court was dictated by their presence in the court. From the time of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh one Sanyal family and from the time of Sultān Sikandar Shāh one Bhāduri family gained ascendancy in the politics of Bengal and acted as rival groups helping the corresponding rival groups in the royal family. After the death of Sultān Saif al-Dīn Hamzah Shāh, the two rival families combined together by a matrimonial

205. Ibid.

206. Baranī : T.F.S., P. 593.

207. Annals, vol. I, 1945, P. 122.

alliance and thus they were able to supplant the ruling dynasty.²⁰⁸

This fact is not corroborated by any other source. Hence, the authenticity of Sanyal's evidence has been questioned. But the events leading to the dynastic revolution show that the main theory of D.C. Sanyal, i.e. the Hindus gained ascendency in the politics of Bengal at the time of the rise of Raja Ganesa, has some credence. It is also known from the writings of the later period that the court of Gauresvara (generally identified with Raja Ganesa) was full of Hindu ministers.²⁰⁹ This leads us to believe that Ganesa not only supplanted the ruling Muslim dynasty, but also raised his co-religionists to position and influence. The non-Muslims maintained this position in the later period also. Thus it may be said that non-Muslims played an important part in politics to shape the future course of the history of Bengal.

Family life : The family has been a primary and significant factor in carrying on the work of the organised social life in Bengal. In the pre-Muslim period family was in existence.²¹⁰ Following that tradition, the joint and undivided Hindu family continued to function in the early Iliyas Shahi period. It is revealed in the writings of Candidasa that Ayhan's family consisted of his wife, father, mother and his sister.²¹¹ An undivided Hindu family has been ordinarily joint, not only in the matters of property, but in food and wardship also. The Hindu family traditions developed the feeling of mutual dependence, co-operation and joint relationship among its members.

208. Durga Candra Sanyal : Bānglār Sāmājik Itihās, Quoted by N.K. Bhattasali, Coins and Chronology., PP. 83-86.

209. Krittivāsa : Rāmāyana, Quoted by S.K. Sen in Bānglā Sāhityer Itihāsa, PP. 84-85.

210. Atindra majumdar : Caryāpada, carya No. 2, P. 146.

211. S.K.K. 2nd edn. PP. 40, 58, 60.

Usually the father, being the head of the family, met household expenses . But the mother is also found to exercise great influence in the family. It is seen in Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan that Rādhā (Ayhan's wife) had to take permission from her mother-in-law before going out of the house ²¹² and she had to deposit money to her mother-in-law soon after her return from the market.²¹³ It is also observed that Ayhan requested his mother to appoint one female guide for his wife which was done subsequently.²¹⁴

In the family life, it is noticed that the relations among the members of a family were harmonious. But in spite of this fact, one thing seems to be clear that the position of the daughters-in-law in the family was not good, as is found in many cases even in modern times. In the family they were not free and they had to abide by the words of their elders. As they were under constant watch, they were to move cautiously. Finding any faults the elders of the family rebuked their daughters-in-law harshly. As a result, daughters-in-law feared their husbands and all in laws.²¹⁵ Rādhā had to bear very rough behaviour from her sister-in-law.²¹⁶ It also appears from the writings of Candīdāsa that the daughters-in-laws were not given permission for going out easily and have sometimes they had to adopt tricks to get the permission.²¹⁷ Even if when they were allowed to go out

212. Ibid, Br̥ndāvan Khando, 7th edn., PP. 78, 80.

213. দধি দুধ বিকনিয়া রাধা আইলো ঘরে / মৌড়ী আনিয়া দেএ পাসুড়ীর খানে ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Tāmbul Khando, P. 14.

214. Ibid, Janma Khando, P.4.

215. Ibid, Dān Khando, PP. 40, 60;

(a) তার মাতা রাধিকারে চাহে খনে খনে

- Bhār Khando, P. 77.

(b) সব খন রাখে মোরে ঘরের ভিতর

- Br̥ndāvan Khando, P. 92.

(c) আনুর হালএ সামীর ভরে

- Chatra Khando, P. 89.

(d) সামী ঘোর দুরন্তার পাসুড়ী গধুর

- Dān Khando, P. 58.

(e) আফার পাসুড়ী বড়ায়ি বড় খর উর

- Br̥ndāvan Khando, P. 92.

216. সহিলো পাসুনবক গালী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Br̥ndāvan Khando, P. 104.

217. Ibid Tāmbul Khando P. 14. Br̥ndāvan Khando P. 92.

they had to come back in time, otherwise, they had to endure harsh and abusive languages of their elders.²¹⁸

During the period under review, it is found that the Gopa women used to go usually in groups, to the market to sell milk, ghee, buttermilk, and curd for their livelihood and for their safe movements they sometime needed a guide.²¹⁹ Gopā women on their way to the market used to make merriment and fun with each other and even sometimes, they used to sing 'Maṅgal Gīt'²²⁰.

The Gopa women usually went to the market very early in the morning. If some one did not rise in time, the others would wake her up so that she would accompany them. They were sympathetic to each other. It is seen that if anyone spoiled her merchandise by chance, she would be afraid to go back to her house. So, if such incident did happen, her friends came up to make good of her spoiled goods from their stocks.²²¹

Women used to go to the river to fetch water. They took it as an amusement in their daily routine. It is observed that they used to go in groups making merriments and fun.²²² This has been a traditional feature of the social life in Bengal which enchanted the minds of the passerbyes.

218. ঘরে না দেখিআঁ বড় খঙ্গায়িবে মোরে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Naukā Khando, P. 73.

219. (a) ঘুঁত দধি দুধ ঘোলে পাঁজিআ গসার

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Tāmbul Khando, P. 15.

(b) সব সখিজন লজাঁ আঁটি বড় রঙ্গৈ

- Tāmbul Khando, P. 15.

(c) সব গোআলিনী যাত্র বড়ায়িক সঙ্গৈ

- Naukā Khando, P. 66.

220. (a) লাস হাস গয়িহাস কানে বানারঙ্গৈ

- S.K.K.; 2nd edn.

Naukā Khando, P.66.

(b) জায়িতে হরাধিত মনে গায়িটে মঙ্গৈ

- S.K.K., 2nd edn.

Naukā Khando, P. 66.

It is also observed that women took their bath in the river. Sometimes, it is seen that they even took their bath in naked whenever they got the chance.²²³

Social Status of women : The Hindu women did not enjoy a high status in the society. They enjoyed restricted liberties having no independent status in the society. Not only in this period but in ancient time also, a woman had hardly any independent legal or social status, except as a member of the family of her father and husband.²²⁴ When unmarried, a woman had to live under rigid supervision and control of her parents, after marriage, she lived under the strict control of her husband and depended on him, and after the death of her husband, she had to depend on her son. In case of husband's death without keeping any male issue, his widow might inherit her husband's entire property. But she should not have any right to the sale, mortgage, or gift of property, and her enjoyment should be consistent with the life of a chaste widow, solely devoted to the memory of her husband. She should live in her husband's family with his parents, abstain from luxury and spend just enough to keep herself alive in order that she might do all acts and rites beneficial to her husband. Besides, she had to be fully sub-servient to her husband's family, even in respect of the dis-

221. Ibid,

(a) পসার ডুবিল মোর জনের ভিতরে ।

কোন পরিকারে আজি জাইবো নিজ ঘর ॥

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Naukā Khando, P. 75.

(b) সফল সখিএ যুগতী করিআ

মনত করিল সার

আপন আপন দধি দুধ দিআ

রাখার তৈল পসার

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Naukā Khando, P. 75.

222. যাই যমুনার গানিছে আইস / সখি মোর সঙ্গে /
যমুনা জলে কুস্ত তরিআ / আসিব এ বস্তু রঙ্গৈ

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Jamunā Khando, P. 111.

223. Ibid, Jamunā Khando, 7th edn., P. 102;
কৈহোঁ ত পুরুষ নাহি এথা কিসে লাজ / হেন পরিতাবি রাখা লয়িআ গোপীকুলে /
বসন তেজি নাখিলা যমুনা জলে ॥

~~Candīdāsa : S.K.K. 7th edn. Jamunā Khando P. 11~~

possession of her property.²²⁵ Thus, it is seen that her life was a state of perpetual wardship and the social laws, customs and traditions made her position dependent and unpleasant. Yet there are references to show that women enjoyed an honourable position in her husband's family. Ayhan's mother played a significant role in the family affairs. Her activities in the family clearly represent her holding an honourable position.²²⁶

Hindu women of the age in question had lofty ideals of fidelity. They lived and died for their husband. She was faithful and devoted to him throughout her life. In fact, after marriage, her husband was an object of adoration for her. That a Hindu woman after her marriage could not think about any one other than her husband is also revealed in the words of Rādhā who says, "being a Gopā woman, I have no other way but my husband".²²⁷ Married women considered it to be a great sin to have any illegal relation with men other than her husband. Once Rādhā expressed, "fie on that life of a woman, enters her husband into water, who gets heaven by making love with different man".²²⁸

224. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol.I, P. 610.

225. Ibid.

226. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. r. 14, 77, 78, 7th edn. PP. 78, 80; For details - see Supra. P.

227. (a) হইএ আক্ষে গোপজাতী / গতি ছাড়ী নাই গতি

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dan Khando, P. 49.

(b) স্মৃতি ভাবে নারী জীবন কুৎসিত

- Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 453.

228. যিক্‌ ডাউ নারীর জীবন
দহে পশু তার পত্নী।
পর পুরুষে নেহাই যাহার
বিষ্ণুপুরে হএ স্থিতী ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Tāmbul Khando, 2nd edn., P. 14.

The 'Purdah' system was not much in practice among the Hindu women of the period in question.²²⁹ Generally it was observed by a section of the Hindu women, particularly those belonging to the upper and well-to-do classes. It is found that these women of the upper classes were not accustomed to move out freely and they spoke with outsiders from behind the curtain.²³⁰ On the other hand, the majority of the Hindu women did not wear any shroud or veil and did not live in seclusion. If there is any necessity of shrouding the faces while they are on move outside, they moved the lapel of their sari or other head dress slightly over their faces.²³¹

Marriage : Marriage is, no doubt, a very important and significant phase in the life of both the sexes of the Hindus. There was no age restriction in respect of marriage. But it appears that child marriage was commonly practised in the society. The Hindus considered it a religious duty to marry their sons and daughters at an early age, particularly the girls before the age of puberty. Rādhā, the wife of Ayhan, claimed herself to be a girl of eleven years.²³² In fact, a marriage at or after the age of puberty was considered a bad marriage. It was extremely difficult to find a husband for a girl who had passed the 'marriageable age'. Padma Purāṇa mentions that it was ignominious for one who had an unmarried daughter.²³³

Negotiation and settlement of marriage was entirely the concern of the respective parents.²³⁴ To ascertain the opinion of the girls to be married was regarded as indecent in the society. The bride and the bride-

229. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol.I, P. 609.

230. Ibid, P. 610.

231. সত্বরে ঢাকিগোঁ মুখ দেহের বসনে
S.K.K. Jamuna Khando, 7th edn., P. 96.

- Candīdāsa :

232. আল বড়ায়ি / এগার বৎসরের বালি
S.K.K., 7th edn. Dan Khando, P. 14.

- Candīdāsa :

233. ঘরে অকুমারী কন্যা বড় অমহিমা

- Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 68.

234. Ibid, PP. 318, 322.

groom had no voice in the selection of a match. Sometimes, a young beautiful accomplished girl was married to a deaf or a blind or to an old man. Occasionally, however, the educated girls could make a choice of their husbands.²³⁵ But such cases were very few and rare in the society of the time.

Marriage in one's own caste, sub-caste or profession was the common practice.²³⁶ Sagotra marriage i.e., marriage between a boy and a girl who are related by blood was prohibited. Marriage on the ground of sameness of 'gotra' (race) and 'Pravara' (family) as well as of 'Sapinda' (a near relation) relationship between the parties to the match were forbidden. Inter-caste marriages were also known.²³⁷ Though the marriage of girls of inferior castes with the males of higher castes were forbidden, such marriages did take place and they were considered inferior. Children out of such marriages gave rise to mixed castes.

The practice of dowry was prevalent in the society.²³⁸ This was favoured by people who were rich and well-to-do. The commoners were least drawn to it. The nature of dowry varied according to the economic standard and social status of the parties concerned. Divorce in the upper classes was not allowed and the bonds of marriage were brought to an end by death alone.²³⁹ But among the lower castes like the Doms, Candāls and the Śūdras divorce and remarriage were not uncommon.²⁴⁰

235. Bharat Candra : Anandamaṅgala, PP. 87-90.

236. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 313.

237. Ibid.

238. Aśuṭoṣ Bhaṭṭacārya (ed) : Gopī Candrer Gaṇ, P. 40; Mālādhār Basu : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya, PP. 25, 400.

239. Alberuni's India, vol. II (Sachau), P. 154.

240. S.K. Sen (ed) : Caṛyā Gīti Padāvalī, Pada -10, P. 58.

Polygamy or the practice of having more than one living wife was common among the Hindus, especially belonging to the richer sections of the society.²⁴¹ Normally, a man used to have only one wife, but those with adequate means could afford to indulge in the luxury of having a number of wives. But the practice of monogamy seems to have been generally common among the lower sections of the society. It appears that all wives of a man enjoyed equal rights and participated in religious activities of their husbands.²⁴²

The death of the husband was, no doubt, the greatest tragedy in the life of a Hindu women. Widow remarriage was in vogue in the society, but it was largely practised among the lower social classes.²⁴³ After the death of the husband, the wife had to live in complete chastity and to avoid all kinds of luxury and exciting food such as meat, fish etc. The position of a widow was not at all enviable. They were often looked upon as inauspicious and were very seldom allowed to take part in the different rites and ceremonies.²⁴⁴

The practice of Satī or burning of widow on the funeral pyre of her husband was also prevalent in the society. Though no reference to this social custom is available in the contemporary Bengali literature, it is found in the writings of Alberuni²⁴⁵ and Ibn Baṭūṭah²⁴⁶ that the custom was practised in Indian Hindu society during the period in question. It is also observed that in ancient Bengal widows were encouraged by the people to immolate themselves in the funeral pyres of their husbands.²⁴⁷ The songs

241. Bhavānīdāsa : Maynāmatir Gān, ed. by N.K. Bhattasali, P. 9; Mālādhār Basu : Srī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya, PP. 327, 454, 543.

242. Bhavānīdāsa : Maynāmatir Gān, edn. by N.K. Bhattasali, P.9.

243. Asutosh Bhattacharya (ed) : Gopī Candrer Gaṇ, P.3.; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 455, 459.

244. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol.I, PP. 610-611.

245. Alberuni's India, vol.II(Sachau), P.155. 246. Ibn Baṭūṭah : The Rehla, PP.22-23.

247. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B. vol. I, P. 611.

of Maynāmati show that the practice of Sati was present in the contemporary society.²⁴⁸ The Manasāmaṅgalakāvyas of the sixteenth century also vaguely refer to the practice of the Satī. According to Ketakadās - Kshemānanda, Behula's mother-in-law Sānakā wept and said that she did not hear in this world that a young widow ever accompanied her dead husband. On the other hand, a girl or a young woman, whose husband was dead, lived as a widow in her house.²⁴⁹ These facts indicate that the Satī was not a regular practice of the period in question and it was in all probability voluntary or occasional.

Public women or Prostitutes : There were prostitutes or the dancing and public women in the society. These courtesans and dancing girls were engaged for the sake of amusement on different occasions such as feasts, festivals, marriage ceremonies etc. They were commonly known as Natī, Veśya, Nartakī.²⁵⁰ In order to enhance their beauty, the courtesans and the dancing girls painted their lips, marked their faces with dots of variegated colours and dressed their hair charmingly with flowers. They wore rich attractive cloths.²⁵¹ In Manik Candra Rājār Gān the harlot Hira is given the credit of knowing the art of bed making by placing a mattress three feet high and spreading over it a Śītal pātī; she covered it with a valuable blanket called the Indra Kambal.²⁵² We also notice in the songs

248. Bhavānīdāsa : Maynāmotir Gān, ed. by N.K. Bhattasali, P. 112.

249. Ketakadasa - Kshemananda : manasāmaṅgala, Quoted by M.A. Rahim in S.C.H.B., vol. I, P. 360, f.n.I.

250. Aśutoṣ Bhattacarya (ed) : Gopī Candrer Gān, PP. 218-219; Candīdāsa : S.K.K. 2nd edn., PP. 31, 112; Vijayagupta : Manasāmaṅgala 13th edn., PP. 80-81; Mālādhār Vasu : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya, P. 607.

251. বেশ্যার পরিধান হবে আগুন পাটের সাড়ী
(The harlot would wear the Āgun-pāt-saḍī) - Manik Candra Rājār Gān.
Quoted by T.C. Dasgupta in Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 278.

252. বিছানা করিতে নটা তাল ডানে
পাটীর উপর পাটী বিছায় এক বুক উছল ।
তার উপর কেলাইয়া দিন ইন্দু কয়ল ।।

- Manik Candra Rājār Gān, Quoted by T.C. Dasgupta in Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 278.

of Gopī Candra that the prostitute Hira first combed her hair minutely. She then wore a bit of tinsels of pearls in rows near the parting place of her hair on the forehead. Under this row of tinsels, she put nine little marks of sandal paste. Then she dressed her hair with beautiful Khoṇpā (knot)²⁵³. In the society, the position of Nartakī (Nācunī or harlot) was not good. It is revealed in the expression of Rādhā who says, "I am a milk maid, not a Nācunī (Nartakī).²⁵⁴ Sometimes, the public women were utilized to achieve one's interest.²⁵⁵

Dress : The coming of the Muslims to Bengal seems to have brought about a profound change in the dress of the Hindus of all classes in general and in particular of the Hindus of the upper class. The upper class Hindus who came into contact with the Muslims gradually began to imitate the dress of the Muslim nobility. The result of this imitation was that during the period of our investigation it would be difficult to distinguish a Hindu from a Muslim aristocrat, if the former withdrew the caste mark (tilak) and some distinctive ornaments viz kundal (ear ring) etc. This contention finds support in the accounts of Kuo Ch'ung li.²⁵⁶

However, the dress of the Hindus of Bengal varied from class to class in accordance with the status of the person concerned.

The Chinese accounts show that the Hindu aristocrats wore a white cotton turban and a long loose robe with a round collar on their bodies and held around by embroidered sash. On their feet they wore leather sli-

253. Asuṭoṣ Bhattacarya (ed) : Gopī Candrer Gān, PP. 218-219.

254. গোপালিনী আরে নহো নাচুনী
-Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., Jamunā Khando, 2nd edn., P. 112.

255. Vijāyagupta : Padma Purāna, PP. 157-166.

256. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bāṅglār Itihāser Duśo Bacnar 3rd edn. P. 323; Annals, vol.I, 1945, P. 117.

ppers. They also wore a long white cotton shirt and pointed shoes.²⁵⁷ In Bengali literature we have references to Hindus using a kind of belt which was called Patukā.²⁵⁸

The dhuti (a long piece of cloth worn round the loins by males) appears to have been the common dress of the Hindus. In fact, the dhuti as a lower garment formed the essential part of classical Hindu culture. The well-to-do classes among the Hindus wore fine dhutis.²⁵⁹ Sometimes, they used a cādar (a sheet worn as an upper garment) on their shoulders.²⁶⁰ They also wore an aṅgarākhī or a long coat reaching the knee-joint and fastened in the neck and breast.²⁶¹

The standard of dress among the poorer sections was different. They tried their best to wear the minimum of clothes. In summer, they were satisfied with a mere dhuti or a single sheet of long cloth below the waist. It hardly reached below the knee and in many cases it was even shorter than that.²⁶² They went about bare footed. Abūl Faḍl in his Ayn-i-Akbarī refers to the dress of the common people thus : "The men and women of Bengal for the most part went naked, wearing only a cloth about their loins".²⁶³ This indicates that the common people were poor and they could hardly afford to buy enough clothes. But in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan Candīdāsa refers to a Gopī (milk maid) wearing silken sari and adorning her body with different ornaments. It is also mentioned in the same source that sometimes the common people put on costly dress and ornaments.²⁶⁴ This shows that the

257. Annals, vol. I, 1945, PP. 117, 122; Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay : Bāṅglār Itihāser Duśo Bachar, 3rd edn., P. 323.

258. শূন্যের গুপ্ত বস্তু দেখে দেবতার আঁচ - Quoted by T.C. Das Gupta in the Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 43, f.n. 1.

259. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 78, 328.

260. Mukunda Rāma : Candī Kāvya, ed. by Kumar Bandopadhyay, P. 338.

261. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 41.

262. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol. I, P. 613.

263. A.A., vol. II, Eng. tr. by Jarret, P. 134. (Footnotes continued in the next page)

people were not so much poor as is mentioned by Abūl Faḍl. Actually, the economic condition of the people was not the only cause of scanty dress, rather the climate of Bengal induced the people to put on such dresses. In fact, in view of the rains, water and mud, long garments were inconvenient. Short clothes, therefore, were the most favourite dress of the peasants and labourers working in the soil of rain drenched Bengal. The Chinese records also show that the people wore clothes according to the season.²⁶⁵ Candīdāsa mentions the use of Magar Khāru (one kind sandal) by the common people.²⁶⁶

The Hindus belonging to the different professions used to wear different clothes. An account of these different costumes is given below :

The Brahman : The Brahmans used to wear various types of dhutis, namely, Sakirani, catak and Maṭak. They also used turban on their heads. The priestly Brahmans also wore cadar on their shoulders. They never wore garments like shirts and coats. But they usually went bare above the waist, with the Paitā (the sacred thread) over the body. The orthodox Brahmans would never use garlands or scents, specially when they were engaged in observing austerities, that is, when they were Bratīs.²⁶⁷

264. S.K.K., 2nd edn., Tāmbul Khando, PP. 5,7,13,15; Dān Khando, PP. 27-32, 35, 37, 42-43, 56,58, 61-63, 19, 46; Bhār Khando, P. 82; and 7th edn., Baṁsī Khando, PP. 118, 120; 2nd edn., Rādhā viraha Khando, p. 136.

265. Annals, vol.I, 1945, P. 123.

266. S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 37.

267. Asuṭoṣ Bhaṭṭacarya (ed) : Gopī Candrer Gān, P. 311; T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 43 and f.n. 2.

Yogī : The garbs of the Yogī (an ascetic) and Yoginī (a female ascetic) were peculiar. They used to shave their heads, wear Kundals (ear rings). Sometimes they used stramonium flower for their ears, garland of bones for their necks and rubbed their bodies with ashes. They also used candan Tilak (Sandal Tilak) on their foreheads. It is found that an ascetic of the Yogī class bore an iron three-proged spear on his left shoulder.²⁶⁸ Sometimes, he also kept along moustache and beard. He put on a rag and carried a beggar's knapsack, a dry-pumkin gourd and a stick. Sometimes he also wore a kind of cloth known as kaupin, carried rags on his shoulder.²⁶⁹

268. (a) মাথা মুন্ডিয়াঁ যোগিনী হাঁ
বেড়ায়ে নানা দেশে ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Rādhā Biraha Khando, P. 138.

(b) শনিবারে রাজা তুমি গুরাইবা মাথা

- Bhavānīdāsa : Maynāmōtīr Gān ed. by N.K. Bhattasali, P. 25.
কর্ণেতে কুন্ডল দিয়া হইল জুগী বেষ

- Govinda Candras songs, Quoted by T.C. Dasgupta in Aspects of Bengali Society, p. 44, f.n. 1.

269. (a) দুই কর্নে ধুতুরার ফুল
গলায় হাড়ের মালা
সকল শরীরে ভস্মাঘ্রে

(b) কপালে চকনের কোটা

(c) বাম কানে লোহার ত্রিশূল

(d) লক্ষ্য লক্ষ্য করে গোপ দাড়ি

- Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 30.

(e) কটিতে যোগিন কাথাঝুলি কানে

- Quoted by T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bangali Society, P. 44; f..n.1.
Kaupin is a small piece of cloth worn over the private parts.

The common dress of the Hindu women was śārī.²⁷⁰ In Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan, it is found that Kṛṣṇa intended to present a sari which was eight yards long.²⁷¹ This unusual length of śārī probably suggests that either it is woven for special purpose or it contained a bodice (blouse) piece like modern times. In ancient Bengal, the śārī, like dhuti, never covered the upper part of the body which generally remained exposed.²⁷² Sometimes, they partially covered the upper part of their body with a long narrow scarf (Orna).²⁷³ Besides, occasionally they also covered their breast with a culī or stanapatta and in a few cases by a bodice which covered the body above the naval and a portion of the upper arm.²⁷⁴ But with the coming of the Muslims, the mode of wearing śārī changed. It is clear that the śārī as worn to-day was unknown in Bengal in pre-Muslim times. It may have been a composite Muslim adaptation of the native forms of draped dresses by both Hindus and Muslims. Its acceptance by the Hindus may have been from a desire to emulate the ruling race and could have been hastened by its utility. Thus, the śārī was rounded over the whole body. The lower part was arranged like a dhuti, hanging in close folds down in front, forming an over skirt with a gathering of narrow vertical folds. The right piece of cloth is passed under the left arm and over the head forming a veil or ancal and then hangs down over the right shoulder.

270. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Narration in the entire book reveals that sari was the common dress of the Hindu women.

271. হেঁয় যেন হাত মোর এটিল / এহা নেহ মোর পরহ যেন ।।

- Ibid, Jamunā Khando, P. 112.

272. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : I.B. Vol.1, P. 613.

273. Ibid, N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 553.

274. Ibid; R.C. Majumdar (ed) : I.B. Vol.1, PP. 613-614; Shahanara Hussain : Everyday life in the pala Empire, P. 91.

It appears from Bengali literature that Vasan, Pāṭol and Vastra were the common names used for the common dress of men and women.²⁷⁵ However, the Hindu ladies used śārīs of different colours and usually they preferred deep colour. There were different kinds and qualities of śārīs : of cotton, of silk and even śārīs made of jute fibre.²⁷⁶ There are mentions of various types of śārīs such as 'Pāter Śārī', Meghnāl śārī, Toṣor śārī, Khīrāvālī śārī, Lakshmī vilās śārī, Vahukhanī śārī, Pāter pāchrā, Āguṇ Pāt śārī, Meghdambur śārī, Gaṅgājalī śārī, Mayur Pekham śārī and Āsmān Tārā śārī.²⁷⁷

275. (a) নেত বসন পরিধানে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Dān Khando, P. 28.

(b) অতি চিত্র বসন পরিধা চন্দ্রাবলী

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Bān Khando, P. 115.

(c) গোপাল বসন হার লয়িতা দামোদর

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Jāmunā Khando, P. 102.

(d) নেত পাটোল না পিন্দিবোঁ

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 29; See also page 41.

(e) পরিধান পটবস্ত্র কটিতে তরুণ

- Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 193.

276. Bhavānīdāsa : Maynāmōtīr Gān, ed. by N.K. Bhattasali, PP. 10, 21; Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. PP. 29, 41, 102, 115; Mukunda Rāma : Chāṇḍī Kāvya ed. by Kumar Bandopadhyay, PP. 125, 140, 153.

277. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 37; Bhavānīdāsa : Maynāmōtīr Gān, PP. 10, 18, 25; T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 270, 278, 282; Dakshinā Ranjan Mitra : Thākurmār Jhulī, Madhumālā, P. 23, 93; Maymonsingh - Gītīkā, Vol. II, P. 160.

Thin śārī made of silken fabrics was very much in vogue among the ladies of well-to-do classes. The Hindu women of economically solvent families generally wore śārīs with an underwear and at times, a string for tying dress worn round the waist called Nibibandha.²⁷⁸ The women also put on Kāñculī (a cover for the breast) of different colours and designs.²⁷⁹ It was generally of two different types - one short covering the breasts only and the other long enough to reach the waist. It was fastened at the back with ribbons. In case of short one, the back was left bare and in that of the long one, it was covered. Kāñculī was in common use both among the rich and the poor; while the short Kāñculī was normally used by the grown up maiden or married ladies for lightening their breasts. Women of the poorer classes wore ordinary śārīs. They also wore less varied clothes. We find in the caṇḍī kāvya of Mukunda Rāma that the poor women wore śārīs made of jute fibre.²⁸⁰ Even they did not use underwear and Kāñculī.

Men's Toilets and Ornaments :

Men, particularly those who belonged to the well-to-do classes, followed various contrivances for cultivating their physical attractiveness. They usually dress their hair with the help of a comb commonly known as Kāñkaī.²⁸¹ Chinese records show that the upper class Hindus used to keep short hair.²⁸² But Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Caṇḍīdāsa refers to common men having long hair, popularly known as 'Ghora cul'.²⁸³ Sometimes they fastened their hair

278. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 48.

279. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K. 2nd edn., PP. 18,29,35,40,43,50,52,56,63,73. In Bengali literature there are innumerable references to this garment.

280. Mukunda Rāma : Caṇḍīkāvya, ed.by Kumar Bandopadhyay, PP.125,140,153.

281. Bhavānīdāsa : Maynāmōtīr Gaṇ, ed.by N.K. Bhattasali, P.9.

282. Annals, vol.I, 1945, PP. 117, 124.

283. (a) বীল কুটিল ঘন ঘৃদু দীর্ঘ কেশ

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Janma Khando, P.3; Vijaya Gupta : Patna Pictorial, P. 454.

(b) মাথের ঘোড়া চুল

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 119.

with peacock's feather and used a riband around their heads. Sometimes, they also wore their hair in knot on their heads.²⁸⁴ For the purpose of making the hair smooth and decent, they used to apply different kinds of oil.

Both men and women were accustomed to take baths at least once a day. It is observed that they were fond of taking baths before they began their daily business. Besides, bathing was also regarded as a sacred duty among the Hindus from the religious point of view. It is seen that men were habituated to the use of oil at the time of taking baths. Vijayagupta in his Padma Purāṇa refers to the use of Āmlaki (myrobalan), sesame (til) perfumed oil (toilo), soddened turmeric (gilā haridrā) and a mixture of rice with water at the time of taking bath.²⁸⁵ They also used mustard oil.²⁸⁶

After bath they dressed their hair. Sometimes it is found that they dried up their hair with the vapour of incense.²⁸⁷ In order to make themselves attractive men used to anoint their bodies with sandal paste. They also used other scents like Āgar, Kasturī (musk), Kumkum (a kind of red powder) and Karpūr (camphor).²⁸⁸ Sometimes, men used to apply Kājal (collyrium) on the eyebrows, Candan Tilak (spot of sandal paste) on their

284. (a) ময়ূর পুচ্ছে বাঁধি চূড়া
(b) কেশ পাশে দিওঁ বেড়া
(c) কনয়া কুসুমে বাঁধি জটা

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 136.

285. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 78, 198.

286. Ibn Batūlah : The Rehla, P. XLVII.

287. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 78.

288. (a) সন্ধ্যা শরীর চন্দনে লেপিল

(b) আগর চন্দন আঁই মাখি

(c) কপূর বাসিত তাম্বুল বদনে

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn. Bān Khando, P. 106.

- Rādhā Biraha Khando, P. 137.

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn. Bān Khando, P. 106.

- Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 363, 365.

forehead.²⁸⁹ Candīdāsa mentions that men sometimes applied a big spot of sandal paste in the middle of their forehead and one small spot of the same on either side of the big spot.²⁹⁰

Men were in the habit of chewing betel (Pān) which were commonly prevalent among the Bengalis for making them elegant looking.²⁹¹ Among the Hindus, the use of Darpan (mirror) was common, and they were also accustomed to the habit of shaving their beard.²⁹² Usually they kept long hairs, shaved their beards and left the moustaches very long. The Yogīs used to shave heads, but kept long beards and very long moustaches.²⁹³

The Hindus of the well-to-do classes had a fancy for costly ornaments. They adorned their bodies with different types of ornaments.²⁹⁴ They put on ornaments of gold, diamonds and other precious metals like Har (necklace), kundals (ear ring), keyūr (armlet), Aṅgad (armlet), Balayā (Bangles), Kaṅkan, Kiṅkinī, Nupūr, Khāru, Patukā, Angurī, etc.²⁹⁵

Women's Toilets and Ornaments : Women, in general, were fond of various types of toilets and ornaments than men. They took keen interest in their ornamentation as well as embellishment. Bengali literature refer to the various items for a women's toilet. It included regular bath, anointing of their bodies, decoration of their hair and bodies with jewels, forehead with tilak, eyebrows with collyrium, hands with dye and lips with betel leaf.

289. (a) কাজনে রঞ্জিত দুই আখী

Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn. Rajā Birala Khando, P. 137.

(b) চন্দন তিলকে আঁতি শোভিত কপালে

Candīdāsa : S.K.K. 2nd edn., Janma Khando, P. 3.

290. দুই পাশে লঘু লঘু তনুত বিশালে

Candīdāsa : S.K.K. 2nd edn. P. 3.

291. Ibid. See Tāmbul Khando.

292. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 363-365.

293. Bhavānīdāsa : Myrnatir Gaṇ, ed. by N.K. Bhattachasali, P. 25; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 30.

294. নানাবর্ণি অনন্ত শোভিত শরীরে

Candīdāsa : S.K.K. 2nd edn., Janma Khando, P. 3.

295. Ibid., 7th edn., Rajā Khando, PP. 106, 119; T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, PP. 43, 46; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 365.

Before taking their baths, the Hindu ladies used to apply Āmlaki oil²⁹⁶ and turmeric (haldi). After the bath they used to anoint their bodies with various fragrant ingredients such as Āgar, sandal paste and Kasturī. They also used to chew betel (pān) with Karpūr for reddening their lips and making them elegant looking.²⁹⁷

The Hindu ladies were very careful about their hair do. They were accustomed to keep long hair and wore them in plaits (popularly known as Khoṇpā, Benī)²⁹⁸ and bound them with ribbons. A careful study of the terracotta plaques of Paharpur shows that the women in the ancient period used various types of hair styles, which were as follows : (a) hair arranged in a top knot; (b) hair combed back and kept in place by a fillet; (c) fan like hair style; (d) hair arranged in a bun; (e) sausage like hair style; (f) hair coiled and allowed to fall on the shoulder; (g) hair arranged in two or three small knots; (h) short and curly hair falling on the neck; (i) long hair plaited and wound round the head; (j) coiffure decorated with ribbon bows.²⁹⁹ In the songs of Gopicandra we also find that the women used to tie up their hair with different types of Khoṇpās such as 'Ilāte Tangra Khoṇpā, Cang ar Bang Khoṇpā, Natī or Notī Khoṇpā and Bhramar Gunjar Khoṇpā.³⁰⁰ In the contemporary Bengali literature we find mention of two types of Khoṇpās namely Kānāri Khoṇpā³⁰¹ and oval shaped Khoṇpā.³⁰² Kānāri Khoṇpā is arranged according to the hair style of Karnat.³⁰³

296. Padma Purāna, P. 237. 297. Caṇḍīkāsā : S.K.K. 2nd edn., PP. 89, 120, 133.

298. Ibid, 2nd edn. PP. 34, 60.

299. Shahanara Hussain : Everyday life in the Pala Empire, PP. 107-109.

300. Asuṭoṣ Bhattacharya (ed) : Gopīcandra's Gān, P. 218. Detailed descriptions of these Khoṇpās are not available.

301. Caṇḍīkāsā : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 41.

302. Ibid, 7th edn., Rāhā Biraha Khando, p. 132.

303. Ibid, 2nd edn., P. 41, f.n.

Possibly in this style, the hair is plaited in two knots placed at the back of the head. These knots looked beautiful and drew the attention of the men.³⁰⁴ The repeated references to the oval shaped Khoṇpā reflect its popularity. Sometimes, the women used to keep hairs in dishevelled way. They parted their hairs in the middle and used vermillion in the parting unless they were widows. They were very fond of flowers and used it for various purposes. Sweet smelling flowers or garlands were used in the hair.³⁰⁵ In order to beautify their eyes they applied Anjan or Kājal (collyrium) and on the forehead they used Tilaka.³⁰⁶

Toilet could not be complete without the looking glass which was popularly termed as Darpan. It appears that the use of the Darpan (mirror) was very common.³⁰⁷ Whenever a women was to apply powder or rouge to her cheeks, tilak mark on her forehead, unguent to the eyes and vermillion in the middle parting of her hair, she did so with the help of a mirror.

The Hindu ladies were exceedingly fond of ornaments. They wore ornaments on almost every limb of their bodies from head to foot. In fact, wearing of ornaments of numerous designs by married women was a special feature. But if she unfortunately became a widow, she threw away her ornaments and jewellery and wiped out the scarlet line of vermillion from her head.

304. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 41.

305. (a) অক্ষিপ্তে কেশ তোর

(b) শিশির শিন্মুর সুঘন রেখায় শোভা পায়

(c) বাসিত ফুলে রাখা বাস্মসি কেশ

(d) খোপাত উপর তোর বউল মাল দেখে

306. (a) কাজনে ঐক্সিল দুই আখী

(b) আলোকে তিলক তোর শোভা ললটি

307. Asūtoṣ Bhattacarya (ed) : Gopī Candrer Gān, P.380; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 269.

Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 35.

Ibid, PP. 42,56.

Ibid, P. 51.

Ibid, P. 48. See also PP.32,37,42,101, and 44.

Candīdāsa : S.K.K. 7th edn. P.137.

Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. P.20;

Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 324.

We find innumerable references in Bengali literature to women's jewellery. Women used to adorn their heads with Mukut which was sometimes studded with diamonds.³⁰⁸ Hindu women in Bengal used Chara and Sin̥thipān̥thi on their foreheads.³⁰⁹

Their necks were decked with ornaments like Har (made of gold and pearls) and Hansuli.³¹⁰ Sometimes Hindu ladies wore Har on their breasts.³¹¹ Har was of many kinds. Of the different types of Har, Sateśvarī Har was very popular.³¹² It was a seven coiled necklace. Hansuli was a moon shaped ornament of neck which fitted with the neck closely above the necklace like a collar. It was also called Gribāpatra.³¹³

The Hindu ladies adorned their nose with ornaments like Besar.³¹⁴ It is a semi circular ornament, decked with pearls. In this connection, it will not be out of place to mention here that the nose ornaments became familiar to Indian life and culture in or about 1000 A.D. chiefly as a result of Muslim influence. We do not find any mention of nose ring

308. মাথার মুকুট জলে রতনে Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Jamunā Khando, P. 112. Also see Dān Khando, PP. 61-62.

309. Bhavānīdāsa : Maynāmōtīr Gān, P. 25; Asūtoṣ Bhaṭṭacārya (ed) : Gopī Candrer Gān, P. 411. Sin̥thipān̥thi consists of three gold strings two of which run from ear's end and joined at the centre by another which goes straight along the hair parting. Cf. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 51.

310. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dan Khando, 27, 39, 40, 43, 58, 60, 63, 71, 73; Jamunā Khando, P. 102; S.K.K. 7th edn. Ban Khando, P. 119; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 79.

311. ভনের উপর হারে Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn. P. 149.

312. Ibid, 2nd edn., PP. 13, 18, 34, 41, 56, 57, 61, 62, 68, 71.

313. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 53.

314. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 79;

(a) নাকের বেসর আর গলায় হাসলি

(b) নাকেতে বেসর দিল করে আলমল

in Sanskrit literature of ancient India.³¹⁵ We also do not find any reference to this nose ornament in the sources of ancient Bengal. But we have testimony in the fifteenth century Bengali literature of the use of nose ornaments. Hence, it is reasonable to think that the nose ornaments were also brought to Bengal by the Muslims.

Women used to adorn their ears with the various types of ear-rings. Of the ear rings, Kundal was very popular among women of well-to-do classes.³¹⁶ It was a large ring made of gold inlaid with pearls. A special kind of Kundal was known as the Makar Kundal³¹⁷ as it resembled the head of a Makara - a kind of fabulous sea - fish. Karnaphul was a large flower like ornament worn on the lower part of the ear.³¹⁸ Vali was also another kind of ear-ring worn on the lower part of the ear.³¹⁹ Caki was exquisitely decorated with pearls and fixed on to the upper part of the ear.³²⁰ Hirādhari Kari was a sort of ear ring used in the middle of the ear.³²¹

Among the most important ornaments of arms, mention here may be made of Aṅgad, Keyūr,³²² Tār and Bāju.³²³ Aṅgad was an armlet worn on the upper arm. Keyūr was another kind of armlet of gold band with nice decora-

315. N.A. Divitia : "The Nose ring as an Indian ornament" - in the Journal and proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, New Series, Vol. XIX, 1923, PP. 78-80; Also See P.N. Ojha's "Some Aspects of North Indian Social Life", P. 52.

316. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. 26-28, 32, 42, 56, 57, 62; S.K.K. 7th edn., PP. 134, 136.

317. Kaśīdāsa : Mahābhārata, D.C. Sen's edition, P. 542.

318. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 79.

319. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 52.

320. Ibid, Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 157.

321. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 52.

322. (a) অঙ্গদ ভূষণে Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn.
Rādhā Biraha Khando, P.150.

(b) হার কেয়ুর আর যত অভিন্ন সব Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn.
Dān Khando, P. 63.

323. T.C. Dasgupta : Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 54.

tions on. Bāju, also known as Bāju Bandha, was generally worn high up on the right arm. It was a sort of thick band of gold with engravings on and tied to the arm with a string. Tār was a plain gold bands about two inches in breadth worn round the arm and below the Bāju Bandha. The Hindu women used Balayā, Curī and Kaṅkan³²⁴ for their wrists. Very frequent mention of Balayā in Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan indicates its popularity. Kaṅkan or bracelet of gold and pearls was also an important ornament for the wrist. The married women were accustomed to wear Śaṅkha Curīs (bangles of conch).³²⁵ Bāhuṭī,³²⁶ a kind of bracelet, was also in use. Different kinds of finger rings known as Ānguṭhī, Mudari³²⁷ etc. were used for arraying the fingers. Women of higher classes were accustomed to the use of finger rings of jewels and diamonds. Mekhla³²⁸ and Kinkini³²⁹ were two important ornaments for the waist. Mekhla was a highly decorated girdle; while Kinkini was a waistband with small bells worn round the waist.

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324. (a) বাহুতে বলয়া - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.7;
See also PP. 29, 41, 48, 52, 56, 58, 62-63.
- (b) বাহুতে কনকচুড়ী - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn. Rādhā
Biraha Khando, P. 150.
- (c) কনক কঙ্কন নিলৈ আঁয়র আঁঠুঠী - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Dān
Khando, P. 62.
325. রতনে অঙ্কিত তোর দুই বাহু শঙ্খ - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th end.
Bān Khando, P. 113.
326. হাঁথের বলয় নিলৈ আঁয়র বাহুঠী - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn.,
Dān Khando, P.62; See also P. 66; N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 557.
327. (a) কনক কঙ্কন নিলৈ আঁয়র আঁঠুঠী - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.62;
হাতের শিরি আঁঠুঠী - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.19.
- (b) রতন গুদড়ী পিন্স হাতে - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn.,
Rādhā Biraha Khando, P. 156.
328. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 557.
329. গুদা সুবনের মোর কিকিনি - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn.,
Jamunā Khando, P. 112; See also P. 62.

The Hindu ladies used anklet or Khāru³³⁰ and Mallatar (golden bunch which was worn on the feet).³³¹ They also used another form of anklet which was popularly known as Nupūr.³³² Dancing girls used Ghungur (small golden bells).³³³ Women are also found to adorn their toes with ornament known as Pāsulī.³³⁴

Food and drink : The food habits among the Hindus was to some extent governed by their social position.

The people of the higher rungs of Hindu society spent lavishly on their food items. Their dishes were mostly vegetarian containing cooked rice (Bhāt),³³⁵ ghee or butter,³³⁶ milk products,³³⁷ various kinds of sweetmeats,³³⁸ plenty of sugar, fruits and vegetables³³⁹ and śāgs of different varieties.³⁴⁰ There were some Hindus of the upper section who took fish curries regularly. Of the fish curries, Saul, Cital, Rehu, Katla, Magur, Cingari, Hilsa, Paba etc. were popular.³⁴¹ On festive occasion, they also used to take meat. They prepared curries with the flesh of goat, deer, sheep and pigeon.³⁴² A special dish known as Kheer³⁴³ (a delicious dish prepared from rice, milk, sugar, spices etc.) seems to have

330. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P.31; Vijayagupta : Manasāmaṅgala, P.26.

331. কনক মল্লতার - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 150.

332. পা এল পাড়ে নুপুরে - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 29; See also PP. 7,62,66; S.K.K., 2nd edn. PP. 113, 115, 133.

333. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 557.

334. বড় দুখ পাইল আরে পাড়িতে পাসলী - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Dān Khando, P. 62.

335. S.K. Sen (ed.) : Caryā Giti Padāvalī, Burdwan, 1956, Pada - 33, P. 90; Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., PP. 151, 157.

336. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., PP. 125, 127; Krttivāsa : SACITRA Saptakanda Rāmāyana, 7th edn., P. 52; Mālādhara Basu : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya, P. 47.

337. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., PP. 124-127; Mālādhara Basu : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya, P. 12.

been very popular among the people of the higher sections of society.

Another variety known as Pāyās³⁴⁴ (rice cooked in milk with sugar added to it) was a very common delicacy in Bengal. Similarly, Khīcarī,³⁴⁵ (a dish prepared from rice and pulses cooked together containing spices and vegetables of different kinds) was much favoured by the people of the higher classes.

The upper class Hindus also consumed fruits in large quantities. In Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan we find a detailed list of many kinds of fruits available in Bengal at that time.³⁴⁶

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338. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.7; Kṛttivāsa : Sacitra Saptakaanda Rāmāyana, 7th edn., PP. 29, 83; Ibid, Lankā Kando, P. 451 for Sandes, Chānābarā (sweetmeats of cheese or chānā), Khaja, jabeli and pishtak (Pitha); In "Candidasa Padavali" (Vasumati Sahitya Mandir, Cal., 3rd edn., 1933, PP. 78 and 246) we find references to various kinds of delicious sweetmeats in Srikrṣṇa's food, viz Sandes, Modak, Jalebi, Malpa or Malpua etc.
339. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna or manasāmaṅgala, 13th edn., P. 96 for various types of vegetables e.g. vegetables of jack-fruits, brinjal, sweet pumpkin etc.
340. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 120; For various types of sāgs e.g. Gimā, Bethua, Kumrah (sag of sweet pumpkin) etc. see Vijayagupta's "Padmapurāna or Manasāmaṅgala", 13th edn., P. 96.
341. Ibid.
342. Ibid.
343. Ibid, P. 32, 135; Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 11.
344. "Mahakavi Candidasa Padavali" Vasumati Sahitya Mandir, 3rd edn., Cal. 1933, P. 99.
345. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, P. 271.
346. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. 95-96 for Ambu (mango), Jambu (blackberry), Dalimba (pomegranate), Saferu (guava), Narang (orange), Cholang (shaddock), Kanthoal (Jack-fruit), Amlak (Emblie myrobalan), Lembu (Lemon), Jambari (a kind of lemon) Kamrang (a kind of sour fruit), Ambara (Hogplum), Narikel (cocoanut), Khajur (Date), Akoral or Akhrot (walnut) Kharmuja or Kharbuja (musk-melon) Kankari, Vangi or foot and soase (cucumber); Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 81 for Tal (palm), Kadalak (plantain) and Sripthal (wood-apple); Kṛttivāsa : Sacitra Saptakanda Rāmāyana, 7th edn., P. 113 for Kadoli (Plantain); Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna or Manasāmaṅgala, 13th edn., PP. 50, 130; Vipradasa : Manasā Vijaya, P. 90.

The Chinese records show that the use of wine and other intoxicants was in vogue in the society.³⁴⁷ It is found in the Padma Purāṇa of Vijayagupta that the higher class Hindus were addicted to the use of wine and bhāṅg (an intoxicating hemp).³⁴⁸

The standard food of the commoners, no doubt, lacked the richness and variety of that of the higher classes. The usual food of the common Hindus appears to have been rice, fish, sag, and other vegetables prepared in a very simple way.³⁴⁹ Their Khicharī which was also prepared in an ordinary manner, was taken without ghee or butter. A favourite dish with the common Hindus was brinjal curry and rice left over night in cold water and taken next day. Besides, a special variety of vegetable preparation, popularly called Śukta³⁵⁰ (prepared with various kinds of vegetables, i.e. potato, unripe banana and brinjal etc. mixed with ginger and turmeric) was in very common use in the Hindu families. The common Hindus also consumed different kinds of fruits. Varieties of sweets and milk preparations were common in the society of the time. These contentions find support in the pages of Chandidasa's Kāvya.³⁵¹

We do not know exactly whether the common Hindus were accustomed to the use of wine and other intoxicants. But there are references which lead us to believe that the lower class Hindus used to drink wine and were habituated to take bhāṅg and opium.^{351a} Use of pān (betel leaves) was widely prevalent.³⁵²

347. Annals, vol.I, 1945, P. 119.

348. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa or Manasāmaṅgala, 13th edn., pp. 10, 12.

349. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., pp. 84, 85, 120, 157; Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., p. 59; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, p. 276, 296-97, 299.

350. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, p. 298.

351. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., p. 134; M.A. Hai and Anwar Pasa : Baru Candīdāser Kāvya, pp. 20, 65.

351a. S.K. Sen (ed) : Caryā Gīti Padāvalī, p. 50; Vijayagupta : Padmapurāṇa or Manasāmaṅgala, 13th edn., pp. 10, 12.

352. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., p. 120.

Religious festivals : The religious festivals of the Hindus were numerous, occurring in almost all important seasons of the year. It seems that the Hindus of Bengal worshipped many gods and goddesses. The worship of the goddess Caṇḍī occupied a prominent place in the Hindu society.³⁵³ Caṇḍī was a goddess who bestowed bounties. In Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan, it is found that Radha worshipped Caṇḍī in order to fulfil her desire.³⁵⁴ Bengali literature also shows that the goddess Manasā (goddess of snakes) occupied an important place in the society from the fifteenth century. Manasāmaṅgala Kāvyas give testimony to this fact.³⁵⁵ There are also references to the Brahma pūjā,³⁵⁶ Viṣṇu pūjā,³⁵⁷ Śiva pūjā,³⁵⁸ Durgā pūjā,³⁵⁹ Saṣṭhī pūjā,³⁶⁰

353. Mālādhār Basu : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya, PP. 267, 296, 391.

354. বড় ঘটন করিয়া চন্ডীরে গুজা মানিয়া
তবে তার পাইবে দরশনে ।।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 134.

355. We have a number of Manasāmaṅgala Kāvyas. Of these, Padma Purāna or Manasāmaṅgala of Vijayagupta and Manasā Vijaya of Vipradasa are important.

356. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, PP. 2,424. The Hindus adored Brahma as the god of creation i.e., they adored him as the creator.

357. Vijaygupta : Padma Purana, PP.2,424. Visnu is worshipped as the god of maintenance of the world.

358. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, PP. 2,3,289,291,311,362. Śiva is adored as the god of destruction of the world. He is reckoned as the most powerful god of the Trinity : Brahma, Visnu and Maheś. Śiva himself is all transcending; sublimely beyond all limits of space, time and form; eternal and infinite. But his position began to recede in the Hindu society from the fifteenth century. We notice that seven merchant ships of Cāṇḍ Sawdāgar sank with all valuable commodities because of manasā 's wrath. Cāṇḍ Sawdāgar prayed to Śiva with all devotion to save his vessels. But Śiva did not respond. he had also lost his sons. Śiva did not save them. Naturally the faith of Cand Sawdagar in Śiva was weakened and the power of Manasā, goddess of snakes, appealed to his mind.

359. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāna, PP. 2,3,305,362,439. The worship of the goddess Durgā was performed with great enthusiasm. Its another important aspect was the worship of the implements of trade, profession or occupation followed by different sections among the Hindus (K.M. Ashraf : Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, P.203.

360. Vijayagupta : Padma Purana, C.U.,1962, PP. 237,302. The goddess Saṣṭhī was adored by the women desiring to be blessed with children. She is also worshipped for the protection of children.

Vasulī pūjā,³⁶¹ Saraswatī pūjā,³⁶² Lakshmī pūjā,³⁶³ Visvakarmā pūjā³⁶⁴ etc. in the Hindu society.

The Hindus considered it as a religious duty to bathe in the Ganges³⁶⁵ and the Brahmaputra river. The former was known as Dasaharā and the latter as Astamī Snān. Bathing in a holy river on the seventh of the Bengali month Magh was known as Maghī Saptamī Snān.³⁶⁶

The most popular festivals of the Hindus were Śivarātri, Ekādaśī, Dolyātrā, Rathayātrā and Holī. These festivals were celebrated with great delight, pomp and show. Holī was observed on the last day of the bright half of Phālgun (February-March). For three days on the eve of Holī, the Hindus of all castes and classes drenched everybody, including the passers-by, with suffron and coloured water. On the third day in the evening, practically the entire population crowded round a huge bonfire and prayed for the prospects of the next harvest.

Social ceremonies: The Hindus had various social ceremonies and institutions connected with their birth, marriage and death. Mention here may be made of only the most popular among them.

Birth of a child, particularly of a son, was an occasion of great rejoicing.³⁶⁷ At birth the Hindu baby was washed with Ganges water and its head smeared with oil. On this occasion, different musical instruments were

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361. We find that Caṇḍīdāsa, the author of the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan was ardent devotee of the goddess Vasulī. See Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K.
 362. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP.1-3. Saraswatī was worshipped as the goddess of learning.
 363. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P.2. Lakshmī was worshipped for fortune.
 364. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 439. The artisans of all sections of the Hindus adored Viśvakarmā as the god of arts and crafts.
 365. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, P. 301.
 366. R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., vol. I, P. 608.
 367. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 301-303. :

played. This was followed by the worship of Saṣṭhī, the goddess of children, on the sixth day after the birth of the child. Then Uthani ceremony was performed on the 7th day of the child. On this day, the relatives and friends gathered in the house of the newly born child. When the child became six months old, the 'annaprasanna' ceremony (the first rice giving ceremony) was celebrated. Before celebrating this ceremony a name was given to the child. On the fifth year of the child, his educational career started quite ceremoniously.

Marriage, a significant occasion in the socio-religious life of the Hindus, was performed with great rejoicing, pomp and show according to the economic resources of the persons concerned.

Marriage ceremony was connected with many religious rites and social customs. It is seen that when the two parties came to an agreement with regard to the marriage, the betrothal ceremony, known as tilak was celebrated. At that time a date was fixed for the marriage which is technically called lagna.³⁶⁸ From this time, the preparation for the marriage began. Two or three days before the wedlock, another formal function called 'gai-halud' was performed. On the day of this ceremony, the bride and bridegroom are seated separately in their respective houses, each on a small wooden platform and a paste of turmeric and mustered oil is applied to their hands and forehead by their friends and particularly by their sister-in-law.³⁶⁹ This ceremony also was performed amidst great rejoicings and splendour.

368. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 334-336, 360-412.

369. Ibn Batutah : The Rihla, P. XLVII.

It is also seen that on the occasion of the marriage the houses of the bride and the bridegroom were tastefully decorated and splendidly illuminated. The marriage ceremony was performed in the bride's house. An open space was prepared for the celebration of the ceremony. A platform was made there and a canopy was raised over it. Gates were constructed by the planting of banana plants. Wedding wreaths of flowers and festons of leaves adorned the gates and the platform as well as the route between the two. Wedding songs were sung and pipes and flutes and varieties of musical instruments were played to mark the rejoicings of this great festival in the houses of both the bride and bridegroom. The women folk of the houses of the neighbours and relations would assemble in the bride's house and enliven the occasion with their wit and humour. On the day of marriage ceremony both bride and bridegroom used to wear costly and varied dresses. Their bodies were adorned with different types of toilets and ornaments. Different kinds of perfumes were also used by them. The bridegroom's party, consisting of relatives and friends of the bridegroom, a good number of archers, paiks and panegyrist, in bright costume came in a procession. Elephants, cradles and horses were also profusely used on this occasion.³⁷⁰ The bridegroom's party were received by the bride's father and relations and were conducted to the platform. The bride was then taken to the wedding mandap (platform). She was placed on a wooden seat (Piri) and was taken round the bridegroom seven times. The Brahmin priest would then solemnise the marriage and the bride would put a garland of flowers on the neck of

370. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 363-370, 378, 380-385.

the bridegroom.³⁷¹ The bride's father would then offer her to the bridegroom by placing her hands on those of the groom and with this the formalities of marriage practically came to an end. The bride was then taken to the house of the bridegroom where the couple was properly received by her mother-in-law accompanied by other invited women.³⁷²

There are references to show that the bride and the bridegroom used to play the game of dice after the marriage was celebrated. This game was generally played in the apartment known as Bāsar ghar,³⁷³ which was tastefully decorated with fragrant and beautiful flowers, where the newly wed couple used to stay the first night of their marriage.

Recreation : The Hindu society was noted for its various modes of pleasure and recreation. Of the diversions, mention here may be made of music as a favourite past time. From Bengali literature we came to know of a number of musical instruments used by the musicians such as flute, Mrdanga, Dhāk, Dhol, Ghanta, Ghāghar etc.³⁷⁴ The repeated mentions of these musical instruments indicated that the Hindus were great lovers of music.

Among other pastimes, dancing and singing, individually or in groups, were equally popular. The professional singers and dancers entertained the masses from time to time, especially on the occasion of marriage ceremonies.³⁷⁵

The game of dice was very common in the Hindu society. We have already noticed that it was an essential part of the marriage ceremony. There are a number of references to this game in Bengali literature.³⁷⁶ Geṇḍuā game

371. Vijayagupta : Manasāmaṅgala, P. 187.

372. Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 410, 412.

373. Kshemanada : Manasāmaṅgala, Quoted by M.A. Rahim in S.C.H.B., Vol. I, P. 290.

374. Candidāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Bansi Khando; Vijayagupta : Padma Purāṇa, PP. 76, 79, 365, 367, 370, 381, 386.

375. Ibid, PP. 360-412.

376. A. Karim : Bāṅglā Prācīn Puthir Vivarana, Baṅgīya Sāhitya Parisad Patrikā, Calcutta, 1320 B.S., Vol. I, Pt. II, P. 105.

was very favourite among the children.³⁷⁷ In the Padāvali of Candidasa we find that a kind of game known as geru was also favourite among the children.³⁷⁸ It was played by two parties of boys with a ball. One party threw the ball against the opponent and if they could catch the ball they scored a point.

Social beliefs and customs : It was a custom in the Hindu society that every one should continue his own family profession. Its discontinuation was undesirable. Hence, people believed that God did not bestow rice to those people who stayed at home without doing any professional work.³⁷⁹ Besides, there were provisions for penalising anyone who violated the custom. Sometimes, he was even expelled from the society. In Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan we find that once Rādhā stopped going to the market at the order of her mother-in-law. She was followed by other Gopīs also. As a result, there was an economic hardship for discontinuance of their business. For this reason the other Gopīs became angry and decided to send their daughters-in-law to the market to continue their business and threatened the mother-in-law of Rādhā that if she did not allow her daughter-in-law to go to the market, they would not take any food in her house. Hearing this, she, out of fear of being expelled from the society, gave permission to her daughter-in-law to go out with other Gopīs.³⁸⁰

377. Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 120. Details of this game are not available.

378. Quoted by T.C. Dasgupta in Some Aspects of Bengali Society, P. 200.

379. গোআলের কুলে রাজা জন্ম লভিয়া ।
দধি বিকে না জাএ থাকএ বগিয়া ।।
বিধি না লিখিত তার কপালের ভাটে ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Bhār Khando, P. 78.
380. (a) আপন আপন বহু ছটিক পাঠায়িব / তোমার ঘরত অন্ন গানি না খাইব ।।

(b) এ বোল সুনির্জা আইহনের মাএ / প্রনাথ করিয়া খুইল তা সাকার পাএ ।।
কাল হৈতে খাইবে রাখা মথুরা ।

Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Bhāṇavan Khando, P. 93.

People believed in good and bad omens. So, they before starting on an auspicious action, carefully examined the auspicious moment, time and lunar day. There are many references to this in Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Caṇḍīdāsa.³⁸¹

People had strong beliefs in the ideas of 'Pāp' and Pūṇya (evil deeds and good deeds). They believed that the performers of good deeds would be rewarded; while evil doers would get punishments in the hell.³⁸²

It is evident from the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan and other Bengali literature that the people had firm belief in the doctrine of transmigration of souls as a consequence of one's actions and in the doctrine of fatalism.³⁸³

381. (a) শ্রুতিস্থি বার শ্রুতম্বে ।
 আতিশয় উল্লসিত মনে ।।
 বসিষ্ঠা সব দেবগনে ।
 বড়ায়ি প্রাণচরনে ।।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Tāmbul Khando, P.7.

(b) শ্রুতম্বে বুদ্ধি কৈল দান্ডার পাতনে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Naukā Khando, P. 64.

(c) তোকে যাত্রা কর শ্রুতম্বে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn. Rādhā Viraha Khando, P. 147.

Also see Mālādhār Basu : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya, P. 34.

382. গুন্য কইলো শ্রুতম্বে আইএ নানা উত্তোষ আইএ
 গানে ইয় নরকের কল ।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 144.

383. (a) গুন্য কইলো কৈল কইলো কল
 জন্ম নভিল আফে গোআলার কল ।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Naukā Khando, P.68; See also PP. 131, 155.

(b) আর তার মুখ দেখিতে না গাইলো / কইল কল আফায়ে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Rādhā Viraha Khando, P.138.

(c) দৈব নিবন্ধন বন্ধন না আ

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Vahsī Khando, P. 122.

(d) ললাটে লিখিত বন্ধন না আ

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P.18. Also see Mālādhār Basu : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya : PP. 148, 150, 201, 200.

It is observed that people would expiate for their evil deeds. We find in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan that Rādhā told Kṛṣṇa to plunge into the water of the Ganges fastening a pitcher with his neck for delivering himself from his sin.³⁸⁴ In another place the procuress angrily told Kṛṣṇa that his expiation of sin was possible only by his going to Benaras.³⁸⁵

People also believed in sorceries and charms of magic incantations. We notice that Kṛṣṇa applied minutely the charms and incantations on fainted Radha.³⁸⁶ There are other examples as well.³⁸⁷

During the period under review, people are found to be highly superstitious. Numerous references are available in Bengali literature. It was thought inauspicious if anyone sneezed or to stumble and to see a lizard at the time of setting out from one's house on work.³⁸⁸ To be called from

384. আরে ভৈরব পতনে গায় গড়াহুনি গির্জা ।
গড়াহুনে পৈস গনো কলসি বাজির্জা ॥
হেন যদি কল কলসি ক্রিষ্ট আকারে পতনে ।
তবে তোর হএ পাপ সাগরে নেতনে ॥

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Bāṇ Khando, P. 30.

385. নোরে নাই যে কাহনক্রিষ্ট বারানসি যা ।
আমোর পাগে তোর বেআপিন পা ॥

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Ban Khando, P. 111.

386. বেআন কলসি কলো পাড়ে বনমাণী
খীরে খীরে গাথখানী তোলে চন্দ্রাবলী

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 114.

387. নিন্দাউলী মনে এত নিন্দাইব অতি

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Vāṇsī Khando, P. 122.

388. কোন আশুত খনে গায় গড়াহুনি
হাঁহী জিঠা আয়র উঠে না গানিলো

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 125.

behind at the time of setting out³⁸⁹ and to see a flying vulture descending in front³⁹⁰ were considered ominous signs. It was also thought inauspicious if anyone just after his setting out from his house, saw an oilman or woman going ahead with oil-vessel on his or her shoulder to sell it or saw the cawing of a black crow sitting on a withered branch or saw a woman going with empty pitchers. According to the popular belief, it was apprehended with the false charges if anyone saw the moon on the fourth lunar day of the month Bhādra (August-September), entered one's hands into the pitcher full of water, traced on mud with water, sat on the seat of a teacher and willingly took air on the body with a broken winnowing fan. To see a begging Yoginī with a bowl in her hand or a fox moving from the left to the right was interpreted as an evil omen.³⁹¹ According to the

389. আট্টে যখনে মৌঁ বাঢ়ায়েলো গাএ ।
পাড়ে ডাক দিল কানিনী গাএ ।।
তারকলৈ মোর পরান গভী ।
মোর ছাড়া তাহনত্রিঁ গেল কভী ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Kalio Daman Khando, P. 107.

390. Vijayagupta : Manasāmaṅgala, PP. 122, 180.

391. (a) ঘরের বাইর হেঁটে তেলিনি তেল বিচিটে
কান কাক রএ সুখান গাছের ডালে ।
আগে পূনা ঘটে বারী হাছী তিঠিহো বারী
চলিনৌ তাহার উচিত পাও কলে

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Dān Khando, 2nd edn., P. 54.

(b) কান্নে কুরন্যা লখা তেলী আগে জাএ

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Bānsi Khando, 7th edn., P. 125.

(c) হরিভালী চন্দ্র দেখিলৌ ভাদ্র মাসে/হাথ ভরিলৌ কিবা গুলিল কলসে

ভূষিত আখর কিবা লিখিলৌ জলে / মিছা দোষে বন্দন আফার তার কলে ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 112.

(d) গুরনর আপনে কিবা চাপিআঁ বসিলৌ / খন্ড বিচনার কিবা বাত তুলী নৈলৌ গাএ

তেকারণে তাহনত্রিঁ বাখী চুরা দোষাএ

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Bān Khando, P. 126.

(e) হাথে খাপর ভিখ পাড়ে যোগিনী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Bānsi Khando, P. 125.

(f) Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 125.

prevalent idea it was inauspicious to set out for marriage celebration or for any business, if a pitcher was found broke or the jackals howled in the mid day.³⁹²

There was a belief that in the affairs of love, a woman's desire was fulfilled if she engaged herself in protracted contemplation in a sacred place or she took bath in a holy stream.³⁹³

With the intention of fulfilment of a desire, people used to perform many deeds. What they did is found in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan in which it is mentioned that anyone who made a gift according to the Kusakshetra rules, bathed in the Pukshara lake, took 'Aṣṭamahāsidhi', touched the hands of ketarasi, performed a penance at Badarī Bateswar and sacrificed body at the confluence of the Ganges and the sea, succeeded in getting the cherished desires fulfilled,³⁹⁴ These superstitions are common even to-day among the Bengalis irrespective of the fact whether they are Muslims or Hindus.

392. Vijayagupta : Manasāmaṅgala, PP. 122, 180.

393. (a) কৈনা সুতীর্থে তপ তৈল ভাস্মগতী ।

কৈনারী কাহেন্নর পদে করে পুরতী ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Brndāvan Khando, P. 84.

(b) কৈ না সুতীর্থে ব্রাহ্ম তৈলা ধন্যনারী ।

যা নরী সুখায়ত ভুজয়ে মুরারী ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Rādhā Biraha Khando, P. 153.

394. কৈ না কুশক্ষেত্রে বিধিবতে তৈল দান ।

কাহার কলিল পুষ্কর গুণ্য শিবান ।।

কাহারে মিলিল আশ্রি অকংগহাশিষি ।

করে হাথে হাথে মিত্রা বিধি দিল বিধা ।।

কৈ না কৈদারধির পরশিল করে ।

কৈ না তক তপিল বদরী বটেধুরে ।।

কৈ পাশ তেজিল পদা পদিত সাগরে ।

যা নরী কুনেত্র কুনেত্র বুনে পদাধরে ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn. Brndāvan Khando, P. 99.

The literary evidence shows that killing of a woman was considered to be a great sin.³⁹⁵ People believed that killing of one hundred Brahmins was not even equal to killing of a woman.³⁹⁶

It appears that people used to take swear in order to prove their innocence. It is noticed that Radha, on being charged with the act of stealing flute, swore by the names of sacred things. Not only that she cursed herself to be bitten by the black snake if she had stolen the flute of Kṛṣṇa.³⁹⁷

It is found that the Hindu women in general, used to do all household work by their own hands. They sometimes, helped their husbands by earning money by means of spinning, weaving or some other mechanical art. They also used to work in the field, go to the market to sell their commodities, buy their essentials from the market. But at the same time they used to cook food and take care of their husbands and children.³⁹⁸ We find in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan that Rādhā used to go to the market for business purpose. Again she is found to bring water from the river and to cook food of various types.³⁹⁹

395. (a) ঠিরা বধ কইনি কাহাঞি আপন মনে
আপঘণ থাকিল তোর তীন ভবনে ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Bān Khando, P. 111.

(b) কেহে ঠিরা বধ কৈলো নানের নন্দনে ।
আর তোর মুখ না দেখিব কোন জনে ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 112.

Also see Mālādhār Basu : Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya, 149, 222, 381.

396. খতক ব্রাহ্মণ আর মাগিলে পোতুল ।
যে গাণ সেহে নহে ঠিরাবধতুল ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 111.

397. (a) চান্দ সুরম্ব বাত বরণ সাখী
যে তোর বাধী নিল সে খাউ দুয়ি আখী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Vānsi Khando, P. 126.

(b) যবে মো চুরি কৈলো হুঁদা নারী গভী
তবে কানপান খাইএ আঁজিলার রাতী ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 127.

(Footnotes continued in the next page)

It is observed that the village people were in the habit of using scurrilous languages. From these we can get a picture of the village environment prevailing at that time. In the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan, Kṛṣṇa is found to express that Rādhā was not his maternal aunt but she was his sister-in-law. In reply to this Radha abused him by saying that who said this he would eat his eyes and his body would be paralysed. Again, Kṛṣṇa spoke ill of Rādhā by mentioning her as a mean and a prostitute. On the other hand, Rādhā is found to abuse Kṛṣṇa by the name of his father. Not only that, she cursed him by the name of his Family.⁴⁰⁰

398. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 556; R.C. Majumdar (ed) : H.B., Vol. 1, P. 610.

399. Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., Dān Khando, Jamunā Khando, Baisī Khando.

400. (a) বহুসি গাউলানী রাখা গল্পে শালী

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Ibid, Dān Khando, P. 24.

(b) দুই আঁখি খাতি পড়ত তার কথায়

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 24.

(c) গামরী ছেনারী বারী

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 38.

(d) বাসিতে বা গারে তোফার বাগে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., P. 36.

(e) আঁখি তোফার কথা ছেন কথিতে

বারে তার বাগে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 47.

(f) তার গোট গুলিগেল আঁখির যৌবনে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 19.

Social Morality : It appears from the materials at our disposal that the Hindu society was in a state of demoralized condition in the early Iliyās Shāhī period. This demoralization of the Hindu society did not start from the said period, rather its development can, with reason, be traced to the pre-Muslim period. Sanskrit literature reveals that corruptions and vices of all sorts prevailed in the social life. The authors of Pavanadūta and Rāmcarita inform us that the Sena kings introduced the custom of engaging Devadasis, young Brahmin widows, for the service of the temples.⁴⁰¹ In this, the upper class influential Hindus got an element of enjoyment. This degraded the morality of the Hindu society and corruption and vices polluted all the spheres of their social life. Tantrikism and Śaktism of the time were also considered to be responsible for the demoralization of the Hindu society.⁴⁰² This condition further deteriorated when Shāhajiyā cult obtained predominance in the society.⁴⁰³ The influence of the Shāhajiyā cult prevailed in the society for a long time. In this state of moral degradation of the society, the Muslims came and conquered Bengal and established their authority in Bengal. As a result of the loss of political power, the Hindus became hopeless. hence, it may be said that the coming of the Muslims helped the degenerating forces of the Hindu society, which had already set in, to continue.

The picture of moral degradation is vividly shown in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Caṇḍīdāsa. We may examine the degraded morality of the Hindu society in the light of the writings of Caṇḍīdāsa.

401. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., Vol. I, PP. 347-348.

402. Ibid, P. 348; Cf. N.R. Ray : Bāṅgālīr Itihāsa, P. 525.

403. M.A. Rahim : S.C.H.B., Vol. I, PP. 350-353.

The Hindu people in general and particularly the young men of the society hadavenous appetite for sensual pleasure. They had no sense of morality. Even they did not have any respect for relationship among themselves. On the whole, they intended to enjoy lustful life shamelessly and unabashedly. They took it as the real pleasure of life in the world.⁴⁰⁴ Accordingly they haunted women to enjoy them in anyway. Initially they tried to win over the love of women by sending messenger with presents. In the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan we find that Kṛṣṇa sent an old lady with some presents, such as flowers of various kinds, silken śāri, betel leaf with camphor to win over the love of Rādhā.⁴⁰⁵ Failing to fulfil their desires by compromise or persuasion, they took to tricks, failing which they took recourse to threat and even did not hesitate to apply force.⁴⁰⁶ Thus it is clear that men were committed to fulfil their desires by any means.

404. (a) নিজ পরনারী দোষ বাহির সংসারে

যত মতীনা সব মিছা জান তারে

পরদারে পাগ বাহি বোলবু হাস্যপ্রি

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 31.

(b) সখুন্ম না মানে সে ভাগিনা ঘাউলানী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 38.

(c) শূনার যুবক সঙ্গে যে হএ ধৃষ্টার/সকল সংসার মাঝে সেই সুখসার

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Jamunā Khando, P. 100.

(d) ইড়া খিষ্টনা মুসঘনা সমি / মন পবন তাত তৈল বকী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Rādhā Biraha Khando, P. 141.

405. Ibid, 2nd edn., Tāmbul Khando, PP. 7,9.

406. (a) আয়র মানায়িবো করে আশেখ যুগলী

- (I shall convince her by making endless tricks) - Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.7.

(b) হাট উখুড়িবে গুচুর তৈল বোলা

দুতরে তারিবো তোক না করিহ ডর

সরস ধৃষ্টার দেহ নার ভিতর

(By adopting tricks once Kṛṣṇa fell Rādhā in trouble and taking this opportunity he offered proposal to her to play amorous sport) Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Narkā

- Narkā, P. 72.

(c) লুড়িআ সব পসায় খাইবো দধি চাহার

কাটী লৈবো পাতেসরী হারে

হাডাইবো তার কীর হাস্যলী করিবো চীর

হাত দিবো চাহার চনে ।

Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Tāmbul Khando, P. 13; See also Ibid Narkā, PP. 56,57.

At that time, there was no fear of religion in the minds of the young people. When women talked about religion, they did not pay heed to that rather they gave wrong interpretation of it. It also appears from the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan that young men took to the fascination of playing amorous sport at an early age.⁴⁰⁷

Society was so much demoralized that the young men gave proposals of amorous sports at any time any where unabashedly and spoke about it nakedly.⁴⁰⁸ In fact, they haunted women every where, even when they went to take their bath.⁴⁰⁹ Kṛṣṇa stole the clothes of the bathing gopis and climbed up a tree, refusing to deliver them until they came to him. When they came out of the water trying to cover their nakedness with their hands he laughingly insisted that they should first raise their hands before he returned their clothes.⁴¹⁰ Sometimes, they seduced women by showing defects

407. (a) পাপ পূর্ণ্য রাখা দুই না মানিআঁ / ধরিবোঁ তোফাফ বলেএ ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Nukā Khando, P.69; Ibid., 7th edn., Chatra Khando, P.78.

(b) পাপের খন্ডন বুধী আফে স্তাল জানী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 35.

(c) বাহি পুরে কাহ্নাজিঁর প্রথম যৌবন ।

তবে দেহে রুতি প্রতি এত বড় মন ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 56; See also P. 43.

408. (a) ডালিম সদৃশ তন তোফার / তাহাত মজিল মন আফার

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Jamunā Khando, P. 112.

(b) বিনি রুচী দিআঁ চোর বাহির গমন

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 52.

(c) কোন বিশ্ব কর্মে নির্মিল দুঐতন / বাহুলী যৌবনে রাখা দেহ আলিঙ্গন

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 30.

(d) রসময় সকল শরীর চোর / ভইল বাহুলী যৌবনে

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.25. See also PP.30,45,50,54; Nukā Khando, P.68; Biradvan Khando, P. 105.

409. Ibid., Dān Khando, PP. 55-56.

410. Ibid., Jamunā Khando, P. 120.

of their husbands.⁴¹¹ In the society the young men were so much addicted to amorous play that they did not hesitate to perform any work in order to fulfil their cherished desires. Women were sometimes chastised by lower grade people.⁴¹² Regarding the character of the young men Rādhā set a good example comparing them with the bumble bees.⁴¹³

This Hindu officials particularly the revenue collectors were highly immoral. We find them playing amorous sports on a pretence of collecting revenues. Even it is found that on a regular payment of tax, women were not set free from the hands of the revenue collectors. They also did not hesitate to apply force.⁴¹⁴

In comparison, women seems to have had a good sense of morality. They had fear of religion. Numerous references to this effect are available in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan of Candīdāsa. They were also afraid of being unchaste. Hence, they tried to save themselves from the hands of the ravishers

411. তোকে পদুমিনী জাতী তোমার আইহন পতি
নপুংস সেহোৎস দাসে ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 33.

412. (a) ভার বহিল এবে দেহ আলিঙ্গনে

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Bhār Khando, P. 73.

(b) পাছে আসিতে কেহে চাহি মোর ।

অজুগিয়া হইয়া কেহে এতবড় রঙ্গ ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 79.

413. পুরুষ ভগ্ন দুই হো এক মান ।

নানা থান ভ্রমি ভ্রমি করএ গধুগান ।।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Rādhā Biraha Khando, 7th edn., P. 147.

414. সুখি যাহা মোর সব দানে / নহে দেহ আলিঙ্গন দানে

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 16; See also PP. 24, 32, 33, 48.

of the society. They tried to dissuade the ravishers by rebuking, cursing and even by threatening them. They also tried to dissuade them from their designs by invoking religion and by adopting means of complaining against them.⁴¹⁵ Sometimes very young girls tried to save themselves by telling that they were of tender age and they did not know anything about the amorous sport. Sometimes, they tried to avoid them on their way and dressed themselves poorly in order to save themselves from the evil eyes of the

415. (a) বাপেঁ মারিঁ দিবোঁ তোর গালী ।

নিজল কাহনাপ্রিঁ তোর বাপ বাহিঁ নাজ ।।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Naukā Khando, P. 70; See also Dān Khando of S.K.K., PP. 24, 45.

(b) সে তোম বড়িক তার দেহ অবশ হয়ে যাক

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 24.

(c) তার গোট মুন্ডিলেক আকার ঘৌবনে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 19.

(d) মোরে তেজ বনমালী /সাসু দুরম্বার ঘরে পাড়িব গালী /
মোএ আইহন বীরের গোআলী ।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 43.

(e) বিচারিআঁ চাহ কাহনাপ্রিঁ আগাম পুরণে
কত পাপ হএ ফৈলৈ পরদার মনে ।।

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 35; See also PP. 24, 36, 69.

(f) যাইবোঁ রাজদুআরে কংস করিবোঁ গোচরে

- Caṇḍīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 58; See also PP. 18, 31, 43.

wantons.⁴¹⁶ It is also evident that sometimes women showed courage to save their chastity even when they were in the grips of wantons.⁴¹⁷

The literary evidence show that in spite of their efforts, women had to surrender to the hands of the ravishers. Such was the deplorable condition of the society in which they had to live. They were so much disgusted that they used to say in grief that the very age of youth was the root of their sufferings and intended to go away to other place.⁴¹⁸ It

416. (a) নোঁছে গোআলনৌ আবালী রাধা

না জানো রুই সুরতী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 45; See also P. 54.

(b) নিছন লইয়া কাহনাত্রি থাকু এক বাটে ।

আন পথে যাইব যিহে মথুরার হাটে ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 55.

(c)

আর না পিন্ধিবো বড়ায়ি সুরসি পাটোল ।

এহা দেখি মাগে কাহনাত্রি বিরহের কোল ॥

মুছিয়া ফেলাইবো বড়ায়ি সিন্ধের সিন্দুর ।

বাহুর বলয়া মোর করিবো শঙ্খ চুর ॥

ছিন্দিয়া ফেলাইবো বড়ায়ি পাডেসরী হারে ।

যা দেখিয়া মাসে কাহনাত্রি নিবিড় শস্য ॥

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P.41; See also P. 29.

417. Ibid., P. 63.

418. দুহে নৈসু বড়ায়ি তিরীর জীবন ।

বৈরি হআ লাগিল একপ যৌবন ॥

এহা দুখ বড়ায়ি গ সহিতে না পারী ।

আগন পাএর মাসে হরিষি বিকলী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 46.

is narrated in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtan that Rādhā expressed her sufferings by saying that if she were a bird she would fly away to some land where she would not see the face of Kṛṣṇa, the ravisher. She even intended to commit suicide by taking poison. She was also telling Barāi that let the earth be divided, she would conceal herself there.⁴¹⁹ We also notice that the women had to face both the external and internal problems. As women, at that time, usually used to go out for their professional works, they had to face the ravishers and it was almost impossible for them to save their chastity. On the other hand, if anyone's husband or the members of her husband's family know about any illegal incident of the wife, he would rebuke her mercilessly. So, women sometimes, in order to save their skin, tried to conceal the incidents that happened outside their houses.⁴²⁰

Women also were not altogether immune from the charges of polluting the society. It is found that sometimes by showing tricks they fulfilled their objectives. There are examples to show that women also tried to win over the heart of men by dressing herself charmingly.⁴²¹ The young girls

419. পাখি জাতি নহোঁ বড়ায়ি উড়ী পড়ি যাওঁ ।
যথা সে কাহন্যত্রিঁ মুখ দেখিতে না পড়ি ॥
হেন মনে করে বিষ খাওয়া গরি যাওঁ ।
মেদিনী বিদার দেউ পসিআ লুকাওঁ ॥

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., PP. 30-31.

420. নখঘাত না দিহ মোর পয়েভারে / আইহন দেখিলে মোর নাহিক নিস্বারে

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., P. 46.

421. (a) বহু ভার না কর তৌ লজ্জ / তোর মোর উভয় সমতী
আসিবার বেলে দিবোঁ রতী

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 7th edn., Bhār Khando, P. 74.

(b) গাদ লাগে কাহন্যত্রিঁ দেখিবারে ॥ নাঞ ॥
পিন্ধি বউল পুষোর হার ।
কুম্ব কুন্ডল হিরার ধার ॥
পিন্ধিআ আমূল পাটোলে ।
কাহন্যত্রিঁ দেখি পড়ি গেলোঁ ভোলে ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., Rādhā Biraha Khando, P. 134.

were also found to participate in making filthy conversations.⁴²²

The above narratives present a very gloomy picture of profligacy of the society. It is also apparent from the above discussion that the immoralities pervaded chiefly the young generations of the time. However, it must be admitted that the above picture of a demoralised Hindu society is mainly drawn from a particular literary evidence, the amorous character of which kavya is well-known. This work may be an exaggerated form and we shall have to be careful in forming our conclusion and generalisation on its basis would be rather hazardous. However, the people, in general, were found to be honest and good tempered as recorded in the testimony of the chinese travellers.⁴²³

422. ভাবত রস নাই ভালিম ডাকরে ।
 ভাল মতে যাবত নাই পাকএ ভিতরে ।।
 জুড়ামিলে সোআদ নাগে তপত দুখ ।

- Candīdāsa : S.K.K., 2nd edn., Dān Khando, P. 54.

423. Annals, Vol. I, 1945, PP. 96-134.

Chapter - VII

Architecture

With the establishment of the Iliyās Shāhī rule in Bengal, great changes took place in the field of architecture and as a consequence there ushered in a new epoch in the art history of Bengal. The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns made a bold attempt to develop a grand architectural style befitting the dignity of the new Sultānate. In this period, the Muslim architecture of the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period changed to become the Bengali Muslim architecture. We do not find any influence of the Tughluq art,¹ on the other hand, we find the emergence of a style which is peculiarly local in character. The reasons are quite obvious. We have noticed earlier that Iliyās Shāh completed the unification of Bengal by bringing the territories of Satgāon, Lakhnautī and Sunārgāon under the Sultānate of Bengālāh and he was, for the first time in the history of Bengal, adorned with the title of Shāh-i-Bangālāh.² This foundation of an independent Sultānate in Bengal marked the end of its connection with Delhi. Hence, the Sultāns of Bengal had to erect buildings of various types with the help of the local masons and materials but suited to their own particular taste and ideals.³ As a result the Muslim architecture

1. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 54.

2. For details see chapters II and III.

3. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 5.

in Bengal took a new form and started getting acclimatized to the deltaic soil and climate.⁴ Here one thing is to be remembered that despite the cessation of relationship with Delhi, the Sultāns of the early Iliyās Shāhī period seem to have maintained link with outside Islamic world as the invitation of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh to the Persian poet Hafīz or his donation for educational institutions at the Mecca and Medīna indicate.⁵ Thus, it may be inferred that influence from the Islamic world in the field of architecture kept flowing into Bengal unhindered.

Before discussing the architecture of the early Iliyās Shāhī period, it is necessary to have a glimpse of the pre-Iliyās Shāhī architectural features of Bengal. Because, the architectural style that developed in the early Iliyās Shāhī period, was evolved from that of the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period.

In the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period, the architecture of Bengal was in the formative stage. In fact, this period may be termed as an age of rough and ready construction in which the local masons and materials with some features of the existing Hindu architecture were utilized to create buildings which would serve their needs.⁶ But in their general pattern the buildings emulate the traditional Muslim architecture which by then had already developed in Delhi, containing such features as

4. The Museum Journal, Peshawar, vol.IV, No.1, 1952 A.D., PP. 37 ff.

5. See Supra, P.

6. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 34.

(a) the liberal use of small domes ; (b) the free use of small two centred arches often stilted; (c) the spiked cusping of some arches and (d) the fashion for markedly cusped or engrailed arches with abundant floreate decoration. This last feature, in particular, though derived from the Seljuk architecture, fitted the native genius of the Bengal craftsmen for terracotta carving, a craft which had been developed in the service of the local builders long before the arrival of Islām.⁷

To these borrowed elements, the Bengali builders proceeded to add other traits or preferences of their own. An example may be cited to this effect that due to the Bengal monsoons, the Bengal architects discouraged the enlarged central entrance favoured by Delhi. As a result, we notice a force of interaction in the field of architecture which led to the evolution of a style in Bengal. A study of the mosques, tombs, and minaret of the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period point out certain fundamental principles which were followed.

In the technique of construction, the Bengal architects used three different techniques - namely, the brick and stone style,⁸ the stone style and the brick style.⁹ Generally, the Muslim architectural activities centred round mosques and tombs. It is seen in the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period that the mosque is a compact building, having only the western covered chamber. No other features of the orthodox mosque plan like the courtyard, the liwan, the ablution pond and the minaret are visible in the mosque. The mosque

7. R.E.M. Wheeler : Five thousand years of Pakistan, P. 110.

8. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 42.

9. Ibid, P. 50.

of this period is oblong in size having multi-domed roof. The facade of the mosque has arched openings. The arches spring directly from the pillars. The upper cornice and the parapet of the mosque are straight, with corner towers, nor the curved roof. The oblong plan of the mosque is an adaptation from the type of Quwwat-ul-Islām Mosque of Delhi to suit the conditions of Bengal.¹⁰ In this period, the circular base of the dome is achieved by filling the corners with over-sailing courses of brick. The buildings of the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period also contained the rudiments of terracotta ornamentation.¹¹ Though terracotta ornamental motif constitute abstract themes, the influence of the local art could not altogether escape incorporation. Local art motifs such the multi-foil arch, the leafy scroll, the hanging pendant etc. were used,¹² perhaps, because of their somewhat abstract nature. It is also seen that during this period, the task of executing the ornamentation was entrusted upon the local artists who were traditionally trained in rendering figure motifs and had little knowledge of abstract ones. As a result, the terracottas of this period constitute the initial exercise on the part of the local craftsmen with purely abstract motifs and in this they fared no less successfully than with their traditional themes. But with the passage of time the local motifs made further headway into Muslim art as is seen in the monuments of the early Iliyās Shāhī period.

The engrailing of the brick arches is also found in this period. Decorative panels are also used in the buildings. To these pre-Iliyās Shāhī features, other traits were added to create a distinctive style in the early Iliyās Shāhī period.

10. Ibid, P. 25, 51.

11. Ibid, PP. 25, 26, 51.

12. These motifs are found in the Bari Masjid. Cf. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., PP. 48-49.

The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultanate of Bengal extended far and wide. But we find the architectural remains of this period mainly in Hadrat Panduah.¹³ There are ruins of some tombs at Sunārgāon.¹⁴ Of them, the tomb of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh has some architectural importance. We find another mosque at Mulla Simla in the district of Hughli. We also get some idea of the military architecture of this period from the description of Shams-i-Sirāj Afīf. Though actual monumental remains of the period are few in number, still there is enough to show the grandeur and richness of the architectural style of the period under discussion. The existing monuments of the early Iliyās Shāhī period are described in the following pages.

Of the remains of the early Iliyās Shāhī period, the building which is most characteristic in style is the Adina Masjid at Hadrat Pāṇḍuāh built by Sultān Sikandar Shāh. It portrays a marked development in mosque architecture. Though it is experimental in many ways, the Adina Masjid shows new architectural elements which were afterwards developed and elaborated elsewhere. In fact, this Masjid opened a brilliant chapter in the field of architecture. In the words of Cunningham, "The Great Adina Mosque of Hadrat Pāṇḍuāh is looked upon by the Bengalis as one of the wonders of

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13. Hadrat Pāṇḍuāh "is a deserted town in the Maldah district, Eastern Bengal and Assam, situated in 25°8'N and 88°10'E at a distance of nine miles from old Maldah and about 20 miles from Gaur, in a north easterly direction from both" (Imp. Gaz. Vol. XIX, P. 392). It is called Hadrat Pāṇḍuāh in order to distinguish it from chota Pāṇḍuāh in Hughly district (Cf. ASIR., Vol. XV, P. 46). The capital was actually established by 'Alā' al-Dīn Shāh after his revolt and assumption of independence. Cf. J.N. Sarkar (ed) : H.B., Vol. II, PP. 81-82).
14. "It was the ancient Muhammadan capital of Eastern Bengal situated in 23°4' and 90°36'E in the Narayanganj sub-division of Dacca district, Eastern Bengal and Assam near the banks of Meghna 15 miles east of Dacca city" - (Imp. Gaz. Vol. XXIII, P. 81).

the world".¹⁵ While J.H. Marshall terms it as "the most ambitious structure of its kind ever essayed in Eastern India".¹⁶ The Adina Masjid, original in design and construction,¹⁷ is far in advance of the type hitherto built in Bengal.

There is a lot of controversy among scholars regarding the date of the foundation of the Adina Masjid at Hadrat Pāṇḍuah. But P. Horn and A.H. Dani, after a close examination of the inscription hold the view that the Adina Masjid was built in the month of Rajab, 776 A.H., corresponding to December-January, 1374-75 A.D.¹⁸

There is also a misconception about the origin of the Adina Masjid. According to Beglar there was a temple at the site of the mosque and the name itself was reminiscent of Aditya Sena Deva, the supposed progenitor of the Senas of Bengal, otherwise known as Adisur.¹⁹ Saiyad Ilāhī Bakhsh also observes that the mosque was originally a temple.²⁰

15. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., Vol. XV, P. 90.

16. C.H.I., Vol. III, P. 602.

17. P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P. 36.

18. P. Horn : 'Muhammadan Inscription from Bengal' in Epigraphia Indica, vol. II; A.H. Dani : M.A.B., PP. 55-56. According to G.H. Salim, the mosque was built in 766 A.H. (Riyad., P. 101); Stewart, S. Prasad, Hamilton and Blochmann give the date as 763 A.H., 707 A.H., 704 A.H. and 770 A.H. respectively (C. Stewart : History of Bengal, P. 110; S. Prasad : Ahwal Gaur Wa pandua, ed. by A.H. Dani in M.A.B., P. 27; H. Buchanon : The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India, vol. III; Blochmann : 'Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal' in JASB., 1873 A.D. No. 3).

Saiyad Ilahi Bakhsh and Abid Ali gave the date as 776 A.H. (Ilahi Bakhsh : Khurshid Jahan Numa in JASB., vol. 64, 1895 A.D. P. 212; Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 139). S.M. Hasan holds the same view (Hasan : Mosque Architectures in pre-Mughal Bengal, P. 67).

19. Beglar : Archaeological Survey of Bengal, Report, Calcutta 1888 A.D.

20. J.A.S.B., 1895 A.D., P. 211.

S.K. Sarasvati also holds a similar view.²¹ But A.H. Dani emphatically expressed the opinion that the plan of the mosque betrays no trace of the existence of an earlier temple at the spot.²²

The Adina Masjid is an oblong quadrangle, 507½ feet from north to south by 285½ feet from east to west²³ and contains within it a huge courtyard measuring 400 feet in length by 154 feet in breadth.²⁴ Externally the entire edifice is encircled by a wall built of brick core and faced with stone. The mosque thus illustrates the brick - and - stone style of construction.²⁵ In area, the Adina Masjid was almost as big as the great Mosque of Damascus.²⁶ So far as the lay out of the Mosque is concerned, it is not in conformity with the traditional square lay out; rather it conforms to

21. Ibid, 1932 A.D., P. 175.

22. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 57.

23. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., Vol. XV, P.90; C.H.I., Vol. III, P. 602; Abid Ali; Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 127; M. Chakravarti : Pre-Mughal Mosque in Bengal in JASB., 1910 A.D., P. 31. H. Buchanan gives the dimensions as 500 'NSX 300' EW (Eastern India, vol. II, PP.649-650); Fergusson, A.H. Dani, S. Grover and P. Brown give the dimensions as 507'X 285' (Fergusson : A History of Indian and Eastern Architecture, London, 1910 A.D.; A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 60; S. Grover : The Architecture of India, P.76; P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P. 36). S.M. Hasan gives the measurement as 516' NS.X 313' EW (Hasan : Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal, P. 69.).

24. Fergusson : A History of Indian and Eastern Architecture, London, 1910; S. Grover : The Architecture of India, P. 76. Cunningham measures the courtyard as 497'X 159' (ASIR., Vol.XV, P. 90). Beglar mentions 419'X 186' (in Archaeological Survey of Bengal, Report, 1888). A.H. Dani gives the measurement as 400'X 150' (A.H. Dani : MAB., P. 60). M. Chakravarti gives it as 397'X 159' (J.A.S.B., 1910 A.D., P. 31); P. Brown mentions 400'X 130' (P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P.36).

25. A. H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 60.

26. C.H.I., Vol. III, P. 602.

the time honoured rectangular planning demonstrated by the great Mosque of Damascus, the Mosque of Samarra, the Mosque of Abu Dulaf and the Mosque of Ibn Tulun.²⁷ Besides, the lay out of the courtyard is in such a manner that the longer side of the court faced the west and this marked a distinct departure from the conventional pattern of square courtyards.²⁸

The courtyard was surrounded by cloisters on all sides. The cloisters on the west side form the prayer hall and are five aisles deep; on the other sides, they are only three aisels in depth.²⁹ These aisled cloisters around the courtyard are supported over 260 pillars of basalt and are roofed with a succession of small domes, amounting to 306.³⁰

Around the interior of the courtyard, there runs a screen of arches. These arches, eighty-eight in number, are surmounted by a parapet twenty-two feet in height from the ground.³¹ The screen of arches makes a fundamental advance over the clumsy arches springing directly from the pillars, as seen in the mosque of Zafar Khān Ghāzī. Here, no pillars have been used in the front row, instead wide piers forming an inseparable element of the long front wall, are seen. It is from these piers that the front row arches spring, thus giving rise to a system of arched facade in Bengal, as opposed to pillar - and - arch construction of the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period.³²

27. Hasan : Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal, PP. 67-68.

28. S. Grover : The Architecture of India, P. 76.

29. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., Vol. XV, P. 90.

30. P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P. 36. Cunningham gives the number as 378 (ASIR., Vol. XV, P. 91); See also for details - Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 127.

31. P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P. 36.

32. A. H. Dani : M.A.B., PP. 60-61.

In the middle of the west side the cloisters are divided into two wings by a large room which forms the nave of the mosque. In the nave, there is a mihrab at the centre and another one to its right. To its left is a canopied pulpit.³³ The western wall, except for five small doors, and a window high up in the central Hall, is devoid of openings, but inside there are the usual niches.³⁴ Many of these are polished and highly carved. In the southern wing of the eastern cloister, the niches correspond to the 18 rows of arches. The northern wing of the same cloister only differs in so far as it contains a raised two-storied platform, commonly known as Badshah-Ka-takht which covers six bays (3rd to 8th - beginning from the south of northern wing).³⁵ In the back wall of the Badshah-Ka-takht, there are three niches, and three doors which are minutely carved and ornamented with passages from the Qur'ān.³⁶ It is strange that the Adina Masjid has no entrance gateway. There are two small doors in the back wall which are, in the words of Cunningham, mere posterns or private entrances for the convenience of the King and the mullāhs.³⁷ There is also a small arched opening in the middle of the east side. This is a simple doorway or passage through the walls, unmarked by any projecting wings or rising battlements. For the public entrance, three archways at the eastern end of the south cloister are left open. This arrangement mars the symmetry of the building totally. According to Cunningham it was most probably an afterthought, when the single small door in the middle of the east side was found utterly insufficient.³⁸ No corner towers are visible in the mosque.³⁹

33. Ibid, P. 61.

34. Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 127.

35. Ibid.

36. M. Chakravarti : 'Pre-Mughal Mosque of Bengal' in J.A.S.B., Vol.VI, 1910 A.D., P. 31.

37. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., Vol. XV, P. 91.

38. Ibid.

39. M. Chakravarti : Pre-Mughal Mosques of Bengal in J.A.S.B., 1910 , P. 31.

The entire composition of the mosque was encircled by a wall built of brick core and faced with stone, except the upper part of the western wall outside.

Thus it appears from the general outline of the mosque that there are symmetrical defects. These defects in planning are not caused by the ignorance of its designer; rather it was due to the dearth of technical knowledge of craftsmen who failed to execute the bold scheme in architecture. In fact, the Bengali masons who were mostly Hindus, had no experience of a large scale building like the Adina Masjid. As a result, they were not in a position at all to build a grand gateway. Even they were ignorant of building tall shouldered domes. For this reason, they failed to maintain the symmetry in the building. So, outwardly the Adina Masjid failed to draw attraction except for its grand scale. But on a close examination of the other features of the Mosque, it can be said emphatically that it contained features which were masterpieces of art and represent a distinctive development in the Mosque architecture. Sir John Marshall rightly observes "considered by themselves, the several parts and the details are admirable enough : arcaded aisles, for instance, are dignified : the vaulted liwan is well proportioned and pleasing and the mihrab is as exquisite a piece of carving as can be found in India".⁴⁰ So, in order to evaluate the magnificent Adina Masjid, it is necessary to study those features closely which came to be recognised as masterpieces of art.

40. C.H.I., Vol. III, P. 602.

The large central room or the nave of the mosque is 64 feet 4 inches from the east to west and 33 feet 8½ inches from the north to the south.⁴¹ It is separated from the wings by two sets of four thick pillars⁴² and on each side it has five archways opening into the five aisles of the cloisters.⁴³ The nave is accessible from the courtyard by a wide opening, 33 feet in span and more than 60 feet high.⁴⁴ The roof was a long pointed arched vault.⁴⁵ This vault was carried by two flanking massive wall, 14 feet 1 inch in thickness. They are pierced by five pointed arches, springing from four rectangular brick piers, oblong in plan, their wider sides transverse to the nave wall.⁴⁶ These rectangular piers are strengthened by central rectangular attached pilasters from the top of which runs a stone string-course along each side of the nave. The pilasters of the nave piers facing the prayer halls on either side form the base for the springing of the arches.⁴⁷ The vault over the nave of the Adina Masjid is probably the earliest example of a form of construction very rare indeed in Indian architecture⁴⁸ and as such it undoubtedly demonstrates the skill and ingenuity of the Bengali architect.⁴⁹

No description of the nave would be complete without a reference to the treatment of the noble expanse of wall surface at its western end. Here, there are three outstanding elements - a central mihrab, another supplemen-

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41. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., Vo. SV, P. 91. Abid Ali and A.H. Dani give the measurement as 64 feet by 33 feet (Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua P. 130; A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 63); P. Brown mentions it as 70 feet in length and 34 feet across (P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P.36).
 42. M. Chakravarti : Pre-Mughal Mosques of Bengal in J.A.S.B., 1910 A.D., P. 31.
 43. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., vol. SV, P. 91.
 44. J.A.S.B., 1910 A.D., P. 31.
 45. P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P. 37.
 46. Hasan : Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal, P. 37.
 47. J.A.S.B., 1910 A.D., P. 31.

(Footnotes contained next page)

tary one to its right side and a mimber or pulpit to its left side. The central mihrab consists of a hollow niche, opening under an engrailed arch. The whole outer surface of it is carved with a scroll work and on either side of the arch, there is a rosette and a triforium over the apex.⁵⁰ Inside the niche, there are twenty panels in the surface. Each panel contains an engrailed arch with a rosette at the spandrel and a lamp hanging from a single chain falling down from the key point. This Chain and lamp may be a development from the Hindu motif of Chain - and - bell. Above the panels two friezes are noticed - the upper one having ornamental merlons and the lower one depicting a series of tree - of - life within beaded necklaces.⁵¹ The niche is highly decorated. Upon this decorated niche is placed an outer trefoil arch, supported on two attached ornate monolithic columns. The base of the column consists of a vase with overflowing leaves - a typical Hindu motif. The tapering shaft is faceted and is further decorated with a band of operation towards the top. The capital has a cross bracket. The arch is a copy of the Hansa - torana.⁵² Here it is interesting to note that the conventional grotesque lion's head at the crown and the kinnara and kinnari at the haunches found in the temple of pre-Muslim Bengal, have been transformed into graceful foliage, palmette and sensuous tendrils. This attempt is a very intelligent borrowing from the pre-Muslim art of Bengal and speaks highly of the local genius which could adapt to the needs of the new circumstance.⁵³ A protruding knob is

48. P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P. 37.

49. Hasan : Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal, P. 72. The other mosques in Bengal with a central vault are the Gunmant Mosque at Gaur (early 16th century) and the Jami Masjid at old Maldah (1596 A.D.).

50. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 64.

51. Ibid.

52. See N.K. Bhattasali : Iconography of the Hindu and Buddhist Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, 1929 A.D., Pl. VII, a, Pl. XXXIX a, and pl. LXIII.

53. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 65.

seen at the spandrels of the arch. This whole complex is enclosed within a rectangular frame, every inch of which is carved with one or the other design. Above this rectangular frame, tiers of moulding, showing nice calligraphic specimen alternating with floral decoration, are seen. Here the main feature of the decoration is marked with an inter-locking pattern. This ornamentation displayed noble conception wrought with a delicate hand. Above this ornamental place there is an arched window.

The other mihrab of the nave, placed to the right of the central mihrab, was less complicated in design. But its surface also is richly decorated. Here we do not find the trefoil arch. But its side pillars are highly carved and inside the niche is a long chain with a lamp in the centre. Smaller panels with their usual decorations are there.

To the north of the central mihrab stands a mimbar or pulpit. It is a canopied square chamber placed at some height. It is built of black basalt curiously wrought with carved work and the ascent to this pulpit is by a flight of steps of the same material. The chamber has arched openings on three sides. The arches are cusped. On the other hand, the fourth i.e. the western side is filled by a flat richly carved mihrab with the hanging chain and lamp motif. The design in the mihrab has exactly the same kind of workmanship as the central mihrab.

The predominant feature of the western prayer chamber is the zenana gallery which has been wrongly called the Badshah

Ka Takht.⁵⁴ This is a structure of great architectural importance. We do not know of the existence of the zenana gallery in Persia or Arabia. They are found in Indo-Islamic architecture. So, S.M. Hasan thought them to be Indo-Islamic in origin.⁵⁵

The zenana gallery is an oblong platform. It occupies six bays in the three back aisles and is covered by 15 domes. The platform of the zenana gallery is supported by 21 massive piers of fine grained black basalt. The piers are short, thick and very heavy. On these are placed slender fluted pillars of a remarkable design seen for the first time in Bengal.⁵⁶ It is on these pillars that the arches, supporting the dome, rest. Originally the platform consisted of flat stone block. Its cornice is carved with a row of billets, topped by another row of beads.

54. Munshi Shyam Prasad described the Zenana gallery as 'Takhtgah-i-Sang-i-namazgah-i-Badshahan Wa Shahzadgan' (Ahwal Gaur Wa Pandua, ed. by A.H. Dani, M.A.B., P. 25). After him all the later writers describe it as Badshah Ka Takht. But actually the name Badshah Ka Takht, meaning a King's throne, is a misnomer. Such a structure is quite out of place in a mosque, for Islam is one of the most democratic religions of the world and such an invidious distinction in a place of worship is almost inconceivable. Such platforms are found in most of the mosques of the pre-Mughal period in Bengal where they have been correctly recognised as the zenana (ladies) gallery. Also See M.A. Qadir : 'The so-called ladies gallery in the early Mosques of Bangladesh', J.V.R.M. vol. 7, PP. 161-172.

55. Hasan : Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal, P. 82.

56. A. H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 66.

Originally the zenana gallery was enclosed by a perforated screen or Jali. This screen conforms to the idea of a jali as used by the Muslims in many mosques in the Indian Sub-continent.⁵⁷ There are three prayer niches in the east wall of the platform which are surrounded with beautiful ornamental Tughra inscriptions and with fine carvings all over the surface. The entrance to this platform is provided only in the west wall by three doors through the tomb chamber of Sulṭān Sikandar Shāh.⁵⁸ The door frames are built up of fragments from some other buildings. Beglar identifies the work as being Hindu but admits that he does not know any local source for their fragments.⁵⁹ The work is more or less of the same kind as that to be seen in the postern gate. In all these doorways various Indian motifs attract undivided attention. These include pot and foliage, pilasters, door guardians and the intertwined nagas on the lintel. The entire composition speaks of high excellence in stone cutter's art.⁶⁰

As the outer face of the west wall upto a height of 11 feet is covered with stone slabs, the Bengali architects choose to display the terracotta art in the brick surface visible at the upper level of the stone-faced west wall. We also find projections of the mihrabs in the back of the west wall. There is a brick string-course in the middle which runs horizontally and cuts the wall height into two halves. It shows a number of registers decorated with terracotta motifs. The lowest register depicts several decorative patterns viz, the beaded necklace with four petalled flowers and vegetal elements within interspersed with tassels, the interlocking, scrolling creepers with rosettes in convolutions, plant

57. Hasan : Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal, P. 83.

58. J.A.S.B., 1910 A.D., P. 31.

59. Beglar : Archaeological Survey of Bengal, Report, Calcutta, 1888 A.D.

60. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 67.

motifs inside rectangular frames and jali design. Above it registers show wavy creepers, knotty abstract patterns, intersecting scrolls and stepped designs, all in terracotta relief. These terracotta friezes are each separated from the other by thin horizontal mouldings. Above the string-course, both the offsets and recesses of the wall surface are decorated with ornamental terracotta panels. Each recess shows a multifoil arch from the apex of which hangs a chain ending in a decorated pendant. The pendants are of different shapes, some resembling round vase, while others are rectangular. The face of each pendant is impressed with delicate vegetal elements. The arch soffits also depict vegetall motifs, while the spandrels show rosettes and lotuses. The multifoil arch is capped with a decorative terracotta finial. It is, however, the projected panels on the offsets of the wall that show rich terracotta decoration. Each offset shows a rectangular panel jutting out from the wall surface. Each panel is contained within ornamental mouldings below and above. These mouldings show lozenge frieze, inverted and regular lotus petals, billets and a triangular pattern impressed on their face. Below the lower moulding runs a frieze of beaded necklaces with a rosette inside, while an ornamental tassel occur in between. The frame of the panel is decorated with an interlocking geomet-pattern. Inside the frame, occurs a multi-foil arch each with two blown terracotta rosettes in the spandrels. From the arch apex hangs a chain ending in a pendant impressed with vegetal shoots. Some of the pendants are surrounded by scrolling creepers, while others show a crosspetal design all around. Between the frame and the upper moulding can be seen, in some instances, a frieze of geometric interlacing and in others, a beaded necklace - and - tassel design, also in terracotta. The composition of the panels is surmounted by a row of merlons depicting terracotta plant motifs.

It is seen that the double cornice and the parapet of the mosque are horizontal. Below the cornice, there is a continuous frieze of interlocking pattern and jali work in terracotta relief, while between the cornice bands the space is filled with a row of arched niches showing geometric and plant motifs.

The projection of the central mihrab panel outside shows three ornamental parrallel panels on its face. These panels contain eleborate terracotta decoration. The central panel shows an arched niche inside. The arch is supported on ornamental pillars. There is the usual hanging motif inside the niche. The arch soffit is impressed with two spiralling creepers rising from the arch springing and running towards the arch apex. Below the central panel, there is a frieze of beaded necklace-and-tassel similar with the ones seen in the wall panels. The panel is surmounted by a row of blind merlons depicting terracotta plants. The flanking panels are similar in decoration, except that they contain no pillars supporting the arch and there is no niche inside. In the Adina Masjid, there are corner towers. These towers are not attached from outside but they are placed within the rectangular plan of the mosque. The base is formed by a pedestalled wide - mouthed squat vase, while the shaft is divided by a soccle in the middle into two portions, each having convex flutes.⁶¹

We also find terracotta ornamentation in the brick tympanum of the mihrab arches. Cunningham⁶² has questioned the selection of these areas for the execution of terracotta decoration, for when the domes were standing, the tympanums must have been enveloped by sombre darkness. A.H.

61. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 70

62. A.S.I.R., Vol. XV, P. 91.

Dani defends the artists by saying that, "that the brick surface should remain undecorated was unthinkable to the Bengali architect. It was his overfondness for decoration and his desire to introduce folk - art in this great mosque that the tympanums of the arches were reserved for it".⁶³ Hence, it is found here that the Bengali architects displayed a great skill in moulding clay into various floral and geometrical designs according to the taste of the time. In their work, they were able to keep up the old tradition with all its liveliness and spirit. Terracotta plaques used in the different tympanums are of various types and designs. This gives testimony to the fact that the designers possessed a great ability of producing different patterns to adorn as many as twenty-eight tympanums.⁶⁴ A description of some of the tympanums is given below to show the extent of variety of motifs employed in the designs.

The seventh tympanum from the south represents a varied composition of ornamental terracotta. There are thin mouldings impressed with arabesque and jali work at the bottom. Above these mouldings runs a row of niches, each separated from the other by an ornamental vertical bar. The niches depict shrubs, twigs and an interlacing pattern. The main composition consists of horizontal lines and intersecting diagonals, the crevices being filled in with rosettes. There is the ornamental arch engrailing above the composition from whose apex hangs a floriated pendant by means of a chain. The pendant is embossed with a design created by two creepers rising from the same base and then spreading upward to meet again in the shape of coiling tips. The pendant was surrounded with vegetal shoots.

63. M.A.B., P. 68.

64. Ibid, PP. 68-69.

The ninth tympanum from the south shows a succession of arches with receding contours from the top. The soffits are depicted with geometric interlacings arabesques and vegetal elements bearing fruits. There is a diamond frieze in between the contours of the arches. Within the innermost arch as many as eight rows of step motif arranged in diminutive scale upwards have been carved. The composition of the lower part of the tympanum shows three horizontal rows of terracotta decoration; the lowest consists of frieze of cross-petals, the middle shows the vegetal elements, while the topmost contains plant and vegetal shoots punctuated by vase motifs. There is the ornamental arch engrailing above.

The terracotta composition of the tympanum of the fourteenth mihrab arch from the south is arranged into two vertical parts. The lower part shows a row of trifoil arch motif supported by ornamental pillars. The pillars have bowl-shaped capitals and show spherical bulge in the middle. The bulge is decorated with jali work, while the mouldings of the capital are impressed with diamonds. Under each arch occurs a plant having a serpentine stem. The upper part is decorated with successive rows of rosettes. There is the usual ornate pendant. The soffit of the arch engrailing depicts a continuous scroll with rosette in each convolution. The entire composition develops above a series of mouldings impressed with merlons, creeper frieze and lozenge all in terracotta relief.

The thirteenth tympanum from the south illustrates the terracotta works composed within a double arch. The outer arch soffit is decorated with full-blown lotus and diamond alternately. The lotus occurs inside a

circle, while the diamond is composed of four lotuses arranged angularly. The soffit of inner arch consists of an inter-connected twisted rope pattern. The space inside the arches shows a series of thin horizontal mouldings, each decorated with a different motif. The motifs include necklace-and-tassel, tassellated necklace, diamond and square, hanging buds, balusters, merlons, creeper frieze, diamond frieze, plants and shrubs, hanging bud flanked by petals, leaves etc. The decoration of the tympanum reveals the surprising range of fancy of the terracotta artists.

The thirty-first tympanum from the south shows a tall terracotta tree with outspread branches and leaves filling the entire space within a succession of as many as five arches. Each arch contours depicts a different decorative motif from the others. A.H. Dani⁶⁵ has linked the tree within the arches to the Indian conception of Kalpataru (wish-filling tree). Since the craftsmen were largely locals, such a stylization of a traditional religious element to suit the Muslim taste is not unlikely.

Thus from the above detailed description of the Adina Masjid we can derive cogent points about the evolution of the art and architecture of the period in question. The first thing to be noted is the stone carving. In fact, the Adina Masjid embodies the finest examples of stone carving seen in the mihrab panels, door frames and the cornice of the zenana gallery. A significant feature of these carvings is the stylization of originally Hindu motifs to suit the taste of the Muslim masters. We also notice a distinct difference between the new design and the old Hindu

65. M.A.B., P. 69.

carved pillars.⁶⁶ The carving of the Hindu pillars is deep and bold but it is shallower and comparatively inferior in the Adina Masjid. The process of decline in the stone cutter's art of Bengal had set in after the eleventh century. The main reason for this decline was the stoppage of patronage. The Muslims were iconoclast and their art was marked with puritanical simplicity. "The Law of the Kur'ān which like the Mosaic law, forbade the making of a graven image or the likeness of anything which is in heaven or earth, dictated the character of Muhammadan decorative art so long as the Sunna - the canonical law of Islām - was strictly observed. Tests from the Kur'ān in the beautiful scripts of Arabia and Persia, were, used with great effect as architectural decoration, both carved and painted".⁶⁷ The natural consequence of this religious injunction to avoid idolatrous practices was that the Muslims kept themselves aloof from painting and sculpture and did not cultivate them even as mere arts. Hence, the stone - cutters of Bengal who had demonstrated their skill and versatility in the sculptures and temples of pre-Muslim period, did not get chance of practicing their art.

It is noticed in the plan of the mosque that the central nave divides the western cloisters into two equal parts. This plan is followed in a number of subsequent mosques.⁶⁸ It is seen in the mosque that the massive octagonal squat piers were used to carry the heavy weight of the stone floor of the zenana gallery. Such piers are not found outside Bengal.⁶⁹

66. Ibid, P. 70.

67. Havell : A Handbook of Indian Art, P. 108.

68. Ibid, P. 71.

69. P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), P. 36.

In the Adina Masjid, we see the corner towers for the first time. But here the corner towers are placed within the rectangular plan of the mosque and not attached from outside so as to vary the corner plan.⁷⁰ In the nave of the mosque, it is observed that the arches are beautifully cusped. This pattern of cusping is followed afterwards and we find them in most of the mosques. These cusps are derived from the Hindu and Buddhist niches.⁷¹ In upper India, cusps are not found before the time of Emperor Shāh Jahān. Probably Shāh Jahān took the idea from Bengal.⁷² As we see in the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period, the battlements and the cornice are still horizontal. The system of multi-dome to cover the roof of the cloisters has also been used afterwards. In the Adina Masjid, we also find a new phase in the evolution of Muslim terracotta art in Bengal. Here the terracotta artists of Bengal found for the first time an opportunity to display their skill independently. As a result, we find a difference between the pre-Iliyās Shāhī terracottas and those of the early Iliyās Shāhī period. Terracottas of the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period represent pure Muslim spirit, while the Adina Masjid breathes a note of compromise with the soil on which it stands. The congenial atmosphere between the local people and the Muslim masters was mainly responsible for this compromise in the terracotta ornamentation. It is seen that traditional art motifs of Bengal which appeared repugnant to Muslim taste were dispensed with or reformed, so that they constituted new elements of ornamentation. Such were the beaded necklace which in Hindu art contained figures of divinities, but were now

70. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 71.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

replaced with rosette or lotus and kirtimukha, changed into stylized vegetal elements. We see a large number of local elements in the terracottas of the Adina Masjid. These consisted of local plants, fruits and flowers, the lotus, the beaded and tassellated necklace, the tassel, the multifoil arch, the chain and pendant, the jar etc. In fact, we notice in the Adina Masjid the earliest appearance of vegetal elements which became universal in the later period. Alongside the local motifs occurred Muslim elements such as interlocking, merlon, the creeper frieze, geometric patterns and the arabesque. In the technique of execution of the terracottas, the traditional high relief ideal of the Hindus was replaced by the characteristic Muslim shallow nature. But terracotta being the art of the brick surface, the Adina Mosque examples look like external application, unrelated to the stone - faced structure. The synthesis of the ornamentation with the structural masonry was achieved in the Eklākhī Mausoleum of the next period.

To the west of the Zenana gallery of the Adina Masjid lies a roofless square room. Munshi Shyam Prasad did not say anything about this room. But Buchanon considers this roofless room to be the tomb of the builder Sikandar Shah. He writes, "the grave is in the centre, and is without ornate. It is composed of brick and covered with an arch".⁷³ Cunningham follows him and remarks, "The sarcophagus is in ruins, and the inside of the vault, in which the body was deposited is now exposed".⁷⁴ Ilahi Bakhsh measures the sarcophagus 9 cubits long NS and 7½ cubits broad thereby indicating it as a Mausoleum.⁷⁵ Abid Ali informs us that there is a tradition amongst the local people that Sikandar Shāh was buried in this chamber after his defeat and death, but unfortunately the ten-domed roof fell in,

73. Martin : Eastern India, vol. II, P. 649.

74. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., vo. XV, PP. 93-94.

75. Ilahi Bakhsh : The Khurshid Jahan Numa, tr.in English in J.A.S.B.,

and much debris collected over the tomb. When this was ultimately removed, the remains of the King's tomb was cleared away by the coolies along with the rubbish and thrown into the adjoining tank.⁷⁶

But Ghulām Husain Salīm says that one day on the pretext of hunting Ghiyāth al-Dīn escaped towards Sunārgāon and in a short time mobilising a large army, demanded the throne from his father. Shortly after, in order to wrest the kingdom, he marched with a large army from Sunārgāon and encamped at Sunargadhi. From the other side the father also with a powerful army advanced. On the next day on the battle-field of Goalpara, both sides marshalling their forces prepared to fight.⁷⁷ In the battle Sultān Sikandar Shāh received fatal injuries and died there (Goalpara).

According to A. Salam, Sunargadhi must have been close to Sunārgāon.⁷⁸ About the identification of Goalpara Wise writes in his "Notes on Sunargaon" that "In 1367, Ghiyasuddin, son of reigning monarch, rebelled and fled to Sunārgāon, there he collected an army and marched against his father. The two armies met at Goalpara, near Jafarganj in the Dhaka district, and nearly opposite the junction of the Ganges and Jamuna. The father was carried off the field mortally wounded. Eight years ago (1794), his tomb was still pointed out in the neighbourhood".⁷⁹ He further states that on the west of Jafarganj, where the Jamuna flows at the present time, stood a village called Goariah, where a Dargah of Sikandar Shāh and Langar Khana or hospital, erected by Jahangir, are said to have existed.⁸⁰ Rennel in his map of

76. Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, PP. 138-139.

77. Salim : Riyad : P. 103.

78. A. Salam : Riyad, Eng. tr., P. 107, f.n. 1.

79. J.A.S.B., 1874, P. 85. Blochmann identified Goalpara with the village of the same name in the vicinity of Ḥaḍrat Pāṇḍuāh (J.A.S.B., 1873, P. 256). But on a careful examination of the circumstantial evidence, his identification does not seem to stand.

80. J.A.S.B., 1874, P. 85.

the District of Dhaka has shown Goalpara as a little dwindled village.⁸¹ On the basis of these circumstantial evidence, S.M. Hasan thinks that Sikandar Shāh could not have been buried in the square room of the Adina Masjid.⁸² This view is also confirmed by Taylor who says that Sikandar Shah was buried in Goalpara in the vicinity of Jafarganj of Dhaka district.⁸³

But one thing is to be remembered here that though it appears that Sikandar Shāh was not buried in the roofless square room of the Adina Masjid, it may be termed as Sikandar's chamber. Besides, architecturally speaking the square multi-domed building at the rear of the western wall of the Adina Masjid recalls the cubical chambers in the tomb of Zafar Khān at Tribeni. It is seen that sometimes the Muslim rulers built their mausoleum during their life time. Following this tradition, Sultān Sikandar Shāh might have started the construction of his mausoleum at the rear of the western wall of the Adina Masjid. Fergusson also maintains that the royal builder wanted himself to be buried within the precincts or the immediate neighbourhood of the Masjid.⁸⁴ Both Ravenshaw and Westmacott also believe that Sikandar Shāh intended part of the great Adina Masjid to form the final resting place for himself.⁸⁵ However, Sikandar's Chamber is a square of 41 feet 9 inches inside⁸⁶ with walls 6 feet 8 inches thick. It stands on a very high plinth, raising the floor to the level of the zenana gallery.⁸⁷ The plinth is relieved with three tiers of moulding. From outside the building gives an appearance of being cubical. Probably it was roofed over by

81. J. Rennel : Map of the Inland Navigation in A Bengal Atlas, containing map of the theatre of war and commerce, MDCCCLXXXI.

82. Mosque Architecture of pre-mughal Bengal, P. 92.

83. J.A.S.B., vol. 64, 1895, P. 211, f.n. 1.

84. Fergusson : A History of Indian and Eastern Architecture, London, 1910, P.

85. Quoted by Hasan in Mosque Architecture of pre-Mughal Bengal, P. 91.

86. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., vol. XV, P. 93. According to Beglar, it measures externally 54 feet by 48 feet (Beglar : Archaeological Survey of Bengal, Report, Calcutta, 1888); whereas Abid Ali notes that this roofless room is 42 feet square (Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 138).

87. Hasan : Adina Masjid, P. 54.

domes, as the remains of four square stone bases of pillars, two in two rows, supporting the domes on arches, as well as the pilasters in the west wall, are still visible. These pillars are circular in shape, from which spring transverse and longitudinal arches. These arches carry 9 domes probably by the similar brick stalactite pendentives observed inside the mosque.⁸⁸ There are three openings on the north and south side, but these must have been trellised windows, as the floor of the tomb is on the same level as the floor of the platform of the zenana gallery in the mosque. Between them there are three openings through the back wall of the Masjid.⁸⁹

During the reign of Sultan Sikandar Shāh another mosque at Molla Simla in the district of Hughly was erected in 777 A.H./1375 A.D. Though this mosque was repaired from time to time, the general plan does not appear to have been materially changed.⁹⁰ In plan, the Molla Simla Mosque was a single-domed square building. It measures externally 24 feet (internally 17 feet). In the back wall there are three mihrabs with a pulpit between the second and third niches. The entrance to the mosque is provided with three doors - one in the front wall and other two smaller side doors in the side walls. In this mosque, there are four octagonal towers. Here the arches are four centred, the cornice is curved and the dome is semi-circular.⁹¹

88. Ibid.

89. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., vol. SV, PP. 93-94.

90. J.A.S.B., 1910 A.D., P. 27.

91. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 50.

The tomb of Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh is the earliest existing Muslim monument in East Bengal. It stands at Mograpara near the ruins of medieval town of Sunārgāon in the district of Dhaka. The tomb is of black basalt and is a panelled table with a plain top-stone of simple pointed barrel form. The eastern side of the table retains three carved panels, each panel consisting of an engrailed arch carried baluster-pillars, with rosettes in the spandrels and floreate lamp hanging from the apex of the arch. Here the lamps are held by double chain as against the single chain in the Adina Masjid. The tomb is reported to have had been surrounded by pillars about 5 feet high, which presumably carried a canopy or pavilion.⁹² At the head of the tomb lay a sand-stone pillar which had been used as a chiragh-dan or a stand for a light. In fact, the style of the designs and carvings bring this tomb very close in time and style to the Adina Masjid.

Before concluding our discussion on architecture, it is necessary to discuss the architectural features of the Eklākhī Mausoleum, which was built immediately after the period of our investigation. Because, the Eklākhī Mausoleum may be said to have marked the zenith of the architectural style that was developed during the early Iliyās Shāhī period. The reason behind this was the congenial atmosphere that prevailed between the Muslim masters and the Hindu populace at that time in Bengal.

It has been noticed earlier⁹³ that Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh successfully repulsed the onslaught of the Sultān of Delhi with the support of the local people. As a price for this support, Iliyās Shāh had to patronize local culture, art and literature. He had also to patronize the forma-

92. J.A.S.B., vol. XLIII, pl. VIII and P. 88.

93. See Supra, P.

tion of a party of local Zamīndārs as oppsed to the party of foreign elements that had so long been strong in the capital.⁹⁴ This political opportunity favoured the rise of a Hindu, Zamīndār, Rājā Gaṇeśa, who ultimately became successful in overthrowing the early Iliyās Shāhi dynasty and thereby change the course of history in favour of Hindu rule. But his rise did not go unchallenged and on the request of Ḥaḍrat Nūr Qutb 'Ālam, Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jaunpur attacked Bengal. At last, the war came to an end by a compromise which brought the House of Raja Ganesa to power in Bengal. Jadu son of Rājā Gaṇeśa, was converted to Islām and was raised to the throne under the title of Jalāl al-Dīn. This compromise augured well for the country and we notice that the Muslims and the Hindus co-operated mutually to evolve a common cultural heritage. The new spirit manifested itself in patronage extended to local language and culture and also to Muslim institution.⁹⁵ But nowhere was the new ideal better expressed than in the architecture of the period, which being a co-operative social product, portrayed clearly the new spirit.

The Eklākhi Mausoleum⁹⁶ is one of the finest buildings in Bengal. It is built in the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁹⁷ The fabric of the Mausoleum is of brick, occasionally interspersed with horn-blende slabs collected from older monuments. It defined a set design for all the subsequent buildings that were erected during the period of the independent

94. A. Karim : Social History, PP. 28-29.

95. A. Karim : Banglar Itihasa, P. 294; Islamic Culture, vol. XXXII, No. 1, 1958, P. 204.

96. According to tradition, as recorded in the Riyad al-Salatin, the Eklakhi Mausoleum is the tomb of Jalal al-Din Muhammad Shah, the converted son of Raja Ganesa. Its name is due to the tradition that it cost a lakh of rupees (Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 125).

97. Percy Brown is inclined to assign the date 1425 A.D. to the monument. Cf. P. Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), 4th edn., 1964, P. 38.

Sultāns of Bengal.⁹⁸ The design of the Eklākhī Mausoleum is simple. It is almost a square of 78 feet 6 inches by 74 feet 6 inches externally, but internally it changes into an octagon of $48\frac{1}{2}$ feet diameter.⁹⁹ This change from the exterior square to the interior octagon is achieved by filling the entire core with brick work. The walls are 13 feet thick. At the outer corners, there are four octagonal towers attached to the side walls in such a way that five facets out of the eight are visible from outside.¹⁰⁰ The mausoleum is entered through a stone door frame placed in the centre of each side. Above the lintel of this door frame, there is a pointed arch. This arch and beam combination is found in Firuzian building at Delhi.¹⁰¹ In this mausoleum is also seen an early example of the curved cornice inherited from the bent bamboo forming the eave of the thatched cottage. The facade of the building is divided into a series of projecting and recessed chases which in effect is suggestive of the framework of a wood and wattle hut.¹⁰² The roof is covered by a single hemispherical dome having no shoulder and finial.¹⁰³ The ornamentation of this mausoleum is very rich and varied, the same pattern being rarely repeated, except in some of the borders.¹⁰⁴ Its ornamentation has been done with glazed tiles, painting and large scale use of terracotta. The outer surface of the walls on all sides is decorated with terracottas. Elaborate terracotta work is also found in the broad rectangular frame in which the door-

98. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 75.

99. Abid Ali : Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua, P. 125.

100. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 76.

101. Percy Brown : Indian Architecture (Islamic period), 4th edn., 1964, P. 38.

102. Ibid.

103. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., PP. 77-78.

104. Cunningham : A.S.I.R., vol. XV, P. 89.

way has been set. The vertical arms of the rectangular frame are divided into three smaller rectangular panels. Of these the middle one is the smallest. Each panel is enclosed within an ornamented border showing a continuous frieze of arabesque between two thin lines which are impressed with intersecting scrolls. The lintel of each panel is embossed with three terracotta rosettes, one in the centre and two at the ends. There are thin tiers of ornamental moulding showing frieze of lozenges above the panels. Above the panels is seen a row of blind merlons which depict different plants in terracotta. Terracotta arabesque is found in the space between the bottom and the top of the panels. The middle panel shows a multi-foil arched niche inside. The arch is supported by two heavily banded brick pillars. The bands depict terracotta motifs like creeper, lozenge, merlon etc. The arch soffit is impressed with a creeper design. In the arched niche occurs a chain with a floriated pendant hung from the arch apex. The flat niche was probably, like other panels, further covered with arabesque originally. At the dome base inside, we also find terracotta ornamentation. All around the dome base there is a frieze of jali work. Immediately above is a series of triple mouldings surmounted by a lozenge frieze. Higher up runs a row of merlons impressed with plant motifs. The apex of the dome vault depicts a large terracotta lotus. The ornamental effect of the cornice is further enhanced by the introduction of enamelled tiles.¹⁰⁵ The interior of the mausoleum is also decorated with painted flowers and other devices.¹⁰⁶ It is to be noted here that painting was used for the first time in the Muslim architecture of Bengal. Hence, it appears that the Eklākhi mausoleum

105. A.H. Dani : M.A.B., P. 77.

106. C.H.I., vol. III, P. 603.

was an important monument both in respect of architecture and ornamentation. This mausoleum marked the phase of introduction of the 'brick style' in Bengal. Since terracotta is the art of clay, it suits brick surface most and it is in this monument that a synthesis was achieved between the decorative technique and the structural masonry. In respect of ornamental motifs, the terracottas of the mausoleum show skilful combination of the Muslim and the Hindu elements, evolving thereby a common art formula in Bengal. In fact, this mausoleum can be said to have completed the phase of the architectural style that had been initiated in the early Iliyās Shāhī period. The participation of local artisans, demonstrated so vigorously in the fabric and motifs of terracotta decoration in the Adina Mosque found full expression in the Eklākhi mausoleum.

Thus it may be said in conclusion that the early Iliyās Shāhī period set the trend of an epoch making style in the field of architecture in Bengal, which was followed with great success in the subsequent periods. The early Iliyās Shāhī architectural style represents an amalgam of local and Muslim elements. In fact, it demonstrates a reconciliation between the traditional Muslim features and the indigenous architectural elements. The Bengali masons and artisans followed the traditional Muslim features to erect the buildings in which they applied the local elements such as piers, curved cornice and the various types of ornamentation depicting local tradition and motifs in brightly expressive terracotta plaques. These local elements in effect turned the Muslim architecture of Bengal to be the Bengali Muslim architecture during our period of investigation.

Conclusion

We have now come to the close of our study and are now in a position to sum up our discussion. A perusal of the preceding pages must have impressed upon our mind that the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns of Bengal were great Sultāns and remarkable administrators. The political unification of Bengal, which they accomplished for the first time, bears eloquent testimony to their military genius. They were also equally great as rulers. They were endowed with administrative talents, but for which they might not have established their rule and guided the destinies of Bengal for a long period. Besides, they identified themselves with the welfare of their subjects, irrespective of their cast or creed, protected them from external invasions, relieved them from oppression and earned their everlasting gratitude. This made their rule not only possible but also popular. They made Bengal their home and contributed to its vast wealth of civilization. The extent of their influence on Bengal cannot be overestimated. It has flowed down to our own times and can be traced in all aspects of our life.

On the basis of information obtained from the foregoing pages, it may be said that the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period marked the phase of transition in the history of Bengal and the following distinguishing features may be discerned of this phase : (i) the establishment and

expansion of the Muslim Kingdom in Bengal; (ii) the spirit of independence among the rulers of Bengal and their resistance to the Delhi authority; (iii) the foundation and growth of the Muslim society and (iv) the system of administration started developing under the new rulers.

We find that within a period of nearly one hundred and fifty years, the Muslim rule in Bengal extended over a vast territory with Devkot in the north, Sylhet in the east, Chittagong in the south-east, Satgaon in the south and Radha in the west. We also notice that the rulers of Bengal tended to behave independently whenever the opportunity arose. It is observed that the Muslim immigrants of different nationalities came to Bengal under banner of Islam with their varied cultural traditions. On the other hand, the local converts, though they accepted Islam, could not altogether change their ways of life. These two strains formed the basis of the Muslim society of Bengal. It is further observed that the rulers of Bengal in the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period tried to evolve a pattern of administrative system based on their past experiences and concepts and in accordance with the need of the society and time. They brought about many necessary and innovative changes in the system to make it more effective and efficient. In the context of this background we have to study the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultanate of Bengal.

Iliyās Shāh, son of Sultān, was a Sijistānī by origin and came of a noble family. In his early life, he was in the service of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi. But for certain reasons, he had to leave Delhi

for Bengal. A close study of the Persian works shows that Iliyās Shāh first settled at Satgāon and became the master of Satgāon in 1338 A.D. Having consolidated his authority there, he started waging war against ‘Alī Shāh of Lakhnautī which lasted from 1339 to 1342 A.D. In this long-drawn war, Iliyās Shāh became victorious and ascended the throne of Lakhnautī in 1342 A.D. and thereby laid the foundation of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultanate in Bengal.

Iliyās Shāh and his descendants ruled Bengal for nearly seventy years from 743 to 814 A.H./1342 to 1411-1412 A.D. After consolidating his authority at Lakhnautī, Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iliyās Shāh launched upon a career of conquest. He first conquered Tirhut and then invaded Nepal. Afterwards he conquered Sunargaon and became the first independent Muslim Sultān to rule over the united kingdom of Bengal. After achieving success in the east Iliyās Shāh turned his attention towards the west. He raided Orissa and advanced as far as the Chilka Lake. Then he invaded Bihar and soon his dominions extended up to Banaras. Realising the danger from his growing power, Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq of Delhi proceeded towards Bengal to bring Iliyās Shāh under subjugation; but could not succeed. As a result of this invasion Iliyās Shāh was deprived of his conquests west of Lakhnautī but he continued to rule over Bengal as an independent Sultān. Iliyās Shāh also succeeded in exerting his influence on the neighbouring kingdom of Tippera. Towards the close of his reign he also conquered a portion of Kamrup. Iliyās Shāh died in 1358 A.D. after a peaceful and prosperous reign which lasted for about 16 years. He was succeeded by his son Sikandar Shāh.

Early in Sikandar Shāh's reign, Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq made another attempt to annex Bengal, but Sikandar Shah defended himself from within the fortress of Ekdāla and ultimately a treaty of friendship was concluded between the parties. During a long and prosperous reign of about 33 years (1358-1391 A.D.) Sikandar Shāh adorned the capital and its surroundings with many noble monuments, the most important of which is the grand Adina mosque. But his last days were not happy. He was embroiled in a complicated family intrigue and died in between 792 and 793 A.H./1389-1390 and 1390-1391 A.D. in a battle with his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh at Goalpara.

History and tradition unite to make the reign of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh the most romantic in Bengal. He corresponded with the illustrious poet Ḥafīz of Shiraz. He exchanged embassies with the Emperor of China. The great sūfī saint Nūr Qutb'Ālam was a friend of the Sultān. The account of Sultān's trial before Qāḍī Sirāj al-Dīn like an ordinary defendant survives in the local tradition which makes him a symbol of justice and equity in this region. He is said to have been devoted to his religion and was fond of Persian literature. He also contributed a great deal to the development of Bengali language. He died in 813 A.H./1410-1411 A.D.

He was succeeded by his son Saif al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh who ruled Bengal for a short period of two years, i.e., from 813 A.H./1410-1411 A.D. to 814 A.H./1411-1412 A.D. He continued the friendly relation with the Chinese court. During his reign Rājā Gaṇeśa, a Hindu Zamīndar of

Bhaturiah, became powerful and it was at his instigation that the Sultān's slave Shihāb al-Dīn killed his master and himself ascended the throne of Bengal. When these things were happening, probably Muhammad Shāh bin Hamzah Shāh declared himself Sultān somewhere in Bengal and issued coins. Possibly he could not maintain his position and ultimately was defeated by Rājā Gaṇeśa and Shihāb al-Din. In this way, the rule of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultans came to any end.

The administration of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns opened a new chapter in the history of Bengal. As the Sultāns were aware of the fact that their very existence depended upon the co-operation of the local people, they adopted a liberal policy in administration. This is evidenced by the fact that the local people especially the Hindus were gradually being associated with the administration. They were appointed as ministers and even in the military service. Hindu nobles were allowed to continue as vassal chiefs; there is no trace of persecution for religious differences; they were not subjected to pay any special tax like Jiziya and lastly the system of punishment was human. Another feature of the early Iliyās Shāhī administration was that it allowed to continue some of the aspects of the previous administrative system of Bengal.

The early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns enjoyed sovereignty and ruled the Sultānate independently. The activities of the Sultāns and their titles give testimony to this fact. At the same time, they also recognised the

theoretical sovereignty of the Khalifah. But this recognition of the suzerainty of the Khalīfah was only in name. In the real sense, they were all in all and were independent for all practical purposes.

The administrative organization of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate was the result of an evolutionary process in which improvement and changes were effected by various rulers. The Sultāns had gradually evolved a system of administration both for the centre as well as administrative units. They set up the central administration in the Capital. The Sultān was the pivot of administration which depended for its efficiency on his personal supervision. He was the head of the executive. He was responsible for the peace and security of his Sultānate. He was the chief law-giver and the final court of appeal. He was also the supreme commander of the army. He administered the country according to his wish and appointed such ministers and officers as he might choose or select. There was a regular council of ministers, but no cabinet in the modern sense of the term. Though the Sultān of Bengal was all in all, there were some limitations upon his authority.

The diversity of administration and requirements of spectacular ceremonial necessitated the attendance of many officials and servants of different ranks. The royal household played great significant role in the actual administration of the Sultānate. The Sultān also maintained a splendid court in a luxuriously decorated hall. The maintenance of a splendid court shows a spirit of competition in the minds of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns. In fact, they wanted to outshine the Sultāns of

Delhi and other neighbouring rulers in majesty and pomp in order to show their equal position with the Sultāns of Delhi and to win support and confidence of the people. The court was attended by quite a big retinue of nobles, amīrs and high officials of the state. A good deal of administrative work was carried out there by the Sultān.

For a smooth running of the administration, the Sultān established separate departments and appointed an efficient officer at the head of each department. There were four important ministries namely, the Dīwān-i-Wizārat, the Dīwān-i-Inshā, the Dīwān-i-'Arḍ and the Dīwān-i-Qaḍā. There was a regular hierarchy of subordinate officers below their departmental officers.

Finance is the source of administration, and as such the early Ilyas Shahi Sultāns gave special attention to the organization of finance. They organized it on the lines laid down by the Muslim tradition. In following this tradition they also tried to adjust the same with the local conditions. It is found that the Iliyās Shāhī sultanate of Bengal had three main sources of revenue namely, Al-Ghanīmah, Al-Kharāj and customs. Besides, there were some minor duties which may be termed as tolls or excise duties. There were also Hātkar, Pathkar and Ghātkar. Though Jiziya appears to be one of the important sources of revenue for the Muslim state, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns did not think it wise to impose it upon the non-Muslims. The Sultān himself stood at the top of the revenue department. Next to him, the Wazīr managed the revenue

affairs in each administrative unit. There were also revenue units known as Qasbah or Maḥal. The revenue officials of each revenue unit were the Mustasarīf or ʿĀmīl, the Mushrif, the Maḥaṣṣīl, Gumāstah, Qānūngū, Kārkun, Chaudhury, Sarhangs and other clerical staff. The Muqaddams, the khut and the patwārī were responsible for the revenue affairs in the villages. There was an elaborate arrangement for the assessment of revenue in Bengal. It is observed that three methods of assessment namely sharing, apprisement and measurement were prevalent in Bengal. Of these methods the method of apprisement was widely practiced in Bengal. There was no uniformity in the rate of revenue demand which was likely to vary from place to place in accordance with the productivity of the soil and the nature of crops produced in different seasons. Most probably the state share to be taken from the people ranged from a fifth to a half during the period under review. The Government revenue could be paid either in cash or kind, but possibly the former mode was preferred.

The army played a very significant role in the administration, because, it was the army which invaded, conquered and established a Muslim kingdom in Bengal. Keeping this fact in mind, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns gave due importance to the army. For this reason, the early Iliyās Shāhī administration seems to be half military and half civil. Hence, the military character of the administration was very apparent.

The army of the early Iliyās Shāhī period consisted of the royal body-guard, troops of the capital, troops employed in the service of the rulers and nobles of the administrative units and recruits particularly employed in times of war. There were four branches of the army : the cavalry, infantry, elephants and the navy.

The Sultān was the commander-in-chief of the army. He paid personal attention to its organization and discipline. Some times a prince or an individual general was asked to lead the army. Possibly there was an army minister who was in-charge of army administration. Though we do not have a clear-cut idea of the army organization, it seems a sar-i-khail commanders ten horsemen; a Sipah Sālār, ten Ṣar-i-khail; an Amīr, ten Sipah Sālār; a Malik, ten Amīrs; and a Khān, ten Maliks. The reference to the naval officers, who bore the title Mīr Baḥr, indicates the existence of other subordinate officers in the navy.

The early Iliyas Shahi Sultans of Bengal were well-known for their skilfulness in the art of warfare. They planned the strategy and tactics of war in such a way so that they might get the maximum advantage of the geographical and topographical features of Bengal. They also tried to avoid as far as possible, to come in direct conflict. They tried to outwit and overcome the enemy in a clever manner. Forts were constructed and maintained at strategic places and they were well stocked with provisions. Digging ditch around a fort or in any place in order to check the march of the army was also an another war tactics of the Sultāns of Bengal.

The army consisted of both Muslim and non-Muslim soldiers. As the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns were aware of the fact that their existence largely depended upon the support of the local people, they adopted a liberal policy towards the local people and recruited them in large number in the army. Though the army consisted of soldiers of diverse origin, the army was a national army. For the army was inspired to protect the country from foreign aggression by national sentiment.

The size of the army of the Sultāns varied from time to time. The soldiers were efficient and highly skilled in war. Possibly the early Ilyas Shahi Sultans gave certain territories to the army officers and soldiers in fiefs in payment of their salaries. But cash payment was also in vogue at that time. It is also seen that the emoluments of the fighting forces were not only adequate, but also handsome.

The soldiers used to wear various kinds of military dress, and use various types of war weapons. It appears that the soldiers were known by their vehicles and weapons. War music played a significant part in the army. It was played in order to keep the soldiers alert and to maintain their war spirits.

In the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate, the highest court in the realm was the Sultān. he was the defender of the faith, and the arbitrator in the disputes of his subjects; he was the head of the bureaucracy, he was the commander-in-chief of the forces. In his first capacity he dispensed justice through Dīwān-i-Qaḍā and in his second capacity, most probably through Dīwān-i-Mazālim or something like that. Court

martials to try and punish rebels were held under his supervision or his military commanders. The Sultān used to call the leading 'ulamās to the court and advised them about the right judgement. Usually the Sultān decided the difficult cases and the cases in which the Qādīs failed. But references are also there to show that the Sultān used to hear complains from his subjects and tried cases himself.

Next to the Sultān, the chief judicial officer was the Qādī. He was in-charge of the Dīwān-i-Qadā. He supervised the judicial machinery and heard appeals against the judgements of the lower courts. He appointed the Qādīs in every important town and village. The Qādī commanded great reverence. It is noticed in the early Iliyās Shāhī period that the rule of law was predominant in the society where even the Sultāns subjected themselves to the sacred law and the decision of the Qādī. There were two kinds of punishment - one was beating by bamboos and the other was banishment. Of these the last one was the highest punishment. The system of imprisonment was also prevalent.

For the efficiency of administration, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultāns divided Bengal into a number of administrative units. But these units were not homogenous units with uniform administrative system in them. The number of administrative units varied from time to time. Possibly it depended partly on the necessity and partly on the prevailing political condition in the centre. The large administrative unit was known as Iqlīm, while the smaller units were called 'Arṣah or Mulk. The

ruler of an administrative unit was the head of the military and civil administration. We have references to the administration of some cities which were variously called as Shahr and Qaṣbah. These cities were not separate administrative units but component parts of bigger units like Iqlīm or ‘Arṣah. There were also some military outposts known as Thānās. It is seen that Thānās were placed under the control of the bigger units adjacent to them. It appears that the smaller unit after Iqlīm and ‘Arṣah was the Maḥal. Maḥal is an aggregate of many villages. Primarily, it was a revenue unit. But later on, in order to enforce revenue regulations and to maintain law and order, some responsibility for civil administration was also given to it. So, the Maḥal unit was associated with some administrative function as well.

Society was divided into two communities, the Muslims and the Hindus. As the customs of the two groups of people were different, they tried to maintain separate identity. Hence both the groups began to develop in two parallel lines dividing the Bengali society into two distinct entities.

With the foundation of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate in Bengal the converted Muslims came into close contact with the Muslim immigrants and this formed the basis of the Muslim society in Bengal. The composition of the Muslim society was very simple. The Sultān topped the Muslim hierarchy and set the standard of socio-cultural behaviour. Along with the Sultān, his sons, brothers and other relatives also held the key

positions in the society. Below the Sultān and the members of the royal family, were the nobility. They exercised a potent influence in the state as military generals, administrators and also, at time, as king-makers. Besides the nobility, there were other groups of people in the upper class. Of these the Sādāt, ‘Ulamā, Maṣhāikh, the Khāns, Maliks, Umarā, Ṣadrs, the Zamīndērs, Muqaddams, Mafūzamān etc. are important. Next to the upper class Muslim, there was another class of people who may be termed as the middle class. This class consisted of the smaller government officers, the clerks, the physicians, the teachers, preachers, poets and musicians. They also enjoyed a position of influence in the society. Leaving aside the privileged and the middle class, the rest of the Muslims were commoners. Petty cultivators, artisans and manufacturers, various classes of labourers, singers and dancers formed this class. Petty government officials were also included in this group. The other element of the Muslim population was the class of the domestics and slaves. In the Muslim society, the slaves were taken into the social order of their masters and they shared the ideas and contributed towards the growth of a homogenous culture and exercised a positive, some times powerful, influence on the direction of the government. Muslim society has never been divided into distinct hereditary nobles and commoners. It is seen many a humble person rose to the highest positions in the state by the dint of his merit. This prevented division of Muslim society into watertight compartments. There were, of course, economic distinctions as can be found anywhere, but wealth and power did not isolate the individual or the family from the rest of his people. Amongst the Muslims one could find people of many professions.

The Muslim women of Bengal enjoyed a dignified status in the society. It is seen that the upper class Muslim women attended the court of the Sultān. The standard of living of the Muslim women shows their elevated position in the society. Purdah system was prevalent among the Muslim women. But they were not shut up within the walls of their houses. They could move out of their houses.

Marriage was the momentous phase in the life of every Muslim, male or female. It was usually arranged by the parents of the bride and bridegroom. Divorce and remarriage of widows were practised in the Muslim society. Polygamy was also prevalent.

It seems that during the period under review the Muslim society was noted for its religious character and the Muslims regulated their way of life in accordance with the injunctions of Islām. Besides, the Muslims were highly praised for their honesty and sincerity.

The Muslims of Bengal had their distinctive dresses. But there was class distinction with regard to the use of costumes among the Muslims. The upper class Muslims wore costly dresses. The poor class, on the other hand, were conditioned habitually to cut their dress requirements to a bare minimum in conformity with their socio-economic status and ability. The use of various kinds of toiletries was common among the Muslims of both the sexes. It is seen that the Muslim women adorned their foreheads with vermillion and Candan Tilak. It may be mentioned here these customs crept into the Muslim society through the

neo-Muslims who kept on using their former customs. Both Muslim men and women used ornaments of beautiful designs and patterns. Though Muslim men wore ornaments, possibly this practice was not very common. They put on ornaments on ceremonial occasions.

The Muslims also paid great attention to their daily food. But in the different groups of people, different standards of good habit existed in keeping with their respective status and resources. The Sultāns, the nobles and the well-to-do people were habituated to take varied and rich food. On the other hand, the diet of the average Muslims was very simple, in sharp contrast to what was prevalent among the upper class Muslims.

The Muslims observed a number of social ceremonies and festivals. Among the ceremonies, the most important were those associated with chatti, aqiqa, bismillāh kḥanī, circumcision, marriage and funeral. Among the religious ceremonies ‘Id-al-Fitr, ‘Id-al-Azha, Prophet's-birth day, Shab-i-Barat and Muḥarram were common. Among the games and pastimes Chaugan, swimming, boat-racing, wrestling, dancing and vocal and instrumental music were popular among the Muslims. It is seen that there were a class of musicians and tiger-tamers who entertained the noble and the rich.

In the Hindu society, the cast system continued. As usual, at the top of the society the Hindus were divided into four castes, the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaiśya and the Śudra. Besides these castes there were numerous sub-castes according to various social gradation and

occupations. In the society the Hindus played a vital role in politics to shape the future course of the history of Bengal. The hindus rose to the great office of the Wazîr, personal secretaries to the Sultāns, commanders of the army and many other important posts in the government.

Joint family was in existence among the Hindus. As a result, there developed a feeling of mutual dependence and co-operation among them. Father was the head of the family. But it appears that mother exercised greater influence in the family. Though the relations among the members of the Hindu family were harmonious, the position of the daughters-in-law was not always good as is found even in modern times. It is seen that the Hindu women, particularly the Gopa women used to go to the market to sell their commodities and to buy their essential goods.

The Hindu women did not enjoy a high status in the society. They enjoyed restricted liberties having no independent status. The social laws, customs and tradition made the position of women dependent and unpleasant. In spite of this position, it is also found that women enjoyed an honourable position in the family as a member of her husband's family. Generally Hindu women did not observe pardah. It was observed by a section of the Hindu women belonging to the upper and well-to-do classes.

Child marriage was commonly practised in the society. The Hindus considered it a religious duty to marry their sons and daughters at an early age, particularly the girls, before the age of puberty. In fact, a marriage at or after the age of puberty was considered a bad marriage.

The practice of dowry was prevalent in the society. Polygamy was common among the Hindus, especially belonging to the richer sections of the society. Widow remarriage was also in vogue in the society, but it was largely practised among the lower social classes. The practice of sati or burning of widow on the funeral pyre of her husband was prevalent in the society of the period in question. But it appears that it was, in all probability, voluntary.

There were prostitutes in the Hindu society. The position of public women was not good in the society.

The Muslim rule in Bengal brought about a profound change in the dress of the Hindus of all classes in general and in particular of the Hindus of the upper classes. As a result of this change, it would be difficult to distinguish a Hindu from a Muslim aristocrat, if the former withdrew the caste-mark and some distinctive ornaments. In food also the Muslims had influence on the Hindus. The educated and enlightened Hindus and their aristocratic section specially imitated the Muslim culture, dress, food and etiquettes. It is also clear that the śāri as worn today was unknown in Bengal in pre-Muslim times. At that time, the śāri never covered the upper part of the body which generally remained exposed. With the coming of the Muslims the mode of wearing of the śāri changed. It may have been a composite Muslim adaptation of the native forms of draped dresses. However, costumes of different kinds were used by the people in accordance with their socio-economic status. The standard of dress among the aristocrats and the well-to-do was very much different

from that of the commoners. Moreover, the poor people tried to keep their dress requirements to the minimum as far as possible. Similarly, the women of the upper class were fond of wearing costly and beautiful costumes of different designs and colours. They managed to get enough time for their toilets and cosmetics. Hindus of both sexes generally used ornaments of different metals and designs. The women belonging to higher class had particular fascination for ornaments and they loaded their body, from head to toe, with a variety of them. It will not be out of place to mention that nose ornaments were unknown to the Hindu ladies. These ornaments were brought to Bengal by the early Muslim immigrants.

The food habit among the Hindus was also governed by their position. The richer and the well-to-do sections favoured a variety of dishes, carefully prepared. On the contrary, the food of the common people was qualitatively inferior and simple.

The Hindus worshipped many gods and goddesses. Their religious festivals were numerous, occurring in almost all important seasons of the year. The Hindus had various social ceremonies and institutions connected with their birth, marriage and death.

The Hindu society was noted for its various modes of pleasure and recreation. Music and dancing were the most popular pastime. The game of dice was very common in the Hindu society. Genduā game was favourite among the children.

It was the custom of the society that every one should continue his own family profession. Its discontinuation was undesirable. The Hindu believed in good and bad omens. They had high ideas of evil deeds and good deeds. They also believed in sorceries and charms of magic incantations. The Hindus were highly superstitious. Killing of a woman was considered to be a great sin in the Hindu society. Killing of a man was also condemned.

During the period of our investigation, the Hindu society was found to be in a state of demoralized condition. The process of demoralization began in the pre-Muslim period. The Muslim rule in Bengal helped the degenerating forces of the Hindu society to continue. The Hindus in general and particularly the young men of the society had ravenous appetite for sensual pleasure. They had no principle of morality. Society was so much demoralized that the young men gave proposals of amorous sports at any time any where unabashedly and spoke nakedly. The Hindu officials also were highly immoral. Women also were not immune from the charge of polluting the society. But women upheld the moral values more than the men.

The rule of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultans not only contributed to political stability but Bengal under them also enjoyed a period of plenty and prosperity. The village during the early Iliyās Shāhī period was the basic unit of economic organization and was the back bone of Bengal's economy. It remained, as in the ancient period, a self contained unit of economic life. The chief feature of the Bengal village community

was a harmonious co-ordination of the specialized functions of its various component groups of workers. Each member of the village community performed a function which was determined by his birth and upbringing. Another leading feature of the village community was that the villagers produce their products mainly for purposes of local consumption. As a result, when natural calamities befell, they suffered much. The village had also a limited amount of trade and commerce.

The cities flourished under the Sultāns and consequently city economy was evolved. Of the cities and towns of Bengal, Pāṇḍuā, Gauda Sunārgāon, Muḥazzamābād, Satgāon, Fathābād, Chātgāon and Ekdaiah were important. The commercial activities of all these cities and towns show that the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate of Bengal was a solvent state.

Bengal in the medieval period was predominantly an agricultural country and likewise agriculture was the principal occupation of the bulk of the people. Agriculture throughout the period in question was in a prosperous condition. All the foreign travellers who visited Bengal speak highly of the fertility of the soil which made it possible for the cultivators to grow two crops every year. Among the agricultural products mention has been made of rice, cotton, long pepper, mustard, ginger, turmeric, pulses, jute, redmillets, sesamum, beans, maize, onions, garlicks, cucumber, egg-plants and sugarcane. Fruits of various local varieties were produced in Bengal. Bengal also reared mulberry trees and silk worms. Animal husbandry was also very popular in Bengal. There was abundance of buffaloes, cows, sheep and domestic fowl. Besides, camel, horse, mule, marine goat, duck, pigs, geese, dogs and cats are mentioned as domestic animals.

Though agriculture was the main occupation of the people, there were many important industries in the rural as well as the urban areas. Textile, metal, sugar and ship-building industries were famous. There were numerous other minor industries. The textile industries was the most flourishing among the industries. Varieties of fine cloth were produced. These textile goods of Bengal found a good market in Malacca in the east and Ormuz in the west.

Next in importance was the metal industry. The metal workers of Bengal handled various metals like iron, brass, copper, bronze, gold, silver etc. with great skill. The Bengali artisans and masons also displayed great skill in stone and brick works. Ship-building, sugar and paper industries also made a remarkable progress at that time.

Bengal had a long tradition of inland and foreign trade which was further developed during the early Iliyās Shāhī period. The river communication provided facilities for internal trade and commerce, whereas the ports of Chittagong, Satgāon and other minor ports linked up Bengal with Far Eastern and Middle Eastern countries. The exports of Bengal included textile goods, rice, sugar, ginger, paper, lac, oil, butter, dry fish, pulses, fruits, betel-leaves, betel nut, onion, garlic, campher, aloe wood, goats, sheep, pigeon, jute stuff, salt, harital, gla'ss etc. The imports consisted of gold, silver, satins, silk, blue and white porcelain, iron, vermillion, quick silver, corals, ruby, diamond, ivory, pearl etc. It is seen that the overseas trade of Bengal was controlled by the Arab, Persian and Chinese merchants. It is also evident that all large business transactions were carried on with coins, but for small purchase the people of Bengal used sea-shells or cowries.

The contemporary records show that Bengal was a rich and prosperous country. The fertility of the soil of Bengal, the abundance of its agricultural and industrial products and the large volume of its foreign trade contributed to the prosperity of Bengal during the period in question. The splendour of the court, the luxuries of the nobles and upper class people also express the great prosperity of Bengal. Ibn Baṭūṭah described Bengal as a land of plenty and cheapness. He remarked that nowhere in the universe did he see a country where commodities sold so cheap as in Bengal. An idea of the cheapness of the necessities of life is obtained from his account.

But the fruits of the prosperity of Bengal were not enjoyed by all people on a just basis. Wealth was unevenly distributed and it was concentrated in the hands of a small minority. There was a sharp contrast between the opulence, pomp and luxury of the Sultāns, nobles and the wealthy merchants on the one hand, and the extreme misery and poverty of the common people on the other. But as the demands of the lower classes were very few and things of every day use were quite cheap, they managed to escape starvation.

As in other fields of the society, the early Iliyās Shāhī period was also marked with the development of a bold architectural style befitting the dignity of the new Sultānate. In the pre-Iliyās Shāhī period the architecture of Bengal was in the formative stage. In this stage the builders utilized the local masons and materials with some features of the existing Hindu architecture. But in their general pattern the buildings

emulate the traditional Muslim architecture which by then had already developed in Delhi. Along with the traditional Muslim features the Bengali builders proceeded to add other traits or preferences of their own. Hence there started a force of interaction in architecture which led to the evolution of a distinct style in Bengal. With the foundation of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate this process of evolution in architecture gets further impetus, because the foundation of the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate in Bengal marked the end of its connection with Delhi. So they had to erect buildings of various types with the help of the local masons and materials. As a result, there developed a distinct phase of architecture which has been characterised as the Bengali Muslim architecture. The early Iliyās Shāhī architectural style demonstrates a reconciliation between the traditional Muslim features and the indigenous architectural elements. The Bengali masons and artisans followed the traditional Muslim features to erect the buildings in which they applied the local elements such as piers, curved cornice and the various types of ornamentation depicting local tradition and motifs in brightly expressive terracotta plaques. These local elements in effect turned the Muslim architecture of Bengal to be the Bengali Muslim architecture in the early Iliyās Shāhī period. The best specimen of the early Iliyās Shāhī style is the Adina Masjid at Ḥaḍrat Pāṇḍuā. The early Iliyās Shāhī style reached the final stage of its development during the period of Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh in the Eklākhi mausoleum.

Thus everything considered, the period of early Iliyās Shāhī rule in Bengal was a period of peace and prosperity when agriculture, industry, trade and commerce, and architecture made considerable progress and from whatever side we view it, the early Iliyās Shāhī Sultānate of Bengal appears to be a flourishing state.

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