CHAPTER - II
CHAPTER II

GENESIS OF THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENTS IN BENGAL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The new culture introduced by the Muslims did not, however, remain 'purely Islamic in its new geographical set-up. Through centuries of intermixing with the local populace various cults, customs and ceremonies crept into the Muslim way of life and gradually acquired an Islamic orientation. Action and reaction between Islamic and Hinduism continued all through the period of Muslim rule in India, accelerated, on occasions, by the 'liberalism' of some Muslim rulers until, in the early 19th century.

In few other countries had the Muslims embodied so many 'infidel', rites and customs in their own creed as India particularly was it true of Bengal and Bihar, where the Muslims were numerous but where corrupt and irreligious practices gained considerable ground. The alteration which Islam had undergone in adopting itself to an indigenous situation is a striking one. The change is manifested in certain rites and customs which had imperceptibly grown out of long contacts with Hinduism, but which were often at variance with the spirit of the Qur'an. The numerous pilgrimages to the
tombs of the holy personages, some of whom were not even Muslims, the semi-pagan festival instituted in honour of such personages, the pomp and grandeur which invariably crept into Muslim social function along with pagan rites, exemplify this trend.

This change is attributed by some to the great simplicity of Islam for a country like India, where an idolatrous and allegorical religion, appealing to the senses and imagination rather than to the mind and heart, was prevalent. Two simple 'Ids of the Muslims were not enough for a country accustomed to a multiplicity of Hindu festivals. New ones were, therefore, instituted or borrowed from Hinduism as for instance the solemn observances consecrated to the memory of the pirs or saints "who are to the Musalmans of India what the deotas (gods) are to the Hindus".

But, perhaps, contact with alien races, each having a peculiar culture of its own, isolation from the cradle of Islam and the smallness of numbers in the

2. Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Adha.
midst of an alien population, tended in the case of the Muslims to produce greater liberality of feeling and more sympathy for the sentiments and religious observances of those around them. The local gods, whom men sought after in times of trouble and sickness, were too near and dear to the innermost heart of the Hindu converts to be abolished without substitutes. "It was much easier to give them anthropomorphus form and to replace them by saints endowed with equal powers and with spirits of easy access to the worshippers".\(^1\)

This spirit of concession, the outcome of circumstances, was accelerated by the personal liberalism of some of the later Muslim rulers. Akbar paid adoration to sun and fire and the full moon of Shaban employed Brahmins to fasten 'rakhi' on his wrist.\(^2\) He cultivated matrimonial relationship with the great Hindu houses of India, and this example was followed later by other Muslim rulers whose wives undoubtedly brought with them thier beliefs and manners, uninterfered in most cases, to their new homes, to accelerate the process of corruption.\(^3\) Akbar's son Jahangir observed Diwali Puja, invited yogis to dine

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2. Ibid. Emperor Akbar celebrated the Hom (a kind of fire worship) from his effection towards his Hindu wives.
with him during Sivaratri and in the eighth year of reign celebrated his father's Sraddha in the Mausoleum at Sikandra. Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan, composed a work called Majma'al Bahrayan or the meeting of the two seas, having for its object the union of Hindu and Muslim religious systems.

By the middle of the eighteenth century this process of assimilation, in Bengal and Bihar particularly, had greatly advanced. Shahamat Jang and Sawlat Jang (Nephews of 'Alivardi) once celebrated the Holi festival for seven days in the garden of Motijhil where coloured water and heaps of 'abira (red powder) and saffron had been prepared for the festivities. After the treaty of Alinagar Nawab Siraj-ud-dawla went to Murshidabad and enjoyed the Holi festival in the place of Mansurganj. Nawab Mir Ja'far crossed the Ganges with all the gentry of the town and in similar manner took part in the Holi festival. It is also said on reliable authority, that on his death bed, Mir Jafar drank a few drops of water poured in libation over the idol of Krittesvari.

3. Ibid., p. 95.
5. Ibid. p. 550.
Incomplete conversion is still another channel through which un-Islamic practices passed into Indian Islam. Mixed practices and beliefs, in the rural areas especially, may, to a great extent, be accounted for this. The burning of Muslim widows and inter-marriage with the Hindu was practised in some part of India during the reign of Jahangir. The worship of the Hindu Shrine of one Manohara Natha "by as many Musalman or Hindu pilgrims" was found to be common by Sleeman in 1836. The actual worship of smallpox, under the name Devi Mata in the Punjab and Sitala in other parts of India among the lower orders of Muslims seems to have been one of the outrageous practices that persisted in the nineteenth century, doubtless as a result of incomplete conversion. As late as 1911, the census report refers to communities, the members of which admitted that "they were neither Hindus nor Muslims but a mixture of both.

The Karta Bhajas a sect founded in Bengal in the eighteenth century, who called their creed Satya-a

Dharma (True Religion), included both Hindus and Muslims. Incomplete conversion in the rural districts of Bengal left these people only nominal followers of the Faith; a condition also found among the Christian converts of the province. The ignorance of these half converted Muslims is clearly manifest in the statement made to a Missionary by the headman of a Muslim village in Bengal during the first half of the nineteenth century "that Muhammad was a Bengali, born in the house of a Brahmin."

The loss of political power by the Muslims, who formed but a small proportion of the Indian population, undoubtedly contributed to the degeneration of Islam in India. The Muslim of Bengal and Bihar had always been predominantly Sunnis and their spiritual guides, the Qadis, appointed by the Nawabs, were also of the same sect. Over the Qadis was the Qadi-al-Qudal who resided at Delhi. The Qadi administered the law as expounded by the Mufti. Superintended the education of the children, being responsible for the orthodoxy of the religion, taught them and decided all disputes connected with religion or public worship scattered throughout the country were Na'ibs or deputy Qadis who watched

2. Wylie. M., Bengal as a Field of Missions, p. 318.
over the spiritual welfare of the masses, instructed them in the faith and suppressed dissent or any expression of independent thought. Their power were great while their treatment of backsliders and renegades was almost summary. The Law laid down the penalty of death recusancy, and though such cases were rare, "the fact that this was the law must have had a wholesome effect in preventing the promulgation of any doctrines and in keeping all united in the bonds of a common faith."  

With the passing of the Diwani into the hands of the East India company great changes took place. The Qâdis stripped of their powers ceased to be a terror to evil doers. The ignorant Muslims in the densely populated districts of the interior were thus left free to incorporate corrupt practices and customs their religious and social life. For three generations these people "without a shepherd receded more and more from their national faith" and conformed to every superstitious rite of the Hindus.

The following description of festival and peculiarities of belief and customs among the Muslims of

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2. Ibid., p. 48.
India based on contemporary accounts will show the extent of deviation from the original faith which Islam in India in the nineteenth century had undergone.

The festival of Muharram which commemorated the martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of prophat, used to be celebrated with much pomp and splendour. The representation of the torrb of Husayn or the chapel which enclosed the tomb bearing the metaphorical name of Ta'ziyah or simply Tabut, were richly ornamented. They were carried in procession in the streets, "the devotees making silly demonstrations of grief" on the tenth day, and were then deposited in the earth, or cast into river or tank or if too costly to be destroyed were carried back and placed in the Imambara. The preparation of the Ta'ziyah was carried on in every Muslim village of Bengal and "Hindu zemindars subscribed towards its expenses as the Muhammedan landlords did to Durga image". Hindus, besides participating in the procession, showed profound respect to the Ta'ziyah and bowed their heads with much solemn gravity.

In Calcutta, according to a Muslim writer, the processionists besides uttering "piercing cries and mournful groans" performed such extravagant feats as piercing their cheeks or padloking their mouths\.footnote\footnote{Afsos, pp.123-4.}

Dr. Buchanan found the ceremony of Muharram performed in Bengal "with much gaudy pomp, tumult, and musical parade" remarkable alike in "magnificence of show and in intolerable din".\footnote{Eastern India, Vol. III, p. 516.} In Bihar, especially in Purnea, he found the ceremony everywhere celebrated "with the same emblems savouring idolatry"\footnote{Ibid, p. 148.}. If in Patna and Bihar City the Ta'ziyahs were not so large as in Bengal, they were yet very numerous 14,000 were annually exhibited, of which about 600 were made by the Hindus\footnote{Eastern India, Vol.1, p. 144.}.

Mr. Gracin de Tassy was of the opinion that the mummerise of the Imambara were copied from the Hindus, especially the fastening of the mouth which was much in use among the Hindu ascetics\footnote{A.J., Vol. VII, 1832, p. 55.}. He further, pointed out that the ceremony resembled, in many ways, the Durga Puja of Hindus the Taziyah like the Durga Puja lasted ten
days and just as the Hindus on the tenth day, forming a grand procession amidst the sound of musical instruments cast the statue of goddess into the river, so did the Muslims pass in procession to throw down the Ta'ziyah\(^1\). Dr. James Wise finds other likenesses between the Muḥarram and Ratha Yatra of the Hindus, in both of which "the greatest merit is attributed to the persons dragging the car"\(^2\). Mrs. H. 'Ali on making enquiries was satisfied that the pompous display on this occasion had grown into a habit by long residence amongst Hindus "who make a merit of showy parades at all their festivals". The orthodox Muslims were as much surprised as the Europeans at the performance of such a ceremony which would be counted sacrilegious in Persia and Arabia\(^3\).

On of the most remarkable features of the Muslim worship in India during the nineteenth century was the veneration the people came to lavish on the saints\(^4\). The belief in saints and the worship of their shrines came largely readymade to India through those

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who introduced their religious orders from Afghanistan, Persia, and Iraq. But the existence of the ancient Guruchela practice among the Hindus and the universal belief in the worship of local gods and goddesses made it easy for saint worship to take a major part in Muslim religious life. In fact the Muslim masses entered into the worship of saints "with more enthusiasm than into the regular religious exercises which are obligatory."

The saints were regarded with reverence and fear even by the Muslim rulers of India and their assistance was often soughts thus. Firoz Shah before his expedition to Thatta sought the assistance of saints buried near Delhi by making pilgrimages to their tombs. The belief that divine wrath would fall on those who ill-treated a saint was also strong in minds of the learned. Barni writes that divine displeasure followed the killing of Darwish Sidi Mowla by Sultan 'Ala'-al Din.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the belief in the efficacy of prayers to saints had

become almost universal among the Muslims of India. The living Pir was applied to for the aid of his prayers, and amulets were sought from him as security against dangers. Tigers and leopards were considered both by Hindus and Muslims to be special property of such saints and in the sunderbans the Muslim devotees pretended to possess charm against the malice of tigers so that Hindus and Muslims presented them with food and cowries to secure their goodwill.

The list of Indian saints whose tombs had become objects of worship or pilgrimage is rather voluminous. Important among those who could count upon their devotees in Bengal and Bihar were 'Abd-al-Qadir, Sultan Sarwar, Shams al-Din Danial, Qutb al-Din, Shaykh Baha al-Din Dhakariyah, Farid al-Din Shaykh Nizam al-Din and Khawaj Mu'in al-Din Chishiti. The last

3. Born near Baghdad in 471 A.H., was gifted with the power of miracles and died in 571 A.H.
4. It was believed that the blind, the leprous and the impotent were cured by prayers at his tomb. (Shir Ali (Absos) The Araish-i-Mehfil, Fourth edition (Urdu text), Calcutta 1871, p. 159; Ja'far Shari'fi, Qanuni-Islam, p. 432-3.
7. Born and died at Multan, Qanun, p. 434.
8. He was reported to be so holy that by his looks clods of earth were converted into lumps of sugar. A.J. Vol. VII, 1832, p. 144.
9. He lived and died at Delhi, Qanun p. 434.
named was one of the most celebrated saints of India. His tomb at Ajmer was frequented by crowds of Hindus and Muslim pilgrims. Some carried their zeal so far or to take away stone or brick of the building, to be placed in their homes, which in turn would become a place of pilgrimage. Emperor Akbar was one of his great devotees and made the pilgrimage several time on foot to secure the birth of a son to succeed him.

Beside these saints of all India fame, each province and sometimes even each district had its own patron saint. In east Bengal alone they amounted to a considerable number the more important of whom. Dr. Wise records, were Shah Jalal of Sylhet, Panch Pir. Munnah Shah Darwish and Khondkar Muhammad Yusuf of Sonargaon, Shah Wali Baghdadi of Mirpur, Pir Badr of Chittagong, Shah Jalal Dakhini of Dacca and Adam Shahid of Vikrampur.


A great confusion seemed to exist in identifying this saint as accounts about him and Shah Jalal of Gaur and Pandua in North Bengal are most bewildering. Blochm & contributions to the Geography and History of bangal. J.A.S.B., Vol. XLII, pt. 3, No. 1, 1873, pp. 280-281.

The veneration paid to one of the saints of Sonargaon is described as follows: "When a ryot has reaped an unusually abundant harvest, he, in gratitude, present a few bundle of ripe rice at the tomb. If any calamity, as the illness of a member of his family, is threatened he brings rice or batasa (sugar cakes) and prays to the saint to avert the affliction. Hindus are as confident of the efficancy of this proprietary offering, and as frequently employ it as the Muhammadans".

Blochmann mentions the existence of a further half a dozen saints of importance whose Dargahs in Bengal and Bihar attracted local devotees in large numbers. He gathered short accounts of them from the inscriptions of the Muslim rulers of Bengal.

Shrines containing relics of saints were also the objects of devotion almost as remarkable. A shrine of great importance belonging to this category and attracting thousands on festival days was that in Mansurganj at Gorakhpur containing relics of saint


2. The saints were Shah Langar, Akhi Seraj al-Din, 'ala' al-DIn 'Alia al-Hiq Nur Qutb Alam, Chisal Ghazi, Badr Alam, the name of most of whom appear in inscription of Muslim rulers of Bengal. See Blochmana, contributions etc. J.A.S.B., Vol. Pf. 1, No. 3., 1873, pp. 236, 261, 262, 173, 284, 291, 294, and 302.
'Abd al-Qadir. In many parts of the country were mosques, supposed to contain a footprint of the prophet; such was the one on the bank of the Lakhya, east of Dacca, in which was a large slab of dark slate, fashioned into the shape of a footprint which was exhibited to any pilgrim on payment of a fee to the custodian. "In the same way as the Gayawal Brahman earns a livelihood by showing Vishnupada" (foot print of vishnu), say James Wise, "the Mutawalli (custodian or trustee) gains his by imposing upon the credulous and ignorant villagers". Of the same nature mention is made by Blochmann of the existence of a Dargah at Muazzampur of one Shah langer, the impressions of whose foot, he says, drew crowds of pilgrims about the time of 'Id al Fitr festival. Dr. Buchanan also speaks of similar monuments erected over the relics of Ismail Ghazi at Pirganj in North Bengal. One of these monuments was supposed to be under water in a lake and a flag hoisted on a long bamboo pointed out the place where those in distress made offerings in a boat.

The princes of India, the nobility and wealthy landlords had come to look upon the support of Dargahs as an action of great religious merit. They esteemed it a duty not merely to give land required for building the tomb of a saint and to permit the holding of a mela near the monument but also to grant lands the revenue of which was appropriated to the maintenance of these pious edifices and to the support of those who attended them. Thus, for keeping in repair the Dargah of Shah Makhdum and the Shah Qutb in Malda (now Rajshahi) and for the maintenance and support of the servants of the shrines, there were rent free endowments of twenty two thousand bighas and six thousand bighas respectively\(^1\). The small tomb over the relics of saint 'Abd al-Qadlr at Mansurganj had an endowment of 100 bighas land\(^2\). The tomb of a local saint Mulla 'Ata'ul-Din Dinajpur had attached to it a grant of 200 bighas land\(^3\).

The worship paid to these saints consisted, with minor variations, in going in procession to the tombs on certain solemn occasions, generally on Thursdays, sometimes on Fridays, to repeat prayers and deposit offerings

3. Ibid, p. 660, for another example of grant to the Faqir guarding a shrine see Eastern India, Vol. III, p. 59.
there; the votaries usually carried pikes, indifferently called wands, lances or banners, a piece of cloth being commonly fastened to them. On reaching the tomb, these pikes were stuck in the ground until they returned. The procession generally would be headed by faqirs and the offerings consisted chiefly of flowers, sweetmeats, pastry, occasionally vetches, oil, molasses, etc.

To the mela came all classes of people, devotees, musicians jugglers, courtesans and dancing girls, idlers and libertines, rogues and swindlers. The tirtha of the Hindus followed almost the same pattern and it is no wonder that in 1832 a Waahabi pamphlet described as follows, the degeneration of the Muslims of India; "If the Hindus have their Gayah, their Mathura, and their Kashi, the Muhammedans have their Makwanpur, (where the tomb of saint Madar is) their Bahraich (where the Holy Salar is buried) their Ajmer (where the attraction is the well known tomb of Khawaja Mu'in-ud-din chisti). The one set build Maths over their idols; the other not to be behind, raised domes over their saints' tombs. In the Maths you will find Mahants and Gosains; at Mohammedans Shrines, khadims, Mujawirs and Pirzadas".

The Dargahs were visited by the people in distress or in fulfilment of vows or for earning religious merit and their journey to these places of sanctity, they underwent "as much exposure and fatigue in reaching them or the strict Hindus on their pilgrimages to the sacred places of Jagannath or Brindaban". Every conceivable object of earthly desire, children, health, fortune or honour would be asked for by the devotees propitiating the saints by offering some vows. The veneration paid by a Muslim in this regard equally that paid by a Hindu to his Guru or Gosain. The former believed implicitly in the miraculous power of the pir, in his 'ability to cure diseases, to make sterile women conceive and as in the case of Shah Karim 'Ali of Jagannathpur, in Tippera, to raise from the dead and to cause rain to fall when and where he pleased. It was again customary for the Murid or disciple to make obeisances, Sijdah, touching the ground with the forehead. This was undoubtedly in imitation of the Hindus in their reverence to the Guru and it was looked upon as most sacrilegious by the orthodox all over the Muslim world.

Each Pir belonged to a known mystic order; he consigned to his disciples the genealogical tree of the individuals composing his religious pedigree and each spiritual family formed as it were, a monastic order which had a president. The succession to the presidentship was denoted by the transfer of staff and mantle of the deceased chief.\(^1\)

In literature the Muslim writers of Bengal seem to have been greatly influence by their contacts with the Hindus, whose mythology, customs and belief are stamped upon their work. In fact, this fusion of Islamic and Hindu ideas in the literary work of the Muslim's is clearly visible down to the middle of the nineteenth century.\(^2\) Apart from their greater use of Persian and Arabic words, they wrote in as sanskritised a style as their contemporaries. They took themes, modes, images and ideas from Sanskrit as unhesitatingly or did Hindu poets and they accepted the Hindu mythology and wrote on Hindu deities "with as much enthusiasm and reverence as any Hindu could have done.\(^3\)

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2. It was only after the reform movement in India had begun, especially the Muhammadi movement, that this tendency gave way to literary activities which can be called Islamic.
Some Muslim writers wrote on purely Hindu themes as for example did Shaykh Fayzullah whose balled on the glorification of Goraksha abounds with the mystic beliefs and practices of the Natha cult of Bengal\(^1\). The work of 'Abd al-Shukur and Syyed Sultan are similarly imbued with the ideas of the Saiva cult and mystic tantrism\(^2\). Other typical example of this class of literature are furnished by 'Alaul, who sang the praises of Siva, and Mirza Husayan, who composed hymns in honour goddess Kali\(^3\).

Even while dealing with Muslim themes, some continued to draw upon Hindu mythology In Nabivasna (Geneology of Prophets). Sayyed Sultan goes to the length of including Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and Krishna all Hindu

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1. Son, S., Bangla Sahityer Itishasa, Vol. 1, p. 752, Ghosh, op cit., pp. 84-85. Natha cult is a saivite cult mixed with Tanstrism and debased Buddhism and riotous with mystery, magic and mantra (Charm.)

2. Sen, S. op. Cit., pp. 593, 760-1, Ghosh of. Cit., p. 83; See also Shukur Mahmud's Panchali' Published by Ghulam Rosul, cal. 1319. B.S.

gods in his list of prophets\textsuperscript{1}.

Others again wrote on themes from popular Hindu Muslim belief. One of them represents his hero as having gone to the nether worlds to seek a boon from the seven sages of the Hindus\textsuperscript{2}. Another represents god as having appeared as half Krishna and half Muhammad to reconcile rival heroes, representing the two communities.\textsuperscript{3} A striking example of this class of literature is furnished by 'Abd al-Ghafur who identifies Ganga-Durga, Padma-Siva and all other house hold gods goddesses of the Hindus as relatives and friends of Ghazi, the Muslim hero\textsuperscript{4}. The interchange of ideas and thoughts had long ago led to the evolution of a common god, Satya Pir, worshipped by both communities and a mass of literature grew up in exposition of that belief\textsuperscript{5}.

\textsuperscript{1} Ghosh, op. cit., p. 83, see for details Sahitya Parisat Patrika, 1341, Vol. 11, pp. 38-54.
\textsuperscript{2} Sen, D.C., op. cit., p. 796; Datta, op. cit., p. 96.
\textsuperscript{3} Ghosh, op. cit., p. 82; Ghazi Mangal of Muslim poets can be called the counterpart of Rai Mangal of Hindu poets, in some of which kalu is represented as a crocodile god. Sen, S., op. cit., p. 925.
\textsuperscript{4} Sen., S. op. cit., p. 925.
\textsuperscript{5} Sen., D.C., op. cit., pp. 796-7.
A change in the outlook of Muslim writers becomes noticeable, however, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, after the Muhammadis had started a vigorous campaign to purge Islam of alien practices. Muslim writers then began composing poetical ballads on the models of the famous Persian and Arabic epics or translating them vernaculars.

Muslims of Bengal superimposed the worship of certain mythical personages around whom have collected various traditions, and romances. One of the most popular and much venerated personage was Zinda Ghazi, whose identity is difficult to determine, the more so because the legends around him and two other saints Ghazi Miyan and Sat Pir are strikingly similar. In the dangerous forests of Sunderbans, the woodcutters invoked certain mythical beings to protect them from tigers and crocodiles. In the twenty four parganas, the mythical hero was Muhurra Ghazi in the eastern part of Delta it was Zindah Ghazi, while to the Hindus it was Kalu Rai riding on a tiger to all of whom were ascribed the powers of controlling wild beasts. Every village in the 24 parganas had shrines dedicated to Muharra Ghazi and no one could enter the forest and no crew sailed through the
district without first of all making offerings to one of the shrines. The guardians of these shrines, claiming descent from the Ghazi, indicated the limits within which the forest was to be cut. The legend about this Ghazi suggests his marriage with the daughter of the Rajah of Sunderbans and ascribe immortality to him with powers of control over tigers. Both Hindus and Muslims raised little mounds of earth and made offerings of rice, bananas and sweetmeats before entering the most dangerous woods.

Of yet another type were the ceremonies connected with Satar Mas'ud Ghazi, believed to be either a brother of Tughlaq Shah or nephew of Mahmood of Ghani and in either case worshipped as martyr hero. To his shrine at Bahraich, pilgrims came from all over India "with lances decorated with red flags, and having at their head musicians singing and playing an tambours".


2. Ibid, Particulars obtained by J. Wise from popular band of musicians at Dacca.

Some carried articles necessary for a marriage ceremony, convinced that Mas'ud Ghazi renewed his nuptials, he being killed on his wedding day. This ceremony, according to Dr. Willson, was celebrated especially by the lower orders of the Muslim Society and by some low-cast Hindus. The belief in the power of this martyr was so great that in the trees around the strine, the devotees hung themselves with rope by the hands, feet or neck, convinced that these vain acts of penitence would enable them to obtain whatever they desired.

Although the tomb of the Ghazi was at Bahraich, in Oudh, it was the common belief that Mas'ud Ghazi resided for some time at Gorkhpur where 50,000 people annually assembled to celebrate his memory at two shrines built on the sacred spot. Sleeman was surprised to see Hindus even making offerings to the Shrine and imploring the favour of the "military ruffian" whose only recorded merit consisted in having destroyed a great many Hindus "in a wanton and unprovoked invasion of their territory". The common people believed that the man had "great deal of interestin heaven which he may be

induced to exercise in their favour by suitable offerings and personal applications to his shrine\(^1\). The pike or jhanda appears to have been used as a common article in this festival in many parts of India.

In the rural on the banks of the Lakhya river in East Bengal mounds smeared with cow-dung stood beneath grass thatches with two knobs at the top representing the Ghazi and his younger brother Kalu. The first milk drawn on the twenty second day after the cow had calved would be poured over the mound as libation and in times of sickness, rise, plantains and sweet were offered\(^2\). It is significant that the mode of devotion paid and the type of offerings made were all akin to those of the Hindus of East Bengal.

The legend of martyrdom on his wedding day is also attached to Sayyed Badr al-din Madar\(^3\), though another version represents him as being father of 1,142 sons and having had died at the age of 395 years 9 months and 26 days\(^4\). In the festivals connected with the

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1. Ibid., p. 49.
4. A.J., vol. vii, 1831, p. 54, The number of children attributed of Madar is supposed to explained by the supposed art or retaining his breath, assuming that the less frequently man respires, the longer he tives, Another version is that he never married and was even alive. See. Qanun, p. 241.
connected with the memory of this saint, pikes again appear. The picks were planted in different towns and village of India where musicians appeared beating a kind of drum and faqirs danced crying 'Oh Madar' and passed through fire lighted for that purpose. On the seventeenth of Jamadi-al-awal devotees assembled at Makanpur to celebrate the annual festival. G.A. Herklots saw millions of such devotees coming from different parts of India in 1832.

Although women came from great distances, they could not with safety to themselves, it is said enter the mausoleum containing his relics; they were immediately seized with violent pains, as if their "whole body was immersed in flames of fire."

It appears that there was a class of Muslim faqirs in Bengal & Bihar devoted to Madar who were called Madaris. Dr. Buchanan reported of as many as 1600 families in Purnea alone as belonging to this order and saw the order increasing. He also met large numbers in Rangpur where admission to the order was allowed to both

sexes. Some Madaris in their costumes resembled Hindu Sanyasis "going nearly naked in all seasons, braiding the hair and smearing the body with ashes and wearing iron chains round their wrists and necks. According to some Madaris the Prophet obtained access to heaven only by virtue of the words Dam Madar or the breath of Madar, the devise of the sect to which tradition ascribed many miracles. Again, the ceremony of passing through the fire was evidently borrowed from the Hindus to whom agni or fire is a much dreaded god.

One of the most popular and important among the host of such holy immortals was Khwajah Khidr. The identity of this personage who commanded awe, respect and devotion of million, is still a matter of dispute. By the first half of the nineteenth century, however, the Muslims of India had agreed that khidr "discovered the source of the water of life" of which he was the guardian. He was believed to be well skilled in

1. Ibid, p. 515.
divination and the phrase Khabari Khidri (the news of khidr) referred to public comprehension of the Government. Khidr was also regarded as a guardian spirit of the seas and rivers of India protecting marines from shipwreck. De Tassy, on the authority of Jawan, tells us that in the month of Bhadra, all those whose wishes had been fulfilled set afloat boats in honour of Khwaja Khidr with offerings of milk and grain.

In Bengal on the last Thursday of Bhadra (August September) this festival was observed by some Muslims and boatmen and fishermen of the Hindu community. The devotees burned incense and carried sweets played on musical instruments "letting off fireworks in great pomp and state," conveyed them to the brink of river and after offering fatiha fixed them on floating rafts and set them adrift with a cargo to money offerings. William Hodges while passing by Murshidabad was much entertained to see the river covered with innumerable lights just floating about the surface of the water. The festival

2. A.J., Vol., VII, 1832, p. 142, Qanun, pp. 272-3 for details
4. Hodges, W, Travels in India during the years 1780, 1781 & 1783, p. 35.
was also observed with much ceremony pomp and grandeur by the Nawab of Murshidabad in 1821.

In Bengal a certain Pir Badar shared with Khidr the dominion of the rivers. He was invoked by every sailor and fisherman when starting on a voyage or when overtaken by storm. Though it is not exactly known as to how this personage came to be regarded as a water god, all authorities agree that he lived in Chittagong, and the Dargah in the centre of the city used to be regarded as the 'pallidium of the city', where pilgrims from all parts of the country flocked on the 29th of Ramadan in fulfilment of vows or to obtain intercession of this saint.

2. J.A.S.B., Vol. LXIII, Pt. III, No. 1, 1894, p. 41. This saint is identified with Badr al-din Badri Alam who had his tomb at Chota Bihar, but who lived for long at Chittagong. According to one account he was a ship wrecked. Portuguese, Pas Goal Peeris Botheil by name. It is also supposed that about the beginning of the eighteenth century Pir Badar came to Chittagong floating on a rock, exterminated the Jims and took possession of the country, J.A.S.B., Vol. XLII, Pt. I, No. 3, 1873, p. 302; Anderson J.D., The people of India, p. 85.
Closely associated with the Pirism and probably directly derived from it is the worship of Panch-Pīr which played a prominent part in the Bengali Muslim society. In some districts of Bengal like Midnapore and Burdwan, the Panch Pīr is worshipped even today. "In west Bengal the 'five saints' from one of the main object of adoration, not only of Muhammadans, but also of Hindus of the lower grades. They are often worshipped as family deities, represented by a small mound an a clay plinth erected in the north-west corner of one of the rooms of the house. On this is fixed a piece of iron, resembling in its shape the human hand, each finger symbolizing one of the quentette, with a piece of yellow cloth bound where the wrist should be." In Sunargawn there is dargah, known as Panch Pirdargah. The sailors of East Bengal remember the Panch Pīr even to-day along with the name of Pir Badar, with a view to getting relief from dangers.

It is difficult to trace the origin of the worship of the Panch Pīr. It is hardly possible to put any date of

2. Ibid.
the Panch Pīr dargah of Sunargawn. The tombs are now found in a modern wall enclosure. By its side there is a mosque, which has also been completely renovated. It is just mentioned that the Panch-Pīrs are remembered by sailors along with the name of Pīr Badar. Who is this Pīr Badar? If he is identified with the celebrated Bihar saint Pīr Badur al-Din Badri 'Alām, the origin of the worship or at least the conception of the Panch Pīr may be dated to the 15th century A.D. But there may be objections to such conjecture, because the Panch-Pīr could have been associated with the some of Pīr-Badar at a later date as well.

Equally difficult is to answer the question, who were the fire Pirs? The list of five Pīrs differ in different places though the name of one or two local Pīrs are found in the Lists. In Bengal it differ from district to district, though in all lists, Ghazi Miyan finds prominence. It is also difficult to say whether Ghazi Miyan is a Historical figure. It seems, therefore, that the conception of Panch Pīr is purely conventional and there were no fire Pīrs, who constituted the lists.

An examination of both Hindu and Muslim religious practices show that the numeral five is important to both

Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus put importance to (a) the five chaste women, viz. Kausalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara and mandudari; (b) the Panchavati i.e. the jungle of five vatas where Rama and Sita were exiled; (c) the five Pandava brothers and (d) the five rivers, i.e., the five feeder rivers to the Indus. The Muslims also put importance to the numeral five in some respects, because they have to say their prayers five times a day, to recite five Kalimahs, and according to Islamic principles there are five pillars of Islam i.e., Iman (belief). Namaz (prayer), Roza (fasting), Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah) and Zakah (poor-rate). The Buddhists had the conception of five Dhyani Buddhas. It may thus be suggested that the worship of Panch-Pir originated through the extreme reverence to the Pir by both Hindus and Muslims. Though the approximate date of its origin cannot be fixed with certainty, this must is certain that it took a long time for the system to gain a popular force and to be accepted by both Hindus and Muslims as part of their socio religious life.

James Wise mentions the existence of a shrine in Sonargaon dedicated to Panch Pir whose five unfinished tombs attracted Hindu and Muslim devotees, none

1. Ibid., E. Haq; Bange Sufi Prabhava, Calcutta, 1935, pp. 242. ff.
knowing, however, who they were whose tombs they worshipped. The list of Five Pīrs, in fact, changed from district to district and displayed rather a remarkable compound of "Muslim hagiology grafted an animism", and in Bengal and U.P. it is perhaps the most remarkable instance of the fusion of Islam and animism. Some Panch Piriyas of these two places traced their cult to the five Pandava heroes of Mahabharata. In some list, again, Amina Sati, the ghost of some faithful widow who died on her husband's pyer, or Bhairava, a ruthless Hindu god, appear prominently. Among the lower orders of the society, both among Hindus and Muslims, five small mound in a corner of the house or under a tree formed the Shrine of this mythical divinity.

Among the Hindus, number five has always been regarded as a lucky one; five numbers formed and forms even to-day, panchayat, or village court of arbitration and Panchami or fifth Lunar day is one of peculiar good omen among Hindus. It is likely that some such idea had been the origin of this peculiar worship and number five might have been merely used to signify an indefinite number as half a dozen does in England.

2. Imperial Gazetteer of India ; Vol. 1, pp. 33-6.
3. Ibid., p. 436.
The long association of Muslim and Hindus and the spirit of tolerance which some great Muslim rulers fostered led to the evolution of common objects of worship. This was particularly true of the lower order of Muslims and Hindus who mutually applied to the deities or saints of the other community when they imagined that supplications to their own had been ineffectual. This practice, according to Buchanan, certainly extended to the Brahmins, Mullahs and Faqirs, and he suspected too that in Rangpur at least some Qadlis and Pandits were involved in this type of mutual worship. At Gorakhpur, in Bihar, he found that not only converts but even Muslims of rank and of foreign extractions were tinged with Hindu superstitions, very often owing to the fears of the women folk who in cases of danger could not be prevented from making offerings to the objects of Hindu devotion.

In Bengal a typical example of this kind of worship was the one of Satya Pir and Satya Narayana by Muslims and Hindus respectively the word Pir being Muslim substitute for the Hindu word Narayana. These words

implied 'true god' for the Hindus and 'true saint' for the Muslims. No image was necessary. The Satya Pir was appealed to only in cases of little importance, as he was supposed "to be very good natured and to concede trifles with much readiness".

A huge literature grew up in Bengal towards the beginning of the 18th century A.D. centering round the Satya-Pir. While the Muslim writes call him Satya-Pir, the Hindus change the word Pir for Narayana though there is hardly any difference between the Satya-Pir of the Muslims and the Satya Narayana of the Hindus. The worship of the Satya-Pir (or Satya Narayana) by both Hindus and Muslims could be noticed in different part of Bengal, especially in the western and northern districts even in the 20th century. A wooden plank is used to denote the seat of the Satya-Pir and offerings of edibles like confectioneries, milk, sugar, betel-leaf, betel nuts are made. The earliest work on Satya-Pir is attributed to Shaykh Fayd Allah, whose Satya-Pir kavya was composed in between A.D. 1545 and 1575. It is needless to mention

that the Satya-Pīr idea could not have grown in a day or in a year; it took many years to gain popularity among the people and to be a part and parcel of the social customs. If we allow at least one hundred years for the Satya-Pīr idea to obtain force in popular imagination so that it could influence a poet to write on it, and if the date assigned Shaykh Fayḍ Allah proves to be true, or even if his date is pushed forward by at least half a century, it may be concluded that the Satya-Pīr idea emerged sometimes in the later part of the period under review. D.C. sen thinks¹ that Sultan 'Ala al-Din Husayn Shah was the originator of the Satya Pīr movement, but there is no evidence to support his view.

The later Bengali literature records two traditions², regarding the Saty Pir (or Satya Narayan) worship. According to the first, Sri Hari (Hindu god) appears in the guise of a faqir before a poor Brahman and advises him to make offering of Shirni (confectionaries) to the Satya Narayana. The Brahmin obey the order and becomes rich due to the boon of the faqir. The second tradition is as follows: A certain merchant obtains a female child with the blessings of

2. Sukumar Sen, op cit, p. 835.
the Satya Narayan. He gives his daughter in marriage and take the son-in-law with him on a certain trading voyage. There he was put to troubles before a certain king, because he did not worship Satya Narayana. But as his wife worshipped him, the merchant got out of troubles and returned home. When they reached near the house, the merchant's daughter neglected prasada (offering) of the Satya Narayana and rushed out of the house to see her husband, and thus enraged Satya Narayana. The boat capsized, Satya Narayana was again worshipped. The merchant his son-in-law all trading vessels were recovered from the water.

How the Satya-Pīr idea originated in Bengal no one can say for certain. But a close examination of the tradition and the method of worship give the following points:

(i) Satya Pīr or the Satya Narayana claims worship from the devotees in the same manner as the Hindu local goddesses Manasa or Chandi does, as depicted in the Bengali literature.¹

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¹ For details, see (a) Vijaya Gupta: Padma, Purana, edited by Basanta Kumar Bhattacherjee, Bani Niketan, Barisal; (b) Mukunda Rama. Kavikankan chandi, edited by D.C. Sen. Calcutta University.
(ii) The method of worship shows that Satya Pir is not represented by any deity but by only a wooden plank.

(iii) Offerings of edibles are made just as they are made to the Hindu gods and the Muslim Pirs.

These points indicate that there is both Muslim and Hindu elements in the conception of Satya-Pir or it can be said with some amount of certainty that the Satya Pir concept originated through a mixture of the Muslim idea of the Pir and the Hindu notion of their deities. Judging from this standpoint, the origin or evolution of the ideal may be traced as follows: It is the result of the pirism or the Muslim conception of the super-human power of the Pirs. When the local people were converted to Islam, they got this conception of Pirism mixed up with their old ideas of the super natural power of the deities. A further evolution of this process saw the culmination in the personification of the Pirism in Satya Pir or the Pirism itself began to be conceived of as a super human power.

Later practices show that a number of imaginary Pirs receive reverence from the credulous masses.
These Pīrs are given different names like Manik Pīr, Ghora Pīr and Kumbhira Pīr. Offerings are made to them motivated by various gains and seeking relief from dangers. For example offerings of milk and fruits are made to Manik Pīr in north, south West Bengal. Folk songs called Manik Pīrer Gan are composed and sung in various districts. In south-west Bengal offerings of clay horses are made to Ghora Pīr with the notion that lame babies get recovery at that boon of the Pīr. Kumbhira or crocodiles are offered edibles and meat. The following account of the crocodiles of the Khan Jahan's tank at Bagerhat, will throw light on the point. "The fact appeared to be that the simple people of the district believe that these crocodiles can bless young ladies to come into an interesting condition, and their blessings are sure to bear fruit. Accordingly many young women repair to this place to bathe in sacred water of the tank, and implore the blessing of the saurian monsters. They offer them fowls.

3. Ibid., p. 239.
and kids; then paint a human figure with red lead on a stone pillar in the neighbourhood, and embracing it, vow to give away to the crocodile the first fruit of their blessings. This vow is never broken, the first born is invariably brought to the tank, and when, at the call of the Faqirs, the crocodiles rise to the surface, the child is thrown on the water's edge with words implying a presentation. But it is taken up immediately after, and borne home amid the rejoicings of the family". In some darghas people bind coloured threads to the branches of nearby trees to have the desired effect\(^1\). In some places stones or walls attached to dargahs are washed with lime\(^2\). Sometimes people offer edibles to fish or tortoise of the tanks attached to the dargahs\(^3\). The fish or tortoise are called Madari. In some district in north Bengal, people arrange a festival known as Madarer Banstola (lifting of the bamboo of Madar) in memorium to madari Pir\(^4\). It is difficult to trace the origin of these practices and beliefs. There is no evidence to show that they were prevalent during the period under discussion. But it is probable that they are also the result of popular influence as we have seen in the case of Satya-Pir or Panch Pir.

\(^1\) As in the case of the dargah ascribed to bayzazid of Bistam in Chittago

\(^2\) As it is found in Sunargaon.

\(^3\) For example, the dargah of Bayazid of Bistam in Chittagong.