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Cover Picture: The Birla House, Delhi, India where Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948; (Picture by Sachi G. Dastidar, December 2012)

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Availability:

ISPaD Office

85-60 Parsons Blvd

Jamaica

NY 11432

Phone: 917-524-0035

Email: ispad1947@gmail.com

Web: www.ispad1947.org

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Shuvo Dastidar
Ispad Project Coordinator

The Indian Subcontinent Partition Documentation (ISPaD) Project’s Third Conference was held at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Old Westbury on a beautiful, sunny, Long Island fall day of October 13, 2012. The conference was a part of campus’ annual homecoming-type event called Panther Pride, a panther being the mascot of Old Westbury campus.

The Conference began with a welcoming address by the Chair of the Executive Board, Distinguished Service Professor Dr. Sachi Dastidar, followed by a Keynote Address by a founding member of The ISPaD Project, Dr. Shefali Dastidar, a New York City urban planner. Mr. Len Davis, Vice President of SUNY, Old Westbury, stated briefly about ISPaD and Panther Pride’s main objectives. He also invited the participants for joining “Panther Week / Home coming” celebration at the campus.


On the occasion of the conference a journal – a first for ISPaD – was brought out by ISPaD Project that included articles by Dr. Sachi G. Dastidar, Dr. Saradindu Mukherji of India, Mr. Bimal Pramanik a Bangladesh freedom fighter now living in India, Professor Jill Hamberg of New York, among others, and messages sent by many individuals supporting the conference. Sessions were chaired by Dr. Caroline Sawyer, Dr. Perwiz Morewedge, Dr. Narayan Hegde, and Dr. Larry Krause. Lively discussions included not only Americans but also individuals with roots in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Guyana, Trinidad, Ireland and Persia. Several students of ISPaD Studies Club of SUNY Old Westbury worked hard to make the conference a success, among them were Lydia Coleman, Tara Campbell and Sunayina Yadav. The conference ended with an open-air lunch outside Campus Center Atrium. Many of the conference partici-
pants joined the rides, games and outdoor activities that were part of the Panther Pride Week.

Professor Dr. Perwaiz Morewedge, seated, getting ready to open the first session of the panel discussion, with Professor Sachi G. Dastidar, both of Old Westbury.

Mrs. Subhra Goswami, a teacher of New York High school, presenting her paper on music and dance. Absent in picture is her dance assistant Sweta Goswami.

Kashmiri Hindus are the original inhabitants of the Kashmir valley in India since its existence. Since late 1300s, these original inhabitants have gone through seven major forced exoduses, the most recent one in 1990, becoming a minority in their own land. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Islamic terrorism took deep roots in the valley of Kashmir and selectively targeted this indigenous minority. Hundreds of innocent Hindus were killed, which resulted in this community's mass exodus to the refugee camps in the plains of India. This forced exodus brought about loss of lives, livelihood, and most importantly their homeland. Those who survived the ethnic cleansing had to live in sub-human refugee camps, with limited to no electricity, clean water and access to health care. They suffered various post-traumatic health issues. Twenty three years later, the effects of being exiled from their homeland are still profound in this community. This research paper analyzes the effects of loss of homeland and forced displacement on health and wellness of Kashmir Hindu refugee community.

Kashmiri Hindus – Living In Exile; Effects of Ethnic Cleansing and Forced Displacement on Health & Wellness

Rashmi Koul

(A paper on this topic was presented at the 2012 Conference)
land of lakes, clear streams, green turf, magnificent trees and mighty mountains where the air is cool, and the water sweet, where men are strong, and women vie with the soil in fruitfulness.” (1)

Legend is that Kashmir valley was once a large mountainous lake and it was drained off by an ascetic named Kashypa, thus getting the name Kashmir. During 3rd century BC, emperor Ashoka introduced Buddhism into the Valley and by the 9th century AD, Kashmir had become the hub of Hindu culture and arts. In the 14th Century, Muslim invaders entered the Kashmir valley for the first time and ruled it for almost 500 years until it was annexed by Sikh rulers from Punjab in 1819. (2) Sikh rulers were followed by the Dogra (Hindu) rulers who continued to rule the state of Jammu & Kashmir until its accession to India in October of 1947, following partition of India.

The Kashmiri Hindu Brahmins, commonly known as Kashmiri Pandits, are the original inhabitants of the valley and have been living there from the time immemorial. Even though, it became a minority community of 700,000 people, its contribution in the fields of education, arts and culture, history, medicine and administration has been exemplary. (3) Notwithstanding the sustained persecution at the hands of Muslim rulers and numerous exoduses, Kashmiri Hindus have managed to keep their rich culture alive.

Ethnic Cleansing

During 600 years from 1389 to 1990, Kashmiri Hindus have been persecuted and ethnically cleansed from the valley at regular intervals. During this time, they have suffered seven major exoduses - each with its own story of horror and turmoil. (4) Several thousand Kashmiri Hindus were beheaded during these cruel times. Each Muslim ruler engineered a fresh wave of terror into the hearts of innocent Hindus. The most recent exodus happened during 1990. January 19, 1990, which is now known as Kashmiri Pandit Exodus Day, was the darkest night in the history of Kashmiri Hindus. That night, hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri Muslims came out on the streets and threatened Hindus by giving them 48 hours to leave the valley. In order to protect their womenfolk and honor, thousands of Hindus escaped that night to Indian plains. Within months, the minority population of 700,000 in the valley was reduced to few thousands. (5) Kashmiri Hindus were under the impression that it would be a temporary phase but it has been 23 years since that dreadful night. They are still longing to return to their homeland but until then they are suffering as refugees in their own country.

Methodology

A health and wellness study was conducted by interviewing 110 Kashmiri Hindus 54 female and 56 male, refugees currently residing in Jagti Township, located near Jammu in the State of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), India. Jammu is about 200 miles south of Kashmir valley, the original homeland of Kashmiri Valley Hindus. Jagti Township is the temporary abode of about 3000 refugee families. This township was constructed during 2010-2012 under the Indian Prime Minister's Rehabilitation and Return Package for the Kashmiri refugees. The sample size represented about 1% of the Township's total population. A detailed questionnaire was created and used for collecting the health and wellness data. The data compiled from the questionnaire was analyzed based on various categories including gender of the interview subjects.

Results

Following are the some of the key results regarding health and wellness of Kashmiri Hindu refugees living in Jagti Town-
ship in Jammu, J&K, India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Pressure</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Underweight</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sleep Disorder</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Normal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regular health check-ups</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of last health checkup for 53% respondents</th>
<th>&lt; 3 months</th>
<th>3-6 months</th>
<th>&gt; 6 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Conditions</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiac issues</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Conditions</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No known issues</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild health issues</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major health issues</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness Condition</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All the time</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling anxious</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having mood swings</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling nervous</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling depressed due to health issues</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Conditions</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fearful of future health issues</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health as a major concern in life</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Blood pressure data indicates that over a quarter of the Kashmiri Hindu refugee population (27%) has high blood pressure (hypertension) and 8% of the refugees have low blood pressure. Col-
lectively that is 35% of the population which is diagnosed with blood pressure issues. In comparison, only 23% of White people and Mexican-Americans and 32% of African-Americans have hypertension. (Burton, 2010)

Due to lack of access to balanced diet, 54% of the refugee population is underweight. In comparison, only 20% of males and 21% of females in the state of J&K are underweight. In whole of India, 28% of males and 33% of females are underweight [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_states_ranking_by_underweight_people]. This clearly shows that the abnormal rates of malnutrition among the refugee population are the direct result of forced displacement from their homeland. It also depicts the impact of lack of adequate economic opportunities on the health of refugees. One-fourth of the refugees reported that they have some kind of sleep disorder and are not getting adequate sleep. Lack of sleep is one of the major factors for ill health and can lead to various diseases like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, depression, ADHD etc. While 16% of the refugee population reported to have diabetes, 32% of the refugee population is either overweight or obese. These high ranges can be easily attributed to sleep deprivation and lack of balanced diet.

According to my survey 75% of the refugee population (61% female and 89% male) rate their medical condition as having mild health issues, while 17% of the population (26% female and 9% male) rate their medical condition as having major health issues. By any standards, these numbers are staggering. Even after two decades after displacement, a large percentage of refugee population is still suffering from mild to major health issues. 26% of females with major health issues is a matter of serious concern. This high percentage is also due to the fact that 85% of these females are unemployed. Most of these families who are still living in refugee camps originally belong to rural areas of the Kashmir Valley and were involved in agriculture-based employment. With forced displacement, they lost their lands as well as any source of livelihood. Unemployment while living as a refugee takes a huge mental and physical toll on humans, and the Kashmiri Hindu females are a prime example.

With regards to access to medical care, about 30% of the refugee population does not even know where to go in case of a medical emergency, our study shows. At present, there is no medical facility within the town.

Forced displacement and ethnic cleansing also impacts the behavioral aspects of human beings. 25-30% of the refugee population in the township feels anxious, nervous and depressed either all the time or most of the time. About 50% of refugee population has such feelings sometimes, study shows.

16% of the population says they are constantly depressed due to their health problems, while 15% say they feel depressed most of the time. Thus 33% of refugee people are depressed due to their health issues, which in today's age is a significant number.

On the economic front, 79% of the refugee population states that they have experienced fewer economic opportunities. This lack of economic opportunities and the resultant low income levels have also manifested itself in terms of ill health and wellness of refugee population. 95% of the refugees feel that they had to adjust to a new lifestyle, new culture, new foods, and new social network. This adjustment also took a heavy toll on the health of the KPs, especially the elders.

With regards to refugee children, 82% of children don't have a regular primary care pediatrician. With poor or no access to proper medical care and no regular
pediatrician, the future health of these children is at stake as well.

Even today after 23 years of displacement within their own country, 73% of the refugee population complains about poor access to medical care. Only 53% of the population goes for some kind of regular health check up and 29% of those 53% had not seen a doctor in more than 6 months.

Conclusion:
The results from this study depict significant correlations between the fact of forced displacement and the deteriorating health conditions of Indian Kashmiri Hindu refugees in India. 23 years of living as refugees after forced displacement has definitely taken heavy toll on the health and wellness of Kashmiri Hindu refugees. Even after two decades, a sizeable population is still enduring chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiac problems. Sociological fears about their future health, lack of economic opportunities, and forced isolation from family are still afflicting this minuscule community of refugees.

This study also reflects that not much has changed during last 23 years. A prior health study conducted 9 years ago in 2003, had reflected similar health and wellness conditions. At that time, Dr. Chowdhary in his report had said, "A whole community has aged prematurely. Multiple disease syndromes have overtaken most of them. Many have died prematurely, others are languishing...Common and uncommon diseases, new syndromes and unique and bizarre constellation of signs and symptoms, have all surfaced giving rise to a wide array of psychological syndromes and mental and physical diseases." (6)

Even though majority of refugees have now moved to different places within India and assimilated in new cultures and environs, there is a sizeable refugee population that is still living in horrid conditions in refugee camps and towns in Jammu, with no or very poor access to medical care. Adequate health care is not at all available for these refugees and that lack of proper medical care is clearly showing in the health and wellness data. The results clearly show that more than 90% of Kashmiri Hindu refugee community is still experiencing post-traumatic illnesses and suffering with mild to major health issues and sadly, future doesn't seem to bring any relief either.

Notes:
(3) ibid
(4) Seven Exoduses of Kashmiri Pandits http://ikashmir.net/exodus/
(5) ibid

Reference:

Coexistence with India

Mobarak Haider
Reporter, Dawn, Pakistan
Dawn, 5th February, 2013
Pakistan’s new army doctrine comes as good news for all who wish us well as a nation. For the first time in 65 years the army has shifted its focus from the eastern border to our internal enemy in the northwest. Let us hope it does not mean hands free for a crackdown on the Baloch (of Baluchistan Province, Pakistan), an issue that needs a political solution while harder military measures may result in deeper tragedies. Although, the army spokesman assured our lions and eagles that we shall keep India as our enemy no.1, yet the admission that the enemy within is more dangerous at the moment, may well prove to be a turning point in our history.

But we have to realize that the enemy within is not simply the non-state actors who have declared holy war on Pakistan; it is a special mindset that has created them and will continue to breed them in the future. It is this mindset which was discussed in detail in my book Tahzeebi Nargasiat and in subsequent writings, including my last blog. Facts and events of our history have shown that this mindset of pathological narcissism, of self-righteous self-love breeds a hundred tragedies till the society falls into paranoia and starts hurting itself and everything around it. What our army and government have now decided to fight is a threat not only to Pakistan but to the entire region’s peace. We have to combat that mindset and the forces that promote it, if we wish to survive as a state and society, whatever the amount of effort it may need, however painful the sacrifices it may demand. We cannot afford to fail, because such failure can empower nations of the region to intervene, exposing our land of anarchy to immense bloodshed and misery.

Unfortunately, the enemy within is the product of our obscure ambitions since 1947. It is of critical importance for us to understand why and how our establishment fed this monster for decades. We, the people, must know the truth if we wish to survive and grow. The dominant classes of Pakistan that demanded separation from the rest of India in 1947 were mainly the same who had ruled India under different Muslim dynasties. They were the landed aristocracy, “pirs” and ulema of different levels. They lost power to the British, but never gave up their claim over India. Some Muslims who served the British as civil servants and the army men also joined to share the ambition for power. Being small in number these groups, even with the support of the entire Muslim population of India could not hope to dominate a huge Indian population in a democratic system. Therefore, they aroused the Muslim masses to support their demand for a separate homeland, appealing to their religious pride and fear of persecution. Congress leaders and a large number of Muslims who chose to live as Indian citizens all exerted each nerve to show our Muslim league leadership that a religious approach to politics in a world of diverse religions and people will initiate disaster but the highly aroused fears of persecution decided our course; our self-image as a special community prevailed.

Faith is one thing while a profession of faith is quite another. Like all ruling elite of medieval ages, our Muslim rulers of India were down-to-earth, worldly men; but they professed Islam only to win the devout support of religious leadership. Religious leaders have also been equally great self-seekers. These two groups of dominant professionals colluded throughout history to rule simpler people with the tool of faith, not only in the Muslim kingdoms of India but everywhere else too. They were magicians and pharaohs in Egypt, Khashtris and Brahmins in India, kings and priests in Christian Europe and Caliph Kings and ulema of fiqh in the Arab Empire. This pattern
of power-sharing by the Muslim kings and ulema worked well in India. Shah Waliullah invited Abdali in that same capacity of a down-to-earth, power-sharing priest. This same formula created the present day kingdom of Saud where a tribal chief and a holy man struck a deal. Almost a similar deal created Pakistan where Quaid-e-Azam seems to have been just a brilliant lawyer whose job ended soon after the partition.

Independence comes as jubilation to a nation. But in 1947 it came with tragedies of separation and bloodshed to the subcontinent. India overcame many of her problems because its leaders depended not on a religious class but on democracy, where the army accepted its subordinate and supporting role, while politics and diplomacy made the main defense. In Pakistan, medieval concepts dominated instead. We had been perpetually indoctrinated to love the “mujahid” and the maulana. The ulema and religious parties immediately demanded a decisive role. Landed gentry found the ulema and the army as their best protectors. That perhaps explains why no land reform has damaged them to this day.

These two stake holders decided to promote each other as the champions of Islam, fighting the heretics of India as their core duty. The Kashmir problem existed only as a permanent excuse for arousing sentiment; it was never handled with the modern tools of effective diplomacy because a liberal, democratic India always found more friends against our ever deepened religious identity. Only one education was allowed and available to the nation: Fight India with the power of Islam. This brought absolute power to our GHQ and finally served American plans; the soldiers of Islam faithfully fought for America’s global supremacy, opening Pakistan’s doors to international holy warriors.

An army that assumes political power cannot remain a professional fighting force; our army gradually outsourced its fighting jobs in Kashmir and Afghanistan to civilian opportunists who were made dearer to us than our own kith and kin through Islamic sentiment. General Zia encouraged these violent hordes to make money through crime and drugs. That might have exposed them to international buyers with greater rewards than Pakistan could offer. Ambition to rule Pak-Afghania may have motivated them and, unfortunately, these non-state actors are not just a few rebels out there; they have a vast popular backing among our affluent middle classes.

With absolute lack of vision, our political and military leadership created a mindset which has no respect for systems of a modern state. The only authority that appeals to this mindset is the maulana (religious preacher) and the mujahid (religious warrior.) A very heartbreaking struggle awaits our lines of defense.

All medieval conquerors were basically predators; they lived at the cost of the people they conquered, appropriating their resources, which naturally antagonized the subject people. Muslim rulers, after the first four caliphs, used the Islamic doctrine of Zimmitude generally to their worldly benefit.

Rulers can win their subjects’ respect, even their affection, with their wisdom and justice. After many atrocities and crimes against their Indian subjects the British were able to leave India as almost friends, and no hostility exists today between them and their former subjects because their leaders and people confessed their crimes; they agreed to leave; and they left many gifts of value like modern learning, religious tolerance, systems of governance, constitutional democracy, science and technology. Unfortunately, unlike the colonial capitalists of Europe, our ancestors had very few
benefits to offer to their Zimmis in India which could endear them to their subjects. Added to it was the religious pride of our ulema that believed in the supremacy of Islam and flaunted it without a semblance of courtesy or hesitation. This only antagonized the subject people even more deeply and necessitated perpetual use of force to maintain Muslim rule. In order to nourish the fighting spirit of the soldiers and common Muslims, ever more pride of faith and ever deeper contempt for reason was injected into their psyche through the ulema and clergy. The principle of equal human treatment of the Muslims and non-Muslims remained alien to their rule.

The absence of positive performance was compensated with boastful pride of the ability to destroy. That is perhaps an inherited attitude when our orators in Pakistan proudly talk of what we destroyed: our ancestors destroyed Indian idols (statues of deities) and kings followed by the recent smashing of the peaceful Buddha; recently we destroyed the Soviet Union, we have pushed America to disaster, we shall destroy India, Europe and every system of “Jahiliah”, including our own systems and people in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This mindset hardly ever asks: what did we create or build?

We, as a nation, have gradually lost all respect for science and scientists; we have substituted research with conspiracy theories; we boast of our nuclear build-up, which is again an ability to destroy, not defend, an ability stolen from heretics without learning the science that creates it. This shortcut mentality, to escape science and invention, is an expression of our lazy, self-righteous pretensions. To bury the guilt, our power hungry ulema expects us to admire a scientist, a nuclear opportunist who admires the Taliban, and hate the real scientists of the world as heretics.

It is, therefore, natural for our people with this mindset to support the monster when it destroys Pakistan and the world with the banner of Islam in its hand. Self-righteousness is the dismissal of humility; it jams our ability to objectively appreciate merit, so that the virtue and merit of others never attracts our attention. Bragging of our own virtue and merit grows louder as our record of performance dips. This dichotomy of practice and pretension paralyses judgment and kills the resolve to make amends. Ever since Independence, our governments and army leaders propagated the easy excuse that India aspires to annex Pakistan to realise an ancient Hindu dream of “Greater India”. But was this view realistic? Is it an exclusively Hindu dream? The fact is: Muslim rulers and the ulema also desired Greater India. They had endeavored hard for centuries to rule the whole of India; many times in these seven centuries they tried to hold Afghanistan with one hand while holding Bengal with the other. Ever since 1947, our generals and leaders have tried to grab Afghanistan and hold Bengal by force. Our lions and eagles still dream to destroy Bharat and make it a Muslim colony again.

Thus, it was natural for the ancient people of the subcontinent to dream of a united India even if it was no more possible. Long before the Muslim conquerors, India had Ashoka, Kanishka and Harshwardhana who ruled large parts of India with no less glory than the Muslims did. It was hardly anything abnormal if some nostalgic sons of the soil wished to restore their past glory in their own land, while the majority did not share the dream. Hindus have lived in this land for more than 4000 years with a deep sense of belonging. On the contrary, our Muslim ancestors came 1000 years ago and did not develop a sense of belonging. They did not assimilate or integrate with
the people they ruled, keeping their identity as foreigners, with loyalty to the holy lands of Arabia. The British also ruled as foreigners but they did not demand a part of India like we did; they agreed to leave India while we did not, although we declared that we were not Indians. Our self-righteousness so limits our sense of justice that what we practice with great pomp and show, seems hateful to us if others desire it.

Justice and honesty demand that facts be examined before we accept or reject a claim. The facts did not verify the claim that India aspired to annex Pakistan or a part of it. Although a limited right wing of Indian politics threatened to avenge the wrongs of history, yet that mood never dominated India. On the contrary our opinion makers and the ulema on this side of the border kept pushing up on mass level the hype to conquer Kashmir and hoist our flag over the “Red Fort”.

It is difficult in Pakistan to state the fact that India did not annex Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka or another dependent country. It did not annex Bangladesh which achieved its separation from Pakistan purely with Indian Army action. The wars which we claimed as Indian aggression on our eastern border were later exposed as our own initiation. These are facts that embarrass our claims of persecution.

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Raja Ram Mohon Roy and Arnos Vale Cemetery of Bristol, England

Dr. Sachi G. Dastidar
SUNY, Old Westbury; & Indian Subcontinent Partition Documentation Project
(From empireslastcasualty.blogspot.com/; 2013)
For a long time we wanted to visit the Samadhi of Ram Mohon Roy (also Raja Ram Mohan Roy or Rajah Rammohun Roy; 1772-1833) and pay homage to the great man. While living in Dublin, Ireland my wife Shefali and I decided to fly across the Irish Sea and visit the grave in Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol. Ram Mohon is considered by many as the Father of Indian Renaissance, the Father of Bengal Renaissance, the Father of the Idea of Modern India, Founder of the Brahmo Samaj reformed religion in Hinduism which espoused casteless, gender equal, monotheistic, services in vernacular languages that people can understand easily and formless religion many of which are now part and parcel of modern Hindu practices. He also fought against many taboos, social ills and orthodoxy of the time. Ram Mohon was influenced by the liberal thinking of the Unitarian Church.

Arnos Vale is quite close to the train station, actually within walking distance of less than a kilometer on your left as you exit the train station. Two bus routes connect the cemetery, or one can take a taxi which takes no more than three minutes at a huge cost. Ram Mohon’s cemetery is barely 100 yards from the entrance as you turn right towards the Speilman Centre.

Among all the cemetery architecture with crosses and headstones Ram Mohon’s stands out distinctively as a Hindu shrine. Arnos Vale Cemetery Guidebook writes, “An extremely influential religious and political thinker, he coined the word ‘Hinduism’ as a term for diversity of Indian religions and wrote extensively on religious and social matters. He stressed the importance of education for Indians, campaigned for women’s rights and worked to end the traditional practice of sati, the burning of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands… “This rare and beautiful tomb is now a listed monument and has long been a place of pilgrimage for Bengalis and Indians. It was repaired and conserved in 2008 using money donated to the Arnos Vale Trust by busi-
nessman Aditya Poddar.” (p 35)

The Cemetery has a nice park-like setting with flowering trees and paths for walking and biking. There are chapels and lodges among the beautiful monuments in the Cemetery. Now in the Speilman Centre there are exhibition, information as well as a nice restaurant. At the East Lodge there is a souvenir center selling cards and publications dedicated to Arnos Vale and more. As it is expensive to maintain such a large property in the middle of the city, the owner of the property proposed to sell it to developers. To keep the property as a national heritage area citizens have formed Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust and Friends of Arnos Vale to raise funds and protect the property. They have to raise one million British pounds to achieve their goal. CEO of the organization is Juliette Randall. Anyone wishing to donate money, buy their publication or receive their newsletter may contact Your.ArnosVale@arnosvale.org.uk, or call (44) 0117-971-9117 or check the web at www.arnosvale.org.uk. In 2013 Mrs. Contractor, widow of an Indian Parsee sat on the board of Arnos Vale.

Impact of Partition on Culture and Faith in Punjab: The Case of a Muslim Saint Who Endures

Dr. Caroline Sawyer,
Professor, Department History & Philosophy, SUNY Old Westbury

Historical sources document that in the nineteenth century--and probably long before--large numbers of people identifying as Sikhs and Hindus customarily visited the shrine of a Muslim saint, together with Muslims. The saint, possibly a historical figure who lived around the 12th or 13th century C.E., was named Sayyid Ahmad. But tradition has bestowed on him a number of popular epithets including La’lanwale (“Bearer of rubies”) Lakh-data (“Giver of lakhs”—that is, hun-
dreds of thousands, presumably units of wealth), and Sakhi Sarwar (1). The saint’s tomb and main shrine are located in the southwestern part of Punjab, just outside of the city of Dera Ghazi Khan, now in Pakistan. Before the saint settled there, the area around it was known as Nagaha; subsequently it was known after him, as Sakhi Sarwar (2).

Prior to the Partition of India, devotees of this basically Punjabi saint were able to move freely from their dwelling places to his shrine for observance of the saint’s urs (anniversary of a Muslim saint’s death). The Partition of Punjab—a province of British India united by language and geography—was to designed to separate the region into a Muslim-majority region in what became Pakistan and a Sikh majority region on the Indian side (3). The new boundary between nations disrupted many important trans-Punjab
pilgrimages, of Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims. Travel for ceremonies such as Sakhi Sarvar’s urs at Dera Ghazi Khan, which were trans-sectarian as well, became virtually impossible.

Based on these facts, it might appear that the Partition put an end to a remarkably pluralistic tradition. Evidence for the history of Sakhi Sarwar devotion suggests that the reality is more complicated. On the one hand, devotion to the saint by Sikhs and Hindus has not entirely died out; one the other, the process of stifling it in the cause of sectarian “orthodoxy” began before Partition. Without doubt, however, Partition accelerated a process of sectarianism that had begun with British rule. That process, integrally linked with modernization, has had significant, and often negative, consequences for rural populations on both sides of the divide: Pakistani Punjab as in Indian.

Documentation for the cult of Sakhi Sarwar comes from two main types of sources. First, several British officials of the 19th and early 20th century, described what they witnessed in the society of people they governed. One, a military officer, wrote in 1911: “The greatest shrine in the Western Punjab is that of Sakhi Sarvar…. Men, women, and children, Sikhs, Hindus, and Mohammedans alike, come from all Districts in the Punjab. There are traditions to suit each, and all are welcomed by the Mohammedan [i.e., Muslim] servants of the shrine.” 4

The other set of sources for the appeal of the cult comes from its antagonists. The Singh Saba movement of Sikhism, beginning in the latter part of the 19th century, sought to define and propagate Sikhism as a faith with clear boundaries, distinct from Hinduism. From the movement, even more narrow definitions of Sikh identity were promulgated in the name of Tat Khalsa: “true Khalsa/ Sikh faith.” In his book Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition, Harjot Oberoi, who terms the Singh Saba’s mission, and subsequently Tat Khalsa, “neo-Sikhism,” discusses in detail the movement’s origins as a response against the proselytizing of British Christian missionaries. Oberoi observes that Tat Khalsa propaganda particularly condemned Sikh veneration of Sakhi Sarvar: The most notable features of popular religion in mid- [19th century] Punjab….were: a repertoire of ubiquitous saints, pervasive beliefs concerning benign and malevolent spirits, witchcraft, divine intercession, the ability of saints long dead to work miracles, the heeding of omens and the boons that were believed to result from making a pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint. It hardly comes as a surprise that one of the first cultural conventions to come under fire from Sikh reformers was the widespread practice of worshipping popular saints like Sakhi Sarvar….5

While researching Hindu traditions of the foothills of the Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, this writer came upon a shrine that suddenly opened a door onto the living tradition of Sakhi Sarwar’s trans-sectarian worship. In a book on popular forms of worship connected with the Hindu deity Shiva, Ron Geaves describes a pilgrimage circuit that is popular among certain Hindu priests in the United Kingdom. (6) What Geaves terms a Punjabi “Tirtha Yatra” route links sites that are all in Himachal Pradesh. Most are Hindu—although Sikhs can and often do visit some of them. (7) One, Dera Baba Wadbagh is primarily Sikh. The other shrine, Shri Pir Nagaha, is Muslim, but only nominally so. The sacred focus of the complex is a Muslim tomb, and green flags fly over the complex, signaling Islam. But as Geaves describes, elements of Hindu and Sikh tradition are so interwoven that it is difficult to characterize the devotions by any
single identity.

Who is this local saint around whom such heterodox devotion has evolved? Two types of evidence confirm the identification that Geaves asserts: Shri Pir Nagaha is Sakhi Sarvar. One, iconography, is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail. In summary, there are at least three standard types of depictions of of saint, all of which come together at the Himachali shrine. (8) The second is the name “Nagaha,” referring to the former toponym of the final home the quasi-historical saint, now in Pakistan, and the site of his primary tomb. (9)

It is unlikely that the location of the shrine has any connection, historic or legendary with Sakhi Sarvar at all. As opposed to the plains below, there is virtually no history of any Sufi presence in the Himalayan foothills of Punjab/Himachal. Putting these facts together leads to the rather remarkable conclusion that people created the Himachal shrine to fill a need. The saint known as Sakhi Sarvar was given a new name, to link the newer shrine to the first one that became inaccessible to pilgrims from the eastern side with Partition. Did the alternative shrine exist before the Partition? Possibly, if Sikh and Hindu devotees of the saint felt a need for a pilgrimage and festival site closer to home. (10)

Of the primary Sakhi Sarvar pilgrimage site, now in Pakistan, Geaves observes: “This location still retains its historic Hindu and Sikh mausoleums as described by Oberoi’s sources but the shrine is now visited only by Muslims and has been Islamized losing its vernacular associations with Punjabi eclecticism except for the memorials of a previous existence.”

It would surely be interesting, if difficult, to visit that shrine to judge the extent to which the traditional pluralistic culture does prevail. To whatever extent it does, the term “Islamized” seems somewhat misleading. If Sikhs were to refrain from visiting one the Shakti peeths of the foothills, Naina Devi, for example, might be said to be “Hinduized.” But a conscious agenda would require evidence beyond absence of non-Hindus. Since the publication of Geaves’s book, Muslim devotees of Sakhi Sarvar have suffered terribly for the cause of “Islamization.” In April of 2011, during the urs ceremonies, suicide bombings killed 42 devotees and wounded nearly 100 more. An Islamist group, Tahrik-e Taliban-e Pakistan, claimed responsibility. (12)

The Partition of Punjab did indeed involve conscious agenda of dividing former neighbors from one another according to objectified sectarian identities. As a result of that political, poorly planned and hastily implemented decision, millions of people lost their lives, from all three thus-defined groups, on both sides of the divide. Anna Bigelow, in a study of Maler Kotla in the eastern Punjab, examines the histories that Sikhs and Muslims there have woven together, to explain and perpetuate their remarkably peaceful coexistence before and after Partition. In summary, she observes, “The narratives are one means of symbolically reversing the process of Partition, of reweaving what was torn apart. The anxiety and destabilization of 1947 left scarred and fragmented people who were unable to account for their neighbors and their own actions during the transition. [The mytho-historical stories about Malerkotla’s sacred history] and Partition are symbolic refusals of the division of India and the division of Punjabi culture, and they establish the frame of peaceful interreligious relations through which Malerkotla’s experience is interpreted.” (13)

Although less coherent and less known than the traditions of Malerkotla, a similarly creative and life-affirming response to division may be seen in the shrine of
Shri Pir Nagaha, as the eastern Punjab’s apparently recreation of a pilgrimage destination that is now lost. A popular name for the region around the shrine, Dev Bhumi—adopted by a local cement company, no less—can mean either “Land of God,” or “Land of Gods.” Immersing herself in the landscape, even a visitor from a rationalistic culture might envision the possibility of new gods arising from the land— Why not? Why not, then, a deity who could bring faithful people from many communities together? Why not one who could heal the wounds? (14)

Notes:

(1) The meaning of this last title, perhaps the most popular, is not clear. In both Hindi and Punjabi, sakhi means “witness” or “testimony,” with particular resonance in Sikhism, where the term is used for scriptural stories about the Gurus. Sarvar seems to be Punjabi, meaning “sword,” or perhaps “blessing.” Either “Testimony of the Sword” or “Testimony of Blessing” could make sense, given beliefs and iconography connected with the saint.

(2) The main contemporary source for traditions about the saint’s life and cult is Oberoi, Construction of Religious Boundaries, pp. 147-160, discussed below. Oberoi refers to the location of Nagaha near Dera Ghazi Khan on pages 149 and 151.

(3) Punjab in India is often reflexively understood to be “a Sikh state,” but there is still a substantial population of Hindus, with the Census of India in 2001 recording well over one-third. History and demographics of the eastern (Indian) Punjab’s partition are complicated by its division in 1966 into what are now three states: two with Hindi as the official language--Himachal Pradesh and Haryana—and Punjab state, the only part of historic and cultural Punjab to have Punjabi as its official language.


(6) Ron Geaves, Saivism in the Diaspora: Contemporary Forms of Skanda Worship Oakville CT: Equinox, 2007. (Print). In Chapter 8, pp. 150-172, Geaves describes the shrine under discussion here, as well as eight other destinations on the circuit. Shah Talai, the Hindu shrine on the circuit that is of most relevance to the book’s arguments receives treatment in a separate chapter, pp. 135-149.

(7) Himachal Shrines that Sikhs are particularly inclined to visit, are in the writer’s experience, the Shakti peeths: ancient sites of Goddess worship: notably Naina Devi and Jwalamukhi and probably also Shah Talai. Far from all Sikhs distinguish themselves from Hindus in appearance, so it is difficult to determine constituencies—as well as somewhat counter to an appreciation of pluralism.


(9) In summarizing Sayyid Ahmad’s life, pp. 155-156, Geaves follows Oberoi’s account in Construction of Religious Boundaries p. 149, almost point for point. He errs, however, in replacing Oberoi’s “in Dera Ghazi Khan district” as the location of Nagaha with “in Una district,” without any evidence. Further on, Oberoi clearly confirms that the Nagaha connected with the saint is in Pakistan (p. 151). As to the apparent problem of two different tombs for one saint, Geaves provides the reasonable reassur-
ance that this doubling is hardly unusual in popular Muslim saint-worship (pp. 156-157).

(10) The role that the saint plays in the lives of Muslims in the Indian Punjab requires further study. A tract on Punjabi Muslim saints, in Urdu, is available in Indian Punjab, in mosques and at urs gatherings. Bagh-e Avliya-ye Panjab [“The Garden of Saints of Punjab”] includes a short entry on Sayyid Ahmad/La’lanwale Pir on page 233, noting that his shrine is now in Pakistan.

(11) Geaves, op. cit., p. 156.


(14) Colleagues who have greatly assisted me in grasping Punjabi cultures are Sandeep Singh, at SUNY/ Old Westbury, and Shinder Thandi, of Coventry University in the U.K. I am especially grateful to Distinguished Professor Sachi G. Das-tidar for encouraging my research and that of others who work to keep memory of Partition and its consequences alive and in scholarly focus.

Bibliography


Liberation War and identity crisis of Bangladeshi Muslims

Bimal Pramanik
Director, Centre for Research in Indo-Bangladesh Relations, Kolkata, India; a former Deputy Commander of Southwest Sector, Bangladesh Liberation Mukti Bahini (Force), 1971

Suddenly a movement organized by some patriotic bloggers and online activists’ network inspiring the history of massacre during liberation war after a judgment came out in early February, 2013 of a known war criminal (Razakar). It is a patriotic movement and pro-liberation people in general are supporting it. But failures of the govt. during last four years tenure have been diluted by this movement. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Bangladesh Jamat-e-Islam (BJI) and other opposition parties have failed to explain the issue to public through their militant activities against the government rather they were involved
in minority repression, arson and subversive activities against the state. 

In recent time an idea is afloat that a cultural polarization is going on in Bangladesh due to ‘trail of war criminal’ in the country. But it is observed that, basically it is a kind of political polarization which is based on liberation war of 1971. Ruling Awami League (AL) led front has been trying to nurture and develop a kind of so-called Bangla culture. It has tried to adjust with the present constitution. In spite of that a few cultural organizations have been trying to develop a liberal Bangla culture, but they have not much influence in society and country. Liberal Bangla culture is nothing but an elite culture which is limited to a small urban middle class circle. (1) Immediately after independence of Bangladesh, practice of Islamic culture engulfed Muslim society and scope of liberal Bengali culture was almost confined within a selected circle. Pakistani Islamic ideals regain its strength in newly independent Bengali Muslim society at a slow but steady pace. Now is it possible to transform this society within a very short period? Apart from that, qualitative pro-Islamic changes have taken place in the field of history, literature and culture. How can it be possible to re-establish the secular ideals of liberation war in the society through a few weeks’ emotional movements by students and youths? It is a hard task to take any initiative to re-establish 1972 constitution for any parliamentary party, due to the politics of votes, who claim them to be so called liberal and secular. A large number of students are coming out from madrasas and studying in colleges and universities. BNP is openly sided with them. So this struggle will continue between liberal and hard-core Islamists and this will be in political, social and religious areas.

When I was a student of Rajshahi University I saw very few people in the prayer room, in hall or in university mosque in 1972-73. There was no zeal of religion at that time. But in present Bangladesh, two parallel cultural streams exist, one based on modern cultural life and thinking and other soaked with medieval Islamic fanatic culture. It is clearly seen in the school-madrassas, college-universities and also in national life. So are these two cultural factions of Islamic faith tendentious towards a clash? I think, reality is, AL and liberal democratic forces are not free from this probable politico-cultural clash. Shahabag movement was only a prelude to this possibility. (3)

During Bangladesh liberation war in 1971 not only Jamat was involved in war crimes. Pakistan Muslim League, Pakistan Democratic Party and Nezami Islam were also opposed to liberation struggle and collaborated with military junta of Pakistan. Most of the Peace Committees
were formed by the Muslim League leaders and a good number of Razakar members came from those parties. At that time Muslim League was more organized and powerful than the Jamat. All those parties were involved in looting, raping, killing and other criminal activities. But people were astonished when Jamat planned to eliminate so called pro-liberation intelligentsia on 14 December, 1971 at Dhaka. It was a big conspiracy against new Bangladesh. It is unforgettable to the nation. After independence, Jamat gradually gathered strength with the help of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Informed people opine that both economic and organizational power of Jamat is now stronger than BNP. BNP and Jamat are hand in gloves in Bangladesh politics.

Some major demands of Shahbag movement (4) are: a) procedure must be started to ban BJI within 26 March, 2013; b) forming independent commission to investigate economic resources of BJI who were involved in war crimes; c) War crime Tribunal must be permanent in nature for continuing the speedy process of judgment; i.e., students and youths of Shahbag are demanding justice of war criminals (Razakars etc.) of BJI. But BJI is not alone; they are one of the constituents of 18 party Islamic alliances of which BNP is a main partner. Now Shahbag movement has come face to face with anti-liberation and pro-Islamic forces. Questions are coming from different quarters, will this anti-BJI movement continue in the country and BJI be weakened and isolated? In that case, anti-govt. sentiment will be diluted further and AL may be benefited from public opinion in the next election. On the other hand, if demands of Gonojagaran maunch (Shahbag) not fulfilled, students and youths may take stand against the government in future. So government is careful to handle this movement of Shahbag. Although govt. is taking hard stand to continue war criminal trials which most of the people of B’desh are expecting. ‘Expression of Indian support for the Shahbag Square will only complicate Sheikh Hasina’s task. India can help best by expediting the proposed South Asian market and promoting the measures needed to draw Bangladesh into a growth triangle that encompasses the northeastern states and the Bay of Bengal region. India must be seen as the friend of all Bangladeshis not just a particular lobby. Bangladeshis alone can resolve the dilemma-- if one exists-- of their Bengali and Muslim identities.’ (5)

Notes:
(2) Op. cit, p-93
(3) Bimal Pramanik, Mukta Bangladesh Ruddha Bangladesh, (Free Bangladesh, Closed Bangladesh) Patralekha, Kolkata, 2011, p-113
(4) Ittefaq, a daily Bangla newspaper, Dkaka, 22.02.2013

Education of Muslim Women in Colonial Bangla Literature

Dr. Swarochish Sarker
Professor, Institute of Bangladesh Studies, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

It deserves attention as to the Bengali Muslim writers of the last half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century and their attitudes towards female education. In this connection, their short stories and novels have been taken under our consideration. Indian Renaissance, that brought manifold awareness to Muslim society of then Bengal, was obviously a delayed manifestation. The
manifold changes and awareness that resulted from female education were immensely inspired and enhanced with the instances taken from Hindu society. But a significant and underlying distinction could be apprehended since the necessity of female education for Muslim women was at the first hand felt by the Muslim women themselves.

The Muslim elite namely Nawab Abdul Latif and his contemporaries found it little inconsistency with the upper class Muslim girls’ having no access to institutional education due to religious disapproval until Fayjunnesa Chowdhurani had established an English High School for girls in Comilla at her own fund in 1873. (1) However, she did not remain content with this achievement only as her aims eventually extended to educating both boys and girls equally. In 1899, Syed Amir Ali appeared to be the first Muslim male who echoed the same as Fayjunnesa. At a Mohammedan conference, he said that female education should run parallel to male education. (2) After this, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, who emerged out as a social worker, a writer, a social reformer, could not only enterprise this view but also publicize it with utmost importance. Following her, a pool of male writers too strode well ahead supporting female education on that time.

It is Mir Mosharraf Hossain who had been found to repent observing the poor condition of women having no education before Begum Rokeya put her own in this regard. In Gazi Miyar Bastani [Baggage of Gazi Mia] (1899), he asserted with great sorrow that there were no such stupid, ignorant, and naïve women in any nation but the Muslims. How deplorable and hapless the life of a woman can be without education has rightly been depicted by Mosharraf Hossain as he wrote:

“Muslim women here do not have any way out either to get or practice education and widen the horizon of knowledge; they do not possess any capability of distinguishing between bad and good; no prudence to walk across the world putting aside all the chaos and conspiracies prevailing here, no capacity to discard the unreal distinguishing between what real is and what not; they do not have any idea of finding either a friend or a foe, no rationality against distinguishing between honest and dishonest doings; even they do not posses such a simple mathematical knowledge of what would be the result of an ‘addition of five to seven.’” (3)

Observing the deplorable condition, Mosharraf Hossain initiated measures towards educating his second wife, Bibi Kulsum. Consequently, she managed to learn reading books and writing letters within one year. Women in the Muslim society were deprived of the bliss that the educated ones could express their feelings to their husbands. Such an observation could rightly inspire Kulsum Bibi, the beloved wife of Mosharraf Hossain, to pass a comment as follows:

“Alas! A Muslim woman holds such a fate that she cannot express any state of her mind to her husband according to her will. She has no way but flatters the outsiders. She finds nothing more troublesome but have her letters to her husband written by others. Words of mind could not be expressed through speech,—unthinkable to say those to others—then what to be written, what to be said… “ (4)

Being an educationist and a leader of women liberty, Rokeya Shakhaoyat Hossain chose the arena of literature to express her views and opinions. Matichur (1905), a collection of her essays and short stories, appeared to be her first endeavour in literature. The attitude of males towards contemporary female education was highly criticized in one of her
essays entitled ‘Degradation of Women.’ She found this resentment against female education resulted from the prevailing superstitions in society. Hence, her standpoint against the so-called complaints against female education was apt and she confronted them obviously with a logical fashion. She explained:

“Our society apologizes hundreds of faults of the uneducated women without hesitation, but in the case of ordinarily educated women, though there be hardly any fault, the society manifests those so called faults hundreds of times and establishes those as the wretched impact of female education. Then there were hundreds of voices chorusing and teasing with — ‘Salute to Female Education!’” (5)

If there be at all any aims at developing the society, merely arranging meetings or developing organizations would not suffice; the activities and the ideologies of those organizations in favor of female education should have been rightly incorporated.

Wishing a Successful Conference

Narain & Bhag
Naraindas Kataria
New York

To make the matter be realized, Rokeya put the metaphor from ‘Ali Baba and Forty thieves’ before us. Her ‘Sisem Fank’ (1918) tells us the story of Kasem who came to know about the secret treasury of the robbers from his brother Ali Baba and got into there chanting the magical phrase ‘Sisem Fank’. But finding the strings of pearls inside he forgot the magical formula ‘Sisem Fank’ to reopen the gate and died at the hand of the robbers. Rokeya’s metaphor proves to be apt here in this connection as the frequent and innumerable meetings arranged and led by the then Muslim society could lead them way to the secret treasury but could not free them from the captivity that had clutched them already. As a matter of fact, Rokeya could well understand to what extent an uneducated woman could do harm to the society since she did never have education on her own health, baby care, managing the households, control the child death and strove to put all these incongruities before the society. Clutching the point of Muslim child death, Rokeya put further importance on the needs of female education drastically on the plea that it could the Muslim women save at least their heredity.

Rokeya’s thoughts in this connection transmitted to some of her other short stories. In ‘Solar Sphere’ Gaohar, a gentleman educated in modern education went to visit Darjeeling with his wife and nine daughters. The maternal uncle of the girls named Jafar was with them. The writer portrays Jafar as an opposition to female education. He intends, Gaohar’s daughters will not receive any education. Gaohar stands against Jafar’s views on female education and tries to convince him as he criticizes his nieces’ attachment to poetry. Gaohar sets various references from religion with a view to establishing a non-conflicting; rather a co-existing relationship between the two. He says:

Wishing a Successful Conference

K. V. JAIRAM
Attorney at Law & English Barrister
Practice also includes: Personal Injuries, Wills/Estates, Matrimonial.

189-15 Jamaica Avenue, Hollis, NY 11423
Tel: 18-470-8019/Fax 718-740-8029
kvjairampc@aol.com
“Who’s Who in American Law”
How does poesy stand against religion? The more the creation of God is revealed, the more devotion to Him is enhanced. How would God be revealed to us if the creations of Him are not conceived clearly through our sense perceptions? (6)

Gohar also refutes Jafar’s suspicion that the educated girls may be converted to Christianity. Gohar opines, if the girls practice religion knowing its truer meaning, there might be no least possibility of being lost—religion.

In the short story ‘Fruit of Wisdom’ Rokeya shows utmost boldness. It is true, in her writings sometimes incongruities are apparent in terms of religious allusions or interpretations. Somewhere her approaches seem to be religion friendly, somewhere she is very much inconsistent with religious thoughts or ideologies. (7) These incongruities can be exemplified through the ‘Fruit of Wisdom.’ At the beginning of this fiction, the tale of Adam and Eve descended from heaven is portrayed somewhat different from that of the Koran or the Bible. She acknowledges this change in a footnote. (8) However, this type of literary freedom towards bringing some changes is apparent in the epic Meghnadbadhakabya (1861) (Killing of Megnadh) by Michael Madhusudan Dutt who has presented the original tale from a different point of view. Rokeya launches Eve’s temptation to Adam towards taking the ‘forbidden fruit’ in such a way that refutes the traditional views that define the event to be a blunder one. On the other hand, she acclaims it to be ‘a glorious attempt’ since here she finds women’s credit having their connection and rudimentary contribution towards knowledge. Rokeya’s derogatory depiction of the magnificent heaven to be an unpleasant and independent one indeed manifests her unparalleled boldness. Here Rokeya depicts how Adam is taking the fruit of wisdom being tempted by Eve:

“Adam also got enlightened after he had taken the scarps of food offered by his wife. Then he started to feel his own miserable condition from the core of his heart. — Is it the Heaven? A lazy life voids of love and deeds—is it the happiness of the Heaven? Then he found him to be a royal-prisoner having no power stepping out even an inch beyond the boundary of the Eden-garden. He lives in a Palace, built of gold and silver bricks and decorated with pearls and coral dusts but he posses not a pinch of it, — not even a piece of cloth. What sort of royal dish is this? The ignorant-bred bliss then collapsed down — there emerged out the awakening of knowledge eventually.” (9)

Rokeya attempts here a symbolic tale. She uses various allusions, images, symbols etc., towards describing a world where women are deprived of the fruit of knowledge by the descendants of Adam and the ultimate result of this deprivation—extreme sufferings, chaos, confusion and chain of independence upon human race. However, a savior appears in guise of a monk at last in Kanakdwip, the dwelling place for the offspring of Adam. Paying most importance, the monk brings back our conscience and makes us cautious vowing: “Be careful! Never deprive girls from education! You must remember that women have complete right to the wisdom fruit brought by them!”

What stories Rokeya endeavored with a view to establishing women education in Muslim society, could obviously be considered as a threat. If women were not educated, they might have been converted to Christianity in some occasions denouncing their own religion. Such a motif is portrayed in ‘Nurse Nelly’ (1921). A careful study of the story conveys such an impression to readers’ thoughts as the authoress is determined to prove that the Muslim woman Nayima has been converted to Christianity as a consequent of having no proper education. It is assumed
that Rokeya intended to motivate the religion prone Muslim community for female education demonstrating such an example before them. She says boldly:

“The truth will reveal inevitably, despite all of the efforts given, long terms propaganda produced by the men who are standing against female education. Education is for all irrespective of male and female. Can any anyone avoid using fire as it can burn the house by accident?” (10)

Rokeya imparted almost an identical issue in an essay in 1931 A.D. Here she asserts her apprehension on men’s possibility of converting to Christianity on the plea of having no woman blessed with education. Drawing a reference from a reliable source in this article, Rokeya mentions thus:

“Several young fellows from upper class Muslim society are publishing advertisement in the newspapers declaring that they will not get married with those brides having no graduations. If there be no such brides in Muslim society, they will rather convert themselves to Christianity.” (11)

Ismail Hossain Siraji was always very much conscious of female education in spite of his having noticeable variations towards other issues on women. If his female characters are analyzed with special care, it gets radiant, to what extent his attachment towards female education was. The historical female characters depicted by Siraji exhibit their excellence in martial affairs along with the knowledge on poetry, music, etc. In his novel Raynandini (1916) [Daughter of the King] the heroine Swarnamayi is found to reciting poems in Farsi. (12) It is at the same novel, Isa Khan’s sister Fatema, a twelve years old teen, appears playing on sitar and singing gazals in such a way as gives us an impression that Siraji was in favor of women’s learning of religious creeds, music etc., from their teen. To establish his standpoint in this regard, Siraji however shows instances from the history of Islam; cites references from the Ketabal Aghani and the Ebne Khaldun. In a footnote he expounds that practicing music among the Arabian women had been a long tradition. He also mentions, Bibi Fatema, the mother of the world, was very much proficient in music. Thus, Siraji shows an obvious affinity to what mentioned above while portraying the character of Firoza as a knowledgeable woman in his novel Firoza Begum (1923). (13) Siraji’s heightening fondness of female education is vivified as he endeavored a distinct collection of essays on this, entitled Strishiksha (1908) [Female Education].

In another novel entitled Bankimduhita (Daughter of Bankim), Sheikh Muhammad Idris Ali (1917) portrays both Hindu and Muslim girls are reading newspapers, little is known about their schooling. (14) The way, Idris Ali makes the teens accustomed to reading newspaper supports us assuming that he used to believing in providing the girls such staff an education that could suffice them reading newspapers regularly. However, he is more signifying and radiant in demonstrating his notion in Adarsha Grihini (1947) [Ideal Housewife]. The preface of this book clearly explicates the necessity of female education:

“Towards developing a nation, heightening it to be a greater and an ideal standpoint female education is no less necessary than that of the male. That female education along with the male one is a must is approved by the teaching of the Koran and Hadith. … it is a matter of great shame and sorrow till today that we could not comprehend the meaning of it. Though we have strict order for educating our female sect that is our mothers and sisters, we have been pushing them to a dark captivity. More than 99% of our women cannot see the light of educa-
Asraf, an educated deputy, in Kazi Abdul Oadud’s short story, grasps the necessity of female education. In the story entitled ‘Asraf Hossain’, Mr. Asraf, the hero, is noticed to teach his wife in house. It is simply comprehensible that an illiterate girl never matches with a higher educated employed husband. In pertinence to this observation, the writer might have passed on his opinions in favor of female education.

Mohammed Lutfar Rahman on the other hand could not remain satisfied keeping female education merely confined in husbands’ services. Along with general education, he was in favor of providing vocational education for female. Lutfar Rahman therefore tried to uphold his thoughts through many of his writings. In his novel Rayhan (1919), the protagonist Rayhan is worried of the adversity, misery and misfortune of women. He realized in what manner ignorance, superstitions, haplessness, poverty etc., turn our women to the beast. Hence, the presence of the writer can be frequently perceived through the arguments disseminated by Rayhan, Karima and Karima’s father in a meeting arranged towards establishing a school for female education. Rayhan even gives pleas of religion while establishing his arguments in favor of female education. Karima though talks keeping behind the curtain, she argues against the blunder of confinement and fake shyness as they impede learning. Besides, her diction namely, ‘dignity of the individual’ while she was speaking deserves mention. However, what Karima’s father argues, indeed seems to most courageous and clear. He focuses on the main reasons behind female education and establishment of schools outstandingly. He continues since woman is to live with man, she requires attaining the qualities that can ensure her a state of equity; otherwise there will come no change in her fate.

In a novel entitled Pathhara (1919) [Wayward], Saraju advocates for establishing the same kind of vocational schools too. She clearly claims that the school founded on her donation will ensure some vocational trainings namely sewing, wooden work etc. (18) Muhammad Yasin while emphasizing on female education in his novel Swargodyan (1919) [Garden of Heaven] raises questions on the good education of children. Therefore, his hero Hamid echoes him:

“It is our women who impart such an education that brings blessings for all. But can there remain any hopes lefts where no difference is found between the life of a woman and a beast? …the objective of marriage is not only to fulfill the biological urges like an animal, but to raise and rear up an honest, valiant and dutiful son. Hence, it is nothing but a reverie expecting a honest, gallant, and dutiful son for the country where both men and women are submerged in ignorance, are void of the light of education in real.” (19)

Kazi Nazrul Islam shows much interest to the ideal followed by the women of Bramho society in connection to female education. In his novel Badhanhara (1920) [Unbound], Rabeya, the main character, is portrayed paying higher homage to her Bramho female teacher. Rabeya’s letter to Mahabuba says, “My entire soul and whole of heart fill with a sense of sacred esteem and honor in reminiscences of that Bramho teacher.” (20) Nazrul’s extreme anguish and anger out of the deficiency in female education outbursts through one of his exaggerated writing named ‘Taruner Sadhana’(1932) [Endeavor of Youths]. Here he says:

“Our contentment does not suffice confining our daughters, wives and mothers into the darkness of captivity. We have
also rendered them an everlasting imprisonment throwing them into the profound cave of illiteracy. This years-long captivity and tortures have caused such a paralyzing effect in their body and mind that whenever they will find any chance to come out of it, probably they themselves will refuse first.” (21)

Kazi Imdadul Haque emphasized on the importance of female education frequently in his novel Abdullah. In the first phase of his novel, he mentions female education as the future dream of Abdullah. Abdullah ponders, “As long as female education is far away from the Muslim society, they have no escape from the garbage of superstitious outlook; and therefore their development will inevitably remain untouched.” (22) Abdullah made up of his mind if God renders him better days, he will take all out measure for female education. Being illiterate Halima’s misfortune deprives her of reading letters from her brother Abdullah. This misfortune and deprivation of Halima lead her revealing the attitudes of the then conservative Muslim society as she says, “Nobody like those in this house…” …it is forbidden for the zenanas (Women) to read and write.”

Therefore, it is eminent what attitude he possesses towards female education and to what extent he has emphasized on it.

Mohammad Najibar Rahman passed no comments regarding female education in his first phase of his literary life whereas in the later phase he seemed to very conscious and vocal. Particularly, his heroine Nuri as an educated girl in his novel Gariber Meye (1923)[Daughter of Poor] deserves mention. He also expresses his clear notion and attitude on the importance of female education when passes comments in the preface novel, “Poor women in the remote villages should be well educated.” (23) Najibar’s promotion of female education vivifies as he pours generous appreciation on Nur’s spontaneous activities. But the syllabus that Najibar Rahman facilitates for Nuri however reveals his limitations too. Because his character Nuri seems to be satisfied getting a sort of education that could help women make smarter for house management only. This type of education could save the family from some minor monetary losses as it is exemplified through the milkman and Nuri episode. One day the milkman claims four taka for three sers of milk provided in twelve days. Nuri finds faults in figure and saves fifty paisa wisely. The writer continues demonstrating his own way of female education focusing on an educated woman’s demonstration of tolerance to her husbands’ co-wives.

Twelve year old Nuri’s traditional syllabus includes memorizing of the Koran, Soothing soul, Bangla epic Meghanadhbadhkabya (Epic on Megnad’s killing), Sita’s banishment, Charupath section iii, arithmetic, geography and sewing. The writer however was not satisfied to this hackneyed syllabus. Consequently Nuri’s husband Nur is noticed to bring a book for Nuri that could teach her those necessary skills for household management. They include the contents on: cooking, clearing utensils of kitchen, Dhekisala (the room for husking paddy), cow yard, home yard, garbage, decoration, washing clothes, drinking water, cleaning home, blending, cutting vegetables and cleaning fish, bed room, store room, cleanliness, punctuality, sewing, in-laws, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, home servants, stranger women, nursing children, education and so on. All these undoubtedly expose Najibar’s perception of female education that sponsored highly to make women smarter housewives.

In the beginning of twentieth century, apart from Begum Rokeya, Nurunnesa Khatun appears to be a devotee to Bangla literature. Her interest in female education is also noteworthy. Her female char-
acters as portrayed in one of her novels Swapnadrasta (1923) [Visionary], are found to be music and novel loving. These instances however can exhibit their handsome access to education though little is implied as regard their institutional learning. In this novel, we find Momena reading Najibar Rahman’s novel Anwara and listening to Tagore and Dijendra Nath’s songs. We find her also possessing a harmonium in her room. (24)

But Mohammad Abdur Rashid Siddiki’s attitude on female education seems to be inconsistent to his contemporary time. In the novel Jarina (1925), he shows such an attitude as may prove him to be opposing to modern education. Jarina, the protagonist of the novel depicted as an ideal character, is blessed with religious education, whereas Amina, depicted as a negative character, is well educated in Bangla and English. Pertinently, the writer here criticizes the contemporary youths for getting married with the educated girls and thus having lost their religious attachment. (25)

Strong recommendations are found for female education in an epistolary novel Byathiter Dairy (1926) [Diary of Distressed] by Mohammad Golam Jilani. In this novel, Azad clarifies his opinions on female education to his beloved from a Hindu community. The negative approaches of the then male society against female education have been strongly condemned. The hero thus explains his point of view:

“The selfish males of this society have left no stone unturned to captivate your race. I am determined to expose all of the forgeries, the wickedness as well as selfishness of the males to you.” (26)

This letter could bring more effects if the message of it be conveyed to a Muslim girl. Because, at that time Bengali Hindu women were more or less blessed with some light of modern education whereas Muslim women were lagging behind in this connection. The concept of non-communal traits of education that Azad was conveying through his letter therefore could have been more significant and meaningful to that of the Muslim ones. A few lines from his letter go as follows:

Is there any meaning of life to a blind man in this world? I wish you possessed the real human qualities, would be a knowledgeable, an elevated one; you would be standing with great guts holding the flag of rebel on behalf of all women.” (27)

Here unambiguously the writer’s own point of view reflects through Azad’s letter. After a few days back another novel named Sati Mahima (1951) [Glory of Devoted wife] by Sahadat Hossain alleges female education as a must towards developing an honest women race. The subject matter of the novel is the life of a faithful woman named Mehernegar. Maniruzzaman, a brother of Mehernegar, expounds the necessity of female education in black and white:

“An educated mother is equal to a hundred of teachers; on the contrary an illiterate mother equates to a hundred of enemies. Because, during childhood, life remains very sacred and peaceful. In this period, all our anxieties, the satanic provocations, get defeat and go on a hiding. Now the mind of the children is innocent, open, tender like a moonlit night and what will be taught them will grow effectively and in the long run this teaching will mould the their character. An educated and experienced mother sets an urn in the name of learning to the core of her child’s thoughts. All these eventually develop a pure heart. …it is known to all that female education is the key to national character.” (28)

On the question of either purda (veil) or free movement of women many Muslim writers of colonial Bengal opine in many
ways. They also raise questions on teaching and learning Bengali, English etc. But most of the writers of that time could well understand that without female education society would not run ahead eventually. Mir Mosharrar Hossain, Matiar Rahman Khan, Najibar Rahman, Syeed Emdad Ali, Muhammad Korban Ali, Mozammel Haque, Shahadat Hossain, Abdul Malek Chowdhury, Abdul Fattah Qureshi, Muhamad Shahjahan, Nurunnessa Khatun et al. belong this group. Their advocacy for female education seems to be alleged but exhibit possessing views on the question of women’s free movement in the society. On the other hand, Rokeya Shakaoyat Hossain, Ismail Hossain Siraji, Muhammad Lutfar Rahman, Kazi Imdadul Haque, Golam Mostafa, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Muhammad Yasin, Muhammad Ghulam Jilani, S. Wajed Ali, Abul Hussain, Kamrunnesa, Abul Fazal et al. belong to the group who sponsor an all-out education and a secular attitude in all sphere of life.

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(6) Ibid., p. 119.
(8) Rokeya Racanabali, p. 180n.
(9) Ibid., p. 180.
(10) Ibid., p. 207.
(11) Ibid., p. 304.
(13) Ibid., p. 242.
(26) Muhammad Ghulam Jilani, Byathiter Diary (Kolkata: Muslim Book
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Silence of the Dead: Policy of the Government of India for the Persecuted Hindus and Other Minorities in Bangladesh

Ramen Nandi
Director, Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities, USA

The President of India, Hon. (Dr.) Pranab Mukherjee, went for a State visit to Bangladesh from March 3-5, 2013, accompanied by his wife Shubhra Mukherjee, Press Secretary, Foreign Secretary, four members of Parliament, Minister of State for Railways and a delegation of twenty five media representatives. This visit is the culmination of a large number of bilateral meetings starting from the visit by Dr. Mukherjee himself when he was the Minister of Finance from 2010 through 2012. Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, visited Bangladesh in 2011 and laid down the frame work of engagement between the two countries for economic and cultural co-operation. The Minister of External Affairs, Salman Khurshid, went to Bangladesh on February 16-17, 2013 after the visit by the Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai to finalize the agenda before the President’s visit.

The issues mentioned in the draft agreement included ratification of 1974 land boundary agreement, sharing water of Teesta River, power, trade and investment, security issues, development co-operation, human resources development, among a few others. The ongoing covert genocide (1) of the Hindus and other minority communities in Bangladesh was never raised in any of those meetings even though the President’s wife herself and some members in the delegations are refugees from (Islamic) Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was facing severe political unrest since Shahabag protests (2) started on February 5, 2013 demanding capital punishment for the war criminals of 1971.
She demonstrated extraordinary courage to host the President and the delegates as planned. During such time of political clashes in Bangladesh, the minority people routinely come under attack by the Islamist activists for no reason. On February 28, 2013, the International Crimes Tribunal Bangladesh sentenced Delwar Hossain Sayeedy, (3) the Vice President of Jamat-e-Islami, to death. Immediately after the sentencing, the Hindus came under attack by supporters of Jamat-e-Islami and Bangladesh National Party (BNP) (S. Roy, 2013). During a period of about 24 days at least 319 temples were torched, desecrated or damaged; houses and shops of the Hindu community came under attack. No one in the Indian delegation even mentioned about these atrocities on the minorities. On the contrary, Indian Foreign Secretary said, while briefing the journalists, that the President is pleased about the fact that India-Bangladesh relations are in a very good state, and that “we seek the best of relations with the people of Bangladesh.” In response to the death sentencing of the war criminal by the ICT and the resulting unrest, the leader of the opposition political party (BNP), Begum Khaleda Zia, (4) did not meet with the President on the current trip even though a meeting was set up in advance.

One of the accolades Bangladesh Government bestowed upon the President of India was “LIBERATION WAR HONOUR” for his services to the millions of people seeking refuge in India during Bangladesh liberation war with Pakistan in 1971. The extent of atrocities committed on the citizens during the liberation war, specifically on the Hindu communities, (5) is reported in the world media. It may be appropriate to mention here that about three million civilians were killed by the Army of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and their (Bengali) collaborators in erstwhile East Pakistan in about nine months time. It is estimated that, during the conflict, over 200,000 women and girls were raped resulting in about 25,000 war babies being born. Estimated ten million people were displaced from home. Even though Hindu population in 1971 was about 25 percent, more than seventy five percent of the victims were Hindus. (6) No estimates are available for the loss of properties by looting and arson. The present Hindu population in Bangladesh is less than ten percent. The President did not raise the issue of the ongoing persecution of the minority communities.

As the President of India, Hon Mukherjee, was delivering his acceptance speech on receipt of Bangladesh “LIBERATION WAR HONOUR” on March 4, 2013, attack on the minority communities in that country continued. (7) Genocide is being committed with impunity in the Chittagong Hill Tract areas against the indigenous peoples, Chakma, Marma, Tripura and others who are mainly Buddhist as well as Hindu and Christian. In the monthly report for April, 2013, Bangladesh Minority Watch (BDMW), an indigenous Human Rights NGO, reported nine incidents of Temple vandalism, land grabbing (of Hindus) and arson in several districts of Bangladesh. There have been numerous reports published by US Commission on International Religious Freedom and other NGOs (e. g., Hindu American Foundation, Kapaeeng Foundation, Global Human Rights Defense, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities) on this matter. In May 2013, an International Religious Freedom Coalition of 23 organizations and individuals led by Hindu American Foundation, (8) urged the US House of Representatives in Foreign Affairs Committee to host a Congressional hearing on the ongoing persecution of minorities in Bangladesh. But no word about the plight
of the minorities in Bangladesh was mentioned by the Indian President or the delegates.

The Indian President paid a nostalgic visit to the ancestral home of his in-laws in Bhadrabila village located in Narail district of southwest Bangladesh and visited a Hindu temple there. But the media did not report if the Hindus in the village are living without the fear of persecution or not.

United States established the Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) by an Act in 1998. The law makers determined that many of the nation’s founders fled religious persecutions abroad, cherishing in their hearts and minds, the ideals of religious freedom. Today USCIRF is monitoring the violations of religious freedom and human rights in the other countries of the world to advise the US Department of State for making appropriate policy decisions. Many of the Indian political leaders, across the party lines, including the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who fled from their ancestral lands to escape persecution since India was partitioned in 1947. After the partition, the Indian Government should have established a commission under direct control of the Prime Minister to monitor the treatment of the minorities, who were assured of freedom of religion and equal rights at that time in Islamic Republic of Pakistan and later day Bangladesh.

Silence of the Indian political leaders, social activists and intellectuals emboldens the Islamist forces and land grabbers in Bangladesh to continue with their nefarious acts resulting in the feeling of insecurity and impoverishment among the minority communities, finally causing forced displacement of those people to India. Such unending migration of people to India is also causing economic, social, sanitary, ecological and other environmental problems, especially, in the borderer districts of the country. Moreover, the victims of atrocities in Bangladesh seeking refuse in India are recognized as illegal intruders making them vulnerable and fall easy prey to the unscrupulous politicians and other anti-social elements. The victims are victimized again.

The Indian subcontinent, devastated for about a millennium by Muslim invasions followed by European colonization, was partitioned in a haste facing the threat of a civil war. The country was partitioned without even a defined boundary and without any plan to safeguard the lives and properties of the minorities in both the countries. Neither the British government nor the newly formed governments of India and Pakistan could abdicate their responsibilities in massacre of unsuspecting civilians and destruction of personal properties in the scale unseen in the history of human civilization. But those events took place sixty six years ago. Should not the governments be more responsible now?

The 13th President of India quoted a statement (Bharat Bichitra, 2013) made by the First Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1949, during acceptance speech for Liberation War Honour, "where freedom is menaced, or justice threatened or where aggression takes place, we cannot be and shall not be neutral.” However, it appears that after sixty four years the essence of that message is lost from the minds of Indian political leaders. These leaders are maintaining the silence of the dead in response to continuing silent genocide perpetrated against the minority communities in Bangladesh. Sir Isaac Newton stipulates in his first law of motion that a body in motion continues to be in motion as long as a force is not applied in the opposite direction. Applying this law of physical science into the dynamics of social science, we can say that the atrocities com-
mitted against the minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh will not stop unless some force in the form of laws and regulations are enacted and enforced by the Government of India in consultation with the other governments. In case this approach does not work, the Indian Government should take the case to International bodies, e.g., United Nations or International Court for adjudication so that the minorities get their rights as assured at the time of partition. However, this possibility is remote in view of the vote-bank politics of the Indian government (Vivek, 2007).

Two other possibilities exist to empower the minorities in Bangladesh. One is to persuade the Indian Government to make the bilateral agreement (9) with Bangladesh contingent upon improvement of the rights of the minority citizens. The second means of empowerment depends on the victims themselves. They may take the case directly to Bangladesh Supreme Court for justice, failing which they can take their grievances to United Nations or the World Court. Unless any such actions are taken either by the Indian Government or by the civil societies immediately, Bangladesh will be devoid of its indigenous minority — the original inhabitants — Hindus, Buddhists and Christians communities within next decade or so.

Notes:
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From Partition to Bangladesh: on the Trajectory of a Troubled Quest

Dr. Mohsin Siddique

Dr. Siddique is a professional in environmental field who has been working in the U.S. for over four decades. He writes on various issues, and is the former founder-editor of South Asia Forum Quarterly published from Washington D.C. This paper is to be published in an upcoming collection of articles on the 1947 partition.

“Reason has always existed, but not always in a reasonable form.” - Karl Marx, Letter from the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher to Arnold Ruge (1843)

In March of 2013 an obscure fascist religious political party named Hefajat-e-Islam (1), embarked on a mission to teach a lesson to the young people who gathered in Shabagh Square (according to Hefajat and other Islamists, organized by atheists) in Dhaka, Bangladesh to protest the verdict of the International War Crimes Court against a notorious war criminal and leader of Jamat-i-Islam (2) named Abdul Quader. The protest was against life sentence given to Quader; the organizers demanded that he is given death sentence. After all, he was well known as the killer of Mirpur. During the 1971 Liberation War he had assisted Pakistani army in killing over 300 people in Aubad village; some he killed himself. (3)

The lesson the supporters of Quader taught the protesters started with the slaughter of one of the organizers, a blogger named Raziv Hayder; they killed him when he was returning home from Sahbagh Square late one evening. The more robust ‘lesson’ involved attacks on Hindu villages in various parts of the country. These guardians of the religion of peace destroyed over 500 homes, 300 temples, 300 businesses belonging to the Hindus and killed about 100 innocent Hindu citizens. Authorities sat on their hands until the carnage was over. No explanation given, no rhyme or reason! But, it follows a pattern: during the Liberation War in 1971, the minorities, especially the Hindu community, were particular target of the Pakistani army and the Bangladeshi collaborators belonging to various Islamic religious political parties. The blame game is old: literally, every democratic progressive movement in East Pakistan (and now Bangladesh) since 1947, including the 1952 Language Movement, has been accused of being some sort of Hindu conspiracy (often,
supposedly directed from Kolkata) by the reactionary, extremist politicians. The Hindu-phobia, and its other incarnate, the general India-phobia, (in recent time RAW [4] phobia), and their routine deployment for manipulating internal politics, demonstrate the effectiveness of such paranoia; these have become integral to the political culture and the lexicon of suspicion & blame. It is reasonable to suspect that India & RAW have interest in Bangladesh and they snoop around (and most likely Bangladesh reciprocates the favor): the concern is with the destructive misuse and propagation of paranoia.

The dust that was stirred up by over 10 million people displaced from their homes and hearths and were forced to find shelter in unknown places due to violence based in religious hatred in 1947 commonly known as riots, had not settled for a long time. By design or benign neglect of state policy, many of the minorities who stayed back in spite of the partition, had to leave eventually, in turn making those who stayed behind deprived of the security numbers provide. Even without getting into all the specific steps taken to make them insecure, the very fact of the bitter and hateful environment created by the communal riots, life in hostile territory thus afflicted could not be inviting. One of the tragic legacies of partition is the creation of clusters of people who are aliens in their own land, as a result of the trauma of the devastation they have witnessed, sometimes self-isolating, defensive and insecure, and often feeling and sometime treated as ‘problems’ to be dealt with. Clever politicians have learned to use them as pawns in local and national elections, often disregarding community’s objective interests.

To be sure, there were/are plenty of ‘reasons’ for the alienation among various religious groups that coexisted in this ancient land. It can be attributed to the heterogeneity of the people of the Indian Subcontinent, and their history of living under long periods of feudal, authoritarian rules, and discriminations by the ruling elite based on ethnicity, religion, language, culture, etc., often obfuscating the fundamental socio-economic conditions, that causes people to fight over inadequate resources and opportunities. A long standing cause for resentment influencing Hindu-Muslim relations is that to the natives Islam is a religion of the invaders imposed on the subcontinent (5). While that is historically true, invasions are not unique to India, neither the atrocities invaders impose on the conquered. Refusal of Muslims to accept the validity of the resentment among the Hindus, and the unwillingness of Hindus to admit that in spite of conversion, Muslims are (by overwhelming majority) natives of the subcontinent (6), made both easy prey to communal exploitation. From cow slaughter to idol procession in front of mosque (7), there were no shortage of excuses to take the frustrations of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, deprivation on the hapless ‘other’, especially when goaded by the ‘educated’ political chieftain or his neighborhood ‘enforcers’.

Even efforts that started nobly, such as Sir Sayed Ahmed’s project to impart western-style education to Indian Muslims, took on communal hue. Thus, while their lives were intertwined, there were separatist tendencies and sectarian elements as well. While Pakistan satisfied the Muslim separatists, the Hindu separatists who “…equated ‘India’ with ‘Hinduness’…regarded nationalist mobilization as the reawakening of …a long-slumbering Hindu nation” (8) have not given up their dreams in spite of the general trend towards secularism which democracy demands.

One other unpleasant subject not talked about much is Muslim attitude towards
Hindu religion. Recall that Islam arose in part out of militant efforts to wipe out idol-worship in the Arab Peninsula (9), and this may be the cause of intolerance towards Hinduism. While Hinduism has a very extensive philosophical basis, Islam does not involve much contemplation nor is it given to speculations on the nature of reality, etc. It is a practical religion, and comes with instruction for just about everything, from treatment of the poor to intercourse (sanctioned, of course). As a result, even among the most reasonable Muslims, Hinduism has been limited at best to ‘tolerance’, as opposed to ‘acceptance’ as an alternate path to the divine. The great tradition of one of the earliest philosophical systems and inquiries in questions of ontology, epistemology, & ethics has not impressed even the educated Muslims. Unlike in the West, the classical epics such as the Mahabharata or the Ramayana are not part of the curriculum for formal liberal education in Bangladesh and definitely not in Pakistan, thereby the citizens of these countries remain unhoused (10) from the rich native literary traditions and lessons they impart. Unfortunately, the situation is not much better in India: political correctness and the priority of the bourgeoisie seem to have superseded the importance of its education being grounded in its classics.

Post partition bitterness has continued. Besides uprooting millions and creating a permanent state of insecurity for those who remained behind, the partition has created permanent enemies between India & Pakistan. The region has descended into unproductive threat-management endeavors, drainage of resources in militarization, instability, and wars, etc., sprinkled with occasional communal riots. Nuclear proliferation and threat of nuclear war now hangs over South Asia. The relation between India & Bangladesh is ambiguous at best; if reason prevailed in a reasonable form, it would have been radically different: stable, open and trusting and one marked by gratitude on the part of Bangladesh. It appears that there are forces in all of the three truncated territories who ensure that mistrust persists, hostilities prevail, and lives of innocent people are sacrificed at the altar of realpolitik.

Noticeable after effect of the partition is the uneven development in the three countries – in economic, political, social, cultural, etc., arena; what transpired in each of the three truncated parts are not unrelated to the intent or lack thereof, articulated consciously or unconsciously when various interests were negotiating the future of the territories they were after. The Indian National Congress (INC), established in 1885 was self-consciously formed as a nationalist party, representing the nation of Indian peoples; the commitment extended to the creation of a democratic society after independence. While the leadership of the struggle for independence, inspired by nationalism fell upon the upper middle class & upper class, they represented the aspirations of the people of the subcontinent as a whole to be free of long and cruel colonial repression. However, the nationalist agenda also assured safeguarding of the class interests of the emerging Indian bourgeoisie, who were trying to free themselves from unfair competition with the British capitalists. Close relations between prominent houses of business with the top rung of the INC leadership was not secret, nor was the disdain of the segment of progressive working class and peasantry for the future INC was offering. (11)

Today hegemony of a powerful capitalist class, backed by an expanding middle class, dominates economy, politics, culture and other aspects of life. It has adopted a perverse hedonistic consumerist ethos hawked by global finance capi-
tal; at the same time some of its urban ghettos are threatened by potential outbreak of plague associated more with medieval Europe, not a resource-rich nation in the 21st century. It also has an expanding and increasingly powerful working class, as well as organized progressive political forces defending the rights of the working class and the poor. It is an unquestionable regional power and is playing increasingly prominent role in the world stage. Over all, in line with the aspirations of the nationalist leaders, India has evolved in to a democracy with its progressive agenda and shortcomings. Perhaps its greatest achievement is the commitment of its people to democracy.

Pakistan is a state improvised to serve the narrow interest of a group of upper class Muslims who were invested more in past Muslim glory. The Muslim League was formed by the political elite connected to the Muslim centers of power in north India to protect and preserve their privileges in an independent India (12). Its theoretical impetus was provided by the so called two-nation theory (TNT), first floated by poet Allama Iqbal, who decided that the Muslims in India constituted a separate nation. This concept was rarely invoked during the entire period since Muslims from the Arab peninsula arrived on horseback and de-throned the unsuspecting Hindu King of Sind (13). Muslims did not live in isolation from Hindus or others, did not operate in a separate economy, nor did they speak an exclusive language inaccessible to Hindus, sang separate songs or loved and hated any differently, etc. It was an instance of successful use of distorted ideology in the form of the political unconscious (14), exploiting economic disparity and deprivation caused by over 300 years of colonial rule, and its legacy. Jinnah, the man who carried the idea to its destructive end at times showed signs of sophistication and seemed to have adopted the secular nationalist ethos, but when felt he might become irrelevant, saw an opportunity for recovery by appealing to the base instincts of the Muslim population. His demand for Pakistan to protect all of India’s Muslims was dishonest, as he was fully aware that “the Muslim nation would have as many citizens beyond its borders as inside them” (15). The following statement of his, made after the partition is astonishing in its hypocrisy: “You are free; you are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State.” (16)

After more than six decades, it is on the verge of being a failed state, facing territorial disintegration threatened by Baluch and the Sindhi nationalists on the one hand, and takeover by the brutal Islamic fundamentalists hell-bent on imposing rules of conduct developed for 6th century Arabia, as if in an attempt to reverse and stop time! From the start, power was in the hands of a coterie of privileged military and civilian (& still linked to vestiges of feudalism) politicians, people who concocted the notion of Pakistan, focused on safeguarding their private interest and did its best to stifle democracy.

East Pakistan, itself an improvisation constructed out of the absurdity of TNT, confronted with a new sort of colonialism, i.e., exploitation by the power structure dominated by the Punjabis, had to resort to democracy. Unwilling to delink from Pakistan, yet unable to compete with the capitalist class in West Pakistan, a motley crew of emerging East Pakistani business interests supported the Awami League to take on West Pakistan. AL led a movement for autonomy, primarily to have control of the economic life of East
Pakistan. There was no sign of any preparation for a war, no administration was setup for governance after the Liberation, and no organization was set up for protecting the gains of, what would amounted to bourgeois revolution in Bangladesh. Awami League’s victory in the 1970 general election was entirely based on the six-point demand for autonomy.

The most telling indication of the improvisational nature of Bangladesh is that as soon as the Liberation War was over, the vested interests immediately started to reassert the notion that Bangladesh is a Muslim country. To the extent that the majority of the population is Muslims, it is a true claim, but surely, no one is that naïve not to note the implication of that claim is much more insidious. In other words, a campaign to assert the notion that Bangladesh is to be a Muslim country, NOT a secular country, was initiated immediately in a number of ways.

Among the major milestones in that subversion were (i) not fully dealing with the war criminals immediately; (ii) Bhutto’s arrival in Bangladesh (July, 1974) to visit with Shekh Mujib, drawing millions of Bangladeshis to the street to welcome him. It proved to be a brilliant scheme and an important occasion to re-launch and signify the ongoing presence of the Islamists, even though in his obduracy and connivance, military of his country slaughtered over 3 million people only 3 years before; (iv) Mujib’s desperate attempt to get on the good-side of the Saudis and others in that region to ‘counter the Hindu influence from India’ while only three years ago, India made it possible to end the War quickly, and reduce sufferings; (iii) Zia led Coup & return of Ghulam Azam and resurgence of Jama-I-Islam; (iv) Ershad led coup & changes in the Constitution; (v) Even with an absolute majority in the Parliament, Sheikh Hasina’s refusal to reinstitute the secular provisions of the original constitution.

As far as secularism is concerned, it has been downhill since then. If anything, Hasina has pushed AL to be a great deal more anti-secular than it was under her father. The father of the nation was a secular man no doubt, but his appreciation of the vulnerability of the minorities in Bangladesh seems to have been limited; perhaps, he did think that liberating the country was enough to protect the minorities, completely ignoring or not acknowledging, or being ignorant of the deep seated hatred for the ‘idol worshipers’ among the Islamic ‘religious scholars’ who roam about rural Bengal imparting such enlightenment as “women are like tamarind to men” (17).

The supporters of the ideology that inspired creation of Bangladesh, believing in their own rhetoric vastly underestimated the strength of the forces of reaction, if not in their numbers, surely their increasing affinity to the rising Islamic fundamentalism. It is astonishing that no one saw the political implications of the sudden proliferation of the so called educational institutions called madrasas, especially in rural areas. Supported by all the governments, in reality, these are training academies for Jamat/Hefajat cadres. The most important lesson taught is the denigration of all other religious belief, especially of ‘idol worshipers’ and hatred & intolerance of Hindus and other minorities, and their duty to covert the ‘heathens’ to peaceful Islam by hook or by crook, no matter that it is banned by-law unless proof of voluntary decision can be produced. Note that BD is not as supportive of religious schools for other religions! Surely, if encouraged, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, could get funding from external sources if necessary, just as the Islamists get their funding from the Middle East & even Pakistan! The urge to return to medieval times implied in the efforts by fundamentalist pseudo-religious, in reality political, movements...
is counter to the direction of history.

The need and demand for democracy in countries gaining independence from colonial rule, emerged as a necessity in the 20th century as they began long delayed process of economic development based on private ownership of the means of production. Labor had to be freed from the shackles of feudalism, and with that came the demand for rights, which in turn lead to mass-scale politicization. In India, it is muddling through as it does in a society immersed in class contradictions. It could have chosen a more progressive path, but has fallen victim to the ordinary laws of socio-economic trajectory, and will most likely follow the capitalist path for some time. But, its commitment to democracy is assured and will provide space for progressive changes.

The sane quarters in Pakistan especially, but Bangladesh as well, wish they could be that far along the trajectory. In Pakistan, it has given rise of violent fundamentalist Islamists, falsifying the assumptions behind its formation, and raising questions regarding the rational for its existence. Bangladesh is still unable to come to grips with its realities. Too smart not to notice the changing nature of the world, yet intimidated by the modernity, it remains stuck in sort of suspended animation.

The contingent nature of the way some of the political formations culminated where they did is hard not to notice. The long history of starting in one place, apparently without much of an inkling of where the end would be, and doing the best with wherever that ends up to be, has characteristically involved the Muslim population of the subcontinent. They appear to be on a trajectory of a troubled quest of unsettled identity, inability in establishing equilibrium between faith and functionality demanded in the new century, and are still reticent about embracing rudimentary elements of modernism such as secular democracy.

Notes:
(1) So far, this one has turned out to be the most viscous, vulgar and reactionary among the extremist Islamist political parties that have mushroomed in Bangladesh. They have demanded that women should not be allowed outside the home, and have implied that they are the reasons why men commit sin (the so called Tamarind Theory of gender relations), etc. Their base is a network of madrasas, especially in the southern area of the country.

(2) Although JI’s publicly stated policy is to make Bangladesh a truly Islamic country under full Sharia Law, in recent times JI leaders have refrained from emphasizing their core political purpose. It was banned after 1971 Liberation War because of its opposition to breaking up of Pakistan. Maj. Zia, usurper of power through coup revived and legitimized JI. It has been the major coalition partner of his Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) one of the two political parties (the other being the Awami League, AL, party of the Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman).

(3) Subsequently, the Supreme Court, on appeal by the government sentenced him to death.

(4) Research and Analyses Wing; intelligence agency of the Indian government.

(5) How that took place is yet another topic of contention. In the absence of empirical information, it is safe to assume that many were forced, and many volunteered to escape cast discrimination, and many others did so for genuinely spiritual reasons.

(6) At one time, Hindu Mahasabha argued that Indian Muslims should leave India and ‘go back’ to the Middle East!

(7) The Origins of the Partition of India by Anita Inder Singh; Oxford University Press, 1987; p.37. It is worth noting the irony that while cow slaughter by Mus-
lims was a huge organizing hook for Hindu communalists, India today is one of the major processor of cow hides, with a large concentration of tannery industry in Chennai.


(10) Term borrowed from Prof. Cornell West, courtesy Asheesh Kapur Siddique, Doctoral Candidate in the Department of History, Columbia University, New York, NY.

(11) Recall the slogan: यह आज़ादी झूठी है। ल़ाखों इन्स़ान भूखे हें। (yea azadi jhuti hai. Lakho insan bhukhey hai, in Hindi. “This independence is hollow; millions are hungry”.)


(13) In 715 AD by a small band of Arab horsemen led by Mohammad Bin Qasem dethroned Raja Dahir of Sind. Since then, invasion, immigration and conversion have continued at various rates. The last one was determined by all of the factors by which one is induced to ‘embrace faith’, both positive (perhaps freedom from cast oppression) and negative incentives (swords must have worked well) etc., that were available to eventually made the Muslims a sizeable demographic entity.


(16) From Presidential address to the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, Karachi, 11 August 1947. This after about a million people died and more were displaced from their ancestral homes and hearths to “prove” otherwise and rationalize the partition! It is rumored that after visiting a riot devastated area, he supposedly said, ‘what have I done!’

(17) According to the head of the Hefajat, that is why women should not be allowed to go out in public.

**Bibliography**


**New York State Turns to Mediation to Resolve Super Storm Sandy Disputes**

Dr. Thomas J. Lilly, Jr., Esq.
Professor, SUNY, Old Westbury
Mediation - the use of a neutral third party to help settle a dispute - is a conflict resolution system that predates history. As life in twenty-first America has
become more complex, the number of disputes has multiplied and the use of formal mediation programs has rapidly expanded to deal with those disputes. (1) On February 25, 2013 N.Y. State adopted a new mediation program to deal with the sudden onset of thousands of claims by homeowners against insurers.(2) Those of us who live in downstate New York are, of course, familiar with the devastation caused by Super Storm Sandy in October 2012. The United States Department of Commerce estimates that the storm caused damage in excess of $50 billion. (3) Such economic statistics, however, cannot communicate the emotional trauma caused to those who lost a loved one or a home. In the storm’s aftermath, it was inevitable that hundreds of thousands of affected homeowners would be making claims to their insurance companies in order to repair and rebuild. (4)

Just as inevitably, many of those hundreds of thousands of claims would be disputed by insurance companies. For example, it is not unusual in a property casualty dispute for the insurer and insured to disagree over the value of a destroyed piece of property, or over the amount of money that it should take to repair property damage. Such disagreements can quickly become emotional for insured persons who are arguing over the value of a beloved home.

In addition, storm damage cases typically involve disputes over whether a particular item is covered by the insurance policy. For example, if a policy says that it excludes coverage for damage caused by flood, the insurance company cannot reasonably be expected to pay for flood damage. Alternatively, if the policy says it excludes coverage for damage caused by wind, the insurance company cannot reasonably be expected to pay for wind damage. The problem then becomes determining what damage was caused by wind and what was caused by flood. Such disputes predictably leave homeowners frustrated and confused.

The sheer number of insurance disputes generated by Super Storm Sandy threatened to create a new flood, this time of the New York State court system. Litigation is by its nature a slow and expensive process. The prospect of large numbers of homeowners waiting for years to be properly paid on their insurance claims caused New York to look for an alternative dispute resolution mechanism. The obvious place to look was to those states that had been decimated by hurricane Katrina in 2005. Louisiana and Mississippi both had utilized mediation programs, and New York decided to emulate those programs.

The salient feature of mediation as a dispute resolution mechanism is that a mediator, unlike a judge or an arbitrator, has no power to impose a resolution to the dispute. A mediator assists the parties in trying to reach an agreeable settlement. If at the end of the mediation process the parties have not been able to reach an agreement, they are free to pursue whatever other avenue of redress they believe appropriate. If the mediation does not produce a settlement the parties are usually not permitted to use what was said in the mediation in any other forum. The risk of attempting mediation is, therefore, usually the risk that the time and money spent will not produce a result. That cost is typically small compared to the potential benefit of avoiding litigation.

The success of a mediation often depends on the skill of the mediator. Mediations are often emotional, and mediations involving storm victims are especially emotional. Experienced mediators help the parties to deal with those emotions and to gain an objective perspective. Often parties will confide information to a skilled mediator that they will not admit across the table to an ad-
versary. As a neutral participant, the mediator may get the parties to communicate in a constructive manner without resorting to litigation.

Because New York is an international center for alternative dispute resolution, the New York Super Storm Sandy Mediation Program has the advantage of access to a large number of experienced professional mediators. The American Arbitration Association, a not-for-profit organization headquartered in Manhattan, was chosen to administer the program and assemble a panel of mediators, all of whom have at least five years of mediation experience. Insurance claimants were informed that they have the right to a mediation of any Sandy related dispute worth more than $1,000. The insurance companies are required to pay the costs of a two hour mediation. If the dispute is not settled in two hours, it is up to the parties if they wish to continue. Costs of the mediation would be assessed to the policy holder only if the policy holder cancelled with less than three days notice or if after requesting mediation the policy holder refused to participate in good faith.

Because the Super Storm Sandy Mediation Program is still continuing, there is not yet a report assessing its success. At a minimum, the program is an indication of the increased use of formal mediation as a conflict resolution system.

Notes:
(2) The program was implemented by the NY State Superintendent of Financial Services as an emergency measure pursuant to the New York State Financial Services Law, Sections 301, 2601 and 3404(e). The provisions of the program, briefly described in this article, are contained in the New York Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations, Insurance Regulation 64. See 11 NYCRR 216.
(3) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Hurricane/Post-Tropical Cyclone Sandy Service Assessment (May 2013).

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Pratip Dasgupta
New York
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Dilip & Dipa Nath
New York
Wishing a Successful

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Tom & Teresa Lilly
New York
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Law Offices of Ashok Karmaker, P.C.
143-08 Hillside Avenue, NY 11435; 718-408-3232
ashok@ashoklaw.com; and
Manhattan Office: The Empire State Building,
350 Fifth Avenue, Ste 3601, NY 10118 212-714-3599
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ISPaD Needs Help from YOU

Several Bengali-Americans in New York, individuals whose families were victims of partition of the Indian Subcontinent – especially of former British-Indian Bengal – formed a partition documentation project called ISPaD or Indian Subcontinent Partition Documentation Project Inc. to save the history and experiences of lost and displaced individuals and families, their villages, their life, and of survivors and that of protectors.

The Project has received not-for-profit status from the Departments of Education and State of New York State and a 503-C tax-exempt status from the I.R.S. (of the U.S. Government). ISPaD is open to all.

The purposes of the project are:

a) Document information from the people affected by the partition;
b) Collect historical records;
c) Study and document demographic and social changes caused by the partition;
d) Create a center to disseminate and share the information with the public and civic groups and rights organizations engaged globally in such activities;
e) Interact with the concerned governments and international bodies to raise awareness about the plight of the victims of ethnic cleansing and support the needy;
f) Organize meetings, seminars, conduct scholarly research, and publish journals and books.
g) Solicit funds to support the above activities.

Ispad is looking for individual and family stories, documents, pictures, narratives, deeds, artifacts, books, family history, stories of refugees, survivors, protectors and that of the lost ones, tapes, films, videos of Bengal and Indian partitions – from 1947 through the present.

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