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THE ROLE OF TURKISH MUSLIMS IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL FORMATION OF BENGAL DURING THE SULTANATE PERIOD (1204-1525)

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Abstract

This research analyses the role of Turks in the socio-cultural development of Bengal during the Sultanate Period (1204-1525). The study showed that Turkish Muslims contributed significantly to establishing fundamental rights in Bengal, such as protecting the rights of people of all faiths, social equality, a fair judiciary, and security. Moreover, the teachings and campaign of Sufis against injustice, including the caste system, social inequality, and intolerance, raised public consciousness and people who have different religions became interested in Islam as they were fascinated by Sufis' generosity, humility, and everyday lifestyle. Muslims established communal harmony and religious tolerance by allowing followers of all religions to participate in administrative activities based on merit. They introduced a universal education system, the Bengali language, and literacy development. Scholars of other religions were also encouraged, engaged, and respected in the pursuit of knowledge. The rulers of Turkish Ilyas Shahi dynasty formed the Bengali nation by uniting the isolated areas of Bengal for the first time during their rules. The study concludes that Turkish Muslims contributed to the development of almost every section of Bengali society and culture.

Keywords: Turkish Muslims, Bengal, Society, Culture, Education, Development.

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Müslüman Türklerin Saltanat Dönemi Boyunca (1204-1525) Bengal'in Sosyo-Kültürel Gelişimindeki Rolü

Öz

Bu araştırma, Müslüman Türklerin saltanat dönemi boyunca (1204-1525) Bengal'in sosyo-kültürel gelişimindeki rolünü analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, Müslüman Türklerin Bengal'de farklı inançlara sahip insanların haklarının korunması, toplumsal eşitlik, adil yargı ve güvenlik gibi temel hakların oluşturulmasına önemli katkılar sağladığını göstermiştir. Dahası, kast sistemi, toplumsal eşitsizlik, hoşgörüsüzlük de dahil olmak üzere Sufilerin adaletsizliğe karşı öğretileri ve kampanyaları, halkın bilincini yükseltmiştir. Farklı dine mensup insanlar, Sûfilerin cömertliği, alçakgönüllülüğü ve gündelik yaşam tarzından etkilendikleri için İslam dinine ilgi duymaya başlamıştır. Müslümanlar, bölgede yaşayan diğer dine mensup insanlara cömertlik ve iş birliğine dayalı idari faaliyetlere katılma fırsatı sunarak, toplumsal uyum ve dini hoşgörünün oluşmasını sağlamıştır. Eğitim yasağının kaldırılmasıyla, evrensel eğitim sistemi tanıtılmış, Bengal Dili ve Edebiyatı geliştirilmiştir. Diğer dinlerin bilginleri de bilgi arayışı konusunda teşvik edilmiş, onlar ile iş birliğine gidilmiş ve onlara saygı duyulmuştur. İzole Bengaliler birleşerek, Türk İlyas Şahî hanedanlığı döneminde bir ulus olmuştur. Çalışma sonucunda, Müslüman Türklerin Bengal toplumunun ve kültürünün hemen her kesiminin gelişimine katkıda bulunduğu ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müslüman Türkler, Bengal, Toplum, Kültür, Eğitim, Kalkınma.

Introduction

In the eighth century, Muhammad bin Qassim (d. 715), commander of the Umayyad ruler Walid (705-715), arrived in the Indian subcontinent's Sindh (now Pakistan) with a message of Islam (Avari, 2013). Although the Arabs arrived in the Indian subcontinent before the Turks, they did not settle permanently. However, according to historian Lane-Poole, "the real Mohammedan conquerors of India were not Arabs, but Turks" (1988: 4). Turkish Muslims' combined arrival and permanent settlement in the Indian subcontinent began with the Ghaznavids (1001-1187). Amir Sabuktigin, an Afghan ruler of Turkish descent, defeated the Hindu king Joy Pal in 970 and facilitated the Turks' access to the subcontinent by capturing Punjab and Peshawar (Schimmel, 1980: 9-12). The Ghaznavids established their capital at Delhi

and dominated a vast area of the subcontinent, including northern India. The Mughal Turks (1526-1858) established their dominance after the break of Turkish Muslims' power in the early stages (Sultanate period), which lasted until the British occupation of India in 1858; thus, Turkish Muslims enjoyed a long reign over the subcontinent.

Ikhtiar Uddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji, a Turkish general of Qutbuddin Aibak ruler of Delhi Sultanate, conquered Bengal in 1204 C.E, and consequently, the Muslim rule was commenced (Siraj, 1970: 548). The Muslim rule continued till the British occupation in 1757 C.E. in the battle of Palashi. Historians identify the long reign of 553 years of Muslim rule in Bengal as the most formative period in history and where the Turks played an important role (Mannan, 1994: 34). Before the political establishment of Turkish Muslims, Bengal was ruled first by the Buddhist Pala dynasty and later by the Hindu Sena dynasty. The Buddhists had made a substantial contribution to Bengali civilization before the advent of Muslims. Later, with the strong influence of Hinduism, the religious, political, and cultural environment of Bengal became quite unstable (Chowdhury, 2008). After the Turkish arrival in Bengal, the situation began to improve, and within a short time, there was social interaction between Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhist culture (Karim, 1992: 34).

The arrival and rule of Turks introduced numerous new components to Bengali society, causing changes in practically every aspect of life. Turkish-Islamic influences were found in religious, political, social, and economic life and a wide range of fields, including architecture, literature, art, aesthetics, and music. Islam was comparatively more liberal than any other religion in the region; Hinduism, on the other hand, was considerably stricter and barrier-like than the caste system, which drew Hindus from lower castes to Islam. A substantial part of Bengal's Buddhist religion, under pressure from Hindu Brahmins, was enticed by the Muslims' generosity and converted to Islam without any fight (Sen, 1928: 528). After the political foundation of Turkish Muslims, immigrants from Central Asia and North India, including ad-

ministrators, writers, poets, teachers, artisans, and others, lived permanently in Bengal, and they played an essential role in the socio-cultural development of Bengal (Karim, 1992).

Among the relevant literary works written so far on the role of Turkish Muslims in Bengal, Jaffar (1936), Md. Thowhidul (2017), Law Narendra Nath (1916), Abdul Karim (1959), and Mohammad Mohar Ali (1985) are some of the authors who have tried to highlight various aspects of the role of Turkish Muslims in Bengal in their writings. In these articles, the authors discuss the beginning of Turkish rule in Bengal, the socio-political situation of pre-Islamic Bengal, and the education system. As the direct effect of Turkish rule, Bengal has made considerable progress which they want to prove. Although this literature discusses various activities of Turks in Bengal at that time, it is not enough because the overall picture of Bengal's socio-cultural development, generosity, communal harmony, political stability, and social progress did not emerge as a result of Turkish rule. This article shows how Turkish Muslims contributed to the development of Bengali social culture through the restoration of liberal rule, the establishment of communal harmony, maintenance of law and order, the development of language and literature, and the establishment of welfare systems.

1. The role of Turks in the socio-economic formation of Bengal

Religion had played a vital role in the social system of Bengal since ancient times, and religion was the central element in building the social system. As a result, religious influences were visible in every sphere of Bengali life. In pre-Muslim Bengal, Hindu and Buddhist classes were influenced by their religion, but Buddhist Pala rulers introduced good governance in Bengal. The Pala rulers were liberal in administrative, social, and cultural spheres, which led to establishing peace and order in society (Elius, 2020). On the other hand, the Sena rulers were very exception. The Sen

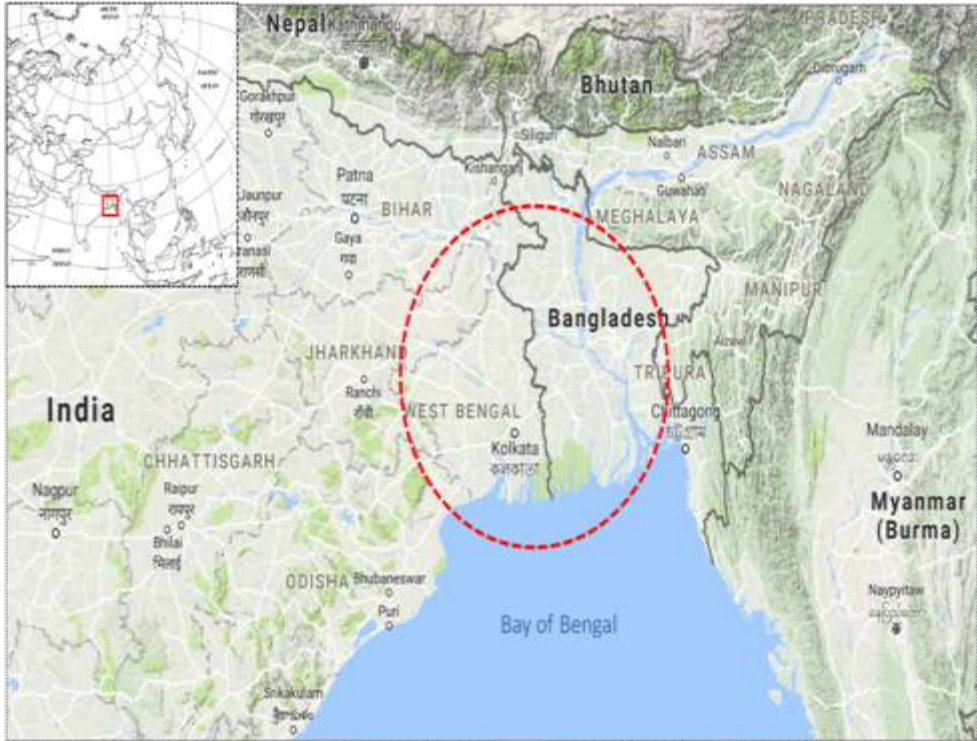
Brahmin rulers in Bengal had resurrected strict religious doctrine and tortured Buddhists, leading to a smattering of Buddhists fleeing to Anbal, Arakan, Pagan, Kuki, and Nepal from the Bengal region (Chowdhury, 2008). The Hindu Sena rulers established a caste system (also known as aristocracy) in Bengal, through which the Hindu community's lower castes were deprived and persecuted by the upper caste Brahmins, which disturbed the socio-religious stability of Bengal (Sen, 1928: 529). A large section of the Buddhist and lower-class Hindus of Bengal had long been victims of the Hindu rulers and a tiny number of Brahmins (Ahsan, 1986). Upper-class Hindus humiliated and insulted the entire Buddhist community in numerous ways by using several sub-names to humiliate the Buddhists. A lower-caste Hindu could never belong to an upper caste society as it was impossible to be a Brahmin if one was born as a lower caste Hindu (Chowdhury, 2008: 310).

The Muslim rule of Turkish descent initiated a multi-faceted change in the social system of Bengal. Islam commands the protection of rights of all people, by which Turkish Muslims tried to protect the rights of all people. The Turks adopted a liberal social policy, showed respect for all the religions of Bengal, were sympathetic to the ordinary people, and did not discriminate in any way. The rulers valued the sentiments of the natives (Rahim, 1963). Numerous superstitions were prevalent in Hindu times at that time, one of which was the practice of *satidah*. If the husband died before the wife through the practice of *satidah*, then the wife would be burnt in the fire with the husband. After establishing Muslim rule in Bengal, many rulers did not allow the practice of *satidah* to continue (Ibn Battuta and Mahdi Husain, 1976: 21). Although there were also rich and poor in the Muslim society, it was not a complex system like the caste system of Hindus. In the Muslim administration, there was an opportunity to get high rank and respect according to merit. Muslim rulers did not impose Islamic rule on non-Muslim subjects in Bengal (Eaton, 1993).

Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah, during his reign, established the first unbroken Bengal with Sonargaon, Lakhnauti and Satgaon territories. Bengalis have since emerged as a nation. Like many other ethnic groups, including Aryans and English, Muslims were also foreigners, but they settled permanently by considering Bengal as their motherland. There is no evidence of allegations of looting and smuggling Bengal resources against Muslims during the Sultanate period. The Turkish Muslims lived in Bengal for generations and made multifaceted contributions to the culture and civilization and the local ethnic groups, the benefits of which were enjoyed by all communities, and which still flow in modern Bangladesh. The Turkish sultans did not interfere in the internal affairs of any religion and granted freedom to other religions. When the famous Hindu reformer, Sri Chaitanya, introduced the revolutionary concept of “Vaishnavism” for the reform of degenerate Hinduism, the conservative Brahmins sharply criticized and opposed it and complained to the Sultan. Aladdin Husain Shah, the then ruler of Bengal, investigated the allegations and found that the Vaishnava concept was not harmful to Hinduism, which led the Sultan to allow this concept to spread (Tarafdar, 1956: 69-70).

The Elias Shahi rulers recognized and praised many Hindu administrators, army officers and zamindars for their contribution to the state. An actual example of the generosity of Turks is that the Muslim rulers of the entire Indian subcontinent imposed *jizya* on non-Muslim subjects, but the Turkish rulers in Bengal omitted *jizya* on non-Muslims here (Elius, 2020). The Muslim rulers in Bengal followed the principle of co-existence between the followers of different religions, which made it easier to establish social order and security. Muslims participated in Hindu social events, and so did Hindus who participated in Muslim social events and exchanged gifts, thus maintaining social harmony.

Figure 1: The geographical area of Bengal (Siddiq and Habib, 2017).



Turkish rulers and expeditions played an essential role in building a prosperous and robust society in Bengal (Abdul Karim, 1959: 73-83). Sufi saints came to Bengal to propagate Islam even before the Muslim expedition. Sufi saints participated in the socio-cultural activities of Bengal and influenced them almost everywhere, from cities to rural areas. Most Sufi saints came to Bengal from Turkey and Northern India, notably Shah Sultan Rumi, Shah Paran, Khan Jahan Ali, Shah Ma-khdoom, and Baba Adam (Saklain, 1993). The role of Sufis in the perfection of the Muslim society and the culture of Bengal during the Sultanate period is undeniable. A section of Sufis of Bengal were skilled scholars (they acquired a degree in Islamic

education) who taught the ordinary people various subjects, provided proper training to the judges for conducting judicial affairs, and provided guidance to Muslim rulers in exceptional cases. All these Sufi scholars were highly respected (Tarafdar, 1956: 315). The Sufi saints used several methods to reach the ordinary people in the remote areas of Bengal, the most famous of which was the *langar khana*, where they distributed food among the poor. Sufis had opened such *langar khana* in different parts of Bengal (Siddiq and Habib, 2017). The Sufis used to communicate directly with the public of all religions, castes, and creeds of the local natives.

Muslim rulers provided political support and economic and administrative facilities to the Sufis for social development and propagation of the religion. On the advice of the Sufis, the Muslim leaders of the local administration occasionally interacted directly with the public (Hasan, S. M., 2012-2014: 29-3). However, the Sufis, despite the patronage of the rulers, devoted themselves to simple living and service to humanity instead of living a luxurious life. The Sufis played an essential role in creating public awareness against injustice, including caste, social discrimination, bigotry, and called for equality, generosity, brotherhood, morality, and many people of different religions became interested in Islam by witnessing their simple life (Al-Masud et al., 2017: 105-121). Fascinated by the generosity and politeness of the Sufi saints, and to escape the dreaded caste system, most of the Hindu lower classes converted to Islam (Ali, M., 1985: 786).

During the Turkish rule, the agricultural system of Bengal became self-sufficient and agricultural production as well as the number of products multiplied. The development and growth of textile industry meets the local demand. During this time, the use of metal industries such as iron and copper increased, and the two-headed sword of Bengal became famous in the subcontinent. The government introduced a welfare control system in the market system. Economic dynamism came through gold and silver coins. The cottage industry was widespread in rural areas,

and women were involved in this profession. During the Turkish Muslim rule, Bengal's trade relations with different parts of the subcontinent, along with the Arab world and Europe, were strengthened, which changed the economy of Bengal (Karim, 1995).

At the beginning of the Muslim period, Khalji rulers of Turkish descent built long dams in Lakhnauti, the capital of Bengal, which benefited many of the local people. Inscriptions from the Sultanate period show that numerous bridges and inns were built for travelers and traders, with people from all religions involved (Tarafdar, 1956: 315). The Turkish rulers built numerous mosques for the Muslim community and allowed the construction of religious shrines for other religions, built several hospitals, and built numerous roads throughout Bengal to strengthen the communication system (Siddiq and Habib, 2017). During the Sultanate period, various tax activities were carried out, including the establishment of the market control system for economic welfare, provision of loans to farmers, strengthening of the police department for public security, recruitment of village police, development of irrigation system, digging of canals, financial assistance, and rehabilitation of farmers affected by natural calamities (Karim, 1992: 61).

There is also criticism about the Turkish Muslim rule in Bengal. RC Majumdar, a modern researcher on the history of Bengal, has presented various facts and arguments claiming that pressure on the lower-class Hindus played a fundamental role in the propagation of Islam in Bengal during the Sultanate period (Ahsan, 1986). Another criticism is that there is no evidence of women's participation in the administration in the early stages of the establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal and historians are skeptical about the contribution of women in the professional fields. Many scholars of modern history point to this as one of the weak points of Turkish rule in Bengal during the Sultanate period. The use of enslaved people was common in Bengal during the Sultanate period, despite the prohibition of slavery in Islam, as was

the case in various parts of the subcontinent with Muslim rulers and nomads enslaved (Mukherjee, 2009: 109-129). During the Turkish Muslim period, the rulers appointed non-Muslims to some positions in the government.

Regarding conversions, the opinion of historian Richard Eaton is very constructive that Hindus were most of the subcontinent population during the Muslim rule in the Middle Ages, and Hindus are still the majority in the Indian subcontinent (Eaton, 1993). The Turkish liberal policies led to forming a strong and powerful society with the participation of people of all faiths, which was beneficial for everyone. Along with the socio-economic development of Bengal, the Turks also contributed to the administrative and cultural progress.

2. Administrative and cultural progress: A symbol of welfare state

Multidimensional elements can be found in the administrative structure of Bengal since ancient times. The Pala rulers ruled Bengal for an extended period of 400 years. In the Pala administrative system, the reign was confirmed from one center, and their empire was divided into many smaller units, usually called *Bhukti*, *Mandal*, *Bithi*, and one representative each to manage these (Bagchi, 1993: 42-56). Originally the Pala rulers relied on the administrative experience of their ancestor Maurya dynasty (320-185 BC). The Maurya's introduced a benevolent system of governance in the subcontinent with a strong presence, and the Maurya's shared a certain degree of governance with the city as well as the rural institutions (Altekar, 1977: 30-42). The Pala rulers adopted a liberal policy in governing the affairs of the Palas, including the participation of other communities in the Pala administration, and through religious universalism in Bengal, the same well-organized system was established in Bengal, which perpetuated and stabilized the Pala kingdom (Bagchi, 1993). However, many things changed during the hundred years of rule of the Sena

in post-Pala Bengal. The Pala rulers employed people of different faiths in their administrative activities, such as the famous Pala ruler Gopal appointed a Hindu Brahmin as his prime minister (Chowdhury, 2011: 45-50). However, the Sena rulers did not include anyone other than Hinduism in administrative activities. The Sena rulers empowered the ultra-conservative Brahmins to set up and administer land to them, giving them the power to determine and collect rents. Ordinary people were deprived of their rights and tortured by amateur Brahmins, which resulted in a massive financial disaster (Kosambi, 1991: 172).

Turks had established a benevolent administrative system in Bengal from the very beginning based on liberal principles, which was mainly in imitation of the traditional Arab-Persian system of governance of Islam. However, in some areas of the administrative system, they followed the local system to adapt to the local people (Rahim, 1963: 34-35). In the first few decades, the Muslims extensively recruited locals into the administration based on merit by adopting a liberal policy irrespective of religion and caste. While Hindus were allowed to participate in various state activities, most of the former Hindu employees were retained in their positions, which helped in the dynamics of administrative work. All the Turkish rulers showed generosity towards the Hindu community, but the Husain Shahi rulers showed the most incredible generosity towards the Hindus during their rule. The Husain Shahi rulers had given many vital positions to the Hindus in the state. (Taher, 2003). Ganesh Bhaduri, a member of the Hindu community, was the prime minister of Alauddin Firoz Shah, the last ruler of the Hussain Shahi dynasty (Majumdar, 1960).

The Muslim rulers of Turkish descent, as well as being skilled warriors and skilled administrators, conquered Bengal and at the same time established stability by maintaining peace and order. A significant aspect of the Turkish rule was that they built major cities of Bengal, such as Pandua, Ekdala, Sonargaon and Lakhnauti.

Some evidence proves that they divided the whole of Bengal into several units (provinces) on account of political purposes. One *iqtidar* (administrator) was appointed in each *iqta*, who simultaneously acted as administrator and army officer to maintain law and order to ensure border security. The Turks used their administrative experience in central Asia to establish a functioning and administrative solid structure in the whole of Bengal. (Abdul Karim, 1999: 58).

In the development of judiciary, Turkish Muslim rulers followed religious law and ensured justice for all. According to society's laws, they governed the social and judicial departments and introduced the gram panchayat system. Muslim judges and the judiciary were respectful and tolerant of other religions. The sultans appointed *Qazis* (judges) but did not interfere in the affairs of the judiciary. The Sultan himself judged in case of important issues such as sedition. Some sultans came to the court for trial and set an example by accepting the decision of the *Qazi*. The administrators won the hearts of the people through humility. Following the principles of the traditional Caliphate of the Caliphs in the early days of Islam, Muslim rulers acted as protectors and guardians of society, working for the safety of the people (Rahim, 1963).

Turkish Muslims brought their famous culture and tradition to Bengal, and architecture was one of them. After the Turkish conquest, many architects came to Bengal from Central Asia and North India and designed their new style of traditional Islamic architecture. Architecture flourished here long before the arrival of Turkish Muslims in Bengal, but after their arrival, a unique local architectural style developed in tandem with the Persian-Arabian style (Dani, 1961: 2). The main elements of architecture used as connecting materials were various high-quality materials, including lime, sand, *surki*. They used beautiful pictures of nature, herbs, waterfalls, rivers, hills, etc., on the walls of the aesthetic buildings. Architects of the Muslim period used to introduce cornices in the construction of buildings and curved lines

on the walls of forts. Mosques and tombs were the most notable in Muslim architecture (Husain, 2007: 12).

Muslim architects designed the buildings to suit the climate of the region. Bengal is a riverine region and receives a lot of rainfall every year, which makes the climate quite humid. Muslim architects applied various architectural techniques, keeping in mind the weather conditions. This period is also called the golden age of the glorious architecture of Bengal. Among the monuments of the period are the *Dakhil Darja* and the *Tantipara Mosque* in Gaur. Sultan Yusuf Shah constructed *Tantipara Mosque* in 1469 as it is the most beautiful mosque of the Sultanate period. Many forts were also built at the time. It was customary for the saints to build their tombs next to the *khanqahs*. The Muslim rulers placed the cultures of other religions in various establishments for communal harmony and attached inscriptions of different cultures to the coins of Bengal. The Muslim rulers of the Sultanate period built numerous small and large mosques in Bengal (Sarkar, 1948). They did not only build mosques and madrasas for the Muslims but also helped in the construction of religious institutions of other religions, especially for the Hindus (Eaton, 1993). Along with the administrative and cultural progress of Bengal, the Turks played an essential role in the progress and development of the Bengali language and literature.

3. Educational progress and development of Bengali language and literature

Bengali had an excellent experience in education, language, and literature during the Turkish Muslim rule. Inspired by Islam, the Turkish rulers took various steps to spread education in Bengal, like the Muslim rulers of Delhi. (Islam, 2017). From the beginning of the establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal, Bakhtiyar Khalji and his successors built numerous madrasas and mosques (Siraj, 1970: 427). One of the characteristics of the Muslim rulers was that during their rule, they established

famous mosques and popular madrasas and took care of them and paid for them (Kaur, 1990: 30-31). Like other educational institutions in other parts of the Muslim world, the education system of madrasas in Bengal was quite advanced (Riaz, 2011: 69-86). During the Sultanate period, considering the political and economic needs of the Muslims, large towns and cities sprang up in Bengal. Scholars used to teach in educational institutions, and students from different subcontinents came here for education. The scholars associated with the department of education did not accept the exchange of education, they provided free education to the students, and the scholars accepted teaching as human service and a respected profession (Long, 1868). The educational institutions established by the Muslim Sultans played a significant role in qualifying the ordinary locals to run the state and build an enlightened society. Muslim rulers, Sufis, and administrators were educated, and they played an essential role in spreading education (Law, 1916).

Many Turkish rulers practiced art and literature, wrote poetry, and acquired skills to pursue knowledge. The rulers respected and patronized the Pandits and honored them by appointing them as their advisors. Muslim rulers and elites donated land to spread education, and Muslim expeditions bore the cost of many educational institutions and *khanqas*. Sufis have been conducting educational activities in Bengal since long before the spread of education by the Turkish rulers. The madrasas established by the rulers and the institutions of the Sufi saints played an essential role in the development of the Muslim education system and society in Bengal. They introduced khanka-centric education system in the early stages. Later, the Turkish conquest of Bengal led to an increase in the number of Muslims, which led to an increase in the number of educational institutions in the Sufi khanqahs. Later, Muslim rulers introduced a mosque-centric education system in Bengal (Choudhury, 2003: 445). They used their funds in maintaining education among the poor people, but from the beginning of Muslim rule in Bengal, the rulers assisted the Sufis in various activities. In some cases, wealthy people used to introduce Maktab in their homes.

The education system of pre-Muslim Bengal did not have free access for all religions and castes, and there were strict restrictions on the caste system in the education system. There was no opportunity for the lower castes to obtain an education. The education system was under the control of Brahmin scholars, and thus only the upper castes could receive an education. At that time, the education system was religious, and the medium of instruction was *Sanskrit*. The frontier of acquiring knowledge was limited to the elite. (Choudhury, 2003). The educational system of pre-Muslim Bengal had the presence of educational institutions as institutional structures, better known as *tolls*. The children of Brahmins got the opportunity to get an education, but the children of wealthy families also got the opportunity to go to *tolls* for money. According to many historians, Hinduism was taught in the language of culture, According to Datta, grammar, poetry, literature, astronomy, philosophy, theology was taught in *toll*, and Brahmanical scholars were involved in the teaching profession (Riaz, 2011). *Toll* was better known at that time also another institution called *Path Shala*. The school is a version of the *toll*, through which the locals used to get an education. In addition to religious education, technical education was imparted in the school. According to Ali Riaz, the school's education system was secular, and various subjects like mathematics, agriculture, boat building, and language education were included in the school curriculum. (Law, 1916: 168).

Although many languages were prevalent in the Bengal region, only 'Sanskrit language' was the medium of education and culture. *Sanskrit* was widely used as a medium of instruction, government, and the language of the aristocracy, and the Brahmins had exclusive rights over this language. However, the Sanskrit language was used only for religious ceremonies, literature, royalty, and aristocracy. The Turkish administration encouraged the practice of culture. The rulers played a significant role in developing and developing the Bengali (Sen, 1911: 4). They selected Bengali as the medium of communication between the aristocracy and the ordinary

people because Bengali was predominant among the languages of all the local people. Turks could enter the root level only through the Bengali language. The development and modernization of the Bengali language started during the period of Muslim rulers in the Middle Ages. Historian Dinesh Chandra Sen emphasized the political prestige of Turkish Muslims in Bengal for the development and growth of the Bengali language and literature (Hasan, 1989: 58-74).

Muslim culture was developed significantly by adding the Islamic style to Bengali literature (Haq, 1957: 65). Muslim scholars also wrote poems and literature in Bengali, which contributed to the enrichment of the Bengali language. Sultan Azam Shah (1389-1409) patronized learning, and Bengali literature reached an apex in his era. A famous Muslim poet Shah Mohammad Sagir wrote *Yusuf Julekha*, a religious novel that enriched the trends of Bengali literature. Under the patronage of Nusrat Shah, the Bengali Hindu poet Sridhar wrote an epic entitled *Vidyasundara*. Krittivas Ozha translated the valuable texts of Hinduism, the Ramayana, which gave the local ordinary people the opportunity to learn Hinduism. He wrote the *Srikrishna Vijaya*, and the other two famous books of poetry of the contemporary period were *Manasamangal* and *Manasabijaya* (Sultana, 2009: 201).

Many words from Turkish, Arabic, and Persian entered the Bengali language and literature during the Muslim rule. Ample Turkish words still exist in the present Bengali language. For instance, '*bahadır*' a Turkish word, is used in Bengali in the same sense as *bahadur*, which means brave in English. '*Baksi*' is '*bakshi*' in Bengali, which means cook in English. '*Ghazi*' is used in Bengali exactly as '*Ghazi*' which used as a warrior in English. Turkish word '*kazancı*' is '*khazanesi*' in Bengali, used as treasurer in English. The Turkish word '*han*' is used in Bengali as '*khan*'. The word '*khatun*' in Bengali comes from the Turkish '*hatun*' (Chatterji, 1926: 342). The use of many Turkish words is also noticeable in Bengali courts. For example, '*tujuk*' is a Bengali word whose Turkish root word is '*tüzük*' meaning dignity. The word

'*fakir*' in Turkish is used in the same meaning in Bengali. The Turkish word '*kara*' is used in Bengali as '*kala*' with the same meaning (Chatterji, 1926: 342-344).

The Turkish rulers also have made significant contributions to the development of Muslim literature and Hindu religious literature and culture. Muslim rulers have patronized and respected Hindu scholars. Famous poets like Shrikar Nandi, Vijay Gupta, Bipradas Pipilai, Maladhar Bose, Parameshwar, and Krittibas were highly patronized by the Turkish rulers. In the era of Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah, *Bhagavat*, the religious book of Hindu, was translated from Sanskrit to Bengali (Haq, 1957). The Muslim generals and regional rulers also patronized the Hindu scholars in his reign. Poet Kabindra Parameshwar and Shrikar Nandi wrote the book of Hindu poetry *Mahabharat* in Bengali under the patronage of Muslim general Paragal Khan and Chhuti Khan.

The principal reason for such kind of patronization of the Muslim rulers toward the Bengali language and literature was to strengthen the Turkish rule in Bengal. They tried to comprehend the locals' attitudes through the Bengali language, exchanging experiences and thoughts with them. Although Bengali culture, literature, administration, and overall education system were developed on a solid foundation during the Turkish rule, no significant contribution was found in practicing science, and no fundamental discovery was found yet (Jaffar, 1936: 2).

Conclusion

Before the arrival of Turkish Muslims, there was instability in the society and culture of Bengal. As a result of the caste system, the social gap became acute. Due to the Hindu Brahmins' strict social and religious principles and unprofessionalism, the Buddhists and the lower-class Hindus were deprived of their rights and persecuted. Despite the short period of Hindu Sena rule, extreme conflicts took place in the society of Bengal. The situation changed as a result of Turkish Muslim rule in

Bengal. The Muslim rulers generously established the rights of all religions, caste, and creeds. The Muslims did not interfere in other religions; the rulers played a neutral role in administering justice. Based on merit, followers of all religions were allowed to participate in administrative activities. Communal harmony and religious tolerance existed in every sphere of Bengali life. Public awareness was created due to the teaching of humanism by the Sufi saints against injustice, caste system, social discrimination, and bigotry. By the influence of the generosity, humility, and simple life of the Sufis, the oppressed people of different religions were interested in Islam. Bengal had an excellent experience in education, language, and literature during the Turkish Muslim rule. Before the advent of Islam, the education system in Bengal was confined only upper class of Brahmanism, but the Turkish rule facilitated mass education. Bengali language and literature developed under the direct patronage of the Turkish rulers, and the once-neglected Bengali language became one of the official languages during the Muslim rule. The Turkish rulers made significant contributions to the development of Muslim literature and Hindu religious literature and culture. Muslim scholars have patronized and honored Hindu scholars, and Hindu writers have translated and written many books with the direct assistance of the Muslim sultans. The trend of spreading education in Bengal, which started successfully during the Sultanate period, continued later in the Mughal period.

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