THE PROSE WORKS OF

MIR MASARRAF HOSEN

(1869-1899)

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Abstract

In the introductory chapter the general importance of a study of Mir Masarraf Hosen's works is discussed. It is stated that all his prose works have not been examined and the reasons for the selection are given. Chapter II consists of a brief account of his life. It summarises all the available biographical information and makes particular use of Nasarraf's own autobiography.

Chapters III, IV and V contain a detailed examination of those of his works which have been selected for special study. The works are taken in chronological order beginning with his earliest known work, Ratnabati. In addition to the analysis of the contents of these works some examination is made of Nasarraf's Bengali style and of the qualities which justify his being regarded as an important figure in 19th century Bengali literature.

Chapters VI, VIII and VII consist of critical analyses of various aspects of Nasarraf's works. Chapter VI deals with his style and diction. Chapter VII summarises what he has to say about the condition of Bengali society at the time, including popular beliefs and superstitions, orthodox codes of behaviour, the education system, the status of women and unrest among the peasants, particularly those who worked on
indigo plantations. More general consideration of his own mental outlook and attitude to contemporary life and society is given in Chapter VIII, which also attempts an analysis of his attitude towards, and his opinions about, the British government in India and the British people with whom he had come into contact.

Chapter IX looks at the reception of Nasir-ud-Din's works by readers of his own and subsequent generations. It presents a historical summary of the principal reviews of his works. Contemporary reviews are examined in fairly close detail and later reviews more generally. The concluding chapter summarises briefly his achievements as a dramatist and as a prose writer, his status in the history of Bengali literature and his influence on later Muslim writers.
Acknowledgement

My words fail to express my deep sense of gratitude to my most respected Guru, Lt. Col. T. W. Clark, M.A., O.B.E., Reader in Bengali, University of London, under whose direct supervision and care this thesis was prepared. It is due to his supervision and vigilance that this thesis was completed within a limited time. With great patience and kindness he has read my manuscripts and suggested various improvements in different stages. Never in my life will I forget his affection and the care he has shown to me during my stay in a foreign country. I will always bear a happy memory of these days I worked with him.

I am also indebted to Messrs. R. Russell and D. Barber who helped me in many ways. I also express my gratitude to the authorities of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the British Museum and the India Office Library for the use of their libraries. Finally my thanks are also due to Mrs. Fuller who so neatly and carefully typed the manuscript.
<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>A.J.</td>
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<td>B.Y.</td>
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<td>J.D.</td>
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<td>L.U.</td>
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<td>R.T.C.</td>
<td>The Report of the Indigo Commission</td>
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<td>S.C.A.S.</td>
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<td>U.P.M.K.</td>
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### Transliteration

**Vowels:**

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The symbols used in this table represent the sounds of the Hindi alphabet.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of Mir Mas'arraf Hosen's prose work is important from two points of view. Firstly he is the first successful writer both in prose narrative and drama among the Muslim authors of modern Bengali literature. Secondly his prose writings reveal certain important aspects of contemporary Bengali society, which are of interest to both the general reader and the social scientist. It is however in the creation of literature in Bengali that Mas'arraf's primary importance to his reader lies.

Literature, as is known, conveys many levels of meanings. An author "sets out to invent a plot to describe action, to depict the interrelationships of characters, to emphasize certain values, wittingly or unwittingly he stamps his works with uniqueness through an imaginative selection of problems and personages. By this process of selection he presents an explicit or implicit picture of man's orientation to society: privileges and responsibilities of classes, conceptions of work, love and friendship of religion, nature and art."\(^1\) This is true

of Nasarraf's writings. They display a number of sentiments which are provoked by his realisation of the insecurity of woman in society and by his disapproval of the moral degradation of many of the zamindars of Bengal. Nasarraf understands that man's life is deeply influenced by a variety of forces, which operate within human society; and that since he is born within that society he will love and hate, struggle and suffer and ultimately die as a member of that society. The creative writer, and it is claimed that Nasarraf is a creative writer, will portray "how man reacts to these common experiences. . . . . which almost invariably have a social nexus." ² Nasarraf was a keen observer and revealed powers of insight into the characters and behaviour of the men and women whom he observed striving under different social forces. These human strivings he sometimes treats sympathetically but more often caustically especially when he is treating the behaviour of the rich, and the rejection by them and others of conventional religion and ethics.

Some of Nasarraf's work, as will be seen later, is fiction but others belong to the category of biography, which

²Leo Lowenthal, op.cit.
also includes much that is autobiographical.

There is no doubt that Masārraf was the first and most outstanding creative writer among the Muslims in the 19th century. His works include verse, prose narratives and prose dramas. We find some prose works written by Muslim authors before him. But those works have little value as literature. One of such works is Ḫaḍāṭ-ye Ḫaḍāṭ by Khandakār Mohammad Samsuddin Siddiki, published in 1860. It is in the main a metaphysical treatise, representative of much didactic writing which Muslim authors were producing at the time, but it had little or no appeal to ordinary readers. Moreover a major part of the book is written in verse. Next we find two or three more minor writers: Munsī Nāmdār, Golām Mosen (possibly another name of Nāmdār) and Sekh Ajimuddin. Munsī Nāmdār wrote as many as 12 booklets, partly in verse partly

3 'Ucit Ṣraban' means 'what one should listen to', copy in The British Museum.

4 These 12 books are available in British Museum and India Office Library:

a) Kaśite Hay Bhumiḵampa, Naridār Eki Dambha, Calcutta, 1863.
b) Dui Satīner Jhakra, Calcutta 1868
c) Kalīr Bū Har Jālānī, " "
d) Kalīr Bū Har Bhangānī, " "
e) Nāmad Ḫaṭer Jhakra, " "
f) C Bancharaner Galpa, " "
g) Bangīye Siyal Raja, " "

(cont.)
in prose. They are very small books containing only 8 to 16 pages, and were published between 1863 and 1869. They have little literary merit, though some of the books were published four times within a year or two. Golām Hosen's Kalir Bau Har Jvalāni published in 1868 seemed to have taken from Nāmdar's writings. Ajjimuddin's Karir Mathay Buro Biye is a short farce on the marriage of an old man who bought a young wife. The book was also written part in prose and part in verse. Masārraf's first work Ratnabati published in 1869 was entirely different in theme and style. It is far better in style than the writings of the authors mentioned above. If Masārraf was influenced by a Bengali author it was almost certainly the

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h) Nanchar pheṣa,

i) Karir Solakala

j) O Khelaramer Gita,

k) Nutan Jhar,

I) Kheder Gan.

---

5 The identity of Golām Hosen and Nāmdar is uncertain. S. K. Sen suggests that the name Nāmdar might be a pseudonym of Bhola Nath Mukho Padihay. (vide, Bagla Sahityer Itihas, Vol. 2, 4th ed., p.103). Though he gives no reason for his assumption. The relationship between Nāmdar and Golām Hosen is unclear. If Golām Hosen is a separate person it must be concluded that his writings are plagiarised from Nāmdar. Confusion also arises because no exact date of their publications is available.

6 Sekh Ajjimuddin, Karir Mathay Buro 1869, copy in India Office Library.
famous Hindu novelist Baṅkim Candra Cār̥ṭopādhyaẏ and not any of the Muslim authors. Baṅkim Candra had published two novels 7 before Maśarraf wrote Ratnabati and the resemblance between Maśarraf's diction and that of Baṅkim suggests that Maśarraf had read Baṅkim's work.

The characters of Ratnabati, though guided or helped by some supernatural or magical power, are subject to human feelings too. Sumanta, one of the heroes of Ratnabati, felt attracted towards the princess whom he secured by magic. However at last he gave her up so that she might marry his friend. It may be pointed out here that in Maśarraf's writings it is found that love is not successful. Ejid of Biñad Sindhu failed to secure the woman he loved. In the lives of other heroes in his writings there is a sign of frustration. The lives of Narendra and Basantakumāri are wasted through no fault of their own. Muraṇnehar of Jamīdar Darpaṇ was murdered by a lascivious landlord, Ābu Nolla a weak peasant was driven from his house by a powerful zamindar. Licentiousness was rampant in upper class society. Rākim Sāheb, Begam Sāheb of Gājī Mīyār Bastāni are examples of a society morally debased. Kenny, a historical person, died with a sense of failure both

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7Baṅkim's third work, Mrinalini and Maśarraf's Ratnabati were published in the same year, i.e. 1869.
economically and mentally.

In the early part of the 19th century the Hindus of Bengal took the full advantage of western education introduced by the then British Government in India, economically and intellectually, they advanced rapidly towards modernisation. The Muslims of Bengal however were lagging far behind. The landed aristocracy among the Muslims were effete and declining day by day. Poverty and superstition prevented acceptance by Muslims of the opportunities of westernised education. As a result they were defeated in every walk of life, in employment and in social privilege. The Education Commissioner Report of India in 1882 will show how amazingly small were the numbers of Muslims in primary or secondary schools, and in the University. Not only in education but in trade and commerce too the situation was the same. All these circumstances led to a sense of frustration among the Muslims, especially those of its upper class. So directly or indirectly in all the works of Mas'arraf his pictures of Muslim society portrayed the frustration which had penetrated their lives.

The social history of the 19th century Bengal reveals the growth of a middle class in Hindu society. There is little evidence that such a middle class had developed among Muslims who were still divided into rich and poor. It may be that in
the Dāktār Bābu, in Bhīrā kānta in Gājī Mīyār Bāstānī we have characters who might be called middle class. But they are comparatively of little importance. The conflict in this book is between rich zamindars supported by senior government officials and the poor. The rich enjoyed all the privileges of wealth, rank and status. The life of the poor was generally one of misery and depression and repression. The European indigo planters, who are also portrayed in Masārraf's work, belonged to the rich upper class.

Masārraf was aware that the Muslims had fallen behind Hindus in social development, particularly in regard to the development of an educated middle class. In Udāsin Pathikēr Maner Kāthā he brings the peasants together to fight for their common cause, and to secure for themselves a higher place in society. In Gājī Mīyār Bāstānī, and in Jamīdār Darpan, where peasants are totally repressed, Masārraf pours scorn on the wealthy upper class and it is obvious from his comments in Gājī Mīyār Bāstānī and in Bīsād Sindhū that he was hoping for a society which would guarantee fair play, justice and freedom to all its members.

Lastly as an autobiographical author his place in Bengali literature is noteworthy. He does not try to impose the story of his own accomplishments on his readers. His candid confessions
about his own follies is also praiseworthy. During the 19th century Bengali literature had seen quite a large number of autobiographies in which authors describe their own achievements, some with exaggerated detail and colour. Masarraf was more modest, though it is sometimes difficult to be sure whether he is describing authentic situations and incidents taken from his own life or whether he is branching off into the realm of fiction.

Masarraf's life story gives sufficient material for a study of Muslim society in Bengal of the time. His own life has certain bearings on his literature also. His failure to marry the girl whom he loved and his great discontent in the marriage to which he was compelled and his disappointment at not being allowed to go to England for higher education gave him pain which we can sense throughout his life, and which influences his other writings.

In the present thesis Masarraf's prose works have been studied. Though he composed several books of verse they are

\[8\] Notable autobiographies are:

a) Ras Sundari Dasi, Amar Jiban, 1863.
b) Kaveri Candra Bidyasagar, Svaracita Bidyasagar carit, 1891.
c) Kartikey Candra Ray, Atma Jiban carit, 1896.
d) Devendranath Thakur, Atma carit, 1898.

not of high quality. Of his prose works only those are examined which were published between 1869 and 1899. Some of his prose works were published later than 1899. They are: Eslāmer Jay (1908), a book on history of Islam, Āmar Jābānī (1908-10), an autobiography, Bibi Kulsum (1910), the biography of his wife. The biographies furnish us with ample materials for his private life. In this thesis frequent use has been made of these works. His autobiography is full of the romantic experiences of his early life and his Bibi Kulsum is a sincere tribute to his late lamented wife.

During the period under observation Masārraf wrote a farce Er Upāy Ki in 1876, but since no copy of it is available this has not been brought under discussion. Another essay of his, Go-Jibān, which was published in 1889 is also not available so it also is excluded. There is another reason for selecting Masārraf's prose works written between 1869 and 1899: they are the best and most representative of his works, and on them his reputation as one of the greatest writers of 19th century Bengali prose rests.
CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF MIR MASARRAF HOSEN

Most of the information regarding the life of Masarraf Hosen is found in Amār Jibānī, his autobiography, and in Bibi Kulsum, a short biography of his wife. There are however references to his life in two of his other works, Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā and Gāji Miḍar Bastānī, in which he describes social and cultural conditions in Bengal.

Masarraf is presumed to have been born in 1847 in the village of Lahinīpara in the present district of Kustīya of East Pakistan, the then Division of Nadiya in the Bengal

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1 The exact date of birth of Masarraf is not known. Brajendranath Bandyopādhyāya in his Sahitya Sadhak Caritmāla, Vol. 2, Book 29, 4th Ed., on p. 33 of Mir Masarraf Hosen gives the date as 13th November 1847. It is stated that the date is calculated from the biography of Masarraf's father published in a weekly journal in Bengali named Education Gazette of October 1903. (Bengali Year, 29 Aswin, 1310.) Masarraf writes in page 3 of his autobiography that he is going to narrate the life story of the past 65 years. The book was published in 1908, so the date of his birth would seem to be 1843. Again, on page 305 of the same book, he writes that he was 20 years old at the time of his first marriage in 1865. From this date his date of birth would be 1845. On page 76 of the same book he gives the date of his mother's marriage as Dec./Jan. 1845/6. This indicates that the date of his birth was not earlier than 1846.
Presidency. His father's name was Mir Moyajjam Hosen, his mother's Daulatammā. Masarraf's parents were well-to-do.  

Masarraf in his autobiography gives a brief history of his family and his ancestors. The autobiography is divided into twelve parts. At the end of each part the author inserted certain relevant pages which have originally formed part of another work, Gāji Miyār Bastāni, part of which had been published in an incomplete form in 1899. The inserted passages are taken from the unpublished part of the work.

In the first three parts of Amār Jibānī, entitled "Āmi Ke" (Who am I?), the author describes the history of his ancestors, with a particular emphasis on the life of his grandfather.

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2 In 1860 by an order of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal the Nadiyā Division was divided into 4 districts and 18 subdivisions, and Kustiya was a subdivision in the district of Pabna. (Vide K. N. Mallik, Nadiyā Kathi, p. 90) In 1862 Kustiya was transferred to Nadiya (Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XIX, New Ed., p. 298.)

3 The story of his father will be found in the discussion of the book Udāsin Pathikker Maner Katha, on p. 142 of this thesis.

4 Amār Jibānī (My life), in 12 parts published between 1908 and 1910.

5 Gāji Miyār Bastāni, Part I, published in 1899, for a fuller discussion vide p. 167 of this thesis.
His earliest known ancestor was Saiyad Sadulla who travelled from Bagdad to Faridpur in Bengal. Sadulla was a saint, and he was accompanied by a number of disciples who had attached themselves to him in Bagdad. They settled in Seka, a village in the district of Faridpur. Sadulla started his journey in search of his father who had left home many years previously. It appears that one of the sons of Sadulla's preceptor, Sah Fahlayan was already resident in Seka when Sadulla's party arrived. Sadulla actually stayed in his house and ultimately married his only daughter. Sadulla had four sons but their names are not recorded in the autobiography. The name of one of his grandsons, Hir Kutabullah, was however recorded. At this point Masarraf gives an account, which to a modern eye seems to be supernatural, regarding the location of Sadulla's grave. Before his death Sadulla instructed his four sons to dig his grave east and west. According to Muslim custom the grave should be dug north and south. Sadulla's sons followed usual conventions, but on the very night each of the sons saw in a dream that their father had changed the direction of the grave, by virtue of his spiritual

\[6\text{Amar Jiban}, p.4.\]
power, so that he could continue his prayers in the tomb. Sadulla was displeased with his sons and he cursed them that none of his descendants would be a scholar in scripture and that they would all suffer from pain in waist during their life time.

Sa'īd Mir Kutabullâ, a grandson of Sadulla, had two sons. A genealogical table prepared from Masarrâf's autobiography is as follows:

| Table 1 |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Sadulla         |                  |
| * son           | four sons, names not given |
| Mir Kutabullâ   |                  |
| Mir Omar Daraj  |                  |
| Mir Ibrâhim Hosen = (first marriage) = second marriage |                |
| Jolfekâr Ali    | Moyâyjman        |
| Hosen           | Hafijâ (d)        |
|                 | Nasima (d)       |
| = Hamidânnessa  | = Daulatânnessa  |
| Ali Asgar       |                  |
| Masarrâf        | Muhtesam         |
| Mokâr-          | Bajlal           |
| Samsunnessâ      | Mohammad        |
| (d)             | Abdus            |
| Ali             | Samad            |
| * name not given |                  |
| (d) daughter    |                  |

7 Amâr Jîbânî, pp. 8, 55.
Saiyad Ṣadullā claimed descent from the Prophet Mohammad. Masārraf states that Ṣadullā was a "Mir", a title presumably given to him by an emperor or assumed by virtue of a court appointment. ⁸

No definite date of Ṣadullā's arrival in Bengal is recorded. Masārraf conjectures that it might have been 'at least 250 years ago'. ⁹ If this means 250 years before the date of publication of the autobiography, the date of Ṣadullā's arrival will be approximately 1650-60 A.D. This calculation assumes forty years as the average duration of a generation. There were six generations from Ṣadullā to Masārraf. Twenty five years might be a more reasonable figure for the average duration of a generation, and if this is accepted Ṣadullā's arrival must have taken place in the early 18th century.

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⁸ a) The word 'Saiyad' is an Arabic term used for the descendants of Mohammad, the prophet (A Dictionary of Islam, T. P. Hughes, p. 556).

b) The word 'Mir' means an emperor, or prince or lord, governor, chief or leader, a title by which saiyads or descendants of the family of Mohammad are called. (Persian-English Dictionary, F. Steingass, p.1560.) It is seen that the title 'Mir' seems to have a variety of application. According to T. P. Hughes, A Dictionary of Islam, p.350, it is used as a title of respect for the descendants of the celebrated Mohammadan saints, in particular for those saiyads who are descended from Fatima, the Prophet's daughter.

c) In page 8 of his autobiography Masārraf writes that the title 'Mir' was awarded to Ṣadullā by a king for proficiency in governmental duty. The title was used by his descendants. Masārraf however does not mention the name of the king by whom the title was awarded to Ṣadullā.

⁹ Amār Jibānī, p.4.
Masarraf gives no account of sons of Kutabullā. However he narrates the life story of one of the grandsons of Kutabullā. Ibrāhim Hošen, the grandson of Kutabullā, was the grandfather of Masarraf. He narrated the life story of his grandfather in the first three parts of the autobiography in considerable detail. Ibrāhim, who was a handsome young man, was interested in hunting and wrestling etc. but not in his studies. Once his father asked his wife not to give him any food when he came home and ordered that ashes should be given to him instead. At night, when Ibrāhim came in, he was surprised to see ashes on his plate. He asked his mother what this meant, and she told him that his father was angry because he was neglecting his studies. Ibrāhim was shocked and left home secretly that very night. He decided to go to Mursidābhād, the then centre of learning and culture for Muslims. On his way to Mursidābhād he received hospitality from a woman zamindar, who took a fancy to him. Ibrāhim took up his residence in her house which was at Saotā.

The woman zamindar adopted Ibrāhim and before her death made him heir to all her properties. After the death of the woman her cousins, who were residing in another village, came and drove Ibrāhim away by force. His life was in danger. Later he was given shelter in Jessore (Yaśohar) by another kind-
hearted lady. While in Jessore he helped the police in capturing some robbers who had broken down the wall of the prison at Jessore. The magistrate of Jessore was very pleased with him and offered him a reward of two hundred rupees. Ibrahim refused it. Whereupon he was offered a job, but this too he refused. In the course of his conversation with the magistrate however he told him how he had been evicted from the property at Sāotā which had been left to him by his patroness. The magistrate helped him to recover the property. It appears that after the recovery of his lost property he returned to his paternal home where he married. It is recorded that he had two sons and two daughters by this marriage.

When Ibrahim's first wife died he married a second time. His second wife was a young widow whom he happened to see earlier on a river bank. He had a son and a daughter born of this marriage. Before his death in 1827 (Bengali year 1233, Caitra) he divided his landed property among his sons. The youngest son Maheb Āli and his mother were given a separate house in another village, Lāhinīpāta.

Ibrahim's first son Jolfekār Āli died early leaving behind a daughter. As a result Muyājjām Hosen, the second son of Ibrahim, looked after this girl. In course of time she was given in marriage to one Sā Golām Ājam, who later conspired to
 deprive Moyājjām of his property. During the latter's absence from home Sā Golām changed the wording of Ibrāhim's will and took over possession of Moyājjām's house. In consequence Moyājjām had to leave the village. 10

Moyājjām Hosen was the father of Nasarraf. At a young age he married a lady Ḥamidannesa by name who died leaving a male child. The child also died shortly after his mother's death. 11 In 1845 (December, or January 1846) Moyājjām married again, this time the daughter of one Munsi Jinātulla 12, who was a head clerk to the District Magistrate of Rangpur. Jinātullā had previously resided in Kasimpur in the district of Nadiya, but afterwards came to live in Lahinipara. Moyājjām had become disinterested in worldly affairs after his eviction from his home, but the second marriage made him interested again in family life.

At this point of narrative the author inserts a local story, a legend concerning the origin of the river Gauri which flowed past the village. The story itself is taken, it would seem, from

10  Amar Jibanī, p. 74. For a fuller account, see Udāsin Pathiker Maner Katha, pp. 29-33, and page 154 of this essay.

11  Ibid and Udāsin Pathiker Maner Katha, p. 6.

12  Amar Jibanī, p. 76.
popular lore, and has no apparent connection with the narrative. It is a Hindu story. A maid whose name was Gaurī worked as a servant in the house of a Brahmin and his wife. Once the Brahmin left home to worship the goddess Gaṅgā but before he went away the maid Gaurī gave him some flowers and asked him to offer them to the goddess. He went to the river and performed the necessary rites but forgot the flowers which had been given to him. Just before he reached home he remembered the flowers and turned back towards the river. On the way he came across a small puddle by the side of the road. He stopped there and put the flowers in the water. As he did so a female figure appeared before him. It was the goddess Gaṅgā who to his eyes bore a striking resemblance to the maid Gaurī. In consequence of the appearance of this apparition when he returned home he fell at the maid's feet and worshipped her as goddess Gaṅgā. She fled from the house of the Brahmin then and there. The Brahmin followed her. As she ran water issued from her body in the form of a river. Eventually she disappeared.

Whether the story was created in folklore to justify the presence of the river Gaurī outside the village is unknown. But it is no unusual thing for rivers of Bengal to change their course and if the river Gaurī had some time ago changed from its old course to one outside the village, it would not be
surprising that such a story could have been invented. Nasārraf attaches some importance to water of the river Gaurī as it had some remedial powers on disease. It is stated that he used to drink the water of Gaurī while he was ailing.

In the fourth part of Amār Jībānī the author describes his own birth. He paints in detail the miserable conditions which Muslim women had to undergo during confinement and the superstitions and malpractices observed during childbirth.¹³ Muslim practice in this regard was not altogether the same as that of the Hindus, but they have many points in common. Hindu women were taken into a separate hut built outside the house for the delivery of the child. In a Muslim household there was a special room for this purpose. The superstitions and some of the practices of Muslims are indistinguishable from those of the Hindus. It was necessary for childbirth to ward off maleficent influences of Bhuts, Prets, Brahmadāityas, and other spirits of the dead. It was a common belief that evil spirits would harm a young child. Dry wood was kept burning in the room for 40 days. The skull of a cow was hung on a bamboo pole outside the house. This is clearly of a non-Muslim origin. The prayer call (Ājān) was made loudly near the room where the

¹³ Amār Jībānī, pp. 93, 97-99.
young child lay. The words of the call were shouted out loud because it was believed that spirits could not tolerate loud sounds and would not come within hearing distance of Ājan uttered with the holy name of God. The first ceremony after the birth was held on the sixth day. A pen, a penknife, an inkpot, a piece of paper were placed by the side of the child as it was believed that on this day God would come to the baby and write its destiny on his forehead. This is clearly a Hindu custom. The next day the hair was cut from the head of the child and weighed and an equivalent weight in gold and silver was distributed to the poor. This is a Muslim practice. A further rite mentioned is Ḥikā, which involved the sacrifice of two goats (one goat in the case of a girl). A name was given to the young child on that day.

Munsi Jinātullā, the maternal grandfather of Masārafa, was not present in the house when he was born, but he was so pleased to hear the news that he gave the bearer of it a large gift. Masāraf's grandmother loved him dearly. As he was then the only child in the house he was allowed great indulgence in his early boyhood. As a result he became a naughty and restless child, so much so that his father had to rebuke him from time to time.
Masarraf’s education began in the manner customary in orthodox Muslim families. He began to write when he was four years and four months old. It was customary that a ceremony was held on the very day on which a young boy formally started his education. This ceremony is generally known as hate khati (a piece of chalk in hand) that is, initiating into the art of writing. On the occasion of Masarraf’s hate khati the ceremony was conducted by one Munsi Jamiruddin, a man of strong personality of that time, who was the tutor of Masarraf’s father also. Sweets were distributed on the occasion. One Munsi Herachatulla was engaged to teach him Arabic, and another to teach him Persian. Later he attended a village pathsala where he began to learn Bengali in a class, conducted by one Jagamohan Nandi.

Masarraf was very friendly with an indigo planter, one Mr. T. I. Kenny who owned a factory in the neighbouring village of Salghar Madhuyā. The young Masarraf must have made quite an impression on Kenny, who suggested to his father Mo’ayjām that he should allow his son to accompany his two daughters to England so that he might qualify for the Indian Civil Service, the examination for which in those days was held in England.

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14. *Amar Jibanī*, p. 102. For a fuller discussion of the education system of those days, see p. 244 of this thesis.
only. Nayajjam was prepared to agree to the proposal though he did make condition that his wife and mother-in-law should be consulted first.  

In the fifth part of the autobiography Nasirrafi describes the vehemence of his grandmother's opposition to Kenny's proposal. She put forward all the orthodox arguments, namely that he would marry an English girl, become a Christian, and so on. Nayajjam was compelled to refuse to let the boy go to England, though it is interesting to note that afterwards a younger brother of Nasirrafi did go to England and read for the bar.

In the same part of the book there is a story about his younger sister. While she was nine years old there was a proposal of her marriage with a son of Nafer Nosen, a clerk of the collector of Fabana district. However Nasirrafi's mother did not approve of this proposal. It seems that Nafer Nosen did not come of a respectable family. Accidentally, Nasirrafi's sister died of fever within a few days. Nasirrafi also describes his mother's death in this part. It was in the year 1861. His account suggests that he was strongly suspicious of foul play. His father had a mistress who it is alleged gave some small doses of poison to Nasirrafi's mother, who died six months

\[^{15}\text{Amar Jiban, p.112.}\]
later.  

Masarraf's father was very friendly with some indigo planters in the district. There was at this time some agitation among the peasants against the planters, which Masarraf describes in detail.  

In the sixth part Masarraf hinted at a misunderstanding between his father and mother. Some little while before his mother's death there was a theft in the house, which Masarraf describes in considerable detail with vividness. This sort of episode is typical of his autobiographical writings. He clearly recalls certain incidents, not necessarily very important ones, and narrates them in such a way that the reader can appreciate the excitement of the moment. It was a very dark night about the time of new moon. His father was away from home. His grandmother, his sick mother and two brothers were sleeping in one room. It was customary for them to keep a lamp burning all night. But the lamp they used did not hold much oil. So it was necessary to keep a brazier burning to relight the lamp when more oil had been put

16 Udasin Pathiker Maner Katha, pp. 170, 177, 185.

17 The detailed account to be found in Chapter VII of this thesis.

into it. The grandmother gave clear orders on the subject to the maid servant. When the lamp went out the grandmother woke and called out the maid to refill it and relight it. On this occasion the maid found that the lamp had oil. She also noticed that the earthen brazier had been removed. Then she called the guard who was sleeping in the corridor. The guard went to the kitchen but there was no fire in the kitchen so he went to a neighbour's house and brought fire. When all the inmates of the house were asleep again the lamp went out a second time. The maid woke up and called to the guard again to bring fire. He was annoyed this time but while he was going to the neighbour's house he heard some people whispering in the darkness by the side of the well. The guard thought that they were thieves. So he hurriedly went to the outer house and woke up another servant from sleep. Then both of them took two sticks and beat the thieves severely. The thieves were also armed with weapons. One of them hit the guard with a spade on the shoulder. The guard was wounded, and he shouted loudly. Meanwhile all the inmates of the house were awake and there was an uproar. The people from a house nearby came and the thieves ran away. But the guard recognised all of them. One of them was an ex-servant of Nasarraf's family. The thieves were caught by the police next day and after a
trial all of them were sentenced to several years imprisonment.

About this time there was a clash between Bengalis and some traders from Northern India. The quarrel took place between the boatmen of a certain police official and traders who were passing along the river Gauri with arms and ammunition which belonged to government. There was a British officer in the boat who managed to restore peace and order. In the course of his description of the episode Masarraf describes local Bengalis as timid and cowardly.\(^{19}\)

At this age Masarraf was already interested in literature and verse-making. Even before this he had composed some verses, some of which were riddles. These verses have been lost except for one riddle which is quoted on page 165 of the autobiography. He also describes the manner of conducting verse-making competitions. Two parties entered into competition with one another. One side composed a verse and the other had to match it, taking care to ensure that the responding verse began with the same letter than the challenging verse had ended with. The give and take continued until one party was unable to produce a verse. All sorts of tricks were possible. One is illustrated

\(^{19}\)Banikim Candra Cattopadhyay in his essay "Bengalir Bahubal" speaks about Bengalis' timidity, vide Bibidh Prabandha, Basumati Edition 1910, p.619.
in a passage which is quoted in this section. A verse ends with a consonant which does not occur in Bengali in an initial position. The respondent was consequently unable to continue according to the rule.

Masarrəf at this time was interested in traditional Muslim Bengali literature which was becoming known about this time as Puthi. He mentions in particular two famous 18th century works, Āmīr Ḥāmja and Sonābhan. 20

In the seventh part of his autobiography Masarrəf confesses some of his follies of his adolescent days. Herepents that he had disgraced his morals in the company of women. He describes his introduction to high society. When he was fifteen or sixteen years old his father took him to Padamdi to call on Nābab Mīr Māhmmād Ālī. 21 They travelled by boat and the journey is described in some detail. Masarrəf was surprised when they reached Padamdi to see how luxurious the Nābab’s house was.

20 Puthi literature - a kind of literature in verse composed generally by Muslim writers of the 18th and 19th centuries, the subject matter being taken from Muslim life, legends or history. These are written in "mixed diction characterised by the fusion of Arabic, Persian and Bengali words" (S.S.Husain, A Description of Catalogue of Bengali Mes, Int. p. xviii). During recent times these are known as Dobhasi Puthi. Notable writers are Garibulla, Saiyad Ḥāmja. For a fuller description vide K.M.A. Mannan's unpublished Ph. D. thesis of L. U., 1964, The emergence and development of Dobhasi literature in Bengal.

21 Mīr Māhmmād Ālī, a cousin of Masarrəf, later on he was awarded the title of Nābab by the then Government.
On this occasion Masarraf stayed with the Nabab for a few days. During that time he was introduced to card playing, witnessed dances performed by professional dancing women known as Baiji and, possibly, to the less respectable company of women whom the Nabab kept in his house. Masarraf describes a trip by boat during which he played cards with the Nabab and one of his concubines. The journey by boat was made in the course of a visit to the house of one of the Nabab's relatives, his younger brother's father-in-law. A special dancing performance was arranged for the visitors. The Nabab himself was not married. It appears that he had some kind of philosophical objection to marriage which however did not preclude his enjoying female companionship in an illegitimate fashion.

From Padamdi the father and the son journeyed to Dacca to stay with a relative. Reference is made to the purchase by Masarraf's father of some jewellery for which purpose he had to borrow money. It is made clear that Masarraf did not approve his father's action on the ground that his mother was dead and there was no sister at home to wear the jewellery. One must assume that Masarraf knew why the father had purchased the jewellery, and conclude that he did not approve of his father's loose living.
At Dacca Masārraft met a school-teacher who presented him with a Bengali version of the Sanskrit drama Kādambarī. He also procured a dictionary from the same school master. From Dacca Masārraft went again to Pādāmndo. After a month or so he and his father returned home by boat.

In the eighth part Masārraft describes this boat journey.

Masārraft passed some of his time during the journey fraternising with the boatmen, who explained to him the various methods of catching fish practised by the fishermen in that district. One of the boatmen told him that a tiger had been trapped not far away from where they were and went on to explain various methods used in tiger hunting. By a fortunate coincidence Mir saw a tiger from the boat. It appears that the tiger was following the boat along the river bank. When the boat was driven near the shore by the wind, the tiger made motions which suggested that he might jump aboard. The boatman however managed to pull the boat back in the middle of the stream. So the attack did not materialise. However Masārraft reached home safe and sound. After some time Masārraft’s father departed to Serājganj and Masārraft was left in the charge of his step-grandmother who had come from Pādāmndo to visit them.

Casual references are made to important projects in this district. There was a proposal to set up the sub-divisional headquarters
at Kustiya and to build an English school there. Meanwhile a railway line connecting Kustiya with Calcutta was under construction. His step-grandmother was worried to see the boy spending his time idly and it appears that she undertook to educate him in morals. She illustrated her teaching by narrating the history of the Nabab's family and of the family into which the Nabab's younger brother had married. She describes with obvious disapproval the foppishness of certain Muslim landlords, and warns the boy against following their example.

The ninth part of the autobiography begins with the old lady's account of the history of Masarraf's maternal ancestor who it appears came originally from Bagdad. Meanwhile Masarraf had been enrolled as a student in the new English School at Kustiya, where his formal education can be said to have begun. It appears however that the step-grandmother's teaching did not deter him from erratic conduct. With two of his friends he decided, without the knowledge or permission of his father, to pay a visit to Calcutta. On the way they met a confidence trickster who by demonstrating some trick, which seemed to them magical, managed to rob them of all their money. However they reached Calcutta on foot and there they stayed at the house of the uncle of Masarraf's friend who after three or so days gave them money for their fares and sent them back to Kustiya.
Mascarraf's grandmother was greatly disturbed by the incident.

Mascarraf's father then sent him to Padamdi to the Anglo-Bengali School. This part concludes with an important account of the penetration of the caste system into Muslim society.\footnote{Amar Jibani, p.262. For further account vide p.281 of this thesis.}

Mascarraf's education in Padamdi does not seem to have made satisfactory progress. He was residing too near to the house of the Nabab, who frequently sent him an invitation to join him in his leisure activities. He became friendly with one of the Nabab's concubines. How far the relationship went it is not known. When his father realised that his education was subject to frequent interruption he withdrew him from Padamdi and sent him to Krishnanagar which was the principal town and headquarters of Nadia district. Krishnanagar had for some time been famous as a place of learning. The boy was admitted into Krishnanagar Collegiate school. Krishnanagar was predominantly a Hindu town though there was always a fairly large Muslim minority. Here Mascarraf made his first real acquaintance with Hindu traditions and culture. His education in Krishnanagar did not last long. Within a year he went again to Calcutta where he met a friend whose father, Nader Rosen, had been a clerk of Pabna
collectorate and was at that time Amin (revenue clerk) at Alipur in the district of 24-Parganas. Nader Hosen invited Masarraf to stay in his house and prosecute his studies from there. He wrote to Masarraf's father asking for permission for him to do so. This is the same Nader Hosen with whose son there was a proposal of marriage for Masarraf's sister at an early date. Incidentally Masarraf describes here the life story of Nader Hosen also. At an early age Nader fortunately met a British officer who was looking for a tutor to teach him Urdu. Nader was appointed the tutor and luckily he met another British magistrate in the house of that officer. The magistrate took a fancy to him and ultimately gave him a job as Najir (supervisor) in his office at Jessore. 23

In the eleventh and twelfth parts which are combined Masarraf describes events leading up to his first marriage. In the meantime he had left Calcutta and was studying in Krishnanagar School. When the school went into vacation he returned home. His family was surprised to see the changes in him. His manners were different, his dress was like that of a well-to-do Hindu gentleman. He spoke the Bengali of

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23 Amar Jiban, pp. 290-293.
Krisnanagar, which is generally regarded as the best form of Bengali. It is probable that until now he had been speaking Bengali with a Kustiya accent. At this point Masarraf remarks that his father seemed to be satisfied with his progress. He also narrates his father’s unfavourable attitude towards some of the new projects of the area—such as construction of a bridge over the river Gaurī and a railway line on it. After the vacation his father allowed him to return to Calcutta and permitted him to stay in the house of Nāder Hosen.

Nāder Hosen had two wives living. The first wife by whom he had two daughters lived in a house in a village some distance from Calcutta. One of the servants described the beauty of the elder daughter to Masarraf. Being a young man he was attracted to her. The prospect of marriage was entertained with encouragement by Nāder Hosen. According to Muslim custom Masarraf did not see the bride-to-be. But it appears that they wrote letters to one another while Masarraf was staying in the village home of Nāder Hosen prior to the marriage. Meanwhile it had been arranged that an older man should marry

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24 For details of Muslim marriage system and customs vide pages 261-63 of this volume.

25 Four letters said to be written by Latifannessa, and one written by Masarraf are reproduced on pages 337-343, 356-358 of Amar Jibani, however the genuineness of these may be doubtful.
into the family and that both the marriages should be celebrated in the country house at the same time. The older son-in-law-to-be persuaded Nader Hosen to allow him to take the elder and more beautiful daughter to be his wife. The marriages were celebrated in May 1965, in the village Maktarpur in the district of Jessore, and to his great distress Masarraf heard the name of the elder daughter pronounced as the bride of the other bridegroom. Masarraf was absorbed in other thoughts as his marriage had been settled by his own initiative, without the knowledge or permission of his father or other near relative.

However one of his maternal uncles who got the information somehow or other happened to be present on the occasion. Next Masarraf's turn for acceptance of marriage proposal came formally. Masarraf agreed but when the name of the bride was uttered he apparently fainted, when he realised what had happened. When he recovered he found that he was regarded as having married the younger daughter, though the narrative leaves the legality of the marriage in doubt. However it appears that Masarraf accepted the fact that he was married. His bride Ajijumesa turned out to be a stupid and not particularly beautiful girl. Masarraf immediately left the house and it is probable that he did not see

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26 Muslim marriage is not valid until there is a formal proposal and acceptance in the presence of two witnesses, for details see pp. 261-65 of this thesis.
his young wife for a long time. The elder daughter Latifa too was greatly shocked by the turn of events and apparently died of hysteria within a few days. It is curious to note that Masarraf was present at her deathbed.

Āmar Jibanī ends at this point. It was stated that Masarraf intended to continue it, but as far as is known he did not do so.

The story of his life from this year onwards can be gathered from references in his other works, Udāsīn Pāthik repertoire Maner Kathā, Gāji Miya Barstānī and Bibi Kulsum. Āmar Jibanī was the last but one of his works. The decision to cease writing seems to have been due to the death of his second wife, of whom he was very fond. He wrote the story of their life together in the book Bibi Kulsum, his last work, and shortly after it was published he himself died.

The following information about his life is taken from the three books mentioned above. After his first marriage he discontinued his education and returned to his village home Lāhinipāra where he took over the care of family property. He mentions that he frequently toured on horse-back. While riding through the village of Sāotā, he caught sight of a

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27 Bibi Kulsum, p.55. Masarraf states that he did not meet his first wife even once or twice in a year.
beautiful girl named Kulsum. They were not brought together for some years. When a fire broke out in the village of Saota Masarraf was in the village and helped in the evacuation of the women and children. One of the people he helped he recognised as the girl he had seen previously. The name of the girl was Kālī and her father's name was Sekh Sadaruddin and her mother's Lālan. Later on the name Kālī was abandoned and she was christened Kulsum by Hajrat Sah Obedāl Hak, the preceptor of Masarraf.\textsuperscript{28} In 1874 he married this girl though his relations and the family of his first wife were opposed to the match. So bitterly was the first wife offended by the marriage that she actually engaged certain persons of profligate character to kill the second wife.\textsuperscript{29} Fortunately for Masarraf the plan was not successful. Masarraf and his second wife were very fond of one another and they remained together until her death in December 1909.

Masarraf's career as a writer seems to have begun in the period between his first and second marriage, i.e. 1865 and 1873. Mention of his juvenile writings has already been made.\textsuperscript{30} He was well acquainted with Kārīgal Harīnāth Majumār of Kumar-Khāli, who was a social and a spiritual leader. That Masarraf

\textsuperscript{28}Bibi Kulsum, p.51.

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., pp. 60-63.

\textsuperscript{30}See p.\textsuperscript{32} of this thesis.
composed some devotional songs is mentioned by Jaladhar Sen in his book on the life of Kangal Harinath Majumdar. Once Masarraraf intended to invite ‘Fikir Cader Dal’, a party of devotional singers, who were at the time singing at Kangal’s house. Kangal replied that this was not possible unless he had become a member of the party. When Masarraraf expressed regret to Kangal that he could not sing songs the latter replied that he knew how to compose them. Thus encouraged Masarraraf sat down with a pen and a piece of paper and within a few minutes he had composed the following song:

"Rabe na ciradin, sudin kadin, ek din din dine sandhya habe/
anar anar sab faakkikar kebal tomar nantu rabe;
habe sab lila saaga sonar anga dhulay garageri yabe/
Sancharer miche baji bhojer baji sab kar saji phurai be;
mari ek palake tin jhalake sakal asa mite yabe/
tomar ei atma savajan bhai parijan hey hay kari kadbe sabe;
tara peye byatha bhange matha tumi katha na kahibe/
tomar ei ta ka kari ghar kari gari gari pare rabe;
abar hat thakite pa rahite parer kadhe yete habe/
cirakalo kare hela gela bela ekhon sandhyar belay arkihabe;
Jagater karan yini - dayar khani tini Masar bharasa bhabe."

This day will not last for ever, evil days or good time — one day it will come an end,
All will end in fiasco, only Thy name will last,
There’s the end of all lives, the golden body will go
rolling in dust,
The false tricks of the world, the illusions of the world; all pretense will cease to exist.
Alas, in a twinkling of an eye, in three gushes, all hopes will be satiated,

31 Jaladhar Sen, Kangal Harinath, pp. 40-41.
These kith and kin, brothers, family of yours all
will weep bitterly,
They being hurt will break their head, you will not speak,
Their wealth, home and hearth, watch and carriage will
be left behind.
Then you will have ridden on somebody’s shoulder in
spite of your hands and feet.
You have wasted your time throughout your whole life,
now in the dusk of your life there is no way out.
He Who is the cause of the world - He is like a mine of kindness,
He will be a reliance of ‘Masa’ in this world.

From this and other songs it is seen that Masarraf used
to write his name as ‘Masa’, a shorter form of Masarraf, which
incidentally in Bengali means mosquito. 32

Masarraf was a correspondent of the journal Sambad Prabhakar
published from Calcutta, 33 and of Grambarta Prakasika edited
by Kangal Harinath Majumdar and published from Kumar Khali. 34
It seems that Bhubanendra Mulchopadhyay, an assistant editor
of Sambad Prabhakar, used to encourage Masarraf by correcting
his language of the reports sent for publication. 35 Brajendra Nath
Bandyopadhyay in a footnote of his book Mir Masarraf Hosen,
in volume two of Sahitya Sadhak Caritmala states Bhubanendra
corrected the language of Masarraf’s earlier works, including

33 Amar Jiban, pp. 336-337. For news sent by Masarraf, vide
Sambad Prabhakar, 29 April, 10 May, 30 December 1865.
34 Grambarta Prakasika, first published in April 1863, for Masarraf’s
correspondence, vide Grambarta Prakasika, August, October 1865.
35 Amar Jiban, pp. 336-337.
One interesting letter published in Grambytta Prakasika shows that Masarraf was charged with plagiarism. Masarraf in a letter addressed to the Editor refutes the charge and unfolds the whole story.

His first work Ratnabati was published in 1869. He states in the preface to the book that he wrote it in order that he might become known as an author. "This is my first attempt to compose a book so that I am known as an author." The work must have appealed to his pirc or preceptor who, it is said, read it a number of times. His next book was a pamphlet in verse on the bridge constructed over the river Gauri.

This book was highly praised by Bankim Sandra Cattopadhyay, who comments in Banga Darshan, "Even a Hindu can not write


37 One of Masarraf’s friends showed a piece of a poem to him and told him that he had composed it and he wanted it to be published in Masarraf’s name. Masarraf, believing his friend, signed his name at the bottom of the poem. When it was published in Grambytta Prakasika a correspondent from Barisal complained that the said poem had been written by some other person and published earlier. Vide Grambytta Prakasika, August 1865, p. 61.

38 Ratnabati, Preface.

39 Bibi Kulsam p. 51.

such a chaste Bengali as he writes. In 1873 his drama Basanta Kumari was published and in the preface to it Masarraf describes it as his second attempt as a writer. He says it poetically, "amar anurag tarur dvitiya kusum..." (second flower of my love-tree...). Another drama Jamidar Darpan was published in the same year. This work apparently achieved sufficient fame to be mentioned favourably in Bankim Candra's journal Baiga Darasan.

It is reported that Masarraf edited a journal, Ajijun Mohar, during 1874. The journal is reported to have been published from Cucura (Hugli) under the patronage of a few Muslim students of Hugli College. But since no copy of this journal is available and since Masarraf's writings contain no reference to it, one cannot be sure whether any such journal was published and, if it was, whether this Mir Masarraf Hosen was the editor.

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42 Basanta Kumari, Preface.
Moreover it is not known definitely what Masārraf was doing there at Hugli at that time. 46

In 1876 another work of Masārraf, Dr Upāy Ki, a farce, was published. No copy of it is available, but a criticism of it is found in the journal Bandhab published from Dacca. 47 During the years 1874 to 1876 it seems that Masārraf did not write anything, nor has he mentioned anything of his activities. It can be guessed that he was staying at home and was looking after his paternal properties. It is also possible that he was living with both of his wives, though there is no definite information on this subject. Later, when in 1884 Masārraf took employment in an Estate at Deldūyar, his second wife accompanied him. He did not mention however whether his first wife accompanied him or not. Masārraf was appointed Manager of an Estate owned by one Karimānnesa of Deldūyar in the district of Maymānsing. 48 During his stay at Deldūyar Masārraf wrote his largest work, Biṣād Sindhu. It is in prose and narrates the tragic events of the martyrdom of the grandsons of the Prophet Mohammad at

46 B.N.B. states in his Sāhitya Sādak Caritmālā, Book 29, p.46, that Masārraf was living at Barabājār, in Cucīra (Hugli). B.N.B. also quotes an advertisement published in Education Gazette of 26 April 1871, in which Masārraf announces a vacancy for a Pandit in a school. However it is not clear what was the relationship between Masārraf and the said school.


48 Bibi Kulsum, p.67.
Karbalā in Persia. The first part of this book was published in 1885. The book was highly praised by the critics and journals both English and Bengali of those days. After two years the second part came out of the press. In the same year 1887 his book of lyrics, Saṅgit Lehārī, saw the light of day. This work is not available, however some of the songs have been quoted by B. N. Bandyopādhyāy in his Sāhitya Sādhanak Caritmanā and Masarraf himself quotes one and part of another in Bibi Kulsum. The songs are devotional and didactic in spirit sometimes written in an allegorical form. It seems that Masarraf took the name Saṅgit Lehārī from Bhārulāl Cakrabartti's poetical work Baṅga Sundarī. In 1889 he published a pamphlet in prose, Go-Jiban, advocating the cause of non-slaughter of cattle. This essay was condemned by some orthodox Bengali Muslims.

49 The Statesman and Friend of India, Calcutta, 31 May 1885.
   a) The Englishman, Calcutta, 4 May 1885.
   b) At the end of Part II of Bisad Sindhu there are quotations from different journals regarding the merit of Part I, such as Bangabasi, 12 May 1885, Bharati, March 1887, Carubartta, May 1886, Grambartta Prakasika, May 1885, Sulabh Sama car, April 1886, Samay, May 1885.


51 Bibi Kulsum, pp. 31, 32, 129.

52 Bhārulāl Granthabali, Ed. A. Cakrabartti; (Vol.2) 1917; Banga Sundari, Ch. 8, p.104.

Masarraf was still, i.e. in 1889, serving in Delduyar Estate though the exact period of his employment there is not mentioned by him. He is reported to have been the editor of another fortnightly journal, *Hitakari*, the first editions of which were published from *Lahinipara*. Later on the journal was published from *Tangail*, the sub-divisional headquarters of Delduyar. At about this time Masarraf wrote a book, *Behula Gitabhinay*, which is a very popular legend among the Hindus. After the publication of this book Masarraf published a book under the pseudonym *Udasin Pathik*, i.e. 'Indifferent Traveller', and the book is titled as *Udasin Pathik Pathiker Maner Katha* and was published in 1890. In 1891 the third part of *Bigad Sindhu* was published. It contained about 43 pages only. It is seen that Masarraf's pen stopped for a quite considerable period of time. The reason for not writing anything may have been that he had to leave the employ-

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54 B.N.B., *Bengala Samayik Patria*, Part 2, p.58. Bandopadhyay gives the date of publication as 1890 (B.Y. 1297, Baisakh). K. A. Mannan, in *Adhunik Bengla Sahitye Muslim Sadhana*, p.251, gives the date of publication of *Hitakari* from Kumarkhali as 1890. He further states that *Hitakari* published from Tangail in 1897 was jointly edited by Raso Ali and Masarraf Hosen. A. Siddiki gives the date of publication of *Hitakari* from Tangail as 1892 (*vide* *Hahe-Nac*, Dec. 1960).


56 Ibid., p.38.
ment of Delduyar Estate. It is gathered from his book
Gajji Miyar Bastani that there was a conspiracy against
him as a result of which he was imprisoned for a few days, though
ultimately he was acquitted.\textsuperscript{57} The book which was published
in 1899 describes some aspects of the life of Mohammedan gentry
in Bengal at this time. In the same book there is a mention of the
intended publication of the following four novels:\textsuperscript{58}

1. Rajiyia Khatun.
2. Tahmina.\textsuperscript{59}
4. Miyati Ki Abanati.\textsuperscript{60}

Besides these there was another announcement regarding the
future publication of four farces and two books of verse.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{57}Gajji Miyar Bastani, pp. 383, 389, 394. For a detailed discussion
see p. of this essay.

\textsuperscript{58}Abdul Latif Caudhuri, Mir Nasarraf Hosen, p.27.

\textsuperscript{59}Part of Tahmina, which is a novel based on Mirdausi’s Shah Name,
was published in a Calcutta monthly journal, Hafej, vide K. A.
Mannan, Adhunik Bengla Sahitye Muslin Sadhana, p.236.

\textsuperscript{60}Part of Miyati Ki Abanati was published in a monthly journal
Kohinur; there is no evidence concerning the publication of
the other two. (v. op.cit., p.248).

\textsuperscript{61}The following list is given by A. L. Caudhuri in his book Mir
Nasarraf Hosen, p.8: 1. Tala Abhinay, 2. Bhai Bhai eito cai,
The first book, Tala Abhinay, was published in 1897 in the journal
Hafej. V. K.A. Mannan, op.cit., p.236.
The other books, so far as it is known, were not actually published
at all.
His next book Nālūd Sarif, an eulogy of Mohammad, the Prophet, together with his life story, was published in 1900. It is written partly in verse and partly in prose. It appears that the book was quite popular among Muslims, and four editions of it were published within a few years. His next book Musalmaner Bangla Sikha was published in 1905. The title of the book suggests that this book was a Bengali primer. In the next two years he wrote as many as six books which were all verse. These are stories of heroes and heroines of Islam.

In 1905, Bibi Khodejair Biba, Hajrat Omarer Dharmajiban Labh, Hajrat Amir Hanzar Dharmajiban Labh, and Hajrat Belager, Jibani O Upadismala were published. Next year Madina Gaurab

62. Sir Nasirraf attended a public meeting arranged by some notable preachers of the Islamic faith where he recited his Nālūd Sarif and the audience was very appreciative. V. Sekh Jamiruddin, Mehercarit, pp. 57-8.

63. The 4th edition of Nālūd Sarif printed in 1912 is available in the India Office Library, London.

64. B.N.B., op.cit., p. 43.

65. Life story of first wife of the Prophet Mohammad, his marriage with Khodija, copy in I.O.L.

66. B.N.B., op.cit., p. 44. The title suggests it to be the life of Omar, the second Caliph.


68. Bīlāl was a muajjin (reciter of prayer calls). In early life he was a slave later on he became an ardent follower of Mohammad. He died on receiving the news of the Prophet's death. Copy in B.M.

69. It describes the journey of Mohammad the prophet to Madina from Mecca, (cont.)
was published. In 1907 his book in verse Moslem Birotna was published. 70 In the following year a prose work Eslemor Jay was published. 71 The book is a history of Islam written in an emotional and high flown language. 72 It gives an account of the Prophet, and propagation of Islam, and the Prophet's victory over the non-Muslims. 73 In the same year his last book in verse, Bajinat, a satire, was published. 74 Some parts of his autobiography came out in the same year. It took about two years for all his twelve parts of Amr Jiban to be published. In 1908 two other books, Musalmanger Bangla Sika, second part, 75 and Khotba, 76 were published. There was an

(cont.) his marriage, and his daugter's marriage. Copy of 2nd edition in B.M.


71. B.N.B., op.cit., p.44.


73. Ibid.


75. B.N.B., op.cit., p.43.

76. Khotba means sermons delivered before the Friday noon prayer (weekly gathering in a mosque). Masarraf translates from the original Arabic. Later on published in the same volume with Maulud Sarif, copy in I.O.L.
announcement in Amar Jiban that he had composed a book named Hajrat Jusuf but there is lack of evidence that the book was ever published. His last work was Bibi Kulsum, a biography of his wife.

The above is generally accepted as a complete list of his publications, but some later critics are of the opinion that Masarraf composed the three other books:

2. Gaji Mirar Gali.
3. Hirak Khani.

They are not however available, which leaves in doubt whether they were published at all. Masarraf was in the habit of announcing the names of future works, but some of them were never written.

It has been reported that some of the essays written by Masarraf published in the journals were not published later in the form of books. One such essay is "Satprasanga" published in Kohimur, a monthly journal from Calcutta. Another essay is "Amader Siksa" published in Hitakam printed from

78 Bibi Kulsum, p. 111.
79 K. A. Mannan, op. cit., p. 246.
Kunār Khāli. The third one is "Pyārisundari" published in Bharat Mahila.

It is said earlier that Masārraf came to Delduyār in 1884 but it is not definitely known when Masārraf left his employment at Delduyār nor can it be said definitely what he was doing after leaving Delduyār. But there is a case for assuming that he did so in 1894. He states in Bibi Kulsum that his eighth child was born in Tangail in 1890 and his ninth child in 1892, but Masārraf does not say definitely whether the ninth child was born in Tangail. While Masārraf was serving in Delduyār Estate he was staying in Tangail, the sub-divisional town nearby. About the tenth and eleventh children he says that they were born at Lāhinipār, his village home, but he does not give the dates. If it is assumed that his ninth child was also born in Tangail, it can be said that Masārraf was in Tangail at least up to 1892. There is some other relevant information which may also be helpful in this connection. Masārraf states that his book Gāji Mīr Bāsānī was published in 1899 but that the press copy of it was lying for five years before it was actually published. In Gāji Mīr Bāsānī Masārraf refers

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80 K.A. Mannan, op. cit.
81 B.N.B., op. cit., p. 45.
82 Bibi Kulsum, p. 69.
83 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
indirectly to his life and activities at Tāngail. So it is possible that he wrote this between 1892 and 1894. One more point may be considered. Bholānāth of Gāji Miyaś Bastānī is most probably the magistrate of Tāngail, Sibcānā Nāg, whose period of service there was 1892 and 1894. The reason for such an assumption is that Bholānāth is another title for the god Sib which name is part of the magistrate's first name. In Hitakari Masāraṇī criticised the magistrate and as a result he was harassed by the office and ultimately had to leave the place and his job at Deldūjār Estate presumably in 1894.

After leaving Tāngail he possibly moved to his native village Lāhinīpārā. There is a reference in the preface to Gāji Miyaś Bastānī that he (the writer assumes the name of Gāji Miya) had to seek his fortune in Bagura during 1897, but that the duration of his stay there was very short. It is not known whether he went to Bagura before Lāhinīpārā or whether he left Lāhinīpārā for a short time and returned after

84 See also p. 197 of this thesis.
85 K. N. Majumdar, Maimansinger Itihās, p. 217.
87 For a detailed discussion see Chapter on Gāji Miyaś Bastānī, vide p. 167 of this thesis.
88 Gāji Miyaś Bastānī, Preface by publisher (First Edition).
working at Bagura. In Bibi Kulsum it is seen that Nasarraf and his family were residing at Calcutta from 1903 to 1909.\textsuperscript{89} However nothing is said about his occupation. In 1909 he took employment in the Padiani Nabab Estate and it may be assumed that Nasarraf lived there till his death. Regarding Nasarraf's occupation a reference was made in the Statesman and Friend of India of 1885 that he was an Honorary Magistrate.\textsuperscript{90} A similar statement\textsuperscript{91} is found in Bibi Kulsum also. It may be possible that he was holding the two posts at the same time - managership in an Estate on the one hand and magistrateship on the other.

Nasarraf had eleven children all by his second wife. It is not known whether he had any issue by his first wife, and no mention is made about her whereabouts after he took up employment in Deldwar. Nasarraf took his second wife with him to his place of employment. His first child, a daughter, was born in 1880,\textsuperscript{92} and his last child, a son, was possibly born in 1896 or later.\textsuperscript{93} Five of his children died in infancy. A table showing his descendants is given in Table 2.

\textsuperscript{89}Bibi Kulsum, p.9.
\textsuperscript{90}The Statesman and Friend of India, Calcutta, 31 May 1885.
\textsuperscript{91}Bibi Kulsum, p.2. Nasarraf writes that he is giving verdicts on cases after hearing both the parties.
\textsuperscript{92}Ibid., p.69.
\textsuperscript{93}His eighth child was born in 1890 and ninth in 1892, so it is assumed that his tenth and eleventh children were born in 1894 and 1896.
Table 2

(First marriage)  Hamidannesa = Mir HoyaJam Hosen = Daulatannesa

    Ali Aagar

    Ajijannesa = Musarraf = Kulsum MushteseN Mukarram Bajlal Samsunnessa (d)
    (first marriage)    (second marriage)

Rausan  *D  Ibrāhīm  Amīna  Sālcha  Sālena  Aṣrāf  Onar  Mah-  Rahela  Mostāk
(d)      D (d)  D (d)  D (d)  D (d)  Daraj bub  D (d)

*name not given
(d) daughter
D = deceased during Musarraf's life time

The names of five sons and a daughter living in 1914 appear in the book Bicad Sindhu, as holders of the copyright.
Incidentally Masarraf gives an account of his illegitimate child born of an Anglo-Bengali woman and he also states that he was threatened with blackmail for this incident.  

His second wife Bibi Kulsum died on 10th December 1909 (Bengali Year 26 Agrahayan 1316) and was buried in Padamdi, where Masarraf was in employment. Masarraf composed the following epitaph in verse on Kulsum's grave.

"Jibaner niyojit Karyya see kari/ Daya maya bhalabasa sneha parihar/ Basan bhusan dhan atmiya svajan/ Lala sa basana bhog kari bisarjita/ Svami shagdini Bibi Kulsum hethay/ Samadhi sayay ray ananta nidray/ Pancha putra ek kanya raahi pranpati/ Jagat charita svarge karite basati/ Tera gata gola sal chabbiye aghram/ Rabibar prato pran karila prayan/ Patigata pranaddhani patisaha asi/ Padamdir mottikay rahilen misi/ Bhari bhagati hai hao khanak darao/ Atmar kalyane tare asiyo ya/

"After finishing the assigned job of her life
Leaving behind kindness, affection, love, tenderness,
Dress, decoration, wealth, friends and kinsman
Giving up desire, lust, wish for enjoyment,
Bibi Kulsum beloved by her husband, here
Is in eternal sleep in the bed of grave,
Leaving five sons a daughter and her beloved husband
Went to Heaven to live there, relinquishing this world
on the twenty-sixth day of Agrahayan in the year 1316.
The life left her on the morning of Sunday
Devoted to her husband, her dearest lord, she came with him.
And was buried in the soil of Padamdi.
0 brother and sister whoever you may be stop for a moment.
Bestow on her blessings for the welfare of her soul."
After the death of his second wife it seems that Masarraf did not write any more, as he was very depressed. He died on 19th December 1911. Some time after his death his portrait was hung in the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat (Bengal Academy of Literature) at Calcutta. His name is mentioned with respect by two historians of Bengal.

96 a) A. Siddiki gives the date, vide *Bengali Akademi Patrika*, Dacca, Vol. 1, pt. 1, 1958, p. 25. But he gives no reference to sources from which he found the date.
   b) A. L. Caudhuri gives the date as 1912, vide *his Mīr Masarraf Hosen*, p. 4.
   c) B.N.B. gives the date as the early part of 1912 (last part of B.Y. 1318), vide *Sahitya Sahakar Caritmaala*, Book 29, p. 47 (Vol. 2, 4th Ed.)

CHAPTER III
Early Prose:

RATNABATI

Ratnabati, Mir Masarraf Hosen's first book, was published in 1869. In the preface to the book the writer states that it is his first attempt to be recognised as an author. The plot of the narrative is based on a fictitious tale. The author does not give any hint on the origin or source of the tale. It may be assumed that he has taken it from oral tradition.

The book is a small one containing 61 pages consisting of 2 chapters only. It is also unknown whether any subsequent edition of this book was published. The story narrates the adventures of a prince of Gujrat and his marriage with the princess of Ratnapur. The book has a happy ending. The kings and princes are not historical figures. The place names Gujrat and Ratnapur are known but they are ambiguous. There is a Gujrat in western India and there is a place of the same name

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1 In the back cover page of his autobiography Amar Jibani, pt. VIII (1909) Masarraf announces that he is willing to publish the book Ratnabati for the second time, and since no copy is available with him he appeals to the readers who can help him with a copy of the book. It is curious to note that Masarraf in the announce- ment gives the date of publication of the book as 1273, Bengali Year, which corresponds to 1866 A.D.
mentioned in Bengali literature of medieval days. Ratnapur is a fairly common name — there are at least three well known places; one on Narbada, another near Jodhpur, a third in Bengal. It is therefore clear that no definite geographical information can be gathered from these two names.

The story as narrated by the writer reads like this.

The prince of Gujrat, Sukumar, was very friendly with Sumanta, the son of his father’s minister. Once both of them were walking through a beautiful part of the city. In course of conversation Sukumar asked Sumanta whether wealth was superior to knowledge or not. Sumanta replied that knowledge was always superior to wealth. Sukumar did not agree. He said that wealthy persons were honoured everywhere and all great things had been achieved by the wealth of rich people. Sumanta, after a short silence, replied that all the human faculties could be developed by proper training and education. Sukumar still did not agree. In the end both the friends decided to travel in foreign lands in order to discover whose argument was correct.

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5 Bengal District Gazetteer, Nadiya, 1910, p.182. Ratnapurin Meherpur Subdivision.
Accordingly Sukumar travelled through many unknown countries till finally he reached a dense forest. The sun was hot and he felt thirsty and hungry. Suddenly he came across a lake in the forest, and immediately plunged into it. While he was still in the water he saw a monkey on the bank of the lake telling beads like an ascetic. As the prince was washing, a few drops of water accidentally splashed on the monkey and instantaneously it was turned into a human being. Sukumar was naturally astonished. But when the ascetic shouted at him in rage for having disturbed him, he became frightened. Sukumar trembled with fear and apologised to the ascetic asking for his forgiveness and explaining that what he had done was an accident. Sukumar also praised the ascetic and as a result the ascetic was pleased and gave him a magic ring which he said would give anything he asked of it. The ascetic however forbade him to travel westward, but as forbidden things always attract human minds, Sukumar decided to travel to the west. After a few days' journey he entered a new kingdom, Ratnapur. He stopped before the gate of the Palace where he noticed an interesting announcement to the effect that the princess of Ratnapur would marry a person who could satisfy her requests for seven consecutive days but whoever failed would be imprisoned for life. Sukumar was jubilant over this announcement. He thought that he would easily get the princess as a wife with the help of that magic ring. So Sukumar rang the bell in front of the royal gate. A sentry took him inside the court of the king. The king Ratnadhvaj was worried to see such a handsome
young man risk life imprisonment as a result of his daughter's whims. Many a prince had tried in vain to marry his daughter. The king warned Sukumār. But the prince Sukumār was determined to try his luck. So he was taken to the princess. Ratnakati, the princess, through her attendant, asked him for twenty thousand gold coins. Sukumār went to his apartment and asked the ring to give him twenty thousand gold coins. As soon as he uttered the words the gold coins were before him. Sukumār gave all the coins to the attendant of the princess. On the second day the princess asked for the same amount of silver coins. By the help of the ring in this way Sukumār satisfied the princess for four consecutive days. On the fifth day the princess was worried lest the man, Sukumār, should be successful. It appears that she did not wish to marry anybody. So she consulted her attendant. The girl attendant who was very intelligent replied that this man must be in possession of some magical power. So on the fifth day when the princess asked for a pearl necklace the girl attendant hid in a secret place near Sukumār's room. She saw him addressing a ring on his finger and there and then a necklace was in his hand. On the sixth day the princess as advised by her attendant asked Sukumār for a ring. Sukumār unhesitatingly gave his ring to her. He thought that he would be able to marry her as he had met demands
for six days and only one day was left. He hoped the princess would not ask for anything more. On the seventh day the princess asked for another ring. Sukumar was caught. He realised that he had acted foolishly by giving her the magic ring instead of asking it for another ring. Sukumar was unable to give her a second ring and was imprisoned for life according to the contract. (The first chapter ends here at page 28 of the original book.)

In the meantime Sumanta also arrived at the same lake. He was astonished to see a monkey sitting in deep meditation like a human being. When Sumanta was washing his hands and feet in lake water a few drops of water splashed on the monkey and it turned into an ugly looking man. The man shouted at him and Sumanta was perplexed and remained dumb for a moment and then begged pardon of him. The man granted him a boon by means of which Sumanta would be able to put on any appearance he liked. Before he left the lake Sumanta realised that water from one side of the lake would convert a man into a monkey, while water from the other side would convert a monkey into a man. When opportunity offered he took water separately from both sides of the lake in two water pots and carried them with him.

When Sumanta at last reached Ratnapur he saw the same
announcement before the royal palace, but he did not ring the bell. He went away and sat under a banyan tree to think over the announcement. While he was there some maids from the palace went past him on their way to draw water. They were talking about the princess and her promise and expressed the opinion that the princess would never marry. They then talked about a prince Sukumār who had succeeded at first but failed on the last day. Sumanta realised that the prince might be his friend Sukumār. When the maids were returning he asked them about the princess and came to know the whole story. He decided to rescue his friend at any cost. He then hit upon a plan. He begged water from one of the maids, saying that he was very thirsty after his long journey. The maid gave him water to drink from an earthen pitcher. Sumanta took the pot which contained water which had the power to convert a man into a monkey and dropped some water into the pitcher without being observed. The princess Ratnabatī used the water in that pitcher for her bath and as soon as she touched it in an artificial pond, she was converted into a monkey. When her attendants went to touch her in the water all of them of them were converted into monkeys also. One intelligent maid realised that these changes were due to the water, and she did not touch it. When she informed the queen
about what had happened the queen could not believe it and ran into the pond and was immediately converted into an old female monkey. The maid ran into the court and informed the king. The king came and saw that all the female inmates of the palace had become monkeys. He was puzzled and horrified. He prayed to God to save him from this dreadful situation.

In the meanwhile Sumanta in the guise of a fortune-teller went before the court. The king appealed to him to save him from his predicament and restore the women of the palace to human form. The fortune teller said that it was all due to his daughter's having inflicted so much suffering on her suitors. The king appealed to him again and the fortune teller told him that an ascetic would appear next day near the lake outside the palace and that he only could save the king. Saying this Sumanta left the court.

Next day Sumanta appeared near the lake in the guise of an ascetic. The king with all his ministers went to see the promised ascetic, who was scheduled to appear on that day. The ascetic pretended that he was very much displeased with the king. However at last he promised to comply with the request of the king. But he made the condition that all the princes imprisoned so far should be set free and sent back home with sufficient money. This was done promptly. The king
brought all the princes before the ascetic and set them free. When Sukumār was brought before him Sumanta recognised him. The ascetic told the king not to free the prince Sukumār. Then the ascetic went inside the palace. He converted all the monkeys into women again except for the princess. The king then appealed to him on behalf of his daughter and promised to give him his daughter in marriage if she was converted into a human being again. The ascetic said that he must give him not only his daughter but half of his kingdom also. The king promptly signed a declaration to this effect. Whereupon the ascetic turned the princess into a human being again. The princess knew nothing about what had happened or what the king had promised. The ascetic told the king that he was a hermit and did not want a woman or wealth. So he proposed that Sukumār should be brought before him and the princess be married with him. The king obeyed his order and the marriage of Sukumār with the princess was solemnised with due pomp and grandeur.

On the bridal night the ascetic told the king that he wished to be present in the bridal chamber with his daughter and son-in-law. The king took him to their room. Sukumār was surprised to see a third man in his room. The women and the maids were peeping inside. Sukumār was lost in thought and the princess was sitting on one side of the bed. Suddenly the
ascetic resumed his natural form as Sumanta and addressed his friend Sukumar. Sukumar was delighted to see his friend Sumanta again. Sumanta raised the question they had argued previously, namely whether wealth was superior to knowledge. Sukumar was not able to answer. He realised that his friend had been right and he had been wrong.

The news of the change in appearance of the ascetic was carried to the king and when he heard the story of Sumanta and Sukumar from the beginning he praised Sumanta's wisdom. The next day the king arranged the marriage of Sumanta with the daughter of his minister. After a short time both the friends returned home taking their wives with them.

(the story ends here.)

The form of Ratnabati

*Ratnabati* may be said to be a fairy tale with a moral in it. The heroes of the book are helped by some magical power which is not a reality in normal human life. Without this magic the story cannot develop - the first one described in the book is the conversion of a monkey into a human being and vice versa, and the second one is the all-powerful finger ring which can supply everything and anything asked of it. Another element of magic is the boon by means of which any one can put
on any appearance he likes.

The characters of the tale are all human beings though they are in possession of some magical power which reminds one of days of mythology and legends. It is true that the book lacks any detailed analysis of human minds, but it is found that there are some human notes in the book. King Ratnadhwaj's worry over Sukumar's failure and his forewarning is the first example of such a human element. As a result the characters do not seem to be men of dreamland. The heart of Sumanta is subtly exposed when he sees the princess for the first time and feels inclined to her.

Now a brief survey of Bengali prose narratives of those days can be made here. Writers like Isvar Candra Bidyasagar,7, Pyaricand Mitra,7 Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay8, Kaliprasanna Simha9 and Bankim Chandra Cattopadhyay10 were pioneers in Bengali prose. Isvar Candra's writings were mainly translations and

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6 Betal panchabimati (1847), Sakuntala (1854), Sitabar Banabas (1860), Bhrantibillas (1869).
7 Alaler Charer Dulal (1857).
8 Aitihasiaik upanyas (1857).
9 Hutom Pysar Naksar (1862).
10 Durges Mándini (1865), Kapał Kundala (1866), Mrinalini (1869).
adaptations from Hindi, or Sanskrit or English. Pyārīchānd's book Alāler Gharer Dulāl is a sketch of Bengali society and Kāli Prasanna's Kutum Pyācār Naksā is a sketch of Calcutta society. Bhūdeb's Anguriya Bininaya though taken from historical sources, has some features of modern novels. Bankim's Durges Nandini may be taken as perhaps the earliest novel in Bengali. Two other works of Bankim were published by 1869. Thus it is evident that there were very few standard novels in Bengali when Nasarraf ventured into the Bengali literary field. Another point to note is that very little information about his education in English literature is available. So it may be assumed that his acquaintance with English novels or any western novels was very slight. From all these it seems that Nasarraf desired to write a tale taken from an unreal world of queer imagination. However the book may have no appeal today but it is not unlikely that it was appreciated during the period when the life of common men was portrayed in a limited number of writings only.

Characters

Nasarraf describes some characters in his book. He does not create them to act or react differently in different situations of life. Since the story has a moral, the hero, by
whom it is established, must win at the end. He was made to win.
So we know the characters as they are. For this reason there
is no characterisation in the book. It is a fairy tale and we
cannot expect the development of character as found in modern
novels.

First of the characters comes the ascetic. He was the
central or key-character of the whole plot. He had the
power to guise himself as anything, man or monkey, and he
could grant a boon by means of which the person concerned
might do or act whatever he liked. The ascetic was a possessor
of supernatural powers. But he was a typical Indian ascetic,
annoyed easily, pleased in the next moment by words of ador-
ation. This is the nature of Jība', the god of Hindu-mystology.

Sukumār was the prince of Gujrāt, who thought that he was
always right. He also thought himself to be wise and learned,
but in fact he was petulant and intolerant to others’ views.
Being human he feared the ascetic with his supernatural power.
He was rather an impatient man. He saw the announcement of
the princess and decided immediately to try his luck. But he
was over jubilant and relied on the magic ring and not on his
own wisdom. Even the king’s warning could not stop him. He
repeated fully when he realised his folly, but he was a grateful
type of man who thanked his friend Sumanta who rescued him from
imprisonment.
Sumanta was a wise, prudent and intelligent young man. He was a devoted friend who rescued his friends by means of the power granted to him. He threw dust in the eyes of so many maids when he dropped into their pitcher the magic water brought from the lake without the knowledge of the ascetic. He did not rely on magic alone and this was his superiority over Sukumar. Sumanta behaved like a human being, when he saw the princess he was attracted to her. But he allowed no scope for the manifestation of his feelings. Sumanta gave the princess to his friend Sukumar when the king promised to give his daughter in marriage to him.

Ratnadwaj was an affectionate father. He had much distress due to his daughter's activities. For her whims many an innocent prince suffered. When Sukumar first came to him he warned him. The king was grateful too, especially in his wish to reward Sumanta for his help.

Ratnabati was the only daughter of the king of Ratnapur. She was a beautiful girl but proud too. The method of choosing her husband was an old fairy tale theme. It seems that she derived pleasure from giving pain to others. She was unwilling to submit to a husband as she was very much conscious of her ego.
Atmosphere

Though the book *Ratnabati* is a fairy tale type story of a land of lotus-eaters it has been set up in an atmosphere which has the flavour of the soil of Bengal. Ratnapur, the main place of the story land, is a typical fairy land city. The princess chooses her husband by a method which is found in a fairy tale. The magic ring is another 'Alladin's lamp' which supplies anything asked for from it, and the water of a lake has the power of converting a man into a monkey and vice versa. The king of the land pays in gold and offers his guests golden seats to sit on. All these are typical of a fairy land.

In spite of all this, the book has the flavour of the soil of Bengal in it. Bengali culture is revealed by the methods of carrying waterpitchers on their hips by the maids. The description of a post-marriage custom is found in the book, where girls and friends peep through the window or lurk about the *basar char* (bridal chamber). The methods of showing respect by bowing one's head and touching of feet are characteristic of a culture which is also found in other parts of India. The presence of a fortune teller, astrologer, Brahmins and their rituals, all represent Bengali as well as Indian culture.

The description of nature is a traditional one which owes its origin to early or medieval Bengali literature or even to
Sanskrit literature. The dewdrops, the birds' music at dawn, the Bakul tree (noted for its small but sweet flowers), the beauty of a night compared with a beautiful woman having a moon on her forehead at the partition of the hair of the head are all common features of traditional Bengali literature.

It may be said that in his first writing Masarraf was inspired and influenced by the folk tales of Bengal, which have the common theme in the pursuit of a prince in order to gain a princess by showing his skills and in the ultimate winning of the hand of the princess together with half of the kingdom.

It is noteworthy that though Masarraf was a Muslim and was brought up as a Muslim, the way of life described in Ratnabati belongs to Hindu culture. There is no trace of Islamic culture in the whole of the book and if one did not know his name it would be impossible to tell from a reading of the book that the author was a Muslim.
CHAPTER IV

MAJARRAF AND HIS PLAYS

It is not known whether Majarraf had any connections with the Bengali stage of those days. Anyway he ventured modestly into the Bengali dramatic field with two dramas only.¹ Among the earlier Bengali dramatists, Madhusudan Datta and Dinbandhu Mitra, though not actors themselves, were associated with the staging of the Bengali dramas. It is known that the great playwrights like Shakespeare and Molière had direct connections with the stageplay.² Direct knowledge of the stage naturally helps the playwright to master the art of dramatic writing. However, in the case of Majarraf, though he lacked experience as an actor, his two dramas are not unfit for stage play.³

It will not be out of place to mention here in short the history of modern Bengali dramas in this connection. The Bengali drama originated in the 1850s with some farces and

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¹ Besides these two dramas it is reported that he wrote two more small music-plays and more than one farce, but copies of those are not available either in London or elsewhere.


³ It is reported that soon after the publication of his first drama Basantakumari it was staged in his native village. V. Jamidar Darpan (Pakistan Edition) 1955, Appendix p.8.
translations from English and Sanskrit texts. A few dramas took their subjects from the Hindu stories in the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyan and the Purāṇas. The notable writers of early days were Tarācaran Sikdār, G. C. Gupta, Ramnārayan Tarkaratna, Madhusudan Datta, Īnbandhu Mitra and Nanomohan Basu.

There were very few original dramas depicting the life of Bengali people in those days. Rāmārayan was a pioneer in the field in the sense that he focussed on some social problems, like Kulīn marriage, the status of women, polygamy, child marriage and marriage by purchase in the upper strata of Hindu society of Bengal. Īnbandhu Mitra took an economic problem like indigo plantation, and its impact on Bengal peasants. Madhusudan took the material from Mahābhārata for his first drama Sarmistha, but he did not follow the Sanskrit technique of drama. Madhusudan "revolted against the classical tradition of Sanskrit dramas, his revolt was more in spirit than in form". 10 Masārraf, a

4 Bhadrarjum, Calcutta, 1852.
5 Kirttibilas, 1852 (copy not available in London).
6 Kulīn Kul Sarbhasva, Calcutta, 1857.
7 Sarmistha, 1859, Padmabati, 1865, Kripnakumarī, 1865. Eke-i-Ki bale Sabhyata, 1865, Buro saliker ghere Ro, 1865.
8 Nih Darpan, 1860, Nabin Tanasvinī, 1863, Sadhabar Ekādaśī, 1866, Biye Pacla Buro, 1866, Lilabati, 1872.
9 Ramabhigek Nāṭak, 1867, Pranay Parikṣā Nāṭak, 1869, Sati Nāṭak, 1873.
younger contemporary of Madhusudan, did not follow him in his interest in western ideas of playwriting. In fact, with regard to form Masarraf, in both of his dramas, followed some of the conventions of Sanskrit drama in respect of the prastābāna (prologue), the sutrādhār (narrator) and nāt-nātī (actor-actress) by whom are exposed to the audience the main events in brief. It seems that he was influenced by Kāmāraṇā in this respect. However, he does not use nandī (eulogy). Madhusudan who had abandoned these conventions of Sanskrit drama more than a decade earlier seemed to have had no influence on Masarraf.

Masarraf may be claimed to be the first dramatist among Bengali Muslim writers. His first drama is a love tale. Though it is a mediocre creation if it is judged from the modern standpoint, it was not an insignificant composition in the third quarter of the 19th century and it is worthwhile to remember that Bengali dramas start from the beginning of the third quarter of that century only. His first drama

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11. P. Guhathākurta, op.cit., p.73.

12. Ibid., p.74.

13. Some farces written in part prose and part verse are found in the writings of Nāmdār, Golān Hosen and Ajimuddin. It is already mentioned (see page 11 of this thesis) that their literary value is very insignificant. Nāmdār's Kalir Bau Ḫār Jvalānī (1868) is a farce on a quarrel between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Dādī Satiner Ḫakra is a quarrel between two co-wives. Bengaye Siyal Raja is a satire on a quarrel between animals over the kingship of the forest. These are very small books and they cannot be termed as dramas in the true sense of the term.
Basantakumārī had little bearing on the life of Bengal, but his second drama, Jamīdar Darpan gives a picture of a society of Bengal with its manifold vices.

Basantakumārī

Basantakumārī, a drama, is the second book written by Masāraf. It was published in 1873 and in 1887 a second edition appeared. It is not known whether there were any subsequent editions. In the preface to the book he writes, "Basantakumārī the second flower of my love-tree blossomed." The book was dedicated to (Nabāb) Abdul Latif Khan Bahādūr, the then philanthropist and leader of Muslims in Bengal.

The drama is written in prose, but there are some metrical compositions in it: five songs, one long love letter, and an address by an eunuch in the royal court. It seems that these songs are intended to increase the dramatic effect by rousing the sentiments of the audience.

The plot of the drama contains an imaginary love-story of some royal personages. The place names Indrapur and Bhojpur are not historical places and their kings and princes are all

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15 "Amar anūrag tarur dvījā kusum" Preface to Basantakumārī. A booklet in verse Goraj Brij Ba Gaurī Sethu was published a month earlier in the same year. It is possible that the drama Basantakumārī was written earlier though published later.
fictitious. The story seems to depict the life of medieval India. The description of flora and fauna of Bengal is a traditional one. The references to mango, jackfruit, cocoanut, lotus, chinorose, silk cotton tree (śimul), cuckoo, crows, are all found in any old or medieval literature of Bengal or India. There are some customs mentioned in the drama such as sādh bhaksan (a pregnant woman's meal), long hairs as a symbol of feminine beauty, use of lac dye, vermillion, sandalwood, aguru, candan etc. all give them a colour of Indian life. As in his earlier book Ratnabati the culture and way of life described in the drama is mainly a Hindu culture. There are references to Hindu mythological characters in the drama, such as Rāmcandra, Indra, Ahalyā, Gautam, Śaci etc.

But the main difference between this drama and his first book, Ratnabati, is this, that there is no role for supernatural power in it. The drama is a story of human passions and feelings. It seems that Nasīrraf came out of the realm of fairy land, and soon after entered the world of reality, particularly in his second drama, Jamīdar Darpan.

The writer did not mention anything about the sources of the plot of Basantakumāri. In the title page he gives the name of the book, Basantakumāri, and a Sanskrit phrase in Bengali characters, bhādhasya tarunībhāryā (an old man's young
wife) is conspicuously appended to the title.

There seems to be some similarity between the plot of Basantakumārī and that of Kīrtti Bilās by G. C. Gupta. Both are based on a story of love between stepson and young stepmother.16 There is an example of such a situation in the life of a historical figure, Ranjit Simha, the famous Sikh king of the Panjab (India).17 This type of story also occurs in Bengali folklores.18 The subject is not unknown in European literature also.19 A Bengali translation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet by Radhā Madhab Kar was published in 1870 which bears the title Basanta kumārī.20 Another tale, Basanta-kumārī, by Umācāran Cakrabartī, was published in 1872,21 but

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17 Satīś Candra Raycandhuri, Bangiya Samāj, p.436.
18 Aśutoṣ Bhattācaryya, Bengali Natya Sahityer Itiḥās, Vol. I, 2nd Ed., pp. 294-99. In the story of 'Bijay Basanta' or 'Bīt Basanta' of Bengali folk literature there is a reference to oppression of a stepson by a stepmother. It is interesting to note that oppression of stepsons by stepmothers is a very popular theme of Bengali folk-literature.
21 Copy in I.O.L.
Masarraf owes nothing to him except possibly the title of the drama.

Basantakumari is a three-act play, each act containing four scenes, except the last one which has one less. In the beginning there is a prologue. The word Rangabhumi is used for drama or scene and a for act, but in his next drama he uses the word garbha to mean a scene.

In the prologue an actor and an actress appear on the stage. The actor proposes to play the drama Basantakumari written by one Mir Masarraf Hosen. The actress does not like the idea of acting a book written by a Muslim. She says, "You utter the name of a Muslim in such a gathering...... he is a Muslim on the one hand, on the other he is from the North of Bengal. So you understand........" The actor replies that, "Even if we cannot please it will be a sort of fun, that is one kind of enjoyment." At last the actress agrees to the proposal of the actor.

The story of Basantakumari is as follows:

22"Nai - chi i chi i eman sabhay musalmaner nam kollen... eke musulman, tate abar uttare bangal. Jante-i pacchen...." Basantakumari, Prastabana, p.3.

23"Priye, manoranjam na korte pali rahasya to habe? Se-o ek amod." ibid., p.3.
Act 1.

Scene 1. In the first scene Birendra Sigha, king of Indrapur was talking with his jester Priyambad. Priyambad advised the king to remarry as his first wife was dead. The king had a young son whom he wished to be enthroned before his death. It was gathered from the minister Baisampayen that everything was in order in the State and he advised the king to get the prince married before he was made king. He also praised the prince Narendra as a polite, kind-hearted, intelligent and well-trained young man.

Scene 2. But the king's jester who was always with the king asked him repeatedly to marry again. The repeated requests of the jester seemed to produce the desired effect. The king seemed to yield to his requests. Priyambad referred to a girl whom they had happened to see earlier. The king reminded him that he was an old man, but the jester replied that everything could be achieved by money. The king gave way and married secretly.

Scene 3. The king's secret marriage evoked criticism from the public - particularly the womenfolk. Even the prince Narendra and his friend Sarat were seen
discussing the situation caused by the marriage of the king. It seemed that the king was now neglecting his duties. There was no proper administration in the kingdom. There was corruption among officials. There were many miscreants in office and the foreign states were preparing for war against Indrapur. The peasants came in vain to the court to seek redress of their grievances.

Scene 4. Rebati, the new queen of Indrapur, seemed to be unhappy as she was married to an old man. She fell in love with the prince Narendra at the very first sight and sent her maid Malati secretly to the prince conveying her desire. But the prince Narendra, being a man of strong personality, drove Malati away. But Rebati was not discouraged at all by this incident, she contemplated ways and means to achieve her end. The old king Sirendra, who was very fond of his wife, passed most of his time in her company. Rebati reminded him of his royal duty, but it produced no effect on the king. The king was negligent of his duties. He expressed his love for Rebati in a metaphorical language, but all these long speeches fell flat on her. Rebati pretended
that she loved him, but she cleverly put it to the
king that she was fond of Narendra, his son by his
first wife. She asked to see the prince in her
chamber, and the king did not hesitate to grant her
request.

Act 2.

Scene 1. The prince Narendra who had heard much of
Basantakumāri, the princess of Bhojpur, expressed
his desire to marry her in the course of conversation
with his friend.

Scene 2. When Narendra received the instruction of
his father to visit his stepmother, he went into
her chamber. While he was there a messenger arrived
from the king of Bhojpur to see the king of Indrapur.
The king was present in the chamber of Rebati at the
time, so the letter and an oil painting of the princess
were handed over to him by the messenger of Bijay
Sinha, the king of Bhojpur. In the letter Bijay
Sinha requested that both the king Birendra and the
prince Narendra should be present at the avayambara
sabha, the ceremony of selecting a husband, of his
daughter. Rebati managed to procure the painting
of Basantakumāri. She deliberately took the painting
away so that Narendra might not get a chance to see how beautiful Basantakumārī was. She was in doubt and suspense as she apprehended that Basantakumārī would choose Narendra as her husband. So Rebati wrote a letter to Narendra expressing her feelings towards him. The king accidentally saw the letter though he did not read it for fear of displeasing Rebati. When the king gave her back the letter, Rebati said that it was meant for her younger sister. She cleverly read aloud a text she invented on the spot. Birendra, a simpleton, believed whatever his wife said.

**Scene 3.** Basantakumārī saw Narendra in a dream and fell in love with him. She fervently hoped that she would get him as her husband. The day of her selecting-husband ceremony drew near. Hundreds of intending bridegrooms were present on the colourful occasion. But inside the palace it was found that Basantakumārī was in pensive mood of mind. Possibly she was in doubt whether she would meet her man of dream in the svayambar sabhā. Bijay Sinha was also worried, seeing his daughter not even properly dressed for the occasion. Bijay presented his daughter with golden robes and
jewellery to wear on that memorable day. Basanta-
kumārī told her father that modesty and chastity
were the real ornaments and beauty of a woman.
However, an obedient daughter as she was, she
complied with her father's request and hesitatingly
met the bridegrooms present in the svayambarsabha.
Basantakumārī became extremely glad to see Narendra,
the man of her dream. She garlanded him and wedding
bells rang and at the same time flowers were
showered on them.

Act 3.

Scene 1. Rebati was envious of the beautiful Basanta-
kumārī for two reasons, first because of her beauty,
secondly she was going to take Narendra from her.
Moreover Rebati apprehended that all her fortune
would vanish if Narendra ascended the throne. Rebati
received no response from Narendra, when all her
attempts to win Narendra failed she hit upon a plan
to take revenge on him. On one occasion she lay down
on the floor when the king Birendra entered her room.
As soon as Birendra entered the room she cried
aloud and said that she was going to put an end
to herself. Birendra was puzzled and he asked the
reason of this. Rebatí at first said nothing, but at last after repeated questions by Birendra Rebatí disclosed that Narendra, the son of the king, had molested her. Birendra became furious when he heard this from his wife, and he immediately ordered that Narendra should be put to death without delay. The queen Rebatí asked the king not to stain his sword with the blood of a sinner like Narendra. She desired that Narendra should be burnt to death, which was his legitimate punishment. Birendra, faithful to his wife from the very beginning, agreed to his wife's proposal.

Scene 2. Narendra and Basantakumārī, completely unaware of the fate that was waiting for them, were enjoying each other's conversation. Basantakumārī saw a letter written by Rebatí which Narendra frankly showed her. She was simply astonished to learn that it was Queen Rebatí, her step-mother-in-law, who had written such a love-letter. In the meantime, Nagarpāl, the police chief, upon orders from the king appeared and chained Narendra. Basantakumārī swooned. Narendra asked the police chief the reason for such behaviour. The police chief told him that it was the king's order. In the
meantime Basantakumāri regained her consciousness and bribed the police chief with all her valuable jewellery to treat her husband kindly. Narendra was then unchained and was taken before the king. Basantakumāri followed him.

Scene 3. Birendra shouted in rage ordering his son to end his life by burning himself in the fire immediately. Narendra like a devoted son of the days of the Ramayana was ready to embrace death. The king did not even reply to his son's question when Narendra wanted to know his offence. Narendra was perplexed by his father's silence. At last the minister disclosed that Narendra was guilty of molesting the chastity of the honourable queen of Indrapur. Narendra could not believe that such a grievous charge should be brought against him by his parent. Like a medieval hero of India he entered into the fire burning before him. Basantakumāri followed her husband in death like a legendary wife. Before Narendra entered the fire he passed on to the king the letter written by the queen Rebati. The king in utter disgust threw it away but on advice of the prudent minister read it. Whereupon he cried madly, drew his sword and killed Rebati. Before
her death Rebati realised that she had been the cause of the death of two innocent souls. At the end Birendra, in complete bewilderment, shouted at the fire "give me back my child", and jumped into the fire to end his life.

The drama ends here.

Though Basantakumari is the first dramatic writing of the author it seems that he has shown quite a considerable amount of skill and proficiency as regards the art and technique of playwriting. However it is not possible to say definitely whether he had any knowledge of the techniques of western dramas.

The exposition of the drama Basantakumari is clearly told in the very first scene. The king Birendra is in conflict, though for a short while, whether he will marry in his old age or not. The complexities develop when Birendra marries a young girl who falls in love with his young son. The situation reaches its maximum when Rebati plots to take revenge on the prince who refuses her proposal. The drama is a short one with the relevant characters only. The drama does not lack in action. Almost all the incidents are performed on the stage, except the marriage of the old king, and the refusal of Narendra of Rebati's proposal and the dreams of Narendra and Basantakumari.
The drama ends in four deaths. For this reason the drama cannot be termed as "tragedy", though there are elements of tragedy in the drama. However it is true that the author failed to explore to the fullest the dramatic elements inherent in the main character of Rebati. Rebati's inner conflict if properly developed would possibly reach to the level of Shakespearean tragedy.

It may be assumed that Masarraf intended to create a tragedy. But it is not certain wherefrom he got the idea of writing a tragedy. It is seen, as stated earlier, that Masarraf followed some of the formal conventions of Sanskrit drama, but in Saksrit a tragedy is completely absent. "The Sanskrit drama is a mixed composition in which joy is mingled with sorrow, in which the jester usually plays a prominent part, while the hero and heroine are often in depths of despair. But it has never a sad ending." So it may be said Masarraf took the idea of writing tragedy from contemporary dramatic works of Din Bandhu Mitra or Madhusudan Datta. Moreover there is very little evidence that Masarraf had direct acquaintance with Shakespearean tragedies or Greek tragedies.

Though *Basantakumārī* is a serious type of drama, still the writer tries to produce some comic effect in it, particularly when the king converses with his jester who disappears as soon as his role is finished after the king’s marriage.

As regards the characterisation in the drama it may be said in general that all the characters are stereotyped. The characters are not at all fully developed, they remain more or less the same from the beginning to the end. Narendra was a good young man from first to last and Bīrendra was an old silly man all along and Rebati was a deceptive woman from the very beginning.

Rebati, a young lady, was an unequal match for her old husband. She posed that she loved her husband, but her heart was revealed when she used base language to the king in his absence. Her love towards Narendra, though not unusual, but never to be fulfilled, resulted in perversion which ended Narendra’s life as well as her own. Masarraf, as it seems, failed to show the inner conflicts of Rebati which would lead the drama into a tragedy in its true sense.

Bīrendra was reported to be a strong and courageous king, but in the drama there was a lack of evidence of these qualities. He was a simple soul with lost personality and an uxorious type of man believing his wife all the time. He neglected his duty
and like an imprudent man he killed his innocent son and daughter-in-law and at last killed himself.

Narendra and Basantakumārī were ideal man and woman with no fault, no hesitation, no vacillation, which made them unreal. However one point is to be remembered when Nasarraf's dramatic skill of characterisation is examined that, in Bengali drama, the characterisation on the pattern of European or English dramas found its way in the 20th century only\(^{25}\) and Nasarraf's attempt in portraying a character like Rebati in the third quarter of the 19th century is commendable no doubt.

Janidār Darpan

Janidār Darpan, the second drama written by Nasarraf, was first published in 1875. It is not known whether any subsequent edition was published during the author's life-time, though another edition came about forty-five years after his death in 1955.\(^{26}\)

The story in the drama depicts the life of landlords (Janidārs) in the then Bengal. The title of the drama means

\[^{25}\text{D. L. Ray in his drama Sā Jāhan (1909) portrays the inner conflict of the mogul emperor Shah Jahan.}\]

\[^{26}\text{Janidār Darpan, ed. Āsāf Siddiki, Dacca, 1955.}\]
"mirror of landlords". These rich people had money and time to indulge in immoral activities. Similar stories had been written in Bengali literature by Tekcād Thākur, Kaliprasanna Sinha and Madhusudan Datta more than a decade earlier. The majority of the characters in the books of Tekcād, Madhusudan were non-Muslims, but some Muslims were portrayed and the society in which they lived was a mixed society. Masarraf, on the other hand, gives a picture of a mainly Muslim society, though there are a very few non-Muslim characters in the drama.

In the preface to the drama Masarraf says: "I was born in the family of a landlord, most of my relations are landlords, so it required little effort on my part to portray the picture of these landholders."

The book was dedicated to his cousin (later on the Nabāb of Padandi) Mir Muhammad Ali, of whom there is a long account

27  Ṭāler Gharer Dulāl, Calcutta, 1857.

28  Hutom Pyācar Naka, Calcutta, 1860.

29  a) Ma-e-i ki Bāle Sabhyata, 1860.
   b) Duro Saliker Ghar Ro, 1860.

30  "Jamīdar baγye anār janna, aμiya-svajan sakale-i jamīdar sutaram jamīdarer chabi ahiita karite bisee aγaς aβasyak karenē" (An appeal to the readers) Preface to Jamīdar Darpan.
to be found in the author's autobiography, Amar Jiban.31

In the same dedication the author writes that "So many enemies are trying (being prepared) to break this mirror."32 Nasarraf does not enlighten on this subject or say who the enemies were but his comments suggest that there was some opposition to his writing this play.

Though it can not be definitely said what the origin of the story of Jamidar Darpan was, it may be assumed that the story is based on some actual incidents, as it is said in the prologue by the narrator, and the hint is given in the preface by the author, of the enemies who were trying to oppose his writing it.

The drama, which begins with a prologue and ends with an epilogue, consists of three acts, and each act contains three scenes. A narrator (sutrachar), or the manager of the theatre, appears on the stage and he expresses his feelings regarding the oppression of the landlords of the country. The landlords are supposed to be the protectors of the life and wealth of the peasants since the administration has delegated this power to them. But in actual practice the landlords are oppressing the poor peasants, particularly those in the rural areas, in


32 "Anek satru darpankhani bhangar karite, prastut haiteche' 'upahar' (dedication), Jamidar Darpan."
very many ways. An actor (nat) appears on the same prologue and supports the views of the Sūtradār but he mentions the misdeeds of a particular Janīdar. The narrator compares landlords to a kind of beast and says to the actor that "in Janīdar Darpan a sketch has been drawn which is not at all fiction but an exact description". Later on an actress (nat) appears on the stage and sings a chorus with the actor in which the theme of the drama is told. After their disappearance from the stage a song is sung behind the curtain.

The main story of the drama reads like this:

Act 1

Scene 1. Hāvoyān Āli, a Janīdar, a landholder of Kośālpur, was an unscrupulous rich man always surrounded by his companions who helped him in the fulfilment of his evil desires. He wanted to seduce a beautiful lady, Nurannehā, wife of one Ābu Mollā, a poor peasant of the village. Hāvoyān Āli tried in very many ways to tempt the lady through a procuress but the lady would not agree to his evil proposals. Then Āli planned to arrest Mollā on a false pretext so that Nurān might be compelled to meet Āli to se-


34The name is probably Nurannehā, possibly due to the printer's mistake the final 'r' is dropped.
cure the release of her husband.

Scene 2. Accordingly Ābu Mollā was arrested by the watchmen of Ālī. Mollā felt completely helpless in the hands of the guards and she gave them some money as a bribe, requesting them not to torture him.

Scene 3. At last Mollā was brought before Ālī who fined him fifty rupees, in default of which he was to be punished and detained. In the meantime one of the companions of Ālī sent Kristamani, a procuress, to Nurannehar.

Act 2.

Scene 1. Nurannehar, a simple devoted village wife, was afraid and worried when she heard that her husband had been arrested by the landlord and would be released only on payment of a sum of fifty rupees. The sum of money was far beyond their means. In the meanwhile Kristamani met Nurān and sympathised with her first, and finally told her that Hayyān Ālī was madly in love with her and she could release her husband if she met Ālī secretly in the night. Nurān rejected the proposal. Kristamani while departing warned Nurān of the consequences of her refusal.
Scene 2. Hayyān Āli was furious to hear of Nuran's refusal. He immediately ordered two of his employees to bring her to him by force.

Scene 3. Accordingly Nuran was brought before the voluptuous Āli. Though she was pregnant he criminally assaulted her; as a result of which she died. Before her death she appealed to God as well as to the Queen 35 for justice. Incidentally an elder brother of Āli entered and rebuked Āli for such an act of inhumanity saying that such conduct was unworthy of their noble ancestors.

The dead body of Nuran was removed secretly and left in the garden near Molla's house.

Act 3.

Scene 1. Molla who had been released from detention earlier happened to see the dead body of his wife lying in the garden. Molla informed a police officer who with the help of two constables took away the dead body for a post-mortem examination.

Scene 2. The preliminary hearing was held in the court of the magistrate at Bilaspur. The counsel for the plaintiff Molla cited previous cases of criminal

35. The Queen Victoria, the then Empress of India.
assault by Ḥāfiz and the case was ultimately transferred to the court of the sessions' judge.

Scene 3. Ḥāfiz who did not appear in person was tried in the court of the judge. Two professional witnesses brought by the defendant testified to the honesty and morality of Ḥāfiz and spoke ill of the deceased Nuran. A report was then made by an English physician which went like this: "My name is F. B. Cunningham; aged 72 years. I am the G. Surgeon of Bensaff district. I made the post-mortem examination of the body of Norren-Nehar, a healthy good looking woman, aged about twenty years, sent by the officer in charge of Dharmashala police station. No marks of external violence except on the genital, profuse discharge of blood from the said part; the lungs highly congested on digesting away the skin of throat extravasation of blood observed all other organs found healthy. In my opinion she must have died of sanguineous apoplexy of the brain."

Ḥāfiz was acquitted. The drama ends here.

In the epilogue the actor and the actress who appeared in the prologue reappear and appeal to the Queen of India for justice and redress of their grievances. Abu Molla also appeared
in the epilogue and he reported that his house had been demolished by the men of Ἐλι and he had been driven out of the village. The actor and the actress prayed in a song to God for justice.

The story of the drama has little dramatic element in it. This can be well said in a novel also which is a story of oppression and triumph of evil. The conflict in the drama is an external one and even in that case the parties in conflict are very strong on the one side and the other is very weak. However the drama does not lack in actions, and all the dramatic actions are performed on the stage except for the violation of Nurannehār. The writer seems to create a tragedy but, as said earlier, due to lack of knowledge of modern art of drama as in European literature he fails.

Although Jamīdar Darpan is not an example of a creation of first rate drama in Bengali it gives a vivid picture of Bengal society in the seventies and eighties of the last century. 36

Character portrayal in the drama is weak in that the characters are types, and there is little development in the course of the play. The villains were rich and bad and they

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36 For details of the then Bengal society see page 143-86 of this thesis.
remained so to the end. The poor who were good and weak and oppressed did not change either.

Hēyōrān, the name significantly enough means wild animals, was a rich but vicious landlord. He was a hypocrite too in that though he did not scruple to assault any woman who appealed to his venture he regularly visited the mosque at prayer time. His companions were no more than an undifferentiated group of men who pandered to his vices hoping to spend his money.

His brother Sirāj who condemned the violation of Kuran-nehar and seemed thereby to represent the conscience of the community took no further action to bring the persecution of Molla to an end. He appeared in the play only once and was as unconvincing as the picus brother of the hero of Ḍālār Gharer Dulāl.

A Dr. Cunningham was a complete caricature. His evidence which was presented in English was not even written ordinarily in good English and as a medical report it read like nonsense. The husband and wife had no solidity. He was poor and weak and doomed to be persecuted. She was poor and beautiful and exposed to the vicious desire of the landlord. Neither could do anything to help themselves, and neither in their sufferings were alive as human beings.

Krīppamani, Haridāś, Jītū Molla were all villains and villainy was their lives' breath.
Though the book *Janīḍār Darpan* is written all in prose, there are as many as ten songs in the whole drama and one introductory speech by the narrator is in verse. All the songs are connected with the theme of the play, and it seems that these musical interludes are meant to rouse the sentiments of the audience by giving a tragic effect on it.
CHAPTER V

LATER PROSE WRITINGS:

1. Bisad Sindhu

Masarraf’s prose work Bisad Sindhu consists of three parts, which were published separately: the first part, Maharam Parbba in 1885, the second part Uddhar Parbba in 1887, and the third part Ejid Bach Parbba in 1891.¹ Later all three parts were printed together as one book.

In the preface to the book the author states that he has derived his material from Arabic and Persian sources, but he does not give any detail. The book narrates the story of the martyrdom of the Prophet Mohammad’s grandsons and great-grandsons as a result of a feud between them and Yezid, the ruler and Caliph at Damascus.

The Maharam Parbba contains 27 chapters, the first of which is introductory; the Uddhar Parbba, 30 chapters and Ejid Bach Parbba, 5 chapters. The chapters are called in Bengali Prabha, which means wave, a nomenclature which is in keeping with the title of the book Bisad Sindhu, which means ocean of grief.

¹Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay gives this date of publication of the third part of Bisad Sindhu but a copy of the third part printed as a separate book is not available.
The book is dedicated to Karimannesā who was the author's employer at that time.  

The theme of the introductory chapter is a prophecy made to the prophet Mohammad by the angel Jebrāil (Gabriel). After hearing the prophecy Mohammad became sad. His disciples were deeply moved to note his melancholy and inquired what was worrying him. At first the Prophet was in doubt whether to tell them about it but finally decided to do so. What the angel had told him was that a son of Huabiwa (Hābiya) would murder his grandsons Hāsān and Hosen. Hābiya who was a bachelor was present at that time, when he heard what the prophet said he promised that he would never marry or have intercourse with a woman. The Prophet replied that the future was in the hands of God and whatever Hābiya resolved now would be of no avail to change what had been predicted.

Later Hābiya was stricken with some sexual disorder which could only be cured by intercourse with a woman. This turn of events had been prophesied to Mohammad by the angel. Consequently he advised Hābiya to marry. At first Hābiya refused but finally consented. To ensure that his marriage would produce no offspring he took as his wife an old woman of eighty.

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2 It is interesting to note that in subsequent editions this page of dedication has been omitted.
He was cured of his disease but miraculously his wife fell pregnant and gave birth to a male child.

Mābiyā was moved to slay the child but paternal affection was too strong and the boy Ejīd grew to manhood. In order to keep his son away from Hāsān and Hosen whom he was fated to murder Mābiyā went away to live in Damascus where he was made Governor of the province by Mohammad. The prophet Mohammad died a few years later, as did Āli, the fourth Caliph and the son-in-law of the Prophet. After the death of Āli, Hāsān, his eldest son became ruler of Madinā.

In later editions the introductory chapter was slightly expanded. The author describes how during the festival of Id the prophet Mohammad was sitting with his disciples when his grandsons, Hāsān and Hosen, approached him and requested some new garments. Hāsān chose green cloth and Hosen red. At that moment the angel Jebrāil appeared to Mohammad, though none of the others present saw him. The angel prophesied that Hāsān would be poisoned and Hosen would be murdered by the son of one of his disciples who was sitting with him at that time. The angel named the disciple as Mābiyā. The episode was presumably inserted to explain how the colours green and red came to be associated with the death of Hāsān and Hosen.

The remaining chapters of this parbba or part take the
narrative as far as the death of Hosen.

**Chapters 1—3.**  Ejdī while living in Damascus (Dāmeskā) fell in love with a beautiful woman Jaynāb (Zainab) who was the wife of one Ābdul Jābbār,⁴ and he plotted to get her as his wife. He told his father Ṣābiya that unless arrangements were made for him to marry Jaynāb he would commit suicide. Ṣābiya at first was astonished by such a proposal, but in the end he yielded to the importunity of his wife, who it seems was still alive to plead Ejdī's cause. Ṣābiya's wife conspired with the chief minister Marāyān⁴ to fulfil Ejdī's desire and a messenger was sent to summon Jābbār to meet Ṣābiya in Damascus. Jābbār was delighted to receive an official invitation and met Ṣābiya in the palace. Ṣābiya informed him that he had taken a liking to him and wished to have him as a son-in-law by marrying him to his daughter, princess Ṣāleha! The princess was a fictitious person who had been invented as a part of the conspiracy. The next phase was a message from Ṣāleha! that she would not marry Jābbār unless he divorced his first wifeJaynāb.

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³The name appears as Jobbār in the first edition, but later editions show this name as Jābbar.

⁴The name appears as Hariya in the first edition. On page 148 of the 23rd ed. Hatim is stated to be the chief minister.
Hearing this Jābbar publicly announced his divorce from his wife Jaynāb. A messenger from the Palace took the news of the divorce to Jaynāb, who was shocked to hear what had happened and left at once for her father's house. Another message then came from 'Salcha' stating that she had changed her mind and would not marry a man who was so base that he would divorce his innocent wife for monetary gain. Jābbar thereupon left the court and it appears that he became an ascetic (fakir).

Chapters 4-6. These chapters bring us to the origin of the feud between Ejid and Hasān. Ejid sent a messenger to Jaynāb with a proposal of marriage. In the course of his journey the messenger met a rich man named Akkās who also wished to marry Jaynāb. Akkās induced the messenger to convey his suit to her. The same messenger was also inspired by Hasān, the grandson of the Prophet, to convey a proposal of marriage in his name. On arrival at Jaynāb's house the messenger conveyed to her all these proposals and Jaynāb agreed to marry Hasān. When the messenger returned to his master Ejid, he informed him of Jaynāb's decision and Ejid resolved to take revenge on Hasān. Despite his grief at the turn of events there was nothing that Kabiya could do to turn his son Ejid from the action that he was going to take against Hasān.
Chapter 7. Hasan's conjugal life seems to be unhappy as he already had two wives. His second wife who was younger turned hostile to the youngest wife, Jaynab.

Chapters 8-11. In the meantime Habiba expired and Ejid became the ruler of Damascus. Ejid demanded the subordination of Hasan to the sovereignty of Damascus and ordered that Khotba⁵ should be read in his name throughout his empire, Syria (Siriyā), Makkā, Madina and Kufa. When Hasan and his followers received this letter they were all so annoyed that the letter was torn up in the very presence of Ejid's messenger. When this incident was reported to Ejid by his messenger he flared up and he immediately ordered his army to march towards Madina. When the army of Ejid approached Madina the people of Madina assembled under the leadership of Hasan and resolved to fight against the alien army. Ultimately Ejid's army was completely annihilated by Hasan's army. However Harūyān, the minister of Ejid, who survived, entered the city in disguise. Though he sent a secret message to Ejid to send more troops, he was sure that it would be impossible to defeat Hasan by open fight. So he contemplated succeeding by tricks and stratagems.

⁵A sermon delivered before the Friday noon prayer in a mosque.
In these chapters it is seen how Narayan was successful in finding out a crooked woman by whose help Narayan poisoned Hasan. Maymunah, an old woman, who was able to enter the household of Hasan, elicited from his second wife Jeeda that there was some misunderstanding between Jeeda and Hasan, after Hasan's marriage with Jaynab. Maymunah hinted to Jeeda that Ejid was willing to marry her, but that this could not materialise unless Hasan was not removed from this world. Jeeda was at first unwilling to accept such a proposal. But at last evil overpowered her and she agreed to Maymunah's proposal. Jeeda saw Maymunah secretly in her house when she gave her a strong dose of poison. Jeeda took it home and mixed it secretly with some honey which Hasan used to take regularly. When Hasan took the honey given by Jeeda, he felt unwell with a pain in his stomach. Jeeda pretended to nurse him and she also wanted to take the honey which caused harm to him. But Hasan prevented her from doing that. However after a few days he was cured and went to the mausoleum of his grandfather. Maymunah was astonished to learn that the poison had not worked as she thought it would. Jeeda tried to poison her husband for the second time with some dates. She first tried to please her husband by saying that she
had thrown away all the honey and brought some tasty dates. She herself took some dates which were cleverly marked. Hāṣān in good faith took some of them but immediately he realised that he had been poisoned again as before. He then rushed to the mausoleum of the prophet and prayed to God for recovery. This time too he was cured but he was sure that the poisoning was the work of Jāeda, as he had married Jaynāb. Hāṣān also guessed that she might have been misguided by some third person. Hāṣān left his home for Musāl, a city nearby. But there too he was not safe. A one-eyed man attempted to murder him, though he was saved by one of his disciples. Ultimately, Hāṣān returned home and stayed in the chamber of his younger brother Nosen. Nāymunā was still then hoping to succeed in her plan. She saw Jāeda who was disappointed that her two attempts had failed, and gave her a very strong dose of poison, reported to be sent by Ejdīd. Jāeda hesitated at first but accepted it later. Nāymunā also told her to drop the powder inside the jug containing drinking water. This time Jāeda was successful. But as ill luck would have it Hāṣān saw her while she was leaving the room. But he did not actually know what she had done as he was asleep at the time. Later he drank some water and immediately fell ill. His son Kāsem
called Hosen. Hosen was very perturbed and excited. He declared that some mischievous person had committed a crime. Though Hasan knew who had done it he did not disclose the name of the person. Before his death he called Jaeda and told her privately that he knew it was she who had given him the poison. Hasan showed his magnanimity by pardoning her and praying to God to forgive her.

Jaeda had no peace of mind. She left her house secretly and was brought before Ejid by Haymuna. Ejid was grateful to her and gave gold and silver, but at the same time he declared that he could not marry a treacherous woman who could kill her husband. Ejid killed Jaeda and Haymuna shortly afterwards. That is the end of the Hasan episode.

**Chapters 19-22.** Thus Maroyan was successful in killing Hasan. His next attempt was to kill the younger brother Hosen. Here also he adopted his previous artifice. Maroyan accompanied by his assistant Otho Alid came to see Hosen in disguise. Hosen was at that time staying in the holy shrine of the Prophet Mohammad believing that the soil of the mausoleum was inviolable. Maroyan posed as a well wisher of Hosen and requested him to leave the mausoleum as they had received secret information that Ejid's army would attack the place very soon. Hosen, though not afraid of death, was in a dilemma.
when those unknown well-wishers had left the place
Moreover Hosen believed in the prophecy that his death
would take place at Karbala. But at last he left the
mausoleum. Ejid received this information from Haroyan.
Ejid then conspired with the ruler of Kufa, Abdullah
Jeyad. As a result of an underhand pact, Abdullah Jeyad
one day publicly declared that he had been ordered by
the prophet in a dream to hand over the administration
of Kufa to the prophet's grandson, Hosen. Accordingly
a messenger from Abdullah Jeyad met Hosen. Hosen had
decided to leave Madina but, as advised by some wise men,
he sent an emissary, Moslem by name, to study the situation
at Kufa. Moslem, a courageous young man, proceeded to Kufa
to see Abdullah Jeyad. He did not suspect evil of Abdullah
Jeyad. So he wrote to Hosen to proceed to Kufa. Hosen,
accompanied by his family and a large number of fellowmen,
started for Kufa, but unfortunately he was misled and
marched in the direction of the plain of Karbala. This was
what Ejid wanted. Ejid's army marched towards Karbala
and guarded the bank of the river Forat (Euphrates).
Abdullah played a trick on Moslem and killed him, and his two
minor sons. Ejid's announcement of a handsome reward for

6 The story of Moslem's two sons has been inserted in the 8th and later editions.
the head of Hosen tempted Simār to attempt that act of cruelty.

Chapters 24-26. In these chapters, Masārraf describes the death of Hosen and the ill fate of his family. Hosen did not know at first that he was proceeding to Karbala', not to Kufa. One day the feet of the horses sank deep in the earth. Hosen suddenly remembered the prophecy of his grandfather. He declared to his family and fellowmen that he had reached his place of death. Hosen's party stopped there and Hosen ordered his men to fetch water from the river. But they were unable to do so as Ejid's army was guarding the bank. Even Hosen's infant child was killed by an arrow shot by one of Ejid's soldiers. Then Hosen's party decided to fight against the soldiers of Ejid. Several strong men of Hosen's party fought heroically against Ejid's soldiers. But all of them were killed at last. Kasem, a son of Hasan, wanted to fight with Ejid's army, but to fulfil a promise made by his father and his uncle Hosen he had to marry his cousin Sakina at that very moment. Kasem later died at the hands of Ejid's army. Hosen's son Ali Akbar also met with a similar fate. Lastly Hosen, dressed in a sacred helmet and armour which he had inherited from his father and grandfather, went to fight. He killed many
soldiers in Ejid's army and as a result the survivors were frightened. Some of them left the river bank and hid in a wood nearby. Hosen felt thirsty and was about to drink water when suddenly he remembered that his infant son, his nephew and many soldiers had died for want of water. He left the river bank and threw away his helmet, armour and sword, and for a moment stood gazing absent-mindedly at the sky and he fell to the ground. Some of the Ejid's soldiers marked this. But nobody dared to attack him. Suddenly Simar marched to him and jumped on the chest of Hosen, and tried in vain to cut his throat with a sharp sword. He failed because that part of his throat had been kissed by the Prophet and was invulnerable. Hosen advised Simar to strike him in the other side. Simar did so and succeeded in cutting Hosen's head off.

This is the end of the first part.

The second part, Uddhar Farbba, narrates the rescue of the family of the deceased Hosen and the revenge taken by Hanifa for Hasan and Hosen's murders.

In the first chapter the author describes how Hosen's horse Duldul returned to the camp and was attacked and wounded by Ejid's soldiers. The soldiers of Ejid captured the surviving women and children and sent them to Damascus.
Chapters 2 - 3. 

Sīmār while proceeding towards Damascus with Hosen's head stayed overnight in the house of a non-Muslim, Ājar by name. Ājar was so moved by the act of cruelty to the Prophet's grandson that he refused to give back the head which he kept in safe custody when Sīmār demanded it next morning. Instead Ājar killed his three sons and presented their heads to Sīmār, but even then he could not retain Hosen's head. Sīmār killed both Ājar and his wife to get back the head for which a very handsome reward had been announced by Ejid. Sīmār handed over the head to Ejid. Ejid kept it covered in a plate and brought Jaynāl Ābedin, Hosen's only surviving son, and Jaynāb, the third wife of Ḥasan, and a little daughter of Hosen in to see it. Ejid laughed at Jaynāl Ābedin's remarks that he would kill him. He taunted Jaynāb, the lady whom he wanted to marry. He asked the little daughter of Hosen to have some dates from the plate. But the daughter screamed to find her father's head when she uncovered the plate. All the members of Hosen's family began to weep at such a pathetic sight. At that moment a miracle happened. The head of Hosen began to ascend high and gradually vanished. Ejid was horrified at such an unusual occurrence.
Chapter 4. In this chapter the writer describes the funeral ceremony of Hosein in the presence of all the angels of heaven. Almost all the dead prophets including Adam, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad and Hosein's parents appear in the plain of Karbalā. The writer describes the greatness of Mohammad and Ali. After the funeral of Hosein and his family all the prophets returned to heaven.

Chapter 5. On the other hand Ejjid was trying to compel Jaynāl Abedin to submit to him. After consulting Maroyān he declared that Jaynāl Abedin would recite Khotbā in the name of Ejjid. But Jaynāl Abedin in fact did not utter the name of Ejjid while reciting Khotbā in the mosque, instead he uttered the name of his deceased father; Ejjid was furious at this and put him into prison again.

Chapters 6 - 16. When Mohammad Manifā, a step-brother of Hosein, and ruler of Ambāj, heard the news of the death of Hosein he decided to take revenge. The people of Madinā also received the news of the death of Hosein and the leading citizens decided to call Manifā and under his leadership to march towards Damascus to destroy Ejjid and his kingdom. Ejjid hearing this planned to oppose Manifā to prevent his entering Madinā. In the meantime Manifā, receiving the invitation from Madinā, started for the town immediately. He requested other
Muslim rulers in Arabia to help him in his attempt to release the Prophet's great-grandson and other members of his family. Ejid's army was waiting near Madina for Hanifa's arrival. When the two armies met there was a fierce battle. Ejid's general was afraid of Hanifa's power. Ejid was disappointed when he learnt about Hanifa's power and skill. He immediately ordered Jaynal Abedin, who was in his prison, to be killed. But Marvan advised him not to do anything hastily. Siimar was sent to help Ejid's army but on his way he was checked by Hanifa's army. Siimar wanted to win by a trick. He announced a cease-fire between the two parties. At the dead of night Siimar in disguise entered the camp of Hanifa's party and bribed a Turkish general who was going to help Hanifa. The unscrupulous general succeeded in capturing the kings of Turkey and Togon and both of them were brought before Siimar. Siimar then decided to proceed to Damascus. At that very moment he was challenged by Hashab Kakka, the ruler of Irak, who was going to Hanifa. Hashab Kakka fought valiantly and Siimar got frightened, so he freed the Turkish and the Togan kings. Ultimately Hashab was successful in capturing Siimar and proceeded towards Madina. Ejid again wished to kill Jaynal Abedin when he heard a rumour that Siimar
was captured and that most of his soldiers had been killed by Ḥanīfa. Though Otbe Alid, a general of Ejid, fought fiercely with Ḥanīfa's army, he too was captured but later on freed by ʿAbdul-Karim, Ṣimār was executed. The victorious army planned to enter the city of Madina the following day.

Chapter 17. Ejid was anxiously waiting for the news of Ṣimār and Otbe Alid. In the meantime ʿAbd al-Rahmān came to see Ejid. He was not definite on what had happened to Ṣimār and Alid. However he guessed that Ṣimār might be caught and killed by Ḥanīfa. Then Ejid was about to kill Jaynal Abedin to avenge Ṣimār's apprehended death. ʿAbd al-Rahmān again prevented Ejid from killing Jaynal Abedin. He contended that there was still hope of an honourable treaty, but that if Jaynal Abedin were killed Ḥanīfa would not agree to any proposal. ʿAbd al-Rahmān proceeded to rescue Alid and Ṣimār.

Chapters 18 - 20. Ḥanīfa entered the city of Madina and the nobles of the city wanted him to start an expedition against Ejid at the earliest opportunity. Ḥanīfa then started for Damascus, but on his way he was stopped by ʿAbd al-Rahmān's flag. On the other hand ʿAbd al-Rahmān himself was frightened to see Ḥanīfa's army. He was also sure that Ṣimār was killed and he reported it to Ejid.
Chapter 21 - 25. Ejid decided to lead himself his army against Madina. But he was soon disappointed to hear that Naroyan and Alid had not returned victorious. Ejid was planning to march towards Madina but, in the meantime, Hanifa's army encamped outside the city of Damascus. Naroyan advised his master not to be aggressive. When Hanifa defeated some of the strong men of Ejid's army in a straight fight Ejid desired to go himself to fight Hanifa. In fact, Hanifa had a brother, Omar by name, who resembled Hanifa, and he was fighting against Ejid. Omar had previously promised Hanifa that he would not slay Ejid. As a result, Omar was captured by Ejid who wanted him to be executed in public next day. But Omar was rescued from the hands of Ejid by a man from Hanifa's side who had enlisted in the guise of a soldier in Ejid's army. Ejid then resolved that Jaynal Abedin should be executed in place of Omar.

Chapter 26. In the meantime Jaynal Abedin escaped from the prison while the guards were busy and unmindful of their duty, watching the execution of Omar and his ultimate rescue. Hanifa was worried to learn that Jaynal Abedin would be executed soon. So his army prepared to attack Ejid. Naroyan and Ejid both consulted one another as to how to avoid the fight for the time being and they sent a messenger to Hanifa
informing him that the execution of Jaynāl Ābedin had been abandoned and that Ejid would submit to Ḥanīfā. Maroynān was also worried as Ḥanīfā did not believe that Jaynāl Ābedin had escaped from prison. Ḥanīfā demanded that Jaynāl Ābedin, if alive, should be returned to him. Meanwhile Maroynān planned to enter the camp of Ḥanīfā secretly to trace Jaynāl Ābedin. Maroynān and Alid in disguise tried to find Jaynāl Ābedin. But unfortunately they were arrested by the Ḥanīfā's guards while they were moving near Ḥanīfā's camp. In the meantime Jaynāl Ābedin, who escaped from Ejid's prison, was coming in disguise towards Ḥanīfā's camp. He too was captured by the guards of Ḥanīfā, as he did not disclose his identity. Gāji Rahmān, the minister of Ḥanīfā, was informed that three unknown persons suspected of spying had been arrested. On further examination next day it was revealed that the persons arrested were Maroynān, Otbe Alid and Jaynāl Ābedin. Ḥanīfā embraced his nephew when Ābedin described in an emotional voice the death of his father. Maroynān was killed instantaneously by the excited mob, and Otbe Alid was pardoned by Ḥanīfā. Ejid learnt that Maroynān and Alid were missing, he could not imagine that Maroynān had been killed. Ḥanīfā with new energy advanced towards Damascus. Ejid was worried to hear the
beating of the battle drums. His most devoted generals were dead. Ejid then prepared himself to fight against Ḥanīfa. In the meantime Ẓib Alīd secretly escaped from Ḥanīfa's camp and joined Ejid. There was a fierce battle in which most of the generals of Ejid, including Alīd, were killed; the ordinary soldiers fled away. Ejid who was also fighting fled from the battlefield, and was pursued by Ḥanīfa.

The third part, Ejid Badh Parbba (Death of Ejid) describes the death of Ejid. In the first chapter the writer describes the dreadful physical tortures inflicted in the prison house of Ejid. The ordinary prisoners were subjected to inhuman tortures. Ejid had put Ḥāmān, his father's minister, in prison. Ejid did not like this man because Ḥāmān did not approve of what Ejid planned to do. Ḥāmān was an upright man. The author gives here Ḥāmān's unbiased views about what Ejid, his old master's son, had done. Jaynāl Ābedin's mother, who was also imprisoned by Ejid, was relieved to hear that her son had escaped from the prison. In the meantime Ḥanīfa's army had entered the city and the palace, and there was an uproar everywhere. Some of the soldiers of Ḥanīfa entered the prison house and unchained all the prisoners excluding the members of Hosen's family. The guards of the prison left the place in fear and the freed prisoners also left.
Chapters 2 - 3.  Ħanīfā, who was chasing Ejid, was determined to catch him alive. He entered the city sword in hand. Gājī Rahmān, Ħanīfā's chief general and minister, followed by a band of army, entered the city. They killed the citizens and soldiers of Damascus and the roads were flooded with streams of blood. Gājī Rahmān entered the royal palace and proclaimed Jaynāl Ābedin, the son of the late Hosen, monarch of Damascus, and trumpets blew to announce the victory. In the meanwhile Ħanīfā who was following Ejid left the city. Gājī Rahmān was worried for his master Ħanīfā. He tried to find him. Jaynāl Ābedin entered the prison house and released his mother and other relations.

Chapter 4.  Ejid who was an expert horseman had managed to elude Ħanīfā and he entered the royal garden. Then he climbed down into a well leading to a hidden chamber built underground in the garden. Ħanīfā also arrived near the well, when he was about to leap in the well he heard a divine voice saying that God did not want him to kill Ejid. For a moment he was bewildered, and when he raised his head he saw the image of the late Hosen in the sky. He also saw flames of fire in the well through which Ejid escaped. He heard another voice from above that Ejid would be burning in the well where he was hiding till the Day of Judgement. In such a situation
Hānifā was puzzled and he left the city but on the way he killed many innocent men. Again he was warned by a voice from the sky that he should not kill innocent men, and that because he was a sinner in the eyes of the Almighty he would remain trapped between the mountain ridges. The next moment two hills nearby came closer and closer together and trapped Hānifā. Nobody in the city knew what happened to him.

There is an epilogue to the book in which the author says that sinners are punished in the long run and none can go against the wish of Providence.

Antecedents of Bisād Sindhu

The martyrdom of Hosen is a historical fact. But the story as described by Masʿarrat has a number of episodes which are not historical. The writer states in the preface to the book that he has taken his account from some Arabic and Persian books, but he does not mention their names. At the end of the same preface he names a person ⁶(1) who has helped him in the

⁶(1)"In conclusion, I gratefully acknowledge that honourable Hafij Khalilul Rahman Abu Juygan Saber, a landlord of Paryaband of Rangpur has helped me in the translation from the original." (translated from the preface to the first edition, copy in E.K.). It is interesting to note that in subsequent editions these lines have been omitted.
translation of the original books.

After the death of Hosn at Kārbala many legends grew in the course of time throughout Persia, Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and in India also. Poets especially Shias⁷ in Persia, Iraq, Syria and Arabia, composed verses describing the struggle of Ḥāsān and Hosn with Eidj for the Caliphate which ended in their death. During the 15th and 16th century some Persian poets wrote on this subject.⁸ In the 18th and 19th centuries' Urdu literature in India⁹ the subject also found a place, resulting in the production of numerous marsias.¹⁰ Even in Arabic literature, poets like Farazdak took the same subject for their poetry.¹¹

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⁷ The word Shia, شیع, means follower, faction, party, sect (A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, Hans Wehr, ed. by J. K. Cowan, 1961, p.498. "This is a general name for a large group of very different Muslim sects the starting point of all of which is the recognition of Ali as the legitimate caliph after the death of the prophet." Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 4, M. Houtsma and others, 1954, p.356.


⁹ Anis (1802-74) and Dabir (1803-75) were two famous Urdu poets who wrote marsias. Ram Babu Saksena, A History of Urdu Literature, pp. 126, 131.

¹⁰ Marsia, elegy of dead, elegiac poems on the death of Ḥāsān and Hosn and other martyrs at Kārbala, ibid., p.123.

It is most likely that Nasarraf followed those literary works, not the historical sources. In the Arabic historical writings of Tabari, Yakubi, Masudi, etc. only short accounts of Hasan and Hosain's lives are given. From historical sources, such as Hitti, Ameer Ali, Kuir and others, we get the following account of Hasan and Hosain's struggle with Eijid.

Mabiya (Huawiya), a provincial governor of Syria in Damascus during Ali's caliphate at Kufa, proclaimed himself the caliph of the Muslim empire in 661 A.D. After the assassination of Ali, his eldest son, Hasan, was proclaimed the caliph of the Muslim empire, by the Iraakis at Kufa, where the headquarters of the Muslim empire had been established by Ali. Shortly afterwards he abdicated in favour of his more able rival Mabiya and returned to Madina on a pension granted by the Caliph Mabiya. Hasan died possibly of poison as a result of a harem intrigue. It is also possible however that he might have died of consumption, probably hastened by his excesses. Hasan's younger brother Hosain

14 Ibid., Vol. 1, p.283.
15a) Ibid., Vol. 2, p.274.
was also living in Madina throughout the rule of Hābiya. When Hābiya made his son Ejid successor to the caliphate Hosen refused to acknowledge him. After Ejid’s accession in April of 680 A.D. Hosen decided to listen to appeals made by his Irāki partisans. He sent his cousin Moslem to Kufa to test the fidelity of the Irakis. After Moslem’s arrival at Kufa thousands of Shias rushed to swear fidelity to Hosen. Moslem wrote to Hosen to persuade him to come and take charge of the movement. In the meanwhile Ubaidullah Jeyad, Governor of Irak, captured Moslem and executed him. Hosen took the road to Kufa with about a hundred relatives and friends. Ejid ordered the Governor of Irak to take steps to disarm them. Ubaidullah Jeyad had established outposts on all the roads leading to Irak and parties of cavalry were patrolling them. On the tenth of Muharram 61, al Hijri (October 10, 680 A.D.) Umar, a commander of 4,000 troops, surrounded Hosen’s party at Karbala and upon their refusal to surrender cut them down. The grandson of the Prophet was killed and his head was sent to Ejid in Damascus.

19 Ibid., Vol. 4, p.1162.
The head was given to Hosen's son and sister who had gone with it to Damascus²¹ and it was buried with the body in Karbala.²²

These are the only facts concerning the death of Hosen which can be regarded as historical. The name of the soldier who killed Hosen was Shamir²³ (the name appears as Simār in Dīghad Sindhu). Shortly after Hosen's death Shia Muslims began to regard him as a martyr and established an annual ceremony of lamentation to take place during the first ten days of the month of Muharram. The events leading to the death of Hosen became the subject of plays, which are known as "passion plays", a term used by writers like Hitti, Muir and others.²⁴ This practice of celebrating the death of Hosen through plays and demonstrations is still prevalent in Persia, Lebanon,²⁵ India and Pakistan, and in these plays the scene of death is made so tragic as to "awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader".²⁶

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²² P. K. Hitti, op.cit., p.190.
c) W. Muir, The Caliphate, p.309 (f.n.)
b) "The annual passion play is enacted in two parts, one called Ḥurra (tenth day) and the other 'return of head' after forty days", Hitti, op.cit., p.191.
c) W. Muir, op.cit., p.312.
The play was first translated into English by Lewis Pelly, titled as Miracle Play, London, 1879.

(cont.)
In addition to the main theme of the deaths of Kasān and Hosen certain characters in Bīgād Sindhu can be verified by reference to historical material. Kasem, a son of Kasān, married a daughter of Hosen, whose name is variously given as Fatema, Sukaina and Sakina. Hosen was survived by a son, named Zainal (Jeynāl) Abedin. Mention is also made of Hanafiya, that is Hanifa of Bīgād Sindhu, one of the sons of Ali. There is also a historical proof of the vengeance for the death of Hosen wreaked on Ubaidullah Jeyād.

(cont.)


27 W. Muir, op. cit., p. 310.

28 Sukaina may be the correct form of the name. Sukaina was a daughter of Hosen. Some authorities refute the marriage of Abdullah, not Kasem, with Sukaina. Sukaina who lived a very long life was well-educated and it is said that she married many a time. Vide, Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. IV, p. 508-9.

    b) Muir, op. cit., p. 312.


31 Ubaidulla bin Ziyad is the same person as Abdullah Jeyād of Bīgād Sindhu. Ubaidulla was governor of Kufa. vide, Hitti, op. cit., p. 130; Nicholson, op. cit., p. 198.
the name of the avenger is given by some as Mukhtar, and
by others as Hanife. There is also evidence that Habiya
appointed Harwan as a governor of Madina. 32

Most of the stories found in Biad Sindh appear to
have been derived from the poetic literature which was
written to commemorate the death of the brothers and to
rouse the sentiments of the public. These works of poetic
imagination seemed to have originated in the Persian language
and have been adopted by Urdu writers in India. The trans-
mission of the theme to Bengali literature was from both
Persian and Urdu sources.

According to M. E. Haq and S. K. Sen, the earliest
poet to take up this theme was Sheikh Faisulla, who it seems
composed a book in verse, Jaynaler cautisa, during the 16th
century. 33 According to these authorities there are more than
twelve poets who wrote on the theme during the 17th and 18th
centuries. They all wrote in verse and it is interesting

33 M. E. Haq, Muslim Bengali Literature, pp. 73, 127, 139, 162.
The names of the authors are as follows:
1. Sheikh Fayjulla, Jaynaler Cautisa
2. Mohammad Khan, Malikul Hosen
3. Nasrulla Khan, Jananganana
4. Mansur, Amir Jananganana

(cont.)
to note that most of these works were called "Janganāmā".

Masārraf was the first author to treat the story of Kārbāla in Bengali prose. Notable writers on the subject are Hayat Mahmud, Garibullā and Saiyād Hanja. Masārraf's story has close resemblance to the Janganāmā by Hayat Mahmud and Garibullā. Though Masārraf took the story from his predecessors, like Garibullā, the characterisation and plot construction are entirely his own, for which he is singled out among the whole of "Janganāmā" writers of Bengali literature.

34. Muhammad Islam, Kabi Hayat Mahmud, p. 169-174
35. Garibullā (Yakub), Janganāmā.
The form of Bīgād Sindhu

It may be said that Bīgād Sindhu is a historical novel. By a historical novel is meant a novel that presents historical persons. These persons existed, but the facts or events about them may not all be true. To quote Trevelyان.

"Historical fiction is not a history, but it springs from history and reacts upon it. Historical novels, even the greatest of them cannot do the specific work of history, they are not dealing except occasionally with the real facts of the past. They attempt instead to create in all the profusion and wealth of nature, typical cases imitated from but not identical with recorded facts. In one sense this is to make the past live, but it is not to make the facts live and therefore it is not history. Historical fiction has done much to make history popular and give it value, for it has stimulated the historical imagination."\(^37\)

The theme of Bīgād Sindhu is the story of the events which culminated in the murder of Hosen. The story has a plan or plot,\(^38\) it covers the events leading up to the

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\(^36\) "A novel is rendered historical by the introduction of dates, personages or events to which identification can be readily given." Jonathan Nield, A Guide to the Best Historical Novels and Tales, 5th ed. Int. XVIII.


\(^38\) M. A. Hai and S. A. Ahsan in *Bāgla Sahityer Itibritta*, 1st ed., p.74, write that it is not a novel having an organic type of plot. It is a type of mixed creation - an admixture of history, novel and drama... it cannot be grouped into a definite type of literary form.
death of Hosen and to some extent the results of the death. The main characters are recorded in history but it has been impossible to trace reference to some of the minor characters. Because of its historical structure Bigād Sindhu may be called a historical novel. But there are elements in it which cannot be verified by reference to history. These elements involve supernatural occurrences, some of which spring from religious belief, others from belief in magic.

The book starts with a prophecy of Mohammad and ends when the prophecy comes true. Besides this there are a few more instances of supernatural incidents in the book, such as the disappearance of Hosen's head from the presence of Ejid, the oozing of blood from trees in Kārbālā, the reappearances at the funeral ceremony of some of the prophets including Āli and Fātimā, the parents of Hosen, the trapping of Hānīfa between mountain ridges till the day of Resurrection. These would be hard to justify in a realistic novel which purports to deal with normal human life. But in a novel of this kind these supernatural occurrences do not overstrain credibility. It is not surprising to find that all the descendants and supporters of the Prophet Mohammad believe in Providence, and are of the opinion that
no men can alter or deviate from the course determined by Almighty God. At times it seems that Ḥasan and Hosein who accept the decrees of Providence and the utterances of the Prophet in their entirety appear to be somewhat less than human in so far as neither accepts responsibility for the outcome of his own actions. On the other hand Ejid, Jāyeda, Maymunah and Marōyān, though villains, appear more like human beings. Because they realise that their actions can influence the future course of events. Ejid fights with the Prophet's descendants and all the time relies on his own skill and strength, but Ḥasan and Hosein accept death with less than maximum resistance because it is God's wish. One critic expresses the opinion that as the writer himself seems to be a believer in supernaturalism, he has failed to keep it under control. With the result that the literary quality of the book is lower than it might have been.  

Another critic writes that "it is full of sentiments and emotions, an admixture of history, novel and drama etc.". However it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which Mašarraf was a believer in supernaturalism, neither is it

40 M. A. Hai and S. A. Ahsan, Bāmlā Sahityer Itibṛttta, p.74.
41 In his autobiography Mašarraf says that he practised magic etc, vide Āmar Jibani, pp. 377, 391.
possible to conclude from his writings what his religious beliefs were; whether he was a follower of Āli, i.e., Shia, or a Sunni. 42 Leaving aside these points, if we treat Biṣād Sindhu as a story of love and passion, jealousy and intrigue, we do not lose anything. Though Masarraf was born in the middle of the 19th century, he was brought up in an environment which was shaped by the beliefs and practices of an earlier age. So it is not surprising that in his writings we find modernism and medievalism at the same time. 43 Like a modern novelist he paints characters like Jaeda and Ejid and the author shows their development in them.

Biṣād Sindhu has the vastness of an epic. It is not only a fight between two or three persons as individuals, it is a struggle between two kings for supremacy, and the outcome of their actions influence the fate of many persons. The book has not less than one hundred characters, packed with episodes, full of horrors and pity, guided by jealousy and ambition leading to intrigue, battles, fights and bloodshed, and like the Iliad it centres round a woman.

42 'Sunni', سني, "One of the path. A Traditionist. A term generally applied to the large sect of Muslims who acknowledge the first four Khalifas to have been the rightful successors of Mohammad." (T. P. Hughes, op. cit., p.623.)

43 For details of Masarraf's mind and attitude see pages 289–307 of this thesis.
The characters.

The characters, broadly speaking, can be classed in two groups. One, the Prophet Mohammad's descendants, and two, the others. The general features of the Prophet's descendants are that they are good and noble people and firm believers in Providence and Fate. The other characters though all evil to an orthodox moralist are nevertheless human. The Prophet's descendants are historical personages but they are not portrayed in this book as historians describe them. Of the 'other' characters some are historical while some are not. History does not give any detailed account of the inner life of these men and women. All are Masarraf's creation though taken from earlier literary or legendary sources.

The most important character in Bişād Sindhu is Ejid. Ejid, the only son and heir-apparent of Mābiyā, ruler of Dāmeska (Damascus), was brought up in affluence, and was given indulgence by his parents. He was cruel, and obstinate and a person of strong will. He would brook no opposition. He was not unreasonable but once he made up his mind nothing could turn him from the course of action he had planned. The first two parts of Bişād Sindhu describe how Ejid formed an implacable resolve to destroy Hāsān and Hosen and their families.
The motive which drove him to this resolve was his evil passion for Jaynāb, the wife of Jābab. He plotted to bring about a divorce between Jaynāb and her husband. When the lady was free to marry again, she married Ḥañān. From this moment Ejid planned revenge. Even though it involved the rejection of the Prophet's descendants. Motivated by revenge he was not loyal to anybody, not even to his father. Even those who served him were murdered or imprisoned. Ejid laughed at Ḥañān's advice and thought him garrulous though he was his father's chief counsel. Ejid at first planned to achieve his ends by tricks only, and he was fully aware that it is a great sin to kill a man, but later on he killed the lady who helped him in killing his enemy. Occasionally he had fits of remorse as for instance in the soliloquy which began like this. "Fie upon women's beauty, and upon a love-seeking man, and fie a thousand times upon a king who seduces somebody else's wife." But the conflict in Ejid was not so strong as to prevent his wicked actions. Good sense peeped through for a moment only. Later in life he showed a strain of cowardice which drove him through fear.

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of the prowess of Hanifa to hide from him.

The character of Ejid as presented in the novel keeps fairly closely to the description given of him in historical sources, where he was described as "cruel and treacherous. His depraved nature knew no pity nor justice. His pleasures were degrading as his companions were low and vicious."45 It would seem that the author passed a judgment on Ejid by likening the flames which attacked him while he was hiding from Hanifa to the fires of Hell.

Jaeda

The most important female character of the book is Jaeda. Masarrat has portrayed her mind, revealed her every action and reaction, her conflict and temptation, her jealousy and ambition. He has shown his readers the inner sentiments of Jaeda where snakes of jealousy glide, where her ambition creeps and leads ultimately to her destruction.

Jaeda, the second wife of Hasan,46 was young and beautiful, well behaved and loving. She was not envious of the


46 It is stated that Hasan had many wives, so there may be a possibility that Jaeda was one of them. It is also stated that he was termed Mitlaq, a great divorcer, as he made and unmade so many marriages. Vide, Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 2, p.274.
first wife of Ḥasan, instead she respected Ḥasan's first wife who in turn loved Jaeda as a younger sister. Before Ḥasan married Jaynāb, Jaeda thought that her husband loved her most dearly, but she turned hostile to Ḥasan as soon as he married Jaynāb. Jaeda believed that Ḥasan must have loved Jaynāb more than anyone else or he would not have married her. Jaeda's belief found a support when a base woman, Maymuna, met her with a bad motive. On a previous occasion Jaeda had disclosed her feelings to Maymuna. In return Maymuna promised to help her by diverting Ḥasan's mind towards her by some magical power. Later Jaeda expressed her opinion that love could not be brought by magic. Maymuna then instigated her by saying that she should not ruin her life in love-less atmosphere, and fortunately for her, Ejdid, the handsome young prince of Damascus, wanted Jaeda. But Jaeda was so blind with jealousy that she failed to realise the absurdity of such a proposal made by Maymuna. Then Maymuna led her to degradation. She proposed to Jaeda that she should poison Ḥasan, but at first Jaeda trembled in fear and said to Maymuna, "... the last thing you mentioned can not be done while Jaeda is alive .... my husband and my heart of heart, life, ... of my heart, so I.... " Her unfinished sentence proved that she was not willing to kill
Hasan. From that moment the conflict in her mind started.
She could not sleep at night. She brooded over her conjugal
state. She considered what Maymunah had said to be right.
She secretly went to Maymunah to see her. But when she opened
the packet of poison her hand shivered. When Jaeda failed
the second time to kill Hasan, she felt discouraged and
said to Maymunah, "None can kill him whom God preserves.
It is strange that a man can digest poison, not once but
twice..." For the last time Jaeda stole into the bedroom
of Hasan, and when she dropped the poison into the water,
she looked at the sleeping Hasan's face and paused for a
moment. This time she succeeded. After Hasan's death she
wanted to escape, but she was unable to move. She found
no shelter in which she might hide herself. A parallel
instance is Lady Macbeth's state of mind before her death.
"Here's the smell of blood still: all the perfume of Arabia
will not sweeten this little hand." (Macbeth, Act V, Sc.I).
The sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth is the expression of
her 'perturbed mind'.

Jaeda wanted to be happy at any cost, and it is sad that
she was disappointed finally. She lost her peace of mind

47 Bisad Sindhu (23rd ed.), p.117.
and cried in dreams in pangs of agony. When she was brought
to Ejid's palace, for a moment she shook off her weakness,
and in an illusion she saw herself sitting on the throne
by the side of Ejid, but only for a moment. Then she met
her death.

Maroyān

He was Ejid's right-hand man even in Mūbiyā's life
time. After Mūbiyā's death he became Ejid's chief minister.
He was cunning and shrewd from the very beginning. He
helped Ejid in his attempt to get Jaynāb. It was his
intrigue which caused the divorce of Jaynāb by her husband.
It was he who procured a base woman, Maymūnā, to poison
Hāsān, Ejid's first enemy and rival. Though apparently a
rogue out and out, Maroyān was not devoid of good sense.
Once or twice he showed some humane behaviour to the members
of the family of Hosen. With due respect and honour he
brought the surviving members of the family of Hosen to
Damascus. He was a wise man no doubt, because it was he
who prevented Ejid from killing Jaynāl Ābedin, son of Hosen.
On his advice Ejid proposed a treaty with Hānīfā. He was
obedient to his master, Ejid, and though he sometimes felt
that his master was not right he supported him. He was true
to his master till his death. He died at the hands of Hanifā, though he repented of his malicious machinations.

Maymuna

She was a woman of crooked nature, and an opportunist. She was a villain from beginning to end and actually she was brought on the scene to perform certain specific jobs, and after that she was heard of no more. A similar type of villain is also found in medieval Bengali poetry, in Gandī Maṅgal, where Durbbalā Dasi picked up a quarrel between the two wives of Dhanapati Sadāgar. Maymunā instigated Jaeda to poison Ḥasan, though at first Jadā disagreed, she agreed in the long run. But she met her death at the hands of Ejid, and before her death she realised what she had done for money.

Simār

He was a general of Ejid. He was a brave but an avaricious man. He cared for only one thing, money and money alone. He was a cruel person, he killed Ḥosen, and killed Ājar an innocent person, who wanted to return Ḥosen's head to his family. Simār died at the hands of Hanifā, but he did not repent of what he had done. In fact, the character was like a tool which was to do some specific jobs,
and no development of the character was shown by the author.

Now the noble characters, that is, the Prophet's descendants, can be generalised; they are men without even little faults; they are men of high esteem and respect. Ḥāsān and Hosen are grandsons of the Prophet Mohammad, and for that reason they are loved and admired by all.

Ḥāsān pardoned his wife, who poisoned him, and also the man who attacked him with a spear. His greatness was shown by the request he made to his younger brother Hosen, not to take any revenge on his wife Jaedā.

Hosen, a worthy son of Āli, the fourth Caliph, was a great warrior. When the army of Ejid attacked Madinā Hosen defeated them. On the plain of Karbalā he fought valiantly. But he was an emotional soul. He believed in Providence. He met his death since it was God's wish. Before death he pardoned his murderer, Sīmar.

Hānifa, who was also a son of Āli, by another wife, was a great warrior and a gallant fighter. He was determined to take revenge for the death of his step-brother Hosen. Ejid and Maroyān were both afraid of him. But Hānifa failed in his attempt to kill Ejid because it was not God's wish that Ejid be killed by Hānifa.
Lastly, it needs to be mentioned about the character of Jaynab. In fact the story of Bigād Sindhu is developed centred on Jaynab. She, a good natured woman, completely satisfied with her lot, faced the world of turmoil. Her first husband divorced her, her second husband was killed and, last of all, she was brought captive by Ejid. Jaynāb when alone in the prison was thinking that she herself was the root of the whole tragic affair of Karbāla. If she were to marry Ejid then there would have been no blood shed.

However it is not unlikely that in portraying Jaynāb Masārraf was influenced by Madhusudan’s Sītā in Meghnād Badh Kābya, where Sītā accused herself for her abduction by Rāvana.

2. Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā

The book Udāsin Pathiker Maner Katha, Part I, was published in 1890. The name of the author was not given on the title page, but Masārraf’s name appears as copyright holder. The writer calls himself Udāsin Pathik (an indifferent traveller) in the preface to the book. He also states that he is going

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1There is an announcement of a future publication of Maner Kathā by Mir Masarraf Hosen on the second cover page of Bigād Sindhu, pt. I., published in 1885.
to give some secret information though he knows full well that it is sometimes dangerous to reveal the truth,\(^2\) and in the conclusion he says, "I am not afraid of criticism".\(^3\)

The book narrates some events in Maśarraf's parents' lives, and the friendship between Maśarraf's father and a European indigo planter. In fact the book narrates two stories. One about Kenny, an indigo planter, the other about Mīr Sāheb, Maśarraf's father. The story of Kenny has been linked with that of Mīr Sāheb. But all the events are not fully co-ordinated; the events in one chapter do not necessarily follow those of the previous chapter. However the author has tried to give a complete story of Kenny, who is the main character of the book.

The book contains 42 chapters\(^4\) spreading over 197 pages. The writer calls each chapter taranga, meaning wave, and each has a sub-title indicating its subject matter, such as Nil Kāthi (an indigo factory), Mīr Sāheb K\(\text{e}\)? (who is Mīr Sāheb? etc.

\(^2\)"maner kathā anakāte mukhe prakāś karā bāga kathin, bīses sāmsārītīr pakṣe nana bighna, nānā bhay eman ki jīban sāmsay." Preface to UPMK.

\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)The chapter mark after the end of the 1\(\text{st}\) chapter seems to be faulty, the next chapter following the 15\(\text{th}\) chapter is marked as the 11\(\text{th}\), instead of the 16\(\text{th}\). Vide copy of UPMK, in British Museum, p.78.
The first chapter opens with the daily routine in an indigo factory in Salghar Madhuya near Kuštiyā. T. I. Kenny, the proprietor of the factory went to inspect an indigo plantation in the neighbouring villages. Though he went ostensibly to inspect the cultivation of indigo he had an ulterior motive. One of Kenny's servants, Jākī by name, had a beautiful wife named Maynā, and Kenny was interested in her. Here the writer introduces a talking bird, a maynā, as it is called, and Kenny asks his men to procure the bird. The play on words is obvious and Kenny's real intention is not lost on his men.

In the second chapter Masārraf described his father, Mīr Sāheb, and spoke very highly of him. His father was an influential man in the district, but after the death of his first wife he became disinterested in worldly affairs. One Sā Golām Ājam who had married Mīr Sāheb's niece usually looked after the property. Mīr Sāheb was very friendly with Kenny. On one occasion Mīr Sāheb helped Kenny by sending some ḍāthīals (club men) to help him in his fight with one Pyārī Sundarī, a woman zamindar (landlord) of Sundarpur.

Chapters 3 - 6. In these chapters Kenny's party and Pyārī Sundarī's party came into conflict. The peasants living in the jurisdiction of Pyārī Sundarī's zamindari
one day appealed to her to save them from the oppression
of Kenny. Kenny's people, it seems, were trying to
sow indigo forcibly in their paddy fields and they had
been partially successful in their attempt. Pyārī
Sundarī asked her manager Ramlocan to check at any cost.
One day in the absence of Kenny Pyārī Sundarī's party
attacked his factory. Mrs. Kenny dropped a bag of coins
through the window at the top of the building, and soon
the lāthīālās, who were poor men, began to scramble for
the money instead of fighting. In the meantime some of
the guards of Kenny's factory attacked the lāthīālās who
immediately withdrew. Mrs. Kenny sent a false report
to the magistrate alleging that some robbers had looted
her house. She also told Mīr Sāheb about the incident.

Chapter 7. In this chapter Masārraf narrates a different
topic. Sā Golām Ājam who had married Mīr Sāheb's niece
was plotting to steal the will of Mīr Ibrahim Hosen,
the father of Mīr Sāheb. Mīr Ibrahim had been dead a
number of years. The wife of Golām was the daughter of
Ibrahim's eldest son, the elder brother of Mīr Sāheb.
Ibrahim's will left his property to Mīr Sāheb and his
ever brother. On the death of his elder brother his share
of property passed to his only child, Sukarannesā, Golām's
wife and Mir Saheb's niece. Golam thought that Mir Saheb intended to take over the whole of the estate of Ibrahim, thus depriving Golam's wife of her due share. Ibrahim had divided his property equally between his two sons, except for the residential house at Padamdi, which he left to his younger son, Mir Saheb. Golam felt that the distribution of the property was unfair. So he conspired with the secretary of Mir Saheb to prepare a forged will and destroy the original. One night Debí Prasad, the secretary, informed Mir Saheb that the magistrate was passing through the village on the way to Salghar Madhuya. Mir Saheb left a musical party he was attending to see Mrs. Kenny. While he was out of the house Sa Golam entered his bedroom and stole a brief case thinking that the will was inside it.

Chapters 8 - 10. The narrator now reverts to the indigo story. Masarraf's accounts in these chapters are presented in such a way as to convey the opinion that the policy authorities in rural Bengal were partial to the indigo planters. They entertained complaints lodged by the indigo factory owners but were reluctant to listen to the complaints of the peasants. As was mentioned in Chapter 7, the magistrate had arrived at the indigo factory at
Salghar Madhuyā and was making an on-the-spot inquiry into the disturbance which had been described in a previous chapter. Some employees of the same factory had in the meantime killed two other employees of the same factory to provide proof that robbery with violence had occurred. The bodies were shown to the magistrate as evidence that Pyārī Sundarī's men had attacked the factory. When Kenny who had been away at the time returned from Yasohar after the departure of the magistrate, he ordered his men to seize the ryots of Pyārī Sundarī wherever they could be found. When Pyārī Sundarī heard that a case had been filed in the court against her on the application of Mrs. Kenny, she expressed at considerable length her grave concern that Kenny, who was a foreigner, was actually torturing natives with the help of other natives.

Chapter 11. Mir Saheb was preparing to visit his sister at Sirajganj, being depressed after the death of his only son. Kenny came to solicit his assistance in the case against Pyārī Sundarī. Mir Saheb gave him the assurance he wanted. Mir Saheb at the same time being very depressed asked his secretary to hand over all papers connected with the estate to Sa Golām, the husband of his niece.
Accordingly Debī Prasād, the secretary of Mīr Sāheb, handed over a box containing documents to Sā Golām.

Chapter 12. In the meantime rumours spread throughout Salghar and Sundarpur that Pyārī Sundarī was determined to oppose Kenny and his wife. One rumour went so far as to allege that Pyārī Sundarī wanted Mrs. Kenny as her servant. Another rumour was to the effect that Kenny wanted to imprison Pyārī Sundarī in his house. One day when Kenny was out the Magistrate from Pabna came to see Mrs. Kenny. While the Magistrate was there some supporters of Pyārī Sundarī armed with deadly weapons attacked Kenny's factory. Mrs. Kenny gave orders to procure men from the neighbouring villages to fight against them.

In the meantime one hundred armed men sent by Mīr Sāheb reached Kenny's factory and Kenny secretly arrived at the factory with a force of police to arrest the armed men sent by Pyārī Sundarī. But Pyārī Sundarī's supporters were stronger and killed many of Kenny's men, including a police officer.

Chapter 13. Mīr Sāheb had not yet left for his sister's place. He was enjoying music with his companion Basiruddin and was ignorant of the fact that his briefcase had been stolen. Sā Golām who had stolen the briefcase broke it open in order
to get at the will, but to his utter surprise, the will
was not there; and in disappointment he threw the
briefcase in the river.

Chapter 14. Kenny's wife who had been away from England for
a long time now decided to visit her home. Kenny at the
time was very perturbed by the opposition of some leading
zamindars including Bhairab Babu, Raja of Naldaang and
Ratan Ray of Naftil. These zamindars had refused to
allow Kenny to plant indigo in any of the fields in their
estates. Consequently he was planning to take what he
wanted by force feeling sure that some of these zamindars
would oppose him. Before his preparations were complete
an agent of Kenny informed him that certain revenue money
belonging to Bhairab Babu was being sent to Yasohar and
Kenny immediately made plans to steal it.

Chapter 15. The author now turns his attention to a situation
which he had hinted at in the first chapter regarding a
beautiful woman to whom Kenny had taken a fancy. Jaki,
Kenny's servant, also became very rich and suddenly became
a favourite of his master. It appears that Jaki had
sold his wife for money. Shortly afterwards Jaki married
a second wife.

Chapter 16. Mir Saheb fell ill and Kenny came to see him.
Kenny observed that Sā Golām was pressing Mīr Sāheb to take a particular drug prescribed by a village kabirāj, physician. But Mīr Sāheb did not take it. Kenny proposed to Mīr Sāheb that Kenny would send some medicine for him. He also warned Mīr Sāheb about Golām, whom Kenny thought to be a villain. Golām, having failed to poison Mīr Sāheb, made another attempt to steal the will. Kenny visited Mīr Sāheb's house again. This time he expressed sorrow that he had been unable to defeat Pyārī Sundarī and Bhairab Bābu.

Chapter 17. Jāki's wife Maynā was disgusted with her husband. She did not approve of the way he was earning money by spying. She despised Jāki for compelling her to submit to Kenny's evil passions. Tired of her miserable life she decided to end it. One day she disclosed her feelings to a neighbour, and at that time Jāki brought some medicine from Kenny for Maynā as she had pain in her stomach. Maynā took the whole bottle of medicine, which was certainly an overdose. Eventually she died within a few hours.

Chapter 18. Mrs. Kenny reached England, but she did not feel comfortable there, because nobody showed her the respect she had come to expect. There were no servants to do menial
works for her. There was none of the grandeur and pomp
which she had grown used to in India. So she planned to
return to her husband at the earliest opportunity.

Chapter 19. This very short chapter contains the information
that the hearing of the case brought by Kenny against
Pyārī Sundarī had successfully ended, and that some of
Pyārī Sundarī's men had been sentenced to several years'
imprisonment.

Chapter 20. Mir Saheb was setting out on a journey to his
sister's house by boat and Sā Golām, Debīprasād and others
had come to the quay to see him off. Sā Golām was worried
because he had failed to obtain possession of the will.
To his great surprise, Mir Saheb handed over the original
will to him, as he was apprehensive that it might be
destroyed on the way. Golām was overjoyed when he received
it from Mir Saheb.

Chapter 21. Kenny and his employees tried to compel certain
village people to sow indigo in their fields and to sign
a contract to deliver the produce to him. Those who were
not willing were detained in the lock-up of the factory.
In one instance a very respectable gentleman of the
locality, with his son, was kept confined for six months,
until eventually he agreed to sow indigo for Kenny, whereupon
they were released.
Chapter 22. Kenny's wife returned one week after the expected date, and he was anxious for her safety. When she got back Kenny seemed to be very happy, but she noticed some change in the atmosphere of the house. She suspected that something had happened during her absence from India.

Chapters 23-24. Jāki's second wife Mākhna\(^5\) did not like him as he was not frank with her. He never told her what he was doing or how he earned his money. Jāki sometimes disappeared from home and stayed at Sundarpur where Pyārī Sundārī lived, or elsewhere. One day there was a quarrel between Jāki and his wife as a result of which Mākhna left the house and went to her parents' home. Jāki was mortified at this. He blamed Kenny for the unhappy situation which had arisen between himself and his wife, because he had provoked her ill-will by refusing to tell her the secret plans Kenny had entrusted to him. One of these plans was to obtain secretly as much information about Pyārī Sundārī as he could get. Now Jāki tried to get his revenge by poisoning Kenny. He dropped some poison into the tea which Kenny's servant had prepared for his master. He was however caught and beaten almost to death. Later he was sent to court and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

\(^5\) On page 88 of U.P.M.K. the name appears as Braja.
Chapters 25 - 29. In these chapters Nasruraf describes how Kenny was fooled by the clever and intelligent zaminder Bhairab Bābu. Bhairab Bābu's employees were carrying bags containing money to the Collector's office at Yaschar. On the way they had to camp for a night because it was very dark. While they were sleeping Kenny's men stole the bags and brought them to Kenny. When however they were opened, they were found to be filled with stones and bits of lead, not with coins. The bags containing the money had been sent by a different route, because Bhairab Bābu had come to learn beforehand that Kenny was plotting to steal them. A case was filed by Bhairab Bābu against Kenny, and Bhairab Bābu got a decree in his favour with costs. Kenny went to see Bhairab Bābu in an attempt to get the case settled out of court. He promised that he would not do any harm to Bhairab Bābu as long as he lived.

Chapter 30. During the absence of Mir Sāheb from his home, Golām changed the wording of the will in his favour and bribed the servants and other employees of Mir Sāheb not to disclose what he had done. Mir Sāheb however heard a rumour that Golām had acquired all his properties. He wrote a letter to Golām but got no reply. Then Mir Sāhib planned to return home. When his boat was approaching Sāota he saw
some men armed with weapons standing on the bank of the river. One of the men shouted out to him and warned him not to bring the boat alongside. Sā Golām was also standing on the bank. He shouted that Mīr Sāheb had no legal right to the property. All of it, land and house alike, had formerly belonged to Ibrāhīm Hosen, and that the lawful heir was Ibrāhīm's eldest son's daughter, Sā Golām's wife. Mīr Sāheb was struck dumb. He never imagined that such a situation could arise. He was the younger son of Ibrāhīm Hosen and as such had rights to a share in the property, but he had never intended to deprive his niece, the daughter of his elder brother, of the property. It never occurred to him that the husband of this daughter of his late elder brother would behave in this way. Mīr Sāheb was broken hearted, and told his boatmen to sail on. After about one year Mīr Sāheb settled in the village Lāhinipāra near Sāota, where he married Daulatannesā, the only daughter of one Munsī Jīnatullā.

Chapter 31. This chapter is a flashback. Masārraf describes his mother Daulatannesā as being a woman of integrity and decent demeanour. He also gives a brief account of his maternal grandfather, Jīnatullā, who had been head clerk
in the court of the Magistrate of Rangpur. Jinātullā had been a wealthy man having inherited the properties of his father-in-law. After Jinātullā's death Mīr Sāheb, who had married Jinātullā's daughter, inherited all his father-in-law's property. While Mīr Sāheb was living at Lāhinipāṭa his old friend Basiruddin came to visit him and Mīr Sāheb regained his old vigour and once more enjoyed music and dancing as he had done previously. Daulatannesā did not object to the somewhat licentious way of life led by her husband.

Chapters 32-37. In these chapters the author narrates the unrest in Bengal in connection with indigo cultivation. The then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir John Peter Grant had been touring by steamer to survey the situation arising out of maltreatment of the peasants of Bengal by the indigo planters. On either bank of the river Kālīganga thousands of people were standing to let the Governor know their feelings about the oppression they were suffering at the hands of the foreign planters. He said he would hear them at the district headquarters at Pābnā. So afterwards hundreds of thousands of peasants

6 Actually Sir John Peter Grant visited Sirajgang through Kustiya for some other purpose; to inaugurate the railway line, vide, p. 274 of this thesis.
from the villages in Nadiyā and Yañohar started for Fābnā. Some foreign planters including Kenny tried in vain to prevent the peasants from going to Fābnā; but the peasants were united and they dealt severely with those who tried to prevent them. The Governor heard the petition of the peasants, and assured them that the Government would protect them from any kind of oppression. He said that they should bring any kind of maltreatment to the notice of the police and the magistrates. He further said that he would examine all written petitions in Calcutta and see that justice was done. Within a few days of the Governor's assurance the peasants of Kuṣṭiyā learnt that a new sub-divisional headquarters under a Deputy Magistrate had been established near Šālghar Madhuyā. The peasants in and around Šālghar Madhuyā called a united meeting at the house of Sā Golām and decided not to sow any more indigo, and they also resolved to fight against Kenny and his employees. Kenny was not at all frightened by the news that the peasants were opposed to indigo cultivation. He ordered his men to carry on his business as usual. But very soon it was discovered that the peasants had cut down the indigo plants and thrown them into the river. Kenny tried in vain to detect the culprits.
Chapter 38. Masarraf in this chapter narrates the way of life led at that time by Mir Sāheb. Mir Sāheb was very little attached to worldly affairs, and spent most of his time in enjoying music and dancing. He was residing near the village of Sāotā but he did not meet Sā Golām, though the servants of two families frequently quarrelled. Mir Sāheb had a mistress named Rupasi. Daulatannesā knew about this but like most devoted Indian wives she did not protest. On the other hand, Rupasi, who came from a very low caste, did her best to create ill feelings between the loving wife and her husband. Rupasi secretly promised to pay some money to a maid servant of the house if she agreed to her evil proposal to poison Daulatannesā.

Chapter 39. The author here narrates the consequences of the Governor's assurance that there should be no compulsion in sowing indigo. The peasants were determined to oppose Kenny's employees, and as a result most of the employees of Kenny left their employment. But Kenny was not discouraged at this. He bought some non-Bengali servants from Calcutta. The local shopkeepers refused to sell to Kenny's servants. By now Kenny was worried, though Mir Sāheb secretly helped him with provisions. Mir Sāheb was also
worried, because Sa Golam who was leading the peasants' movement was determined to harass Mir Saheb as he was friendly with Kenny. The peasants refused to pay any revenue for their land and Kenny approached the Government for help to maintain law and order in the locality.

**Chapters 40–42.** Daulatannes joining seriously ill after she had drunk a cup of milk which tasted sour. The poison which was secretly given by Rupasi, was the cause of Daulat's illness. Daulat's mother and other members of the family made every effort to save her, but without success. Daulat died shortly afterwards. The maidservant who had acted as a tool of Rupasi was repentant, but it was too late. After the death of Daulat the situation in the family of Mir Saheb changed. Daulat's mother somehow learnt that there had been foul play and that some of the servants were responsible. Very soon some of the servants including the culprit left the house.

Mir Saheb left Sota leaving his sons with his mother-in-law, and went to Padamdi, his ancestral home. Here too he was unhappy because of the hostile attitude of the peasants.

Kenny imported some agricultural machinery but he was still not successful in the cultivation of indigo.
His purse was soon empty and when he lost the cases brought against him by the peasants, he fell into debt. Soon he fell ill, and went to Calcutta for treatment, but later he died in hospital. When the news of his death reached Kuśitiya the people were greatly relieved.

**Conclusion:** Kenny’s zamindari including his factory was sold in auction; and later the building materials were used in the construction of an embankment near Goyālanda. But the embankment also was later broken by the strong current of the Padma.

The book ends here. At the end of the book the author states that a second part would be published soon, but so far as is known, no second part was ever published.

**The historicity of the book**

The book is a biographical narrative, describing some of the events in Maśarraf’s father’s life. Some of the other characters, Kenny, Pyārī Sundarī and Bhairab Babu are historical figures. The main events described are in connection with

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7 Kenny’s name appears in the Report of Indigo Commission, 1860, Appendix 21, case No. 18, and also in the "Papers Relating to the disputes between the indigo planters and ryogts of lower Bengal", 1861, p. 13, p.70.
Pyārī Sundarī and Bhairab Majumdar’s names are mentioned in Pabna Jelār Itihās, by Radha Raman Saha, pts. II and IV, p. 17, p.77.
indigo cultivation and the book describes in detail the story of one indigo planter, T. I. Kenny, who had a factory at Salghar Madhyā. It may be conjectured with fair probability that the book deals with events which happened during the period from 1844 to 1865.9

In the report of the Indigo Commission the name of Salghar Madhuya appears though one Mr. Hampton was mentioned as the man in charge of concerns there. The name of Kenny appears in the same report where it is stated that a case of plunder and rioting by Kenny's people was filed before a magistrate.11 The magistrate concerned, Mr. Eden, commented on the case, "This was a most gross outrage committed in open defiance of the police, thirty-four ryots complained of the

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8 A detailed discussion on indigo cultivation, its methods, and malpractices are to be found on pages 266-79 of this thesis.

9 The date is assumed on the basis of Masarárf's autobiography, where he states that his father married in 1845 (December, or January 1846) and the book UPMK narrates the story of Masarárf's father from one year before his second marriage in 1845. On the other hand Kenny's name appears in an English newspaper of Calcutta published in 1865.

10 The Report of Indigo Commission (1860), Calcutta, Appendix I.

11 Ibid., Appendix 21, case No. 18.
outrage and the plunder of their homes. The Europeans were not punished."

In a Bengali newspaper Som Prakāś the names of Kenny and his manager Deoyān Sambhunāth are mentioned. In a letter found in the East India (Indigo) Papers Kenny complains that the cultivators had tortured his employees. In the same papers relating to indigo, the commissioner of the Rajshahi Division writes to the secretary of the Government of Bengal relating the harassment of Kenny's people by the peasants. It is also found in contemporary newspapers that Kenny's people had been oppressing the cultivators. An extract from the Hindoo Patriot may be quoted, "Mr. Kenny's people impudently did something like this, and the result was that about 27 villages of his immediately severed themselves from the factory." An almost similar account is given in a Bengali newspaper, Sambād Prabhākar. From the

13 Papers Relating to the disputes between the Indigo planters and ryots of Lower Bengal, 1861, p. 13.
14 Ibid., p. 70.
15 The Hindoo Patriot, Calcutta, July 5, 1860.
16 Sambād Prabhākar, Calcutta, May 10, 1865.
available records it is clear that Kenny is a historical figure and that he had a factory in Salghar Madhuya.

Masarraf wrote this book thirty or forty years after the actual events. He was a young boy of fifteen or sixteen when the Indigo disturbances happened in Bengal. He wrote this account from memory and hearsay, so it is not unlikely that some of the deeds perpetrated by other planters were ascribed to Kenny. In the book Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors by C. E. Buckland, a British member of the (Indian) Civil Service, an account shows how the peasants suffered at the hands of indigo planters, and their employees, and in most cases the peasants did not receive due protection from the public and law.

"It appeared after due inquiry that on the whole the petitioners had not always received the redress from the law, and that practical protection from the police, to which they were entitled. Some of the cases, though many months old, had not been disposed of, and one case in which a raiyat after having been wounded in affray in which factory people were the aggressors, was carried off from factory to factory and undoubtedly died in durance from the effects of wounds." 17

The Indigo Commission also reports on the abduction of women. 18


the detention of peasants in the lock-ups of the planters\textsuperscript{19} and the maintenance of clubmen (lāthīās) by the planters.\textsuperscript{20} From all this evidence it may be presumed that Kenny, as described by Mašārraf, was a real individual. The historical sources give little information about his whole life, though his fight with Pyārī Sundarī and Bhairab Bābu has been mentioned in a later book on history.\textsuperscript{21}

After the report of the Indigo Commission was published the peasants decided not to sow indigo under compulsion and as a result it may be assumed that the planters in general became worried. But Mašārraf's Kenny seemed not to be worried at all. He imported some agricultural machinery and even brought servants from outside Bengal. Kenny's Bengali employees left their jobs and the peasants determined to take revenge on the indigo factory's new employees. Reference has been made earlier that Kenny in a petition complained to the government about this. Some of the peasants refused to pay the rent due to a landlord who was an indigo planter. Buckland in his book

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{R.I.C.}, Evidence, p.96.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., Appendix 18.

refers to such incidents. It is not definitely known when Kenny's concern ceased to operate. Masarraf gives no date for any of the events in his book. An English newspaper in Calcutta reports that Kenny was in the Kustiya School on the occasion of the prize giving ceremony in 1865. So it is apparent that he died after that date. Masarraf describes the destruction of Kenny's factory at Sâlgâhar, but a later historian does not mention its destruction; he mentions the existence of 'Kenny's concern' in Kustiya. It is possible of course that Kenny had more than one factory.

Masarraf says that Kenny was an Honorary Magistrate. This may be so. During this period European planters were sometimes appointed Honorary Magistrates.

On page 140 of his book he gives a description of a journey made by the Governor of Bengal, Sir John Peter Grant. An almost similar account is found in the book Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors. "In the month of August (1859) Sir John Peter Grant while on tour by water through a part of the Bengal

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22 Buckland, op.cit., p.194.

23 The Englishman, Calcutta, May 4, 1865.


districts received the petitions from numerous raiyats of Nadia district complaining that in indigo cases they did not obtain due protection and redress from the magistrates that raiyats obnoxious to the factory were frequently kid-napped and that other acts of great violence were committed with impunity in open day." 26 An extract from Sir John Peter Grant's minute of 17th September 1860 may be quoted,

"...numerous crowds of raiyat appeared at various places whose whole prayer was for an order of government that they should not cultivate indigo. On my return a few days afterwards along the same 2 rivers from dawn to dusk, as I steamed along these 2 rivers for some 60 or 70 miles, both banks were literally lined with crowds of villagers; claiming justice in this matter. Even the women of the villages on the banks were collected in groups by themselves; the males who stood at and between the riverside villages in little crowds must have collected from all the villages at a great distance on either side..... all were most respectful and orderly, but also very plainly in earnest. It would be folly to suppose that such a display on the part of tens of thousands of people men, women and children has no deep meaning." 27

The other principal characters in the book are Mir Moyajjam Hosen and Daulatannessa Begam, the parents of Masarraf. Masarraf describes his father as 'Mir Sãheb' as he was popularly

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26 Buckland, op. cit., p.186.
27 Ibid., p.192.
known by that name.  He describes his father as a "jewel among the Muslim community in India", and he also speaks very highly of his earliest ancestors, though he does not conceal the fact that his father indulges in licentiousness and was too fond of music and dances to be able to devote much of his time to worldly affairs. Mir Saheb was a great friend of Kenny. Masarraf describes his mother as a noble lady and he frankly admits that his words fail to describe his mother's quality. He describes with emotion her victimisation by the mistress of his father, and her subsequent death by poisoning.

Sa Golam Ajam who is not known outside Masarraf's writing was a crook, who married a niece of Mir Saheb and who later conspired to evict Mir Saheb from his properties.

It is clear from what has been said above that Udasin Pathiker Maner Katha has importance as source material for a study of indigo cultivation in Bengal.

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28. Saheb (ساحب), a Persian word (origin in Arabic) meaning Sir, or Mister, which is used as a mark of respect of an Indian Muslim community. (Also used in Urdu).

A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English, J.T. Platts.

UPMK, p.6.
3. Gājī Miṣrār Bastānī

The first part of the book was published in 1899,¹ the second part was not published separately, but was inserted in the author’s autobiography Ḥāmr Jībanī, which the writer began to publish in 1908. Ḥāmr Jībanī is in twelve volumes, and the concluding chapters of Gājī Miṣrār Bastānī were inserted in it. The second part of Gājī Miṣrār Bastānī, remained unfinished as did the autobiography. It is stated in the preface to Gājī Miṣrār Bastānī, pt. I, that the second would be published later, but as stated above it was not. The title of the book Gājī Miṣrār Bastānī means "the brief case or the bag of Gājī Miṣrār". Though the name of the author did not appear on the title page it can be ascertained from his later book Bibi Kulsum that Masāraf himself is Gājī Miṣrār. Moreover the holder of the copyright of the book is stated to be 'Udāsin Pathik', which is another pseudonym of Masāraf. He wrote his earlier book Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā under the pseudonym ‘Udāsin Pathik’.

¹The date as given in the preface to the book is 15 Āśvin, 1306, B.Y., i.e., 1 October 1899, but the date as given by the Calcutta Gazette of 31 October 1900 is 4 April 1900. However, a second edition of the book was published in 1969 from Dacca, East Pakistan.
The first part of Gațī Mițar Bāstāni contains twenty chapters spreading over 400 pages. The second part was to contain four chapters with the writer's self-introduction stating his object in writing this book. The chapters in the book are called nathi which in Bengali means 'file'.

The Bāstāni is a story of three widowed landholders in Bengal, Payjarānnesā, Sonā Bibi and Mani Bibi. The writer names the place in which the action occurs, 'Arājakpur', which means literally 'a place of chaos, misrule'. Similarly the names of the characters are descriptive of the nature of the person portrayed. The name of the central figure in the plot is 'Payjar' which means 'corrupted', 'evil'.

The story may be summarised as follows.

**Chapter 1.** Payjarānnesā, a woman zamindar (landholder) of Arājakpur had illicit relationship with Bholānāth, the magistrate of Arājakpur. Bholānāth frequently visited her in her residence. The second magistrate Riturāj was also well acquainted with Payjarānnesā. Both the magistrates, whenever they met, praised the lady and also got pleasure in discussing the strife between Muslim landlords of the area, particularly the women zamindars.

**Chapter 2.** Sablot Candhuri, a voluptuous landlord of Jamdvār

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2. Sablot means one who plunders all.

cared only for two things, women and wealth. His hired men used to go out in the dead of night to procure women for him. Sablo hoje made money by instigating Sona Bibi and Mani Bibi, two of the women landholders who lived in the same place, to litigate with each other. The main point of the feud between them was that Jayshak, the minor son of Sona Bibi, who had married one of the daughters of Mani Bibi, could not inherit his late father's estate during his minority, and that Sona Bibi was the trustee till Jayshak attained majority. At the instigation of Mani Bibi, his mother-in-law, Jayshak filed a civil suit in the court to deprive his mother of the trusteeship. Sona Bibi was left alone, when her son went to live in his mother-in-law's house, and Mani Bibi's hired men were continually trying to harass her. As a result she could not even go out, but was restricted to her own house. To settle the case Sablo hoje offered himself as mediator between Sona Bibi and Mani Bibi, thereby making money from both parties. He did not however settle the rift.

4 Sona means gold; Bibi a feminine title, literally a woman.
5 Mani means pearl.
Chapter 3. Payjärannesā or Begam Šāheb as the author more frequently calls her, lived in a palatial building styled Kunja Niketan (grove house). Her husband had died a premature death leaving a huge estate behind him. The two brothers of Begam Šāheb seized the opportunity to misuse the wealth their sister had inherited. They took her to Calcutta and mixed with high society. The shy village woman, Payjärannesā, however soon became an enlightened and astute lady, well able to look after herself in the fast living and wealthy society of Calcutta. In time she returned home and invited Bholānāth, the magistrate, or the Ḥākim Saheb, as he was popularly called, to Kunja Niketan to dine with her.

Bholānāth, or Ḥākim Saheb had much to say in praise of Begam, because, being a Muslim lady, she had broken the fetters of the veil and come out of purdah. Ḥākim Saheb was highly pleased to see such a cultured lady in a mufussil area. The Begam was anxious to cultivate Ḥākim Saheb for she had some ulterior motive. She had more than one paramour but she welcomed Ḥākim Saheb as her dearest lover. On one occasion when Ḥākim Saheb came to dine with her another lover, whom she called Šīye Kāṭā Sīkhī, or
Sikli Kāṭā Tiye\(^6\) was staying in her house at the time. To prevent embarrassment she told Tiye Kāṭā Sikli to hide in her bedroom and, as a result, he became very jealous at the entertainment that the Begam was providing for the magistrate. Tiye left her house threatening not to come again.

**Chapters 4-5.** Now turning to the story of the strife between Sonā and Mani Bibi we notice that Mani Bibi's men were planning to assault Dāgādārī, Sonā Bibi's foster brother, because Mani Bibi was of the opinion that it was Dāgādārī who was preventing Sonā Bibi from agreeing to a compromise over the inheritance of her son. It was alleged that Sonā Bibi was more attached to her foster brother Dāgādārī than to her son, Jayāhāk. Mani Bibi's men were successful in their intrigue against Dāgādārī. A false charge was brought against him and as a result he was arrested by the police. Sonā Bibi was shocked to learn this, and she requested the police to treat him gently. She also handed some money to the police as a bribe. She complained to the police also that she was being forcibly detained in her house and had no freedom to move. The police officer was reluctant to believe this. He told her to apply to the magistrate of Arājakpur for the re-

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\(^6\) 'Sikli Kāṭā Tiye' means a parrot who has slipped out of his chain and flown away.
dress of her grievances. When the police received enough money from Sonā Bibi they treated Dāgādārī with due respect, but nevertheless they still kept him in prison.

Chapter 6. Begam Sāheb failed to understand the sudden departure of Tiye Kājā Sikā. She had had a soft corner in her heart for this gentleman. She recapitulated that she had done a lot for him, more in fact than what she had done even for her late husband. In the meanwhile, Rīturāj, the other magistrate, came to see Begam Sāheb, and described to her how one Bherākānta had complained to the higher authority against him, and that Bherākānta was trying to get the case transferred to some other judge in the district. However the author gives no account of the charges brought against Bherākānta. Begam Sāheb was angry with Bherākānta, though no particular reason for her anger is given by the author. Begam Sāheb was a little indisposed, when a sub-deputy magistrate, known as Maulabi Sāheb, came to see her. Rīturāj Babu was then hiding behind a curtain. When Maulabi Sāheb left, another friend of Begam Sāheb, Ukil Babu, arrived at the gate of her house. There was an uproar at the time because Ukil Babu had fallen from his horse near the gate. During the

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7 Bherākānta means a simpleton.
confusion Rituraj Babu slipped out of the Begam's house by the back door before Ukil Babu was brought before Begam Saheb, by her servants. Rituraj did not want Ukil Babu, who was a pleader, to see him in the Begam's house.

Chapter 7. Dagađari who was still under arrest was brought before the court. His lawyer moved a petition for bail which was granted. Dagađari, while returning home from custody met Bherakanta who warned him to take care because Mani Bibi's men were out to harm him. Bherakanta himself was described as an upright man, which is not surprising in view of the fact that he was the author himself. ⁸

In addition to Mani Bibi Bherakanta had another enemy in Jalatannesā,⁹ another woman zamindar. It appears that Jalatannesā was a friend of Begam Saheb and so shared her friend's dislike of Bherakanta. At the request of Jalatannesā Begam Saheb made plans to get Bherakanta in trouble with the magistrate.

Sonā Bibi was the only person who was friendly to Bherakanta. She, in the meantime, was anxiously waiting for Dagađari's release from custody and she was very glad

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⁸Bibi Kulsum, p. 70.

⁹Jalatan means teasing; nesa means a woman, generally used as feminine title.
when he came back. She had, by now, resolved that she would not hand over the control of her property to her son, Jaydhak, Mani Bibi's son-in-law.

Chapter 8. In this chapter the writer speaks highly of the British Administration in India. He accuses the native magistrates of being inefficient, corrupt, and good-for-nothing. Next he describes how Sonā Bibi had been detained in her house and forbidden to leave it. The servants too were disloyal to her, a situation which was due to the intrigue of her son's mother-in-law, Mani Bibi. The antagonism between the two women, Sonā Bibi and Mani Bibi, was a family quarrel; Mani Bibi in addition to being mother-in-law of Sonā Bibi's son, was also her first cousin. At this point in the story Bhasakanta came to the rescue of Sonā Bibi. He appealed to the judge at the district headquarters who issued an order that Sonā Bibi should be free to move anywhere and that whosoever hindered her movements would be liable to punishment. An order was issued to the police to escort her if she desired to move. Mani Bibi's party were disappointed at this turn of events. But secretly they managed to procure an order from Hakim Sahib to the effect that Sonā Bibi should be forbidden to use the share of the property which belonged to her
minor son Jaydhāk. Sonā Bibi was about to leave her residence with all her moveable assets when the police officer arrived to show her the order of the magistrate. In the presence of the police Mani Bibi's employees and Sonā Bibi's servants came to blows. Jaydhāk also appeared on the scene and searched his mother's person because he had heard a rumour that she was removing all the gold and jewellery. Sonā Bibi was shocked at the rude behaviour of her son, though she knew that he had been instigated by his mother-in-law. Sonā Bibi left her home at Jamdvār in utter disgust, and went to Arājakpur, thus abandoning her property. Dādārī accompanied her.

Chapter 9. It was one Sunday when the court Inspector of police reported to Hākim Saheb at his house that there might be a breach of peace in the locality of Jamdvār due to the feud between Sonā Bibi and Mani Bibi. Hākim Sahib demanded that the real brain behind the dispute should be found out and penalised. Hākim Saheb believed that Bhеṛkāntа was at the root of the rivalry between Sonā Bibi and Mani Bibi. He guessed that Bhеṛkāntа had written in a newspaper against the government officials and that he had complained against them to the higher
authority. So Hakim and the second magistrate Rituraj Babu were both displeased. They decided to teach him a good lesson. They then went on to talk about Begam Sâheb and her physical beauty. One Bâra Babu, probably Hakim's head clerk, also joined in the vulgar remarks made by Rijuraj and Hakim regarding Begam Sâheb. In the meantime the sub-deputy magistrate, Maulabi Sâheb, came to see Hakim Sâheb, wuereupon Rituraj passed a sarcastic remark about the Muslim community as a whole.

Chapter 10. The main ring leader of Mani Bibi's party, Mathâ Paglâ Ray10 tried to injure Bhêrakanta, on the assurance that if he did so he would be given the post of manager of her estate. Another employee of Mani Bibi, Ghar Bhângâ11, proposed that a forged deed should be made and registered to the effect that Sonâ Bibi had willingly transferred her property rights to her son. This would, of course, be possible if they bribed the registrar of deeds. But Mathâ Paglâ wanted to capture the property by physical force. He desired at the same time to murder Lâl Ālu, who had previously been an employee of Mani Bibi and was

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10 Mathâ pâglâ means mad headed.

11 Ghar bhângâ means one who breaks a house.
now a suitor for her hand. Though Mani Bibi did not approve of his approaches to her. In this chapter the writer introduces a new character, a hermit woman, or Bhikhārini, as the author calls her, who could predict future events, and was in consequence a great favourite of the unmarried daughters of Mani Bibi. Mani Bibi too was willing to know her fate, particularly as regards her recovery from a disease which had been troubling her for sometime. She was in fact a leper.

Chapter II. Sonā Bibi who was staying at Arājakpur was frequently visited by her sympathisers and advisers. At this point in the chapter the author introduces a digression. Speaking as Gāji Miyā, he criticises in strong language those pettifoggers who create ill-feelings between the two rival parties in order to get money from them. He also expresses his sorrow over the condition of Muslim women of Bengal who were kept in seclusion and deprived of education. Sonā Bibi as advised and guided by Dāgādārī appointed a lawyer to fight against Mani Bibi. Dāgādārī was of the opinion that a barrister would be needed to fight such a difficult case. One day Lāl Ālu, who had applied to the court claiming that Mani Bibi was his wife, came
to see Sonā Bibi. Sonā Bibi wanted to know the real intention behind the petition which he had submitted to the court. Ḍheṣakānta, who was at that time present in Sonā Bibi's house, was of the opinion that Lal Ālu had an ulterior motive in instituting a case against Mani Bibi. In fact Lal Ālu wanted to blackmail Mani Bibi on the grounds that once he had illicit relations with her. When Lal Ālu and Ḍheṣakānta left Sonā Bibi's house, Ḍagādārī came in and advised her to get on good terms with the Begam, since she was a friend of Hakim Sāheb. But Sonā Bibi did not like the idea. She told Ḍagādārī that he could try himself if he wanted it. Ḍagādārī it seems had once been friendly with Begam Sāheb, and now he wanted to revive the old friendship.

Chapter 12. Begam Sāheb was passing her days in the company of her former lover Ukil Babu or 'Ākāler bādhu' as she called him. Begam requested him not to plead on behalf of Ḍheṣakānta even if he gave him ten thousand rupees. While he was with her some gentlemen from outside Bengal came to attend Samākīrtītan, a meeting for

\[12\] Ākāler bādhu means a friend in need, ākāl means bad days, bādhu means a friend.
devotional songs which Begam Sāheb had arranged. Ukil Bābu did not join them, he viewed them in hiding behind the curtain. The writer here condemns in strong language Begam Sāheb's coquetry and her un-Islamic behaviour. He also despises the free mixing of Muslim women with male companions, and their non-observance of purdah. Here again the author through the mouth of Gāji Miya, says that a woman like Begam should leave the Muslim society because she is a disgrace to it. At this point Gāji Miya calls Begam Sāheb as Begam Thakurānī. Thakurānī is a Hindu title. At the end of the musical soirée Ḥakim Sāheb, Riturāj Bābu, Bakkesvar Bābu, and a newcomer, the jail-doctor, came to see the Begam. The Begam's paramour, Ukil Bābu, who was hiding uncomfortably under a bed, watched them and overheard their conversation. When all of them left the room, Ukil Babu came out and left the Begam's house in disgust.

Chapter 13. In this chapter the author describes the activities of the hermit woman or Bhikhārinī, as he calls her. Some of the daughters of Mani Bibi were fond of the hermit woman, since she had promised to help them to get what they wanted. The unmarried daughters wanted good husbands and the married daughters wanted obedient husbands. The
hermit woman promised to do her best. Mani Bibi wanted the dispute between her and Lal Alu to be settled by the magical powers of the hermit woman. The hermit woman secretly came to know that all Lal Alu wanted was money. One night she overheard a conversation between Lal Alu, his old father, and Ghar Bhanga, in which they were planning to demand twelve thousand rupees from Mani Bibi as a precondition for the withdrawal of Lal Alu's petition. Lal Alu was brought before Mani Bibi, where Bhikhari was also present. Bhikhari asked Lal Alu why he was demanding twelve thousand rupees when his share was only four thousand. Lal Alu became nervous and frightened. He felt sure that Bhikhari possessed supernatural powers and could read his mind. So he withdrew his petition immediately.

Chapter 14. While two partisans, one belonging to Mani Bibi, the other belonging to Sonab Bibi, were going round collecting land revenue they met one another and a fight ensued. A police officer accompanied by two constables were in the vicinity at the time investigating a theft case. He tried to stop the fight, but Sonab Bibi's men attacked him too and then went away.
Chapter 15. In this chapter the author describes an incident which throws light on the relationship between Hindu and Muslim communities. Once some of the Muslim inhabitants of Arajakpur had requested Rituraj Babu to stop playing music while they were praying in the mosque. As he did not comply with the request a group of armed men attacked his house at night, while a musical performance was going on. They put a lamp Rituraj Babu had left burning in the hall, and assaulted the womenfolk including Begam Saheb and Rituraj’s wife. The Begam Saheb had also come to attend the musical performance. Rituraj Babu was very angry and decided to teach the Muslims a good lesson. He conjectured that Bherakanta had had a hand in the affair.

In the meantime, the police officer who had been assaulted by the Lathial of Sona Bibi came to the house of Rituraj Babu, and described what had happened. Hakim Saheb was also in the house at the time. Both the magistrates were angry and told the police officer to file a strong case against the culprits. The police officer was also of the opinion that Bherakanta might be associated with Sona Bibi’s party in assaulting the police.

Chapter 16. The case of Daga Daisy came before the magistrate of Arajakpur for hearing. Hakim Saheb passed an order that
Dāgādārī should be remanded in custody and the case postponed. Sona Bibi was disappointed but she managed to send some food for Dāgādārī in the prison house. The writer then refers to Begam Sāheb's attitude towards Sona Bibi. She wanted to detach Dāgādārī from Sona Bibi, but preferred to do it by underhand means. Dāgādārī had been once a friend of Begam Sāheb. Though later on he became attached to Sona Bibi, nevertheless the Begam had not forgotten him. One day she went to see Sona Bibi and suggested that she should use her influence to secure Dāgādārī's release. Sona Bibi was quick to understand the ulterior motive which lay behind the Begam's request and said bluntly that she, the Begam, could secure the release of Dāgādārī through the good offices of her friend Hakim Sāheb. Bheṣakanta was at the time present in the house and heard the conversation. When Begam Sāheb had gone he told Sona Bibi that he suspected that the Begam's real motive in coming was to find out whether she had any particular fondness for Dāgādārī. A little later Bheṣakanta informed her that Lāl Ālu was living at Mani Bibi's house apparently quite happily.

Chapter 17. Scene changes to Mani Bibi's house. Mani Bibi was very ill with an incurable disease and Lāl Ālu was
nursing her. Mani Bibi's daughters, who were not on friendly terms with their mother, did nothing to help her. In the meantime the hermit woman had left Mani Bibi's house. But before she went she told her that she would not recover, but would die as a punishment for her great wickedness. Mani Bibi's sickness got worse and after a few days of great pain she died. Lāl Ālu left the house for good.

In the second half of this chapter the writer narrated how Begam Sāheb in the guise of a male met Ukil Bābu in his house at dead of night. She reminded him that Bheṣṭakānta's case would be heard next day. Ukil Bābu, on the Begam's request, agreed not to plead for Bheṣṭakānta, but he demanded one thousand rupees from Begam Sāheb. Begam Sāheb gave him a hand note to that amount as she had no money with her. In consequence Bheṣṭakānta's case was not heard the next day, but was postponed for two weeks.

Chapter 18. Bhikharinī after leaving Mani Bibi's house went to stay with Sona Bibi who was still trying to get her son Jaiḍhāk back. To enable her to do so she had employed an ascetic whom she called guruji to get him back for her. The guruji made a small figure resembling Jaiḍhāk and shot arrows at it. When he had done this he informed Sona Bibi
that unless Jayghak came back to her within 40 days he would die. Jayghak heard what had happened and reported his danger to the district judge and the divisional commissioner, but they laughed at such a funny idea and took no notice of it.

The story now turns first to Dagadarī and then to Bheṛakānta. Dagadarī was still in custody and his wife and mother came to ask Sonā Bibi's help in securing his release. This she was willing to do, but made no definite promise. In the meantime Bheṛakānta and his wife were very worried, because his case had not yet been heard. He went to the court almost every day but could not get a hearing taken up by the magistrate. At last, however, his case came up before the Hākim Saheb who found him guilty of being an accomplice in assaulting the police and sentenced him to two years rigorous imprisonment together with a fine of one thousand rupees. Bheṛakānta's wife and children were all screaming when they heard the news of his sentence. The neighbours who may be expressing the thoughts of the author, were distressed to hear of this very severe sentence, especially as they did not understand what it was Bheṛa-

kānta had been punished for. Sonā Bibi tried to get him released but she failed. However she was able to send some food to the prison house. Even Begam Saheb was moved to
some sympathy for Bheýakánta. She was however more interested in Dágádári and while Hákim Saheb was listening to some music in her house she asked him if he could arrange for Dágádári to be released on bail. Hákim Saheb was surprised at the request but promised to do what he could.

Chapter 19. Bheýakánta was released from jail by an order from the district judge at Nacchárpur, but he was ordered to pay the fine of one thousand rupees. Hákim Saheb granted him bail but he wanted to punish him. Bheýakánta though free, hid himself in the house. He and his wife were worried because the fine had to be paid within a fortnight. Soná Bibi who had been Bheýakánta’s well wisher refused to let him have the money which he needed to pay the fine.

In the meantime Dágádári was also released from custody and he went immediately to see Begam Saheb. She told him to procure the letters which she had written to different persons at different times and which she said were in possession of Bheýakánta. While Bheýakánta was in the capital city to consult a barrister about his case, Dágádári went to see his wife in an attempt to get those letters for the Begam. He pretended to be a
well wisher of Bhākapānta, but he failed in his attempt.

A few days later a case was instituted at the sub-
divisional headquarters, Khāmkheyaliganj, against Sona
Bibi and Dāgādārī for assaulting the police officer. A
warrant for their arrest was issued, but both were
acquitted. Bhākapānta too was acquitted finally, and
the fine was remitted.

Chapter 20. Dāgādārī feared that if Jayghāk and Sona Bibi
reached a compromise his position would be insecure. So he
tried to get a permanent income from Sona Bibi's estate.
He prepared a document stating that Sona Bibi being pleased
with him for his good services would grant him a monthly
allowance of one hundred rupees for life. Sona Bibi was
displeased at Dāgādārī's behaviour, when he came to her
to get the document signed. In the meantime Sona Bibi was
removed from the trusteeship of her husband's estate by
an order from the court. Her last hope of getting back
her son also vanished when her guruji disappeared secretly.
In utter disappointment she left the country and went to
Mecca on a pilgrimage.

13 Khāmkheyalāli means whimsicalness, ganj is a general name
for a big market place.
Dāgādārī then went to see Begam Sāheb but he was not warmly received by her. She was worried because Riturāj Babu, who had been of great help to her, was under an order of transfer from Arājakpur and would be leaving very soon.

This is the end of the first part of Gājī Miyyār Bastānī.

The unfinished portion of the second part of Gājī Miyyār Bastānī as published in Āmar Jībanī:

Chapter 20. (Unfinished part from Gājī Miyyār Bastānī, pt. I).

Gājī Miyyā praises the editor of the journal Sāsadhar, who was a fearless person. This journal published an account of the misdeeds of the Ḥākim Sāheb of Arājakpur and of the Begam Sāheb. The Ḥākim Sāheb would have liked to teach the editor a lesson, but he apprehended that the same thing might happen as had happened in the case of Bherākanta. The Ḥākim Sāheb secretly encouraged one Kālīkrīṣṇa Babu, a zamīndar, to go to the capital to entrap the editor and bring him to Arājakpur under an order of arrest which he had issued against the editor, but which could be served only in his district. The editor of Sāsadhar was brought to the police station, but was granted bail on a surety of two hundred rupees. He was instructed to attend the court at Arājakpur when summoned.
In the meantime Begam Sāheb had planned to have the editor beaten while he was in Arājakpur, but by mistake her hired men attacked someone else and the editor returned safely.

Chapter 21. At this point in the story the Hāmm Sāheb was transferred from Arājakpur. Bīturāj Bābu who was already under an order of transfer, was on leave. The Begam Sāheb felt unhappy and insecure. She was financially ruined due to persistent squandering for the last years. Even her friends refused to give her loans, and her slaves and servants left her. She tried to sell her gold and silver, but her movable property was forfeited by a decree from the court as a result of her unpaid debts. Even 'Ākāler bādhu' once her favourite pleader, Ukil Bābu, filed a suit for the realisation of the money the Begam had promised to pay him. The Begam once a princess was now a pauper. She dismissed all her employees and she went to one Dāktār Bābu who was at that time living in Chittagong, to realise some money she had lent him. The Begam Sāheb first went to Sunāmganj to her brother, Ḥaṭu, but he seemed to be indifferent to her. He offered her no help in realising the money from Dāktār Bābu. When Begam Sāheb sent a messenger to Dāktār Bābu, he refused to recognise her. Dāktār Bābu
was known there as a European physician, and his servants
did not even allow Begam Sāheb, a native woman, to enter
his house. The Begam Sāheb then decided to go to Medinipur
but her servants and boatmen refused to proceed further
until they were given their salaries. The Begam Sāheb
expressed her inability to pay them even a penny but
requested them earnestly to take her to Medinipur where
Sikli Kāṭā Tiye, her former lover, was living. The boatmen
secretly planned to sail on towards their home, so at
night while they were all asleep she left the boat and began
to walk through the fields to the village nearby.

Chapter 22. Begam Sāheb was utterly at a loss what to do.
It was a dark night, and the moon was on the wane. She
felt nervous. She thought to put an end to her life by
drowning but she could not bring herself to do it. She
suddenly saw a light and began to walk towards it. She
reached a gathering where a musical party was going on.
A kind hearted lady received her and took her into her
house. The Begam Sāheb then disclosed part of the story
of her life and said it was her intention to go to Medinipur.
The lady accompanied the Begam to Medinipur, where one of the
sons of the lady was serving. The Begam tried to secure
a home with Sikli Kāṭā Tiye, but in vain. His wife drove
her out of the house. The lady then proposed that all of them would accompany her son who was about to be transferred to Darjeeling.

The book Gājī Miyār Bastānī, part II, ends here, though it was stated by the author in the preface to part I that the entire book would be finished in 24 chapters. Nevertheless it would seem that the story was in fact complete at this point.

The form of Gājī Miyār Bastānī.

Gājī Miyār Bastānī is a long diffuse novel. There are two main themes running through the greater part of the book: the clash between Mani Bibi and Sonā Bibi over Jayghāk and the possession of the estate, and the various activities of Begam Sāheb. These two themes are linked together geographically because all three women lived in the same locality, but the themes themselves tend to follow separate courses. The activities of Begam Sāheb have little to do with the main conflict between Sonā Bibi and Mani Bibi and vice versa. There are more than fifty characters in the book who might be called minor characters and they are to a very large extent irrelevant to either of the main themes. They appear and disappear on the scene very often for no particular reason. Such handling of the characters could be justified if the book were a sketch of the
social conditions in the locality but their irregular appearance does tend to make the novel structurally less coordinated than it might have been. The author himself appears in the guise of Bheṣṭakānta whose role also is not altogether clear. He is not a spectator nor is he a definite participant in the activities which are described.

There is another commentator in the book beside Bheṣṭakānta, namely Gājī Miya. He plays no part in the story. He is only the mouthpiece of the author whereas Bheṣṭakānta is the author himself only where his role is to comment on the actions of the characters. Sometimes Gājī Miya's comments are witty, sometimes caustic. He frequently jeers at upper class Muslim society because of its westernisation and its non-observance of purdah which result in parties between the members of both sexes. Often his comments are directed against the corruption of Government officials.

This method of presenting a story through the mouth of a narrator who makes personal comments from time to time was not unknown in the Bengali literature of the day. Barīkīm Candra Čāṭṭopādhyāy frequently made use of it, particularly in Kamalākānter Daptar to which Masārraf acknowledges his indebtedness. This method was almost certainly borrowed by Bengali novelists from certain English writers of whom Fielding and
Dickens may be mentioned.

The characters

The principal characters in the book are the three Muslim women zamindars, all of them widows, and Ḥākim Saheb, the magistrate. Important but not equally essential to the main action are Bherakanta, Dāgādāri, and Jayghāk. The minor characters are many and serve mainly to give colour to the situations in which the main plot develops.

Pajjarannesa, the Begam Saheb.

The author describes Pajjarannesa as Begam Saheb, i.e. the widow of a Nawab, though in fact she is not. Her real name is forgotten in course of time and she tends to be known throughout the book as Begam Saheb. She is a widow and zamindar of Arjakpur who at the beginning of the story was a very rich woman. She loved pomp and grandeur, and flirted with the high officials of the town where she lived. Though a Muslim by birth she did not observe purdah, nor follow the Islamic way of life. On the contrary she indulged in music and dancing and mixed freely with males of both communities. She had at least two or three lovers at the same time, one of whom at least was surreptitiously living with her. She had close social contact with the Government officers, and entertained
them with wine and spirits which are forbidden in Islam.
In so far as we can analyse her motives it would seem that
it gave her great pleasure to be a popular hostess and to be
regarded as a woman of wealth and high social standing.

She lost her husband while she was very young and her
two brothers exploited her wealth, took her to high society
in Calcutta and as a result Payjarannesā, a village woman,
turned into a sophisticated and smart society lady.

Her days in time came to an end. Her lovers left her
one by one. Her wealth was exhausted and her youth gone,
and her misery began from that day. The officers with whom
she was friendly left the place under orders from higher
authority. When her funds ran out even her servants left her.
At last she repented of her misdeeds chiefly in harassing
innocent people and she planned to commit suicide. Friendless
and helpless she was given shelter by a kind-hearted lady.

The author makes no final judgment but it is clear from
passing comments during the story and from the events them-
selves that he uses Begam Sāheb to point the moral that only
misery can follow from abandoning traditional conduct. It
is implied that the social freedom claimed by Christian and
Hindu women can only lead to disaster if copied by Muslim
women whose proper place is in purdah.
Mani Bibi

Mani Bibi, another woman zamindar living in Jamdvar, was in love with one of her employees, Lal Ali, while her husband was still alive. From the very beginning she was not fond of her husband. Though he was a sick man she was very cruel to him. No reason for her dislike of her husband is found in the book. She was a greedy and unscrupulous woman. She planned to acquire the property of her son-in-law, Jayghak, and in consequence hated Sonā Bibi, her daughter's mother-in-law, because quite naturally Sonā Bibi objected to her son's property being taken over by his wife's mother.

She died of an incurable disease, but before death she had a dreadful vision of Hell. She cries, "O what pain! Don't pierce my tongue with red hot iron rods. A snake is coming to me out of the fire with its head raised." The vision of Hell which the author gives her is the measure of his disapproval of her selfish and dissolute character.

Sonā Bibi

She was another Jamdvar landlord. She was to begin with a good lady of good moral character. She lived in purdah as long as her husband was alive, and had little formal education except that she knew some verses from the Holy Koran which she used in her prayers. But soon after the death of her husband she came
out of purdah, and with a strong hand managed his property. She was an intelligent woman, though sometimes she was guided by some other persons. She was affectionate too. She loved her foster-brother Dagadari, and was very distressed when she knew that he was trying to get her to sign a document which would ensure for him a large monthly payment. She was aggrieved at her son's conduct, though she knew full well that her son's mother-in-law was at the root of all the strife. She tried in many ways to get her son back, and went so far as to employ magic and incantations. When all her attempts failed she went on a pilgrimage to find solace for the rest of her life.

Dagadari.

At the beginning of the story Dagadari was the right-hand man of Sonā Bibi. By nature he was cunning, self-seeking and as is seen later vindictive. He supported Sonā Bibi only in order to gain something for himself. When he failed to get what he wanted from her, he did not hesitate to leave her and transfer his allegiance to Begam Sāheb and to try his utmost to create ill-feeling between his former mistress and Bheypākanta. When in the company of Begam Sāheb he was boastful. He claimed to be a poet of considerable eminence and a writer of greater talent even than Madhusudan and Barikim Candra. The Begam Sāheb however was shrewd enough to see through his pre-
Hākim Sāheb.

In the story he was a prominent man, because of his official position. He was the magistrate of Arājakpur, the main place of the action. He had a name, Bholaṇath, but the writer prefers to call him Hākim Sāheb, the common name for a magistrate. He was an unscrupulous and a dishonest person. In fact he had only one intention, that of pleasing his friend Begam Sāheb. That is why he detained Bagādārī in custody and sentenced Bherākānta to imprisonment. His name suggests that he was non-Muslim. Though he was friendly with Begam Sāheb who was a Muslim he had no good feelings or respect for the Muslim community.

Bherākānta

As Masārraf said in a later work Bibi Kulsum14 Bherākānta was a reflection of Masārraf himself, and was used as a vehicle for the expression of Masārraf’s opinions. Certain passages from Gājī Miyār Bastānī confirm the identification of Masārraf with Bherākānta; and in the preface to his autobiography, Āmar Jibānī, the author states that the incidents

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14 Bibi Kulsum, p.71.
in Gaji Miyar Bastani were in a number of cases taken from his own life.

Masarraf served on the estate of a woman landlord at Delduyar in Tangail, but after a few years of employment, possibly in 1894, he left the place. Though he nowhere states the reason for his leaving, he does say in the preface to Gaji Miyar Bastani that he was in financial difficulties and had to seek his future elsewhere. He went to Bogra in Northern Bengal to find employment. It is not unlikely however that Masarraf had incurred the displeasure of his employer and left for that reason.

It is said that Masarraf was associated with a journal published from Tangail, and it is assumed that he used to write editorial columns, in some of which the family quarrels between the co-sharers of an estate, all of whom were women, were condemned. Masarraf is said to have distributed some

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15 See page 54 of this thesis.
16 Preface to G.M.B.
17 Ibid.
18 Introduction, 2nd edition (1961) of G.M.B.
19 Ibid.
anonymous posters in secret in the streets of Tangail town, in which he ridiculed certain government officers and women zamindars. As a result he was summoned to appear before the court of the Deputy Magistrate at Tangail. There is however no definite proof that he was convicted. It is reasonable to suppose that all these events and the general situation in which they occurred inspired Masarraf to write a book giving vent to his feelings by satirising women landlords and officials of Tangail. Bholanath, magistrate of Arakpur in Gaji Miyar Bastani, strongly resembles Sibanda Nag who was the Deputy Magistrate of Tangail while Masarraf was there. It is interesting to note that 'Sib' and 'Bholanath' in certain contexts are synonymous. There is a resemblance too between Begam Saheb of Gaji Miyar Bastani and Karimnoss, employer of Masarraf, of Delduyar in Tangail.

The question arises whether this book was written from literary motives or for some other reason or a combination of both. The presentation of the characters suggests that

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21 Ibid.
22 Kedar Nath Majumdar, Maimansigher Itibas, p. 217
the main purpose of the author in this work was to condemn certain persons and certain situations in which the poor suffered at the hands of wealthy and influential. Most of the characters are either altogether good or altogether bad. Hakim Saheb, Begam Saheb, Mani Bibi etc. are out and out bad with no sense of moral values. They are the lascivious, corrupt and anxious to gain power and money. At the other extreme is Bherakanta who is shown to be an upright man anxious to help others and made to suffer because of his integrity. There are a few characters in between, such as Sona Bibi, who seem to suffer at the hands of the more villainous but they are not presented in a manner which awakes sympathetic response from the readers. They are weak. Bherakanta himself however is not clearly described. He is a comparatively minor character in the book serving as a contrast to the out and out villains. He is described by the author as being a good man though he did not hesitate to offer bribes to a police official to extricate Sona Bibi from her trouble when he was unable to settle the dispute between her and Mani Bibi. It is not clear why Begam Saheb was so hostile to him unless it is to be understood that she was acting in support of a friend of hers, one Jalatannesha, who was annoyed with Bherakanta for reasons which are also not disclosed. The name Jalā-
tannesā means 'persecuting female' and it may be that in suggesting that she was inimical to Bherakanta for reasons unknown Masarraf was actually pillorying his own employer Karimannesā.

The name 'Bherakanta' is non-Muslim though it is clear from his views on morality and duty of a woman towards her husband that he is a believer in Islam and in the orthodox Islamic way of life. He frequently referred to the Holy Koran like a traditional Muslim.

Defects and values of the book

The book Gāji Miyār Bastānī is in many ways defective. In structure it is inadequately co-ordinated, movement from one incident to another is disorderly, many of the characters seem to be irrelevant to either of the main plots. Some of them might with benefit have been omitted altogether. Some of the speeches, comments and descriptive passages are long, to the extent of being tedious. As a whole the book seems to lack concentration on essentials and though the author claims he was imitating Kamala Kanter Daptar his work is a poor shadow of Baqīkim's composition.

On the other hand the book is a social picture with a didactic purpose. Similar treatises had been written previously
in Bengali literature, i.e. Naba Babu Bilas, Álarer Gharer Dulal, Hutom Pyacar Naksa, in which a predominantly Hindu society is portrayed. In Gaji Miyar Bastani, however, a mixed society, Hindus and Muslims, is described. The book is a valuable record of the licentiousness prevalent among the native officers and Muslim zamindars. In a later chapter of this thesis the society of Bengal as depicted in Masarraf's writing has been described in detail.
CHAPTER VI

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

1. LANGUAGE

Bengali prose is commonly classified into two linguistic categories. The first is 'Sadhu bhaṣa'\(^1\) (chaste language), that is to say a literary language used in writing by many educated and learned authors during the 19th century. Sadhu bhaṣa may be described from two aspects: vocabulary and grammatical features. The vocabulary of Bengali (or any New Indo-Aryan language) as S. K. Chatterji says, "can be said to consist of 4 elements: 1) tatsama, 2) tadbhava, 3) desṭ, 4) vedesṭ. By 'tatsama' the Indian grammarian (of Prakrit) meant only those words in Prakrit which are identical in form with Sanskrit: e.g. hari, sundar, kusuma, deva, manda, cinta, etc."\(^2\) Those Sanskrit words which underwent phonological changes may be termed 'tadbhava'.

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\(^1\) It is not definitely known when the term 'Sadhu bhaṣa' was coined. T. W. Clark conjectures that the term came into use between 1824 and 1840. (Vide Bulletin of the S.O.A.S., 1956, pt. 3, p.471.) However Rammohun Ray used the word 'Sadhu bhaṣa' in his Vedanta Grantha published in 1815. (Rām Mohan Ray Granthābali., p.8.)

Chatterji cites an example: *eyo* (married woman whose husband is alive) is derived from Sanskrit *avî dhava*. He also describes historically the change of the word in different stages from Old Indo-Aryan (Vedic or Sanskrit) to New Indo-Aryan language. There are few words which do not preserve their Sanskrit forms but were accepted with slight modification in the New Indo Aryan: *Krisna* *Keśa*. These are given the name 'semi-tatsama' by the European scholars and accepted as such by Chatterji and others. 'Desi' words are "unexplained by Aryan roots", and 'vedesi' (foreign) words are borrowed from languages like Persian, Arabic, English etc. Chatterji gives a rough percentage of different types of words of Bengali:  

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{tatsama} & 44.00 \\
\text{tadbhaya, semi-tatsama, desi and others} & 51.45 \\
\text{foreign (Persian)} & 3.30 \\
\text{(English)} & 1.25 \\
\hline
100.00
\end{array}
\]

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3 S. K. Chatterji, *op. cit.*, avidhava avihava āiha āyihawa āiha āiha āyyā eo, or eyo

4 *Ibid.*, p.190. Chatterji further shows that certain words though looking like 'tatsama' words, in pronunciation are 'tadbhava', such as: *padma* written as in Sanskrit, but pronounced as *padda* in Bengali, *ibid.*, p.200.

It is evident from the above that the greater part of Bengali words are derived directly or indirectly from Sanskrit. However the 'tadbhava' words are not Sanskritic but rather Bengali. It is found that from the beginning Bengali literature borrowed from Sanskrit, and Sanskrit having a very rich vocabulary was a "supreme source of vigour for Bengali". Early Bengali poetry as well as prose had a preponderance of 'tatsama' words.

In its grammatical features Bengali 'Sadhu bhasa' followed some of the rules and practices of Sanskrit grammar: such as formation of compound words (sandhi and samas), some inflections on Sanskritic models; abundant use of compound verbs, i.e. verbal phrases consisting of verbal noun plus an operative verb, e.g. pradan kara (to make a gift) as against decoya (to give). Sadhu bhasa also employed longer verbal inflections than were current in the spoken language, e.g. karitechilam (was doing) as against karchilam, and longer pronominal forms, e.g. amadiger (our) for amader tahadiger (their) for tader. One sentence of Sadhu bhasa written as "tahadigake ghara haite bahiskar kariya dao" (drive

7Ibid., Das describes the prose of the first quarter of the 19th century.
them out of the house) will be like this in 'calit bhāga'
(colloquial language), "tāder ghar theke ber kare dāo".

The second linguistic category is 'calit bhāga' (col-
loquial language). The characteristics of this language
are the use of fewer 'tatsama' words, shorter verbal and
pronominal forms and fewer samās and compound verbs.

In any case the statement that Bengali prose style is
classified into two groups is an oversimplified statement.
The Sadhu bhāga of the 19th century appeared in various
colours in the hands of different writers. The prose written
by the pundits of the Fort William College was different in
style from that of Bidyāsāgar or Barīkim Candra, Rāmmohan Ray,
Akṣay Kumār Datta, Barīkim Candra Cattopādhyāy, Bhudeb
Mukhopādhyāy and Debendranāth Thākur all wrote in 'śādhu bhāga'.
Even Pyāricād Mitra used śādhu bhāga in his Alāler Gharer Dulāl.
But the language of Alāler Gharer Dulāl is different from
that of Sītār Banabas by Bidyāsāgar.

Īśarcandra Bidyāsāgar who has been claimed as the 'father
of Bengali Prose' wrote all his works in 'śādhu bhāga'. Barīkim

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It is difficult to ascertain when this term 'calit bhāga' came
into vogue. Probably it was called in the 20th century. Barīkim
Candra in 1878 used 'Pracalita bhāga' for colloquial style in
one of his essays published in Bangadarśan of 1285 B.Y., p. 80.
Candra in his early works (*Durgesñandini*, *Kapāl Kundalā*, *Mṛinalinī*) follows the language style of Bidyāsāgar. However in his later writings Barikim uses fewer 'tatsama' words, many 'tadbhava' words including verbs. In this way 'sādhu bhāsa' was being simplified, or brought more near to colloquial or 'calit bhāsa'. As regards the language style Barikim's attitude expressed in the preface to *Rajsimha* is worth quoting here. He said, "now-a-days writers or language critics are divided into two sections. One section holds the view that Bengali grammar should be on the pattern of Sanskrit grammar. The second section (among them there are many Sanskrit knowing pundits) says, that which is current usage will be allowed though they do not obey the Sanskrit grammar. I myself hold the view of this second section..... although I wrote in case of address 'bhagaban' (O God), prabho (O Lord), pitah (O father), now I have abandoned these usages since they are not used in Bengali language."\(^9\)

He further contended elsewhere that "simplicity and clarity are the marks of good style and the language to be used will depend on the subject matter or the topic. So if the colloquial style serves no purpose there is no harm in using

literary or more difficult diction." During the latter period of his life he used a language more near to the colloquial, though he did not employ calit bhāṣā all through.

During the middle of the 19th century some writers introduced colloquial style into Bengali fiction. The pioneers were Pyāricād Mitra (1857) and Kalîprasanna singha (1862).

Pyāricād’s Aūaler Gharer Dulāl is written in mixed style of sādhu and calit bhāṣā, but he uses more 'tadbhava' words, 'desī' words, and some Arabic-Persian words - those which were considered admissible by the Sanskritists. In the dialogue part the speeches are all in calit bhāṣā. But he had certain defects; he uses the verbal forms of sādhu bhāṣā and calit bhāṣā in the same sentences. This defect is commonly known as 'guru canḍali doṣ', a term used by the Bengali grammarians. In Hutom pyācar Nakṣa the author used the calit bhāṣā exclusively. Madhusūdan Datta and Dinbandhu Mitra


12 Aūaler Gharer Dulāl, p.100, "ḥasya karite karite ... balābali karte laglo." Here first verb underlined is of sadhu bhāṣa whereas the second underlined verb is colloquial or calit bhāṣā. Many such examples may be given from the same book.

13 Madhusūdan’s farces (1) Eke-i ki bale sabhyata, and (2), Buro-saliker ghare Ro, are written in calit bhāṣā. In his drama Madhusūdan used (cont.)
in their dramas and farces used calit bhaṣa. Dinbandhu also committed the same type of mistakes as use of sadhu verb forms and calit verb forms in the same structure. Even Barikim did not avoid similar mistakes.

Pyāricād and Kaliprasannā introduced colloquial or calit bhaṣa in fiction, but the main trend was toward the usage of Sadhu bhaṣa in all sorts of literary writings. Masarraf also uses the sadhu bhaṣa in his first book Ratnabati (1869). The whole book is written in 'Sadhu bhaṣa', even in dialogues he does not use the colloquial forms of verbs or pronouns.

The main feature of this language is abundant use of 'tatsama' words. Page 15 of Ratnabati taken at random contains a total of 109 words, in which there are 11 samās or Sanskrit compound words, 51 'tatsama' words and 5 compound verbs.

(cont.)
'calit' verb forms, but excessive use of 'tatsama' words and Sankritic type of idioms made his drama lifeless. (Vide, S. K. Sen, Barigala Sahitya Itihās, Vol. 2, second ed., p.41.)

Dinbandhu Mitra in his first drama Nīl Darpan used two types of language, sadhu for nobility and calit for the ordinary people.

In Sadhabār Ekādāśī, p.271, 281 and in Jāmai Barik, p.566, 567 vide collected works, Dinbandhu Granthābali, ed. by his son.

In Mrinalinī and in his other books there are these types of mistakes. S. K. Sen on p.80 of his Bahgala Sahitye Gadya (Calcutta, 1954), gives some examples from Barikim's works.
Mašarraf uses the śādhu forms of verbs throughout his entire book, and it is praiseworthy that he did not mix up śādhu and calit forms. He is very consistent in his use of śādhu bhāga. He uses numerous compound verbs: pradān kara, nirikṣan kara, bhanga kara, patita haoya, ānāyan kara etc. These could be replaced by deoya, dekhā, bhānga, pada, ana. He uses the Sanskrit vocative case in Bengali, as batse (0 child), bandho (of friend), prabho (0 Lord). In Bengali there are no inflections for the case of address. So these could be replaced by the nominative case forms, i.e. batsa, bandhu, prabhu. He uses some pronominal forms which were used in early 19th century Bengali prose, such as āpankar (your honorific) for āpanār. He uses inflections for adjectives qualifying feminine nouns: catura sahacari (p.18), icchānubarttini kinkari (p.20) [clever companion, female, obedient maidservant] and he also uses grammatical gender in certain cases: āṣa balabati (p.18), Jibanmrttu kārini lajjā (p.25). Here āṣa (hope) and lajjā (shame) have been considered as feminine gender. Bengali today has no such grammatical gender. For gerunds he uses the suffix 'pūrbbak' in pp. 8-9, "Sukumār anguri prāpta haiyā tapasvir pada cumban pūrbbak punuray stab karilen." (Sukumār having received the ring, having kissed the feet of the ascetic, again eulogised him.)
One interesting point about the language of the book *Ratnabati* is this, that Masarrraf uses none of the Arabic or Persian words which were current in Bengali at that time. It may be due to the fact that the story of *Ratnabati* deals with a Hindu theme in which words used by the Muslims of Bengal had no suitable place. It was however commonly found that during the 19th century Muslim writers were inclined to use some Arabic-Persian words in their writings whatever might be the theme. A critic of *Ratnabati* cast doubt that the author of *Ratnabati* might be a "Non-Muslim writing under a pseudonym of a Muslim".  

Masarrraf's next two books were dramas, and naturally there is a marked change in the language he used in those two dramas. Both the dramas, *Basanta Kumari* (1873) and *Jamidar Darpan* (1873) are written in 'calit bhāṣā'. It seems that Masarrraf was very conscious of the fact that the language of a drama should be a colloquial or spoken one, otherwise it would fail in its appeal to the audience.

In *Basanta Kumari* Masarrraf uses 'calit bhāṣā' throughout. In this drama he uses few 'tatsama' words and the verbal forms are all 'calit'. All the characters speak in colloquial Bengali except the King Birendra who uses more difficult vocabulary.

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Sometimes the king uses metaphorical language in verbose style, so also his minister. It is quite likely that Mašarraf does use this sort of language with the intention of producing the grandeur of a royal court.

Mašarraf uses highly colloquial verbal forms like kotten for karten (p.12), dekhchilum (p.121) for dekhchilām, pāllemna (p.121) for pālāmnā, kocci (p. 116) for karchi, kolle for karle. These verbal forms were as if in a phonetic transcription to represent fairly closely the actual pronunciation; such forms were later used by Rabindranath Tagore, Pramath Candhuri and other writers of the 20th century.

However, Mašarraf is not always consistent in using these forms; sometimes he uses kallen (p.125), karben (p.20), which consistency would have him write as kollen, korben respectively. In one instance a verbal form seems to be faulty: phuṭini (p.88). The sentence is "se nām kāro kāche phuṭini" (I have not disclosed that name to anybody.)

In case of the pronominals he uses the suffix 're' in the objective case, such as āmāre (me), yāre (whom). In the vocative case Sanskrit forms are retained as in Ratnabati: pitah (0 father), 'Malati', 'Rebati', 'Sakhe' (0 friend). A few English words or words derived from English have been used by Mašarraf, such as bākṣa from English 'box', Māiri,
a word for swearing on, probably from 'By Mary'. There are a few Persian, Urdu/Hindi words in Basanta Kumārī. Even some full sentences in Urdu/Hindi have been written in Bengali characters. The Persian words contain kāgaj (paper), darbār (court), daraja /darwaja/ (door).

In Jamīdar Darpaṇ too Maśārraf uses colloquial language. Though the drama begins with a prologue in verse and ends with a metrical composition, the remainder is written in prose. However there are several songs inserted between two scenes in order to heighten the dramatic effect. The book contains some English sentences too. This is due to the fact that English was the official language of Bengali courts.

In this drama Maśārraf uses colloquial verbal forms throughout except where lawyers and police officers use sādhu verbal forms: as haite, haiya, pheliyā etc. though however there are some colloquial forms used along with sādhu verb forms. He uses some colloquial negative particles like ne instead of na. This particle was rare in 19th century writings. He uses some shorter forms of verb which may be dialectal, as ne for niye (p.46). He uses some dialectal forms of nouns and verbs, where regular phonetic change may be observed. A nasal sound is used instead of a lateral in initial positions of words: such as nok for lok (person), najā for lajja (shame);
a nasal for a flapped or rolled sound, e.g. nakamə for rakamə (how) and a semi-vowel for a sibilant, e.g. eyechi for esjechi. 

The language of Bigād Sindhu is also sadhu bhaṣa, or better it may be termed as simplified sadhu bhaṣa. All the verb forms are of 'sādhu bhaṣa'. As regards vocabulary there are abundant Sanskrit 'tatsama' words but they are not used excessively and pedantically — and the percentage of 'tatsama' words is less than that of Ratnabati. The language is totally different from his dramas because of the seriousness of the subject matter. The sentences generally are not long though long sentences do occur. Though the subject matter of the book is taken from the history of Islam, Masārraf uses Persian-Arabic words as seldom as possible. In a total of approximately 127,000 words in Bigād Sindhu less than 100 words (excluding repetitions) are Arabic or Persian. Masārraf generally used Bengali terms in place of terms which are characteristic of the Islamic way of life. For instance, Masārraf uses 'Īsvar' for Allah (God) which is Sanskrit. No Muslim in his daily life uses the word 'Īsvar'. After the publication of the first part of Bigād Sindhu there was an adverse criticism on this point. Masārraf in the second part of Bigād Sindhu comments as follows, "the ignorant people of my community are highly displeased with me after the publication of the first part. My fault
is that I have used Bengali words in addressing the prophet and his descendants, and this is an act of great sin."\textsuperscript{18}

Udāśīn Pathiker Maner Kathā is written in simplified 'sadhu bhaṣā'. Here Maśarraf uses fewer 'tatsama' words. There are few instances of the dialectal use of some particular words which do not ordinarily occur in written Bengali, e.g. bānda in place of bādha (to bind), kānda in place of kādā (to cry). It seems that he was less careful in this and later writings. It may be due to his old age that he did not rectify his manuscripts. This sort of defect is particularly noticeable in his Gājī Mīyār Bastānī, and all other later writings including his autobiography.

This defect, one critic says, is a mark of "East Bengalism (sic)".\textsuperscript{19} As regards vocabulary Maśarraf in Gājī Mīyār Bastānī uses a number of Arabic-Persian words which were commonly used by both Hindus and Muslims, such as ukil (lawyer), moktār (less qualified lawyer or of lower court), hākīm (judge or magistrate), hujur (sir), āmlā (officer), mashur (famous), manjur (granted), darkhāsta (petition), be-ākha (a fool). Some English loan words like 'court', 'police', 'inspector',

\textsuperscript{18}Bigād Sindhu, 23rd ed., 2nd part, Ch. IV, p.303.
\textsuperscript{19}Calcutta Gazette, Appendix, 31 October 1900.
'judge', 'dismiss' are also used in this book. Masārraf uses Hindi or Urdu for the speech of a magistrate as it was a sign of aristocracy to speak in Hindi or Urdu at that time (last part of 19th century). Gāji Miyār Bastānī is written in simplified 'sadhu bhāṣā'; and there are colloquial forms in dialogues. In the matter of language and style there are differences between Ratnabātī and Gāji Miyār Bastānī, the first and last of the writings under consideration. This will be more clear below while discussing his style.7

2. STYLE

Something may be said about style in general before discussing Masārraf's style in particular. Different critics have tried in many ways to give a precise definition or description of style. The summary given here is based on Mohitlāl Majumdar's findings, and his attempts to explain the significance of style in literature.20 He says that it is accepted by the western critics that style has three different levels of meaning:

20 Mohitlāl Majumdar, Sāhitya kathā, Calcutta, 1938, pp. 240-95.
1. the peculiar mode of expression of a particular author, that is to say personal idiosyncracy of expression,

2. power of lucid exposition of a sequence of ideas,

3. complete fusion of the personal and universal.

There is however more to style than these three qualities but it is difficult to define them objectively and with precision. Majumdar says that style has to do with the mode of translating ideas into words, so that the words conform to the ideas.\(^{21}\) The Sanskrit critics described the beauty of language in the 'alapkar sastra'. The term 'alapkar' "connotes an extraordinary turn given to ordinary expression".\(^{22}\) The 'sastra' lays stress on figures of speech, rhetoric and word order. But modern critics like Majumdar and others say that these things are only the outward appearance and that there is something inner, which transcends all that is outward.

"Poetry alone can tell her dreams;
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from sable chain
And dumb enchantment."\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) Mohitlal Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p.260.


\(^{23}\) Mohitlal Majumdar, *op.cit.*, quoted in p.273.
Majumdar further comments that the language should follow the idea and he quotes this remark in English, that "every work of enduring literature is not so much a triumph of language as a victory over language". 24

In these pages an attempt has been made to describe Masarraf's language style, its beauty or grace, and his peculiar modes of expression and it will be shown how successfully his thoughts are expressed in language.

Some examples from his language will be cited here to show the figures of speech he uses, such as: similes, metaphors, personifications, alliterations, analogues. Most of the figures of speech are of the traditional type found in contemporary Bengali writing, many of them borrowed from Sanskrit. But there are cases where Masarraf uses new similes and metaphors also. In some cases these are very appropriate.

The following examples of metaphors from Ratnabati, being the first book of Masarraf, show his command over Bengali language.

1. ताहर मुखाचाँद्रमा निरिक्षण करिले हृदयांबुधि अनांदे उद्वेल हाया उथे (p.15)

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24 Mohitlal Majumdar, op. cit., p.274.
2. When I see her moon-like face, the ocean of my heart overflows with joy.

2. ḍubhka jaladhi cintābāyur pratighāte sphita haiyā ḍrday ke āghāt karite lāgila (p.58)

(The ocean of sorrow swollen by the blows of the wind of anxiety began to strike the heart.)

3. cītta bāran dhāiryānkuśe-d bāran nā māniyā sei padmini grahan karite pratijña sarobare dhābita hāiteche (p.13)

((my) heart elephant not being retained by goad of patience is running to the lake of promise to seize that lotus.)

The metaphors underlined in the foregoing examples are conventional and borrowed from Sanskrit but Ṛṣabharat has adapted them to his own writing by completing the images they suggest in words of his own. The compatibility of his own phrases 'udbel haiyā' (overflow), 'pratighāte sphita haiyā' (swollen by the blows), 'hrday ke āghāt karite' (began to strike the heart) with the conventional metaphors is proof of his own mastery of comparative imagery. There are many other similar instances in Ratnabati in which he has fitted conventional metaphor into a wider imagery of his own creation, such as 'ei subernalatāti kon bhāgyabān tarur abharan karibār abhiprāye svājan kariyāchen' (p.56). (God) has created this golden creeper with the intention of making a decoration of
which fortunate tree.7

In Bāgād Sindhu examples of his adaptation of Sanskritic metaphors are prolific. Two or three examples will suffice to illustrate his originality in the use of this figure of speech.

1. ye din Ejiēr ɲanən cakor Jaynāber mukhə candrīmār
   parimal su dhā pān kariyāche sei din Eji d Jaynāb kei,
   manapraṇ samarpan kariyā Jaynāb rūp sāgāre atma bisarjjān
   kariyāche /p.34)

The very day on which the eye-partridge of Eji d drank the fragrant nectar of moonlike face of Jaynāb (from that day) Eji d has surrendered himself in the ocean of beauty of Jaynāb, dedicating his heart and mind to her.7

The metaphors here are conventional no doubt, but he fits them into a structure which makes them as good as original ones.

Another example is given below:

1. Pratinidhīr bākya-bajrāghāte sukh svapnataru dagdhībhūta
   haila (p.29).

The dream-tree of happiness was burnt by the thunderbolt of speech.7

Here svapnataru (dream-tree) is a conventional image as is bajrāghāte (thunderbolt) but the linking of bākya (speech)
with bajrāchâte is original. The Sanskritism of two metaphors is continued in the phrase 'dagdhibhūta' (hails) which forms the predicate of the sentence.

One more example may be given:

'Yadi Jāeda sapatnir īryānale dagdhibhūta na haiten tabe ki āj Jāeda bibecanā-tula danḍer prati nirbhar kariyā sampatti-sukh samuday ek dike, ar svāmīr pranay, prān-bhinya dike jhulaiya parimān karite basiten ' (p.93)

If Jāeda had not been burnt by the fire of jealousy of a co-wife, then she could not start weighing wealth, happiness etc. on one side and love for husband and his life hanging on another side, depending on the balance of conscience.

The imagery of 'īryānale dagdhibhūta' (burned in the fire of jealousy) is a conventional type of metaphor and familiar to Bengali readers, but the association of 'bibecanā' (conscience) with 'tula danḍa' is an innovation and it makes the reader feel that the balance is suspended before him weighing a concrete with an abstract.

The foregoing examples illustrate the type of figures of comparison used by Maśārraf. He is however quite capable of adapting the same innovating technique to the purposes of
satire also. An example is given below:

'Mananiya Harṣel bahādur bhāratiya Sibhil sarbhis
ākā śe, pūrna jyoti sahakāre pūrna kalebare
pūrna candārupe dekha diyechen √39, Udāsin

Pathiker Maner Kathā

The honourable Mr. Hoerschel has appeared in the
sky of the Indian Civil Service with full brightness,
like the full body of the full moon.

The use of pūrna (full) three times strikes one as ex-
cessive but the image of the full moon in the Civil Service
sky is clear enough to make his point.

The following passage from Ratnabati illustrates
Masarraf’s skill with similes.

'Saśi simantini yāmini rāj putrer bhābē dukkhe
dukkhini haiyā gaman samaye bhāgkuler kalarabe-i
yena kārān on ebaś sīśir patanechale yena aśru bisarjjan
karite karite prasthān karilā. (p.22)

The night with moon on the parting of her hair
being depressed by the coming misfortune of the
prince laments as with the cries of bird, and
sheds tears like dewdrops falling and then goes away.

The personification of night in the phrase 'Saśi simantini
yāmini' is very suggestive. The literal translation is "night
whose hair parting is the moon. This anthropomorphic image implies that night is like the prince’s mother, the mark on forehead being the sign of a Hindu wife.

One more example of personification is given below:

\[ \text{ei danter ābhā here saudāmini abhimānī haye kādmānīr āśray layache (p. 46, Basanta Kumāri)} \]

// The lightning becomes jealous of the brightness of her teeth and takes refuge in the cloud. //

The above metaphor contains a personification of lightning (saudāmini).

He is not always however successful with personified metaphors. The following example from Biṣad Sindhu is overweighted with imagery and the total effect is obscurity.

\[ \text{‘svārtha prasābinī garbhabati āsa yatadin santān prasab nā kāre, tatadin āsa jībī loker sāmāta manasākāse īṣṭacandrēr uday haynā’ (p.171)} \]

// As long as hope pregnant with selfishness does not give birth to its offspring, so long will the moon not rise in the ...... sky of mind of a man who lives by hope. //</p>

The metaphors are here definitely strained and one is at a loss to know what he meant to convey by the word ‘sāmāta’ which ordinarily means ‘performed’ or ‘regular’, neither meaning
being suitable to the present context.

Sometimes Maṣarraf uses excessive similes. The following example will show this.

'huṭāsāner dāhan āśā, dharanīr jal śoṣan āśā, bhikharīr arthalabh āśā, caḳsur darśan āśā ghāḥhīr ṯuṇabhakṣan āśā, dhaniker dhan bṛiddhir āśā, premiker premer āśā, samrāṭer rājya bistār āśa yeman nibūtti nāi, himṣāpurna pāphādaye duraśārā temni nibūtti nāi - iti nāi (p. 407, B.S.)

As the desire of fire to burn, the desire of earth to dry up, the desire of a beggar to get money, the desire of eyes to watch, the desire of a cow to eat grass, the lust of a wealthy man to accumulate wealth, the hope of a lover to secure love, and the desire of an emperor to extend his empire has no end so the evil desire of an evil mind full of vices has no cessation, no end of it.7

Here a comparison has been drawn between 'the evil desire' and eight different things.

Some examples of Maṣarraf's use of alliteration may be given:
1. Kumudini kānta birahi malinī haiẏā sajiẏe dubila
   (p.48, Ratnavatī)
   [The water-lily being gloomy in the absence of her husband (i.e. moon) plunged into water.]
   Repetitions of 'ka' and 'la'.

2. tīyār candra tār laḷātēr samatul hate pārenā
   (p. 46, Basanta Kumāri)
   [Even the moon of the third lunar day is not (beautiful) like her forehead.]
   Repetitions of 'la' and 'la'.

Occasionally he plays on words, as the reference to the word 'bāran' in the following sentence illustrates.

'cittabāran dhairyyānkuṣe-o bāran na māniẏā
sei padmī grahan karite...etc.'

Here first 'bāran' means 'elephant' and the second means 'restraint'.

Lastly something may be said about the ample use of proverbs that Masarrat used in his various writings, particularly in Gājī Miẏār Bastānī and Udāsīn Pathiker Maner Kathā. Proverbs are short and pointed sayings sometimes having a witty end. These are oral tradition which are found in written literature also. Bhāratcandra Raygunākar during the 18th century used some witty remarks in his poetical work Annadāmangal Kābya
Masarrat also uses some proverbs to express the ideas more precisely and emphatically. Some of these are given below:

1. basanter koki, sukher paγra (G.M.B., p.9)
   "Of spring cuckoo, of happiness pigeon"
   (A full purse never lacks friends.)

2. nācte base ghōmta ki (ibid., p.16)
   "Dancing veil what"
   (No modesty while dancing.)

3. āj hāte soṇa kāl hāte chāi (ibid., p.19)
   "Today in hand gold tomorrow in hand ashes."
   (Respect today, humiliation tomorrow.)

4. śatru mukh ār pāgaler jihbā dui samān (p.18, U.P.M.K.)
   "Of enemy mouth and of madman tongue both equal"
   (The speech (mouth) of an enemy and the tongue of a madman are equally (dangerous)).

5. ek gācher bākal anya gāche lágenā (p.24, ibid.)
   "One of tree bark another in tree do not fit."
   (The bark of one kind of tree does not fit into another.)

However these are the proverbs which are of traditional type, but it seems that some of them were used for the first time in Bengali prose writing. Here are some illustrations:

1. strīloker man rāj dhānir kella athābā yadhūghar (p. 346, G.M.B.)
Of woman mind of capital fort or museum
(A woman's heart is like a fort of a capital
town or like a museum.)

2. dayār hāt bistār, nirddayer hāt saṅkoc. (p.42, ibid.)
(Of kindness hand spread, of unkind hand contracted.)

(A kind man gives generously while an unkind man
is a miser.)

Masārraf's dramatic style needs particular mention.
Only two of Masārraf's dramas are available, but it can be
shown that Masārraf has shown skill in giving life to the
dramatic personae. He makes them real and living by putting
language into their mouths which suits them individually.

In his first drama Basanta Kumārī, kings, princes,
courtiers, peasants, all appear. But all of them use a
different style, their vocabulary reveals whether the speaker
is a peasant or a prince. All of them use the 'calit' or
colloquial pronominal and verbal forms, but the language
of kings or ministers is more Sanskritic in vocabulary and
more metaphorical in style and their sentences, longer

in construction.

King Birendra, even when he is in a light mood and
passing his leisure time with the jester speaks a language
which apart from verbs and pronouns is markedly Sanskritic.
In the following extract he is describing the beauty of the royal garden.

'ei basantakāle udyanastha sarobare kamalāmala
dhan bhangite prosphujita haye nayaner priti
sadhan karche. Pupper madhugandhe udyan k enam
āmodita hayeche.' (Basanta Kumāri, p.17)

In the spring how elegantly are the lotuses blossoming in the garden lake. They give pleasure to the eyes. The garden is made delightful by the sweet scent of flowers.

The feature of this style is that the king uses scholarly in preference to simple words: kamal instead of padma (lotus), nayan instead of cokh (eye). The minister of King Bireshendra uses verbal phrases, such as agaman karechen instead of ese echhen (has come). Prince Narendra uses gaman kari instead of vai (I go).

King Bireshendra uses metaphors while admiring the beauty of the queen. He compares the queen with nabakali (new bud), sudhākar (moon), and he particularly mentions the beauty of her eyes, eyebrows, forehead, teeth, and hair, and compares them with kurangini (deer), rāmdhanu (rainbow), triśīr candra (moon of the third lunar day), saudamini (lightning) and kādambini (cloud) respectively.
Birendra's emotional speech is in high flown language: 're duratma re kulantara tui ekhano amar samrukhe darye aches? tui na pandita hayechili ... tor etabara asparddha ..... ei asi dvara svahaste-i tor mastak chedan kartem, ta korbona... tor sonitakta sir mritikay lunthita haye ki Indrapurer gaurab lop karbe ' (p.117)
\(\Delta\) (thou art) O rogue! A disgrace to my family. Still thou art standing in front of me, is it that you were a scholar? What great audacity!

... I would behead you with this sword by my own hand, but I do not want your blood-stained head to fall on the ground and make extinct the glory of Indrapur.\(\therefore\)

The words like duratma (rogue), kulantara (disgrace to one's family), samrukhe (in front of), asi (sword) and the verbal forms chedan kartam (I would cut), lunthita haye (fallen) are not ordinarily used in spoken Bengali.

One more example of extreme emotion is expressed in the last speech of Birendra. Before his death Birendra's style is simple and more colloquial.

'hay hay ei agune pure amar Birendra mareche...
Amar Narendra dao, Pranadhik Narendra, niraparadhi
siu, amar Narendракe phiriye dao, Narendra,
amar kole ay, amar pran gela... amar Narendra,
eso kole kari ' (p.126)
\[Alas! alas! my Narendra is dead, burnt in this
fire... give me back my Narendra, Narendra dearer
than life, an innocent child, give me back my
Narendra, Narendra come back to my arms. My life
is going to be finished, .... My Narendra come to
my arms.\]

Except for the above passage the style of Birendra, Narendra
and the Minister is markedly Sanskritised.

In the same book there are examples in which language
is as simple as that used in the day-to-day speech of ordinary
Bengalis. The following passage from Basanta Kumari, being simple
in vocabulary and style, makes every action and gesture of the
peasants lively. The dialogues are witty too.
\[From Basanta Kumari, Act I, Sc. 3.\]

1 praja
bali o beyai, raja beta buru kale biye kore
okebare yacche tai haye geche. rat din antapure-i
thake .... yete aste payer nala chire gela....
eman magi-pagli rajar rajye thakte ache?
2 prajā Ohe tumi bujhte pāroni, rājā ki sādhe o
rakam hayechen? rājā buro, rani kācā ekebāre
bhera beniye diyeche, kāje-i pagal hayechen,
buro bayase biye kalā sakaleri ai daśa hay, tumio
ta kichu kichu bujho/

1 prajā eta nā

2 prajā barā loke ār choṭa loke anek taphāt.

1 prajā āre bhāi thāma. ... barā mānuser doṅ nāi,
āmāder choṭa loker ghare hale dhāke dhole kati
bajto/

prajā yubarājer jayhok mamdor pratī ore māndo,
tui kichu ceye ne nā āmā der sāne ta tor
khaoyā colbenā/

Narendra Ore tui ki musalman?

Māndo (bhave bhave kāpīte kāpīte) doi Allār. Mui hēdu/

1 peasant Listen 0 beyāi (son's or daughter's father-in-law)
The king has gone to dogs since he married at an
old age. He stays days in and days out in the harem. ... The veins of my legs are torn .... one should not live
in a kingdom of such a henpecked king.

2 peasant 0 you could not understand, how the King has turned
such a silly man. The King is an old man while the
Queen is quite young, so she has made him a fool
(as a lamb), so he has become a madman. If anybody
marries in an old age he is sure to be in such a state. I think you also understand to some extent.

1 peasant Not so much.

2 peasant There are difference between a rich man and a poor man.

1 peasant O brother, hold for a moment, the rich cannot commit any crime, if such a thing occurred with the poor, like us, then it would get a wide publicity (by beating a big drum).

peasants Hail to thee O prince (to Māmdo) Hello, Māmdo, you better ask for something from the prince. You can't take food with us.

Narendra Is it that you are a Muslim?

Māmdo (trembling in fear) By Allāh. I am a Hindu.

The simplicity of the style is evident from the vocabulary.

Jamīdar Darpan, the second drama of Masārraf, is written entirely in colloquial style. Only in one or two scenes are there passages in 'sādhu' style. The officials of court, judge, clerks, lawyers, police, use 'sādhu' language. One sentence in the report of a police inspector is exceedingly long. (Act III, Sc.2) and written in 'sādhu bhāga'. However Masārraf uses fewer Sanskritic words in the book.
A short scene from Jamīdār Darpan is quoted below to show Masārraf's skill in creating lively peasant scenes.

From Jamīdār Darpan, Act III, Sc. 1

pratham caṣā e ġay ār bāstabbī haynā. gela nā,
ore dhare niye ei kanīṭa kareche,
Jamīdār bahut āche, anek jamīdarer nām-o
śunechi, erā yeman bābā/

dvi. ca māmuji, ki nakame mālle?
pr. ca āmi ki dekhte gichi?

dvi. ca bujichi bujhichi, O byāta bara śaytan.
banduk hāte kare thik sājer bela āmag er bārīr
pāch duyar diye bārīr maddio āse.... O māmuji
ai saheb (palaite udyat)

Inspector khāṇa rao, kāhā yātā hāy?
pr. ca. kartta, āmra kichu jaṇine/

pr. ca kartta āmra musalman, mara manuṣ chūte
parbbonā, āmader jāt yābe, e kām āmader nay/
pr. kan. (Mūṣṭhaghāt kariyā) ne sālā, sūr ki bācca,
lās ne/

dv. ca. ei nischi

1st cultivator It is difficult to live in this village any more.
(she) did not go, (she) was taken forcibly,
and so such a thing happened. There are more
zemindars. We have heard the names of so many zemindars, but these are 0 Heaven.

2nd  Hello, maternal uncle, how (she) was killed.
1st  I did not go to see.

2nd  Well I have understood, that man is very wicked as a devil, he used to wander about the rear of our house, with a gun in his hand, sometimes he enters into the arena of our house by the back door ... O dear maternal uncle, there comes an officer.

Inspector  Halt! Where do you go?
1st  Our Lord, we know nothing.

1st  Our Lord, we are Muslim, we cannot touch a dead body.

2nd  We will be then outcast, sir. I can't do that.

1st constable  What you can't do that. You must (holding by the neck) 0, sala (brother-in-law, sala, a derogatory term in Bengal) hold it, come on, carry the dead body.

2nd cult.  No sir, we can't do that, you may beat us, or do whatever you like, but still we can't, we will be outcast, moreover this is not our job.
1st constable (giving a blow with his fist). Well, sāla, son of a pig, carry the dead body.

2nd cult. Well sir, we are ready.

The language used by the cultivators makes them real. Their cowardly nature is shown in the fear caused by the appearance of the police official. They showed courage first by not agreeing to carry the dead body, but finally they were cowed by the violence of the police.

Masārraf's wit and humour are seen in his drama Basanta Kumāri. In it a clown talks to the king in jest.

'Āpār cul pekeche? Kai? Āmi to ekṭio pāka
dekhte pāna/ Ekṭi-o kāla hay nāi, yeman sāda
temni dhab dhab karche/ tabe āpni biye korbennā kena?'

(p.21)

[Your hair has turned grey. Has it? O no! I do not see a single grey hair. Not a single hair has turned black. They are as white as anything. Then why should you not marry.]

This language may seem to us to be nonsense but we should not forget that here Masārraf is trying to create an atmosphere of fun and merriment. Another extract from the speech of the same clown shows that he does not always speak nonsense.

'phul dekhle man khuśi e-o ki kono kājer kathā
hū. peṭ bhare ḍhārtī na karle ḍhār ṭūko ḍhār
dekho kichute-i man suki nan/ dekhun ei, udar, ini
pūrna thākle phul na sukle-o man khusi hay, tabe
raja rajaṛ man keman balte pārīna.' (p.16)

'It is not a useful saying that the heart becomes
glad when somebody sees a flower. If someone does not
eat a full meal then his heart is not full of joy —
even though he smells or sees a thousand flowers.

Listen, this stomach, if it is full, then mind is
satisfied even if it does not smell a flower, however,
I do not understand what goes on in the minds of kings./

An extract from the speech of village women contains
a witty remark about the king who married for the second time
during his old age.

'cok thākle ki habe? man ye ekhano ḍhāgūyi dev
tāta āge-i balechi' (p.29)

'It matters little, though he has eyes. I said earlier
that his mind is still crawling on hands and knees.
(i.e. like a young child).

Similar witty remarks are found in Jamīdār Darpan also

Dvitiya Mosāheb. āmi e ḍhārṭhok kichui bujhte pārīne/
Hāvyān Āli. bujhbeki? ājo ye gaḷ āitle dudh pare/
Dvitya. dudh pare tāte kṣati nāi, hujur kintu
bujhe calben, sēge caṭser jāl nā pare/
takhan ār thare thore balā calbēna... pyac ghāṭāte
sakale pāre kintu myāo dharār belay keu nei/

(Act I., Sc. 2)

Second companion. I can't understand these signs in, alī.

Hayojān alī. Why should you understand? Even now, if
your cheek is squeezed milk drops from it. (That
is to say still you are a baby.)

S.C. It matters little, if milk drops... but sir be mindful
see that you don't shed tears in the end, then you
won't be able to talk by signs.... everyone can create
trouble but there is no one "to bell the cat".

So far we have discussed the figures of speech used
by Masarrāf in his prose writings and dramas. The discussion
of his style would remain incomplete if nothing were said
about the rhythm of his prose, particularly of Bijād Sindhu.
Prose has also its rhythms or patterns of movements which en-
hance its beauty and turns a prosaic prose into an elegant or
poetic prose. As said by Professor Saintsbury, "verses or parts
of verses which present themselves to the ear as such are
strictly to be avoided in prose; but such as break themselves
into prose adjustment are permissible, and even strengthen and
sweeten the 'numerous' character very much."25

Masarraf's prose is well balanced in respect of its division of groups of words and syllables. The example is given here from the beginning of Beṣad Sindhu.

'tumi āmar ekmaṭra putra || ei atul bibhab ||
subistṛta rājya || ebaṇ asaṃkhyya sainya ||
samanta sakali tokār || Dāmeska nājmukuta ||
aeire tokārī śire sōbhā pāibre || ......
balata tokār kiser abhāb? || ki manastāp? ||
āmi ta bhābiya || kichhua sthir karite paritechina ||'

You are my only son. These immense wealth, this great kingdom and innumerable soldiers and fighters all belong to you. The royal crown of Damascus will decorate your head very soon...

Then will you say what do you want? What is your heart-burning? I am unable to find the reason of it.

The rhythm of the prose will be well understood if the piece is read aloud. The intonation or variation of pitch of voice of the above passage is given below:

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The lines quoted above are well marked by a high tone and a stress in each group of words, and a low fast transition in each group from stress to stress.

Some more examples of sentences can be given. The sentences are rhythmic and the movement of the sentences makes them vivid.

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śakti rahita haibe ḍudhā pipāsāy katar

haiyā paribe sei samay ekṭu biśrām karic kintu

bisram hetu ye samayṭu ku apabyay haibe biśrāmer

par dvīgun bege caliyā tāhā paripūrna karibe

/Ś.S., p. 29/
The traveller was running as fast as his legs could carry him. There was no pause, there was no rest for a moment. Ejid secretly instructed him, when you are excessively tired, you will be bereft of power for movement, when you will be exhausted out of hunger and thirst, then only you take a little rest, you should make up the loss (of time) you wasted due to rest, by doubling the speed.

One more example may be given.

\[ \text{artha? hāyre artha? hāyre pātaki artha} \]

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\[ \text{tui jagater sakal anarther mūl} \]

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\[ \sqrt{3} \]
Wealth? oh wealth? Oh sinful wealth? thou art the root of all evils of the world.

The intonation is gliding up after each quotation, the pitch is from high to level and low to level.

The first sentence is a one-word sentence, then a two-word sentence, then a three-word sentence, and then gradually the number of words increase. The speed of utterance is accelerated by each addition of word. All the four sentences could be framed in one construction but then the beauty of the style would have been lost.

Many more similar patterns could be quoted from Nasarraf's writings.
CHAPTER VII

BENGAL SOCIETY AS REVEALED IN MASĀRRAF'S WRITINGS

From various writings of Masārraf we can form an idea of his time and age. He was born in 1847 and in his autobiography he describes some of the social customs and beliefs of that period. He also describes some events of his grandfather's and father's lives and his source for this information was his maternal grandmother who knew something of his family history. For this reason he was able to describe the social conditions from the beginning of the 19th century. Our sources of information are mainly his autobiography, Āmar Jīvanī, Bibi Kulsum, his wife's biography, and Udasīn Pathiker Maner Kathā, a biography of his parents. This information is supplemented by Gajī Mīr Barrānī, and Jamīdar Darpan.

The following aspects of Bengal society are depicted:

a) education;

b) the life of the Muslim zemindars;

c) popular beliefs and customs;

d) the status of women in society, including 'sati' in Hindu society, widow remarriage among Hindus, the Muslim marriage system;
e) peasant discontent, particularly with reference to indigo cultivation;

f) Hindu-Muslim relations and mutual influence;

g) the structure of Muslim society including the caste system among Muslims, dowry on marriage, slavery, and conversion to Christianity.

a) Education

A description of village schools given in the autobiography gives a picture of the system of indigenous learning in Bengal. Masruraf writes that when he was four years four months four days old he took part in a ceremony known among Muslims as 'takti'¹ and by Hindus as 'hate khari'. The ceremony involves giving to the child a slate and a slate pencil. William Adam in his report on "the State of Education in Bengal"² refers to the ceremony as follows:

"When a child, whether a boy or a girl, is four years, four months and four days old, the friends of the family assemble, and the child is dressed in his best clothes, brought in to the company, and seated on a cushion in the presence of all. The alphabet, the form of letters used for computation, the Introduction to the Koran, some verses of chapter LV, and the

¹Amar Jiban, pt. IV, p.102.

²William Adam, a missionary and an educationist was appointed by the Government to survey and report on the state of Education in Bengal. Accordingly he submitted to the Governors General of India his "Report on the State of Education in Bengal between 1533 and 1538 and the total number of reports submitted by him was three."
whole of chapter LXXXVII are placed before him, and he is taught to pronounce them in succession. If the child is self-willed and refuses to read, he is made to pronounce the Bismillāh, which answers every purpose, and from that day his education is deemed to have commenced."

After the ceremony of 'takti' Masārraf joined a 'pāthsālā', a village school usually run by one teacher. His schooling began first with four consonants of Bengali alphabets, Ka, kha, ga, gha. The first writing was done with a finger on the ground, later a plantain leaf was used. When the class had gone as far as conjunct letters they were allowed to write on palm leaves. The arithmetic tables were recited from an early age. These included a monetary table known as 'kaṛakiyā'. In time pupils were promoted to writing on paper and finally they learnt to write accounts, letters, petitions, deeds etc. This stage is the end of 'pāthsālā' training and a successful student would expect an appointment as Muhuri (clerk).

Masārraf tells us that his Bengali teacher Jagamohan Nandi who conducted a 'pāthsālā' in the adjacent village was asked by Masārraf's father to move his 'pāthsālā' to their

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4 Amar Jibani, p.103.
house. This he did. It appears that Maṣarraf had two other tutors, one for Arabic and the other for Persian. These Arabic-Persian teachers generally known by the name of Munsī saheb' are described as being experts with the cane.⁵

Maṣarraf's description of his own education is in conformity with the report of William Adam.

"Not only are printed books not used in these schools, but even manuscript textbooks are unknown. All that the scholars learn is from the oral dictation of the master; and although what is so communicated must have a firm seat in the memory of the teacher, and will probably find an equally firm seat in the memory of the scholar, yet instruction conveyed solely by such means must have a very limited scope. The principal written composition which they learn in this way is the 'Saraswati Bandana', or salutation to the Goddess of Learning, which is committed to memory by frequent repetition, and is daily recited by the scholars in a body before they leave school, all kneeling with their heads bent to the ground, and following a leader or monitor in the pronunciation of the successive lines or couplets..... The only other written composition used in these schools, and that only in the way of oral dictation by the master, consists of a few of the rhyming arithmetical rules of Subhānkār...."⁶

Maṣarraf gives a description of 'Sarasvati Bandana' in his autobiography like this: "We used to lie face down

⁵Āmar Jībanī, pp. 103-104.

⁶Adam's second report, p.17.
with a pen under our foreheads, and begin to recite a
verse Nandi Mahaśāya taught us:

"Victory (hail) to the goddess in the manifestation of
Stationary and moving objects,
A pearl necklace shines on your bosom,
A painted book and a violin are in your hands,
I salute thee 0 glorious Goddess Bharatī,
Thou art Sarasvatī. Your colour is pure,
Your ear-rings are decorated with jewels." 7

As regards literacy in Bengal, Adam gives a figure
which shows "the number of families in which the children
receive occasional instruction in reading and writing from
parents or friends". In the appendix of the second report
Adam gives detailed statistics. From that Appendix a summary
of the table is quoted here.

Total number of families in the Nattore sub-
division of Rajshahi district:

Hindus 10,095 )  
Muslims 19,933 ) 30,028

The number of families in which the children
receive instruction in reading and writing:

Hindus 1,277 ) 1,588
Muslims 311)
From this figure and other information supplied by Adam the picture of the educational system, the percentage of literacy among Muslims and Hindus in Bengal can easily be found. In Calcutta, the then capital city of India, there were institutions where English or western education was given, but in rural arrears there were no schools where English was taught or western education was given. In big towns like Dacca, Hoogly, Krishnanagar, there were arrangements for higher education including English language and science. It is also seen from the 'Despatches' of the East India Company from 1854–60 that there were proposals for establishing colleges, universities, and a separate Department of Education. Accordingly English schools and colleges were established in different parts of Bengal and a University at Calcutta was founded. Government aid to private schools was increased and more officials were engaged.

(jay jay debi cara cara sar,
kua yuge sobhe muktar hare/
bina ranjit pustak haste,
bhagabati bharati debi namaste /
tvam sarasvati nirmal baran,
ratna bibhushita kundal karan /

(Āmar Jābani, p.106)

It seems that there are certain mistakes in the text given by Masārraf. The first line should be "carācar sāre", and the corresponding second line should be "kuc juga šobhita muktar hare".

(cont.)
for proper supervision of the government and non-government schools. The Hindus took the opportunity of getting western education which made them more fit for public service and better placement in society. The Muslims in general were averse to western education for political, religious, and economic reasons. The Muslims had been suspicious about accepting western education, since the administrative rule of India had passed into the hands of English from the Muslim rulers. As a result of the non-acceptance of western education by the Muslims they lagged behind the Hindus.8

The Indian Musalmans written by W. W. Hunter9 gives a vivid picture of Muslims in India, particularly of Bengal, in respect of education. Hunter comments "our system of public instruction is opposed to the traditions and hateful to religion of the Musalmans".10

Masarraf11 in his autobiography writes of the attitude of the Muslims towards (western) English education.


9W. W. Hunter, The Indian Musalmans: Are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Qeem?, London 1871.

10Ibid., p.174.
"A school to teach English has been established at Kumarkhalli, it is about six miles away from our house. But it is an act of sin if anyone learns English. at the time of death the dying man will not utter the name of Allah (God) or Rasul (Prophet). Moreover the elderly, superiors, and relatives, believe that if anybody learns English he becomes a sort of devil. He drinks wine, passes water standing, cuts his hair short, wears European dress, takes food with forks and knives, does not say prayers and does not fast, becomes impertinent, loses all signs of politeness. My grandmother believes that the boy (Masarraf) will be converted into Christianity and marry an European Christian girl...... and will have no faith in Islam."11

In English schools there was no provision for Islamic teaching. This is also evident from Hunter's earlier remarks,12 and a similar statement by Masarraf in his autobiography, "We studied long, but we do not find the name of God or Prophet anywhere, nor do we hear it from anybody's mouth not even from our teachers, rather we find in English books the names of pigs."13

11 Amar Jibani, p.164.

12 "The truth is that our system of public instruction, which has awakened the Hindus from the sleep of centuries, and quickened their inert masses with some of the noble impulses of a nation, is opposed to the traditions, unsuited to the requirement, and hateful to the religion, of the Musalmans." The Indian Musalmans, p.174. See also p.249 of this thesis.

As regards female education Nasirraf writes in Gaji Miyar Bastani, chapter XI,

"...for Muslim woman there is no provision for education and learning... if we take the case of ordinary women from the viewpoint of their intelligence and power of reasoning it is found that there are no women as backward, simple and ignorant as Muslim women. At an early age female infants play with dust, but soon they grow older and then they are held captive till their marriage."14

Regarding Sona Bibi, an important character of the book, Nasirraf writes,

"Sona Bibi is more than forty years old. When her husband was alive she learnt to say prayers five times a day, and a few verses of the Holy Koran as required in saying prayers. She knows the three-storeyed building where she lives and the compound walls, domestic animals and birds like ducks, hens, dogs, cats. Among the plants she knows onions, chillis, brinjal etc. As regards education she can with difficulty sign her name, but even in that case the right place on the paper for signature must be shown to her, and the pen from the inkpot must be given to her in right manner..."15

It is beyond doubt that Muslim women received no school education during those days. The report of Indian Education Commission of 1882 gives a similar picture. To quote the evidence given by one Syed Amir Hosain before the

15 Ibid., ch. XI, p.139.
Indian Education Commission,

"Among the girls of Muhammadan of the lower classes there is no education to speak of. Muhammadan girls of the upper and middle classes are taught reading the Koran and simple religious books and needlework in their own zenanas, but they seldom learn to write. The number of leading and representative Muhammadans who are in favour of female education in public schools may be counted in one's fingers."\(^{16}\)

In the same report of Education Commission statistics are given to show that only one in 568 females can read or write.\(^{17}\)

A table is also given in the same report showing the percentage of Hindu and Muslim pupils in secondary schools. In Bengal the percentage of Hindus is 86.55, and that of Muslims is 11.93.\(^{18}\) No separate statistics are available showing Hindu female pupils and Muslim females. However, these figures speak for themselves as regards the backwardness of Muslims, of both sexes, in the field of learning, since half of the total population of Bengal was Muslim.


\(^{17}\) Ibid., pp. 529, 27.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 226, Ch. 5.
Masárraf tells us that his father could not write Bengali though he could read it. An Arabic-Persian teacher (munsi) could not write Bengali either. Masárraf's father's education in the Bengali language gives us a hint of the attitude of Muslims towards learning Bengali. Hunter writes of "the vernacular of Bengal, a language which the educated Muhammadans despise". Hunter's remark to a certain extent is true, particularly the upper class Muslims of Lower Bengal (Hunter uses this term, by it he meant Dacca, Faridpur and Eastern Bengal) used to cultivate Persian or Urdu. And the spoken language of Musalman was full Persian or Urdu, words and phrases. Hunter termed the "patience" as "Musalman Bengali".

The attitude of Muslim intelligentsia towards learning Bengali may also be gathered from the evidence given by Nabab Abdul Latif before the Education Commission. He says,

"... primary instruction for the lowest classes of the people who for the most part are ethnically allied to Hindus should be in Bengali language, purified however from the superstructure of Sanskritism of learned Hindus and supplemented by the numerous words of Arabic and Persian origin which are current in every day speech. For the middle and upper classes of Muhammadans Urdu should be recognised as the vernacular."

20. Ibid., p.103.
22. Ibid., p.152.
However in the official records of Government of India and Bengal, it is found that they wanted that Bengali should be used by Muslims in public instruction. "In Bengal it would not be desirable to encourage the Mahomedans to look to oriental languages for higher education. The vernacular language is generally Bengalee, not Hindustani far less Coordoo."  

Muslim children as is seen in the case of Nasárraf used to begin their education by learning Arabic and Persian, since every Muslim from peasant to prince ought to say his daily prayers in Arabic, the sacred language of the Holy Koran. Nasárraf however states that the professional priests, mollahs, who earned their livelihood by reciting the Koran, did not know even the meaning of the Koran.

b) The life of the Muslim zamindars

Licentiousness was prevalent among the zamindars (landlords) of Bengal in the 19th century. Nasárraf in his

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24 From a letter of C. Bernard, Secretary to Government of Bengal, to Secretary of Government of India (1872), Selections from the Records of the Government of India. (The Education of the Muhammadan community). No. CCV, 1886, p.173.

25 *Amar Jībanī*, p.102.

autobiography describes the life of his cousin, a Nabāb and a zamindar, who indulges in all sorts of immoral activities. In his drama Jamīdar Darpan, Masārraf describes the life of a debauched landlord. These landlords were luxurious and lazy. To quote Masārraf’s words "they feel too tired to chew their food". They passed most of their time in enjoying dances, music and the companionship of women. Besides the slave girls they had concubines. Masārraf gives a brief account of one of his cousin’s concubines in his autobiography. In the prologue of the drama Jamīdar Darpan, these landlords are described as beasts.

"They do not have four legs and a tail; they dress themselves nicely and take fine rice. They sit on a very deep cushion and their flatterers sit around them like dogs.... God has given them hands and feet but all are useless to them; they can’t walk, .... they have fingers, but they can’t eat.... as servants help them and chew the food for them."

In Gāji Miyār Bastānī, Masārraf portrays the lives of some women zamindars. The Begum Sāheb of Gāji Miyār Bastānī

28 Jamīdar Darpan, prologue.
29 Amar Jībānī, p. 187.
30 Jamīdar Darpan, prologue.
poses as a very rich woman, and this was the attitude of a landlord to pretend to be rich and sometimes they spent money only for vanity.

It is also found that there was rivalry among landlords of Bengal. The book *Gājī Miyaṛ Bastānī* tells the story of rivalry between two Muslim zamindars. There is a reference to a clash between the employees of one zamindar and the other, both parties claiming the rights of realising revenues from the peasants.

c) **Popular beliefs and customs**

Village people in those days believed in supernaturalism, spirits and ghosts. Masarraf's description of the origin of the river Gaurī which flowed past the native village of Masarraf is an example of belief in supernaturalism held by Bengali people in the 19th century. A Brahmin's maid-servant, Gaurī by name, was the goddess Gangā in disguise. When the Brahmin recognised her she disappeared and water issued from her body forming the river Gaurī. The people of the area,

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32 *Amar Ḫibanī* (the unfinished portion of *G.M.B.*), pp. 142-43.


34 *Amar Ḫibanī*, p.76-81.
and Masarraf too, believed that the water of the river Gauri was a panacea for incurable diseases.

While discussing the evil influences of spirits, Masarraf gives a classification of ghosts, known to the people at that time. These evil spirits are grouped according to their origin: such as, when a cow died and turned into a ghost it was known as 'godān', and when a Brahmin died and turned into a ghost it was termed as 'brahma daitya' and low caste people including 'cāṅgal' and rogues were 'duṣṭa bhuta' and when a woman was converted into a spirit she is called a 'pretni' or 'petni'. Not only Hindus, Muslims are also converted into spirits. Lower class people among Muslims, when converted into spirits were known as 'māndo', 'tāllu', 'kāllu', 'lelū', 'bhutuya' etc. Even some women were converted into jainī before their death. Besides, these Muslims believed in the existence of 'jen', 'parv' etc. (said to be originated from fire). Masarraf also refers to some spirits, known as 'pṛcpāci', who were inimical to young children. Masarraf describes the activities of those spirits during confinement and childbirth.

\[35\] Amār Jībanī, p. 47.
\[36\] Ibid., pp. 93-98.
\[37\] Ibid., p. 98, vide, page 26 of this thesis.
Masarraf himself was fond of magic and incantations. He describes in the 11th and 12th parts of his autobiography how Latifa, his first love, was treated when under the influence of evil spirits. An 'ojha' or 'rojā' (one who cast out evil spirits by means of charms, an exorcist) was called. Before he read some mantras he kept some incense, china roses, rice, green plantain, ripe bananas, green cocoanut, a skull, bones of a cančal (low caste Hindu), a piece of bone of a bastard, near the patient and covered the place by a screen. Within a few minutes a spirit, invisible to the spectators present, appeared and his voice was heard.\(^{38}\) The spirit who was cross-examined by the 'ojha' told that the disease was incurable and she had to die. Accidentally she died within eight days. Masarraf himself tried in vain to cure Latifa by applying oil purified by mantras.\(^{39}\)

In Gají Miyər Bastani the belief in supernaturalism is found in the attempt of Sonā Bibi to try to reconcile herself with her own son who had turned hostile to her after his marriage, by the help of a 'guruji' (preceptor) who

\(^{38}\) Āmar Jibani, pp. 391-396.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., p.395.
practised charms (mantras). Guruji sat in meditation in a lonely room and arrows were thrown to a small statue which resembled Sonā Bibi's son. Sonā Bibi also sought help from a woman snake charmer (bedeni) who could join two leaves of a tree simply by clapping of hands.

In Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā it is found that the mother of Daultannesā offered 'sinni' (sweet, in the name of God) for the recovery of her daughter from a fatal disease.

In Jamīdar Darpan, professional Muslim Mollās offer sweets at a tomb of a pir (a spiritual leader).

People in those days were much aware of ill omens. They thought it unlucky if they saw somebody sneezing when they set out on a journey, or if they saw a lizard.

d) The status of women

As regards the status of women it may be said that they were under the domination of men. Wives were required

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40 C.M.B., ch. XVIII, p.309.
41 Ibid., Ch. XVIII, p.311.
42 Ibid., ch. XVIII, p.310.
43 Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā, p.183.
44 Jamīdar Darpan, Act III, Sc. 3, p.60.
45 Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā, p.45.
to respect and adore their husbands whatever their disposition. Masarraf comments, "a husband is like a God to an Indian woman".\textsuperscript{46} Generally speaking the women had little or no freedom even in their domestic life. They had no say in any matters and husbands could inflict any punishment on them. In \textit{Udasin Pathiker Maner Kathā} Mrs. Kenny, an Englishwoman, remarks that Indian or Bengali women are beaten by their husbands.\textsuperscript{47} Though Masarraf gives no such instance in his works, it may be assumed that women had very little freedom, and disobedience on their part was not tolerated by their husbands.

Both in the Hindu or Muslim society, marriage had to be arranged by the guardians or parents of the bride and bridegroom, and the bride had no choice or say in matters of marriage. In \textit{Gajñ Miyar Bastani} one of the female characters says, "our marriage is not at all happy, it brings misery, because it is a game of chance. I don't know if two women among a hundred are happy in conjugal life."\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Udasin Pathiker Maner Kathā}, p.104-5.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.}, p.97.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Gajñ Miyar Bastani}, ch. XVII, pp.286-88.
Women were secluded behind the veil, particularly in the upper class. But it may be presumed that in the lower class women who used to work might go outside and not observe purdah. However Masarraf seemed to have deplored the non-observance of purdah by Muslim ladies. In Gaji Miyar Bastani Masarraf made sarcastic remarks on Begam Saheb, who used to mix with male officers, lawyers and doctors of the town.\textsuperscript{49} The entire book is a satire on such women of high society.

Masarraf incidentally gives an account of the Muslim marriage system in order to make it clear to non-Muslim readers.\textsuperscript{50} There are two aspects of Muslim marriage system. One relates to the principles laid down by religion, which are strictly followed by Muslims of all countries and for all ages, another to local customs. For a Muslim marriage to be religiously valid there must be one proposer and one witness who testify that the bride has accepted the formal proposal of marriage. When the bride says, "I agree..." then the bridegroom also should say, "I agree to marry so and so the daughter of so and so..." A fixed amount of money,
'moharāna', is also agreed upon by the bridegroom, to be paid to the bride. In fact it is never paid, however in case of divorce the bride can demand it.

Before the marriage is celebrated, according to law none is allowed to see the bride, but it is difficult to ascertain whether a bridegroom is allowed to see the bride since the authorities differ. An orthodox Muslim contends that it is not permissible to see a woman who is not related to him. Masārraf himself belonged to orthodox society. So when he married he was not allowed to see the bride. It seems that he was unsympathetic to such a system. He states that he wrote a critical essay in Sambad Prabhākar on the Muslim marriage system.51

Masārraf tells us of a custom of viewing the bride through a mirror just after the marriage is formally celebrated. The bride and bridegroom are brought together in an inner room, and a mirror is placed before them. Then both of them look at the mirror and see each other. This is known as ' Mukhdarān'52 (also known as 'cār caśmi', four eyes.)

Other practices like entertaining guests or musical performances or giving presents etc. are purely optional and

51 Amār Jībānī, pp. 375-6.
52 Ibid., p.367.
There is no bar against widow remarriage in Muslim society, but religious sanction is that a widow must wait ('eddah') for a certain period of time\(^53\) after the death of or divorce by former husband.

Among the Hindus, widow remarriage was not practised, instead 'sati',\(^54\) the self-immolation of a woman on her husband's funeral pyre, was prevalent in the 18th or 19th century. From different historical sources the numbers of women victims of this practice can be gathered. In the book The Good Old Days of Hon'ble John Company by W. H. Carey, it is stated "more than 500 women were allowed to immolate themselves every year between 1814 and 26, while the British Government patronized the show".\(^55\) From a manuscript record available in India Office Library (London) it is seen that during 1821, 654 widows sacrificed their lives in Bengal, and the number for 1822 was 583.\(^56\) These are official figures, and it is possible that all cases were not registered with

\(^53\) Masarraf states it to be 4 months and 10 days, but according to Hedaya (A commentary on the Musalman Law, Hamilton, London 1870, p.128) it is 3 months.

\(^54\) 'Sati' means a virtuous wife, the system was known as 'sati dāha', the cremation of a virtuous wife with her husband's corpse.


\(^56\) (Mss) Reports on the suttees performed in the Lower and Upper provinces in the year 1821,22, p.126.

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the Government. Since the then Government required that all 'sati' must be recorded by the authority and intending widows should obtain the necessary permission before observing this 'sati' system.

However there was a movement against this system and the Government of India passed an order, Regulation XVII of 1829, which declared this 'sati' system illegal and punishable by the courts. But there is evidence that the system continued even up to 1839, if not later.

Masarraf in his drama Basanta Kumari gives an instance of such a 'sati' where a young wife dies along with her husband. But it is clear that during Masarraf's life 'sati' was a thing of the past.

Though 'sati' system was banned by law, the widow remarriage in Hindu society was not accepted by scripture or tradition. So the problem remained for Hindu society,


58 Kumudnath Mallik, Satidaha, Calcutta, 1914, p. 70.
59 Basanta Kumari, Act III, Sc. 3 p. 122.
because a young widow had either to sacrifice all her human passion, or had to take recourse to immoral practices. Tévarcandra Bidyasagar, a great social reformer of the 19th century, appealed to the then Bengal Government to make widow remarriage legally valid. As a result an Act was passed in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, in 1856 (Act XV of 1856) "to remove all legal obstacles to marriage of Hindu widows". 60

Although legal obstacles were removed, the orthodox Hindu community did not accept the idea. However some widow remarriage took place in different parts of Bengal. One Kālināth De of Maimansimha in 1867 married a Hindu widow. 61 Some orthodox Hindus tried to undo some widow remarriage. In Jamīdar Darpan 62 Masārraf refers to an instance where a bride (widow) and a bridegroom were about to be burnt alive in Fābna. Although it is difficult to ascertain the truth in this particular instance, it is most likely that the opposition to widow remarriage by orthodox Hindus was violent.

Polygamy was the custom prevalent in Hindu as well as Muslim society. Masārraf himself married more than one wife

61 Kedarnath Majumdar, Maimansimher Itihās, Calcutta, 1906, p.191.
and some of his ancestors did the same.

Masarraf's attitude towards polygamy seems to be favourable since as a Muslim he cannot challenge the authority of Islamic principles which supports polygamy up to a certain limit. But it seems that he is fully aware of the unhappy consequences of polygamy. In his autobiography he speaks of the attitude of his grandmother who vehemently disliked the principle.

e) Peasant discontent, particularly with reference to *indigo cultivation*

The peasants of Bengal, particularly of Nadiya, Yaschar, Khulna and Pabna were dissatisfied with the conditions existing in the indigo plantations. Masarraf refers to the subject in his Udasi Pathiker Maner Katha. Here a detailed background of the indigo cultivation in Bengal, prepared from official documents, is given.

The cultivation and manufacturing of indigo as dye started in Bengal during the last part of the 18th century. A Frenchman, Louis Bonnaud by name, started manufacturing

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63 Amar Jiban, p.244.
indigo by modern methods near Candannagar in 1777. In the nineteenth century it was a profitable trade, and some of the British settlers in Bengal and also in other parts of India started this trade. In a later period a few native zamindars also cultivated indigo for profit either on their own lands or on the land of their tenants. In the course of time profit-making grew so rampant that the cultivators who sowed indigo for the planters were deprived of their due remuneration. Two methods of cultivation of indigo were generally followed – namely the 'nijabād' cultivation, conducted by the indigo planter at his own expense on his own land, and the 'ryoti' cultivation, conducted by the ryot (tenant) at his own expense on his own land under an agreement with the planter. This agreement laid down the rate at which the ryot would be paid for his produce and was accompanied by an advance paid to him, to be deducted for his dues when accounts were made up for the year. Theoretically it looked quite simple and unobjectionable, but in practice it was open to serious abuses.

64 Satis Candra Mitra, Yasóchar Khulnār Hīnas, vol 1, p.759.
66 J. C. Majumdar, British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Pt. I, p. 914.
The prices given by the planters for indigo were far below the market rate. The Indigo Commission\(^{67}\) found that a ryot was given Rs. 4 only for a maund (about 82 pounds) while the market rate varied from ten to thirty rupees (1 rupee equals 1s. 6d.). The planters' rate was more or less fixed and they also forced the ryots to sow indigo in the very best land which the ryots possessed. Moreover they cheated in measuring the land and in measuring the bundles of indigo.

The oppression of various kinds practised by indigo planters on cultivators was known to the Government and partially admitted by it as far back as 1810, when it withdrew the licences granted to four European planters on account of "severe ill-usage of the natives proved against them".\(^{68}\) Some foreign planters later secured the zamindari or 'putni'\(^{69}\) rights on lands by purchase and, as a result, they got absolute authority over the poor illiterate ryots. As Sir John Peter

\(^{67}\) By provision of section 12, Act XI of 1860, the Indigo Commission was set up to investigate into the indigo affairs, with W. S. Seton-Karr, C.S., as president, the other members were R. Temple, C.S., Rev. J. Sale, C. N. Catterjee, W. F. Ferguson.

\(^{68}\) E. Buckland, op. cit., Appendix, Grant's minute, para 2, p.238.

\(^{69}\) 'Putni' means a tenure by which the occupant holds a portion of the zamindari in perpetuity with the right of hereditary succession and of letting or selling the whole or part as long as a stipulated amount of rent is paid to the zamindar. (A glossary of Judicial and Revenue terms of British India, H. M. Wilson, London, 1855, p.410.)
Grant, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, comments, "when the raiyat has a zamindar who is not an indigo manufacturer, he has some protection in indigo matters; when the same man is an indigo manufacturer and zamindar or zamindar's representative, the raiyat has no such protection". 70

From the cultivator's point of view indigo cultivation was not at all profitable. 71 So when they refused to sow indigo they were tortured by the hired láthiāles (clubmen) and menials of the most despicable character engaged by the indigo planters. Gradually the situation went from bad to worse. Many cultivators refused to sow indigo, but by a law, Regulation V, 1830, passed in 1830 by the then Government of Bengal, the planters brought the cultivators to look for breach of contract. Many cultivators were imprisoned under this law of 1830. 72 Oppression by foreign planters continued unchecked because of the rule that Europeans could be tried only by a British magistrate at the Calcutta Supreme Court.

70 C. E. Buckland, op. cit., Grant's minute, p. 9.

71 "indigo as a paying crop must stand very low in the scale" R.I.C., para 62, p. 18.
J. E. Gastrell, Geographical and statistical report of the districts of Jessore Purdaspore, Backergunge, p. 12.

Court. This made it virtually impossible for the cultivators living in the interior of Bengal to get any redress of their grievance. Ryots who once entered into a contract would continue to sow indigo for generations to come because they could not clear off the advances they had received.

However, after the lapse of a few more years the peasants of the indigo growing districts, Nadiya, Yasohar, and Khulna united in a determination not to sow indigo any more. They also decided to fight the planter's employees. The planters and factory owners filed numerous suits against the peasants for breach of contract and for riots. The magistrates, who were almost all Europeans, were biased in favour of the European planters and factory owners. The planters complained to the Government that the ryots were against the cultivation of indigo although they took regular money from the factory; and, on the contrary,

74 Satis Candra Mitra, op.cit., p.780.
75 Ibid., p. 775, also R.I.C., paras. 112, 119.
the peasants also complained that the factory owners
with their hired men were forcibly compelling them to
sow indigo and were torturing them in every possible way.76
It may be taken as a fact that the planters and their
people indulged in various types of offences, such as arson,
looting, outrage on women, forcible detention of peasants
in godowns, until they signed a contract. Some of these
allegations were found to be true by the Indigo Commission,
a reliable account of which is also found in the book Bengal
Under the Lieutenant Governors, by C. E. Buckland, a British
member of the Indian Civil Service.77

A weekly newspaper in English, The Hindoo Patriot,
from Calcutta was advocating the cause of the peasants.
Numerous letters, complaints and editorials were published
in the paper. Some extracts may be quoted, "... Mr. Mr

"... Mr. Oman of Bijlee concern belonging to
Mr. Mears boldly arrested some mandals78 of
Ummepore, Krishnapore, Poarah, Bishode,
Rakhandi, Arocan, etc. and threatened to
confine in godown if they did not enter into
contracts with him.........................
Mr. MacArthur wishing to throw off impediments
which hindered him from acting as he would,

\[\text{\footnotesize 76 R. C. Majumdar, op.cit., pt. 1, p.917.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize 77 C.E.Buckland, Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, 1901, Calcutta,}
pp. 185-194.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize 78 Headman of a village.}\]
attacked the above gentleman's Katcharee Baree with 200 armed lathials, himself being at their head.

"...Mullickpore has been dreadfully looted too, and Mr. Skinner has gone to investigate the case." 79

"One Ramtanu was attacked in his house in the month of February by the Hazrapore planter Mr. Oates. Ramtanu fled but the females could not; at first the fury of the lathials fell upon the house and furniture, the former was demolished, and the latter looted, when the females were arrested, deprived of their clothes and made to stand naked in the yard ..... Shaks of Lautara suffered a few months ago similarly from Mr. Oates. Their houses were looted and burnt down, a case was also soon instituted which was as soon as dismissed by Mr. Skinner ..... Mr. Oman is considered by his ryots and the surrounding people as the most oppressive of all the planters, and consequently his concern is in great danger of being closed this year..... The appearance of the dreaded Mr. Kolony has produced a great sensation among the people, they think that the Government is determined to ruin them, or else why should it send a man whose greatest dishonesty will be passed over by his mere denial, in a district where lately he acted more like a planter himself than a Magistrate?" 80

"... Mr. Oman has collected many hundreds of lathials whom, as the rumour is, he will arm with muskets and revolvers." 81

79 The Hindoo Patriot, Calcutta, 5 July 1860.

80 Ibid., 22 August 1860.

81 Ibid., 3 September 1860.
Bengali newspapers and journals also reported the oppressions of indigo planters. The journals like Bangadut, Semācār Darpa, and Tattva bodhini Patrika published some accounts of indigo cultivation and its malpractice. In Bengali literary writings too references to the oppressions of the planters are found. To quote from Ālāler Gharer Dulāl,

"In Yośohar the oppressions of indigo planters has increased enormously. The peasants are not willing to sow indigo because it is more profitable if they sow paddy; and moreover he who has once taken an advance from the factory of an indigo planter is ruined for ever."

Nil Darpa, a drama, was published in 1860, giving a picture of an indigo factory owner and village peasants.

The Rev. James Long who was supporting the cause of the peasants translated the aforesaid book into English and published it, and as a result he was convicted in court and imprisoned for one month. The peasants repeatedly appealed to the Government for redress of their grievances.

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82 Quoted in B.N.B.'s Samād Patre Sekaler Kathā, p.198.
83 Ibid., p.108.
85 Tekcād Thakur, Ālāler Gharer Dulāl, 1st ed. 1857, p.141.
86 Dinbandhu Mitra, Nil Darpa, Dacca, 1860.
87 After the publication of the English translation Rev. Long was convicted in court for sedition. The actual translation was done by Madhusudan Datta.
Buckland writes, "numerous petitions were received from the raiyats complaining of cruel oppressions practised upon them by the planters, and of compulsory cultivation of a crop which they represented not only as unprofitable but as entailing upon as a harassing, vexatious distasteful interference." The Governor of Bengal, Grant's minute of 7th September, 1860 may be quoted,

"I proceeded along the Kumar and Kaliganga which rivers run in Nadia and Jessore and through that part of the Pabna district which lies south of the Ganges. Numerous crowds of raiyats appeared at various places whose whole prayer was for an order of Government that they should not cultivate indigo." 39

The disturbances caused by indigo worried the then Governor-General of India, Lord Canning. His letter of 30th October, 1860, to the Secretary of State for India, in England, may well be quoted:

"I assure you that for about a week it caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi, this was when Grant came back from his rather ill-timed expedition to the railway works at Sirajganj. You will have seen a short account of it in one of his minutes or official letters. Both banks of the River [the Jamuna] for a whole day's voyage (70 or 80 miles) lined up by thousands of people, the men running with the steamer, the women sitting by the water's edge;


89 Ibid., p.192.
each village with those who had flocked into it from distant districts, taking up the running in succession; all crying to the Sahib for justice, but all respectful and orderly..... A few people who can do this and do it soberly and intelligently may be weak and unresistful individually but as a mass they cannot be dealt with too carefully, neither can there be any doubt that they feel a deep seated grievance. From that day I felt that a shot fired in anger or fear by a foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flame."

In 1860, 31st March, a Bill was passed as Act XI of 1860, in the Legislature of Bengal to provide for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry on indigo matters. The commission in the course of time submitted a report to the Government. The Reports dealt at length with the different methods of cultivation of indigo and also took the evidence of different planters as well as of peasants regarding the charges brought by the peasants. It would appear from the report that the malpractices in connection with indigo plantation were all proven. However, it remains undecided whether all the foreign planters were equally guilty. No doubt some of them indulged in various kinds of offences. No specific number of planters charged with malpractices can be given. It is seen from the report that the number of Europeans engaged in

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90 Private letters: From Canning to Wood, 30 October 1860.
the indigo trade was 243 and they owned 567 estates. A questionnaire was sent to 44 European concerns, and replies were supplied to the Commission. However, the commission asserted from other sources, including the evidence given by European officials and missionaries, that some of the planters were notoriously tyrants, though it gives no figure as to their numbers. The planters belonged to the same class as the rulers of India, and most magistrates were friendly to them. To quote the report of the Indigo Commission, "The bias of the English magistrate has been increasingly towards his countrymen, whom he has asked to his own table or met in the hunting field or whose houses he has personally visited."91 There were no doubt honest officers, but "honest officers willing to do their duty were discouraged or prevented from doing their duty by the attitude of the higher authorities".92 Moreover it is odd that sometime before 1860 some European indigo planters were appointed as Honorary Magistrates. The Rev. James Long says of them in the report of the Indigo Commission, "the wolf is appointed the guardian of the flock".93 In the evidence given by A. Eden it is stated "one tithe of the offences

91 R.I.C. Para 119.
92 Ibid., paras 3652-53, p.166.
93 Ibid. para, 1628.
actually committed ever came before any court at all".  

Eden further says, "deeds of violence are not frequent, but still they are such as to keep up and perpetuate a feeling of terrorism without which, in my opinion, the cultivation of indigo could not be carried on for one day. Any act of violence committed in a district [he refers to incidents in Rajshahi where three cultivators were killed, six wounded, three villages gutted] would be enough to strike terror into the hearts of ryots."  

De-Latur, a judge giving evidence before the Indigo Commission remarks, "such a system of carrying on Indigo I consider to be a system of bloodshed".  

From the report of the Indigo Commission it is seen that the following allegations were brought against the foreign planters:

a) acts of violence which have occasioned the death of natives;

b) illegal detention;

c) assembling in tumultory manner - engaging in violent affrays with other planters;

d) illicit infliction of punishment.

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94 Ibid., para. 3595.

95 Ibid., para. 3596.

96 Ibid., para. 3918.
The commission recommended that the ryots should not be compelled to sign a contract, and that all sorts of complaints should be dealt with in civil courts. Accordingly some more new sub-divisions were created, the police force was strengthened and improved, and courts were established at the most important places in the indigo districts.97 However the peasants were happy that Government was prepared to protect them. The indigo disturbances were not only a great historical event in Bengal or India, they caused similar interest in England also. Newspapers like The Times98 and the Economist99 commented and in the House of Commons there was a debate in 1860 and another in 1861.100

Indigo cultivation continued in Bengal until the end of the 19th century, when chemical substitutes were prepared in western countries. The export of indigo from India decreased to a minimum and after 1890 or so the cultivation of indigo was practically stopped.101

97 Buckland, op.cit., p.193.
98 The Times, London, 11, 21 April, 7 May, 9 July, 4 August 1860.
Māṣārraf in his Udāsin Pathiker Maṇer Kathā narrates the story of an indigo planter\textsuperscript{102} who was a historical figure. Māṣārraf narrates the oppression of indigo planters on the one hand and, on the other hand, the justice, righteousness of the British Governor of Bengal. Though there are slight discrepancies in the description of events, such as the visit of the Governor, Sir John Peter Grant, to Serajganj was in connection with the inauguration of new railway lines. However, it was during his administration that the Indigo Commission was set up and ultimately the evil practices and the oppressions by the planters were removed.

f) Hindu-Muslim relations, and mutual influences.

In Bengal as elsewhere in India, Hindus and Muslims had lived side by side for many hundreds of years. So it is natural that there is a mutual influence of one society on the other in respect of culture, customs, and ways of life. First mention may be made of dress and food. In an area where Hindus were in the majority Muslims used to follow Hindus. In Nadiya or in the adjacent districts Muslims used

\textsuperscript{102}The story of this indigo planter is to be found in page 143-64 of this thesis.
to wear the dhuti.\textsuperscript{103} In respect of head dress Muslim boys imitated the Hindus, by not wearing caps. In respect of food, Hindus and Muslims used to take the same type, however there was one restriction among Hindus. They believed that the cow is sacred. So no Hindu could take beef. But secretly many Hindus took the prohibited meat. Mas\text{\aa}raf gives an account where Hindu boys took food made with beef and he also refers to a Hindu Brahmin teacher who used to eat beef regularly.\textsuperscript{104}

Mas\text{\aa}raf gives a very interesting phase of influence of Hindus on Muslims in matters of personal names.\textsuperscript{105} It is not known whether Hindus had any inclination for Muslim names. It is the custom for Muslims to keep names in Arabic or at least in Perso-Arabic. Mas\text{\aa}raf tells us that his second wife was called by the name of Kālī before her marriage.

Though the marriage system of Hindus and Muslims differ in principle, there are certain common customs to both Hindus and Muslims. These are the parts of the celebration such as

\textsuperscript{103}Amar Jibani, p.236.
\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., p.277.
\textsuperscript{105}Ibid., p.287. Bibi Kalsuma, pp. 44, 45, 52.
'Gāye halud', use of turmeric before bath, musical performance, entertaining of guests. The dowry system, giving money to bridegroom, before the celebration, seems to have infused into Muslims from the Hindus. It is also found that some sort of 'caste' system was prevailing in Muslim society in these days. This attitude manifested at the time of settling marriage between two families of different level or status. The marriage would not take place in such a situation.

It is found that Muslims used to read Rāmāyan, and Māhā Bharāt, the sacred book of the Hindus. Maśarraf in different places in his works refers to Hindu mythology. Maśarraf's wife used to listen to recitations of Māhā Bharāt. Maśarraf refers to some instances where Muslim landlords used to donate money for making of idols of Durgā or Sarasvatī (Hindu goddesses), in celebrating pujās!

Hindus and Muslims were living, in the same villages in Bengal, peacefully and in harmony. In Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā Maśarraf states how peasants of Bengal, both Hindus and Muslims, stood united against the foreign indigo planter.

107 Ibid., p.262.
109 Amar Jībānī, p.95.
110 Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā, pp. 156-163.
In the same work it is seen that Muslim landlords used to employ Hindu employees.

However there are instances where Hindus and Muslims come into direct clash. In Bengal or in other places in India communal riots jeopardised the peaceful atmosphere of India at different times. In Gājī Miyr Bastānī Masārraf describes a clash between Hindus and Muslims over a musical performance arranged by a Hindu officer during the prayer time of Muslims. During the 19th century (even in the early 20th century) there had been clashes over cow slaughter.\textsuperscript{112} Outside the province of Bengal there was an anti-cow killing movement, organised by some fanatics. Hindus thought the cow sacred, while Muslims used to eat it.

The language used by Hindus and Muslims of Bengal differed to some extent, at least in the vocabulary denoting the particular religion and culture. Hindus would use 'pujā' (worship), 'aśīrbād' (blessing), 'Bhagān' (God), 'upābās' (fasting), 'upāsana' (prayer), whereas a Muslim would say

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{111} Masārraf’s father had Hindu servants. Nabab of Padamdi had quite a number of Hindu employees.

\textsuperscript{112} The Hindoo Patriot, Calcutta, 17 Sept. 1884, p.148.
The Moslem Chronicle, Calcutta, 9 April 1875.
Also see, Kājī Abdul Oudūd, Hindu Musalmāner Birodh, Calcutta, 1936.
\end{flushright}
these as namāj, doyā, Allāh, rojā, etc. However, Maśarraf sometimes used words like 'āṣirbbād', 'snān' (bath) and 'jal' (water). A Muslim would generally say 'gosal', 'pāni' instead of 'snān' and 'jal'.

g) The structure of Muslim society. Slavery and conversion to Christianity.

Muslim society in the 19th century, it may be assumed with fair probability, consisted of two strata, upper and lower. A middle class among Muslims was non-existent in the 19th century. Maśarraf himself belonged to an upper class family though during his lifetime their condition had been declining. The Muslim middle class came into existence during the 20th century. It was possibly due to the rise of lower class, through education and better employment. Some of the declining upper class who lost economic prosperity checked their fall to the lowest stratum by accepting education and various employment. The middle class thus formed among Muslims took part in various socio-political-economic activities of the 20th century.

Maśarraf's cousin Nabab Mohammad Ali113 and his other

relations all belonged to the upper class by virtue of their economic position or by virtue of their birth. Masarraf's writings bear testimony to the existence of these two (upper and lower) classes alone. Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā gives on the one hand the story of his father, and of two more zamindars, and on the other hand of the peasants. Similarly the book Gāji Miyar Bastāni tells the story of three women zamindars. The book narrates the incidents of the last quarter of the 19th century and, by this time, more and more upper class aristocrats or zamindars were losing their supremacy. In Jamīdar Darpan also Masarraf narrates the story of a landlord.

The next important information gathered from Masarraf's writings is about slavery. This ancient system was still prevalent in Bengal during the 19th century. During the British rule in India there was agitation to abolish slavery. In 1789 (9th April) the Calcutta Gazette in an editorial suggested the abolition of slavery. But it was not officially banned until 1839, when the Government of India set up a "Law Commission on Slavery in India" to investigate the system

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114 H. S. Mukhopadhyay, Kalikātā Sekāler o Ekāler, pp. 468, 648, 675.
of slavery. The Reports of the Law Commission give a picture of how the system was prevalent throughout India and how young children were bought and sold during famines, and how children were sometimes kidnapped and sold. It was a sort of regular trade in some parts of India. In Bengal districts it was also common, "the sale of a person into a state of slavery is common throughout the district Dacca" and "domestic slavery exists along the Northern frontier of the district of Rangpur". The report of the Law Commission quotes Dr. Buchanan, "in the civilized parts of Rangpur many are induced to keep slaves from the difficulty of procuring servants, especially of the female sex". The slaves in Bengal or in other parts of India "are employed either as domestic or outdoor labourers and sometimes in both ways." Masarraf states in his autobiography that in their house there were as many as 30 to 32 slaves (maid servants). His maternal grandfather used

115 Adam's report on Education, p. 82.
116 Ibid., p. 105.
117 Law Commission on Slavery, p. 43.
118 Ibid., p. 32.
119 A.J., p. 100.
to buy slave girls from Rangpur where he had been serving, and he sent them to Masarraf's house. During famines, from poverty a poor father would sell his daughter, and even a husband would sell his wife, if they were given enough money. 120

In Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā Masarraf states that during these days it was no offence to buy or sell slave girls. 121 The women slaves used to be treated as concubines and they had children by their masters. 122 A similar account is found in the report of the Law Commission on slavery. "A mussalman master has by the Mohammadan law a right to exact the embraces of his female unmarried slave of the same religion, but not of his Hindu slave..." 123 "The middle class of musulman", says the Joint Magistrate of Furreelpore, "frequently provide against the escape of female slaves by marrying them under the form of nikah..." 124

It is found that the offspring of the slave girls remained slaves through generations in their master's house. Masarraf gives such a hint in his autobiography. It is also found that these children sometimes left their master's house and turned hostile to him. Masarraf writes, "who were

120 A.J., p.100.
121 U.P.M.K., p.175.
123 Law Commission on Slavery, p.31.
124 Ibid., p.36.
the persons come to steal in the house, those who were maintained by Munsi Jinātullā for generations and my father's slave women's issue. Kuṭan they had been 'golāms' [slave] for generations'.\textsuperscript{125} The Law Commission on slavery also states that "In some of the musulman communities there exists a class of people denominated 'Gholams' the signification of which word seems to denote that the class so designated is in a state of slavery'.\textsuperscript{126}

Masārraf's writings thus give a picture of slaves in the 19th century, especially among the Muslims. But it is also a proved fact that slavery existed in the Hindu society also. Sometimes these slaves were ill-treated by their masters. The Law Commission on slavery reports such instances. Masārraf narrates a story of the hostility of a slave woman belonging to his parents, who was used as a tool by a woman who plotted to murder Masārraf's mother.\textsuperscript{127} Gradually the slaves would flee from their master's house and seek the life of a free man.

Masārraf mentions in his drama Jamīdār Darpan that some Muslim families were contemplating accepting Christianity.\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{125} A.J., p.150.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Law Commission on Slavery, p.40.
\item \textsuperscript{127} U.P.M.K., p.176.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Jamīdār Darpan, Act II, Sc. 2, p.29.
\end{itemize}
It is known that during the 18th and 19th centuries Christian missionary activity was vigorous and Christianity spread in Bengal and in other parts of India also. Some notable Bengali educated people like Krpanomohan Bandyopadhyay and Madhusudan Datta and a host of others embraced Christianity; one example is that of Sekh Jamiruddin, but afterwards he was reconverted to Islam. It is very difficult to say at the present time how many Muslims in Bengal adopted Christianity. The Calcutta Christian Observer, a journal of Calcutta, comments that "the musalmans were more unwilling to the preaching of the Gospel than the Hindus". The Calcutta Christian Herald, another newspaper of Calcutta, writes about conversion of two Musalman families, whereas in the same paper a correspondent expresses dissatisfaction over the fact that "Mohamadans are not converted".

129 Sekh Jamiruddin, Meher carit, Calcutta, 1909.
131 The Calcutta Christian Herald, Calcutta, October 8, 1844.
CHAPTER VIII

SOME ASPECTS OF MASARRAF'S MIND
AND HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS LIFE AND SOCIETY

Masarraf was born in a once well-to-do family. His father had experienced the vicissitudes of life. Once a landlord, later on a pauper, ruined by a family intrigue, Masarraf's father was restored to comfortable circumstances by a second marriage. His way of life may have influenced his son's character. His family environment, associations and education, all these made Masarraf a hotchpotch of a traditional landlord's son and a modern man of the scientific age. His father, a type of 19th century wealthy man indulging in luxury and the companionship of women, introduced Masarraf to one of his nephews, a Nawab and a big zamindar, through whom Masarraf at an early age came into contact with the Nawab's mistress. Masarraf had been staying near the Nawab's house, where he was admitted into a school founded by the Nawab. But his education seemed to have made little progress, as he was fond of music and of the companionship of the Nawab's mistress.

Of course, the Nawab could be held responsible for encouraging such a young boy to be in the company of professional
women, or it might be hereditary, since Māṣarraf's father
had also a mistress, and occupied most of his time with
dancing and music. Twice Māṣarraf left home secretly.
During his father's absence from home he wasted time in
leisurely activities, and as he confessed he had sexual
experience at an early age. Māṣarraf held his family
environment responsible for this.

Before he was twenty he secretly married at
(1847-65) Yašchar far away from his home though he was
unsuccessful in marrying the girl he selected. He lost
his mother while he was only fourteen years old. After
his mother's death his father became disinterested in
family affairs. All the children were left in the care
of their grandmother. Māṣarraf's father's indifference to
his wife might have instigated the son to take revenge on
his father by living in the same immoral style. Māṣarraf's
mother's death, and his father's indifference, and the house
in which Māṣarraf lived, with so many young maidservants,
all these influenced his life in different ways. The first
phase of his life ends at his first marriage in 1865.

Māṣarraf gives no account of his life between
(1865-73/4) his first and second marriages. This period may
be termed as the second phase of his life. He was cheated in

the marriage, and naturally this would lead to a life of frustration. It is seen in the book Bibi Kulsum that he indulged in drinking wine and wasted his time in bad company. ² After eight years of his unhappy first marriage he met a beautiful girl and brought her home to marry her. Possibly by this time Masārraf's father was dead, and on the advice of his family 'pīr' (preceptor) he married her according to Islamic principles. ³ Though the second phase of his life ended with the second marriage, he did not lose his feeling of frustration. His moral slackness continued during the third phase or till the beginning of the fourth phase of his life. Eleven years after his second marriage he became the father of an illegitimate child born of a prostitute. ⁴ However one thing is commonly found, that the people addicted to drink are frank, and this is the case with Masārraf. He frankly confesses his own follies. He admitted all these in the last phase of his life, i.e. 1908-11.

The third phase ends with the starting of his employment at Delduṣar in about 1884. Masārraf did not mention

²Bibi Kulsum, p. 55.
³Ibid., p. 53.
⁴Ibid., pp. 113-115.
his first wife. It is a matter of pity that the lady in
question lost the love of her husband through
(1884-94) no fault of her own, and it is evident that Masārraf did not
do justice to her. Incidentally Masārraf says that after
his second marriage his first wife turned hostile to Kulsum
and to Masārraf. As a result, Masārraf seems to have had
no connection with his first wife. During the fourth phase
of Masārraf’s life he seems to have been reasonably well-to-do
and happy in his family life. He had eleven children, all born of
his second wife. During this period he wrote his best prose
works, 5 which ended with his leaving his employment in
Delduyār. It seems that he was compelled to leave the job
and the place.

The next few years of Masārraf’s life are shrouded
in obscurity. Perhaps his ideas clashed with the conventional
ideas of the aristocracy and the orthodox Muslims,
as a result of which he lived in seclusion in his
village home. He probably wrote only one prose work during
these days. He wrote a few books in verse, the subject matter
of which he took from the history of Islam. This phase of his
life, which may be called the fifth phase, ends with the beginning

5Biṣād Sindhu in 3 parts and Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā.
of his employment in the estate of the Nawab of Padamdi. The last phase of Masarraf's life seems to have ended at Padamdi where his second wife died. Most probably Masarraf himself died there too. During this phase he recollected his early days and wrote his autobiography and biography of his wife. This may have been a sort of escapism and an attempt to cope with the present and since there was no possibility of a bright future.

There are some passages in Masarraf's works which make clear his attitude towards the political thinking of his day. During the seventies or eighties of the 19th century political movements in Bengal had just begun. In those days only educated people or the sons of rich people participated in them. Masarraf as we know could not afford to join in political activity and he had doubts about the political agitators of his time. Though he was not a member of any politically active group he was none the less a patriot. He loved his country and from time to time he expressed a desire for independence though in vague terms. His attitude in this respect resembles that of other writers of his day including Bahkim Candra Gajṭopādhyāy. Specific demands for political independence
were not heard until the early 20th century. But several decades before that individuals and later associations including the Indian National Congress which was founded in 1885 were calling on the government to grant administrative and legislative authority to the natives of the country.

In Bigād Sindhu Masārraf makes some general comments on an independent life and country. He says, "Independence, what a sweet word. How joyful is independent life, what a comfortable place an independent country is..."6 "But if one is deprived of independence for once it is difficult to get it back .... if the sun of independence is set it is difficult that it will rise again."7

In Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā he remarks: "the very word 'home' is so sweet that we are unable to feel it unless we have hearts like an Englishman. We are Bengalis, and we have learnt only to trample our home under foot. We do not know how to worship it. We do not know that this bushy damp hut is a holier place than heaven."8 In Bibi Kulsum Masārraf states his wife used to recite frequently these lines from

6 Bigād Sindhu (23rd ed.), p.311.
7 Ibid., p.507.
8 Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā, p.71.
Padmini by Rangalāl Bandyopādhyāy:

"who wants to live without independence
who wants to live?
who wants to put on his feet the chains of slavery,
who wants to put them on the feet." 9

These words recited by his wife reflect Masārraf’s feeling too.

From these remarks cited above it is quite clear that Masārraf was also a patriot who wanted the freedom of his country; but he was not associated with any movement or party. This may be due to his poor financial circumstances. In the biography of his wife Masārraf states that his wife was "displeased with the 'svadesī' movement". 10 She contended that "those who have no financial stability should not join any political party". 11 Bibi Kulsum was of the opinion that Masārraf was not "qualified to join any political bodies". 12 These remarks are not only the words of Bibi Kulsum, they express the opinion of Masārraf too. 13 One critic 14 expresses

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9 Bibi Kulsum, p.42.
10 Ibid., p.122.
11 Ibid., p.123.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Muhammad Abdul Haï and Saiyad Ali Ahsan, Baslā Sahityer Nabita, Dacca, 1956,
the view that "Masārraf was indifferent to public associations and that he was not connected even with 'Mahomedan Literary Society'". It should be noted however that this Literary Society was founded and patronised by the Muhammedan Nawabs and princes, and almost all its members belonged to the uppermost class. So it is probable that a man like Masārraf was not acceptable to a society patronised by the élite.

That Masārraf wanted the good of the society is expressed unambiguously in his writings. In Gājī Miyr Bāstānī he says, "on seeing the distress and degradation of society his eyes shed profuse tears". In the unfinished portion of the same book he says, "Who can say that'Gājī Miyr' is the author himself? He has not blamed them. He has duly warned them out of sincere affection and good feeling, all that he has done is to make public the real picture of society".

The attitude of Masārraf towards the British government is to some extent similar to that of Bānkim Candra Cāppopādhyāy. Bānkim on the one hand expresses his desire for freedom in his

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15 Muhammad Ābdul Ḥāi, op.cit., pp. 70, 71.
16 Gājī Miyr Bāstānī, ch. XII, p.178.
novels and in essays, but as a servant of the British he was also loyal to them. He, like Baṅkim, was caught between a desire for freedom and his admiration of the British, though Maśarraf was not in the employ of the British Government. Baṅkim's attitude in this respect is summarised by T. W. Clark, in an essay, "The Role of Baṅkimcandra in the Development of Nationalism":

"a) British rule is necessary for India which can only profit by it.

b) British rule is friendly. It will provide opportunity for growth that India needs.

c) British rule will continue until Hinduism is purified." Maśarraf praises the British Government many times in his book Gajī Miṅār Bastānī. He says "So I bow to the English Government a thousand times. I pray wholeheartedly to God that the English may rule the whole world." That Maśarraf himself was loyal to English administration is confirmed by this remark made about him by a British Official

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19. Ibid., pp. 444-45.

and quoted in Gājī Miṃār Bastānī: "We have known Bhera-
kāntā [Masārraf] for a long time. He is a loyal subject
and particularly loyal to us. As long as he is there [in
Arājakpur] nothing unlawful can happen. My predecessors,
all Europeans, have praised him very much." 21

In this connection we may mention the attitude of Masārraf's
father. Masārraf in his autobiography repeatedly says that
his father also was very loyal to the English administration. 22
When asked by some one Masārraf's father once replied, "though
the planting of indigo may end some day, the English should
stay here for ever". 23 Possibly Masārraf inherited the
loyalty to the English from his father. His father was also
friendly to an indigo planter.

Masārraf's attitude towards European or British indigo
planters was unfavourable. In his autobiography he narrates
at great length a story of how a Bengali woman was kidnapped
by an English employee of an indigo factory. 24 In the con-
clusion he remarks, "similar offences of oppressions and
torture committed by the foreign planters were numerous, and

21 Gājī Miṃār Bastānī, ch. IX, p.110.
22 Amār Jībanī, p.120.
23 Ibid., p.123.
24 Ibid., pp. 126-133.
it is difficult to enumerate all of them." In Udāsīn Pathiker Maner Kathā he gives a story of an English planter. Though this planter was friendly to his father he did not hesitate to unfold the misdeeds of this planter. It seems that he had no friendly feeling towards foreign planters.

It is found that Maśarraf praises the British administration and the British officials as generally being honest and just. But however he describes an English magistrate who was biased to planters and, in another instance, he creates a doctor, an Englishman, who is unscrupulous.

It has been stated that Maśarraf had been suffering from a sort of conflict in himself. From his various writings the conflict in him may be traced. In Udāsīn Pathiker Maner Kathā it is found that Maśarraf had sympathy with the peasants who were tortured by the foreign indigo planters. One Sā Golām, a relation of Maśarraf, sided with the peasants

25 Amar Jībānī, p.133.
26 Udāsīn Pathiker Maner Kathā, pp. 52-67.
27 Jamidar Darpan, Act III, Sc. 3. Dr. Cunningham.
28 Kaji A. Odud in an article "Bisād Sindhu", collected in his Saśvata Baṅga, p.124, first points out this conflict.
but Masarraf did not support him simply on personal grounds, though he agreed with his attitude. This Sā Golām once evicted Masarraf's father from his paternal home. Masarraf accuses even Dīn Bandhu Mitra, the author of Nīl Darpan. He writes in his autobiography, "he Dīn Bandhu has not made it public, though he knew fully well, that among Englishmen there are many good souls, they are sympathetic towards peasants, kindly to them."  

That Masarraf hates medievalism and orthodoxy is evident from the following remark in Bigād Sindhu: "O God, Almighty God. Remove the ignorance of society. Destroy the darkness of superstition by the bright light of good knowledge."  

But in the same book he describes some supernatural events. These are the part of the story no doubt, but his comments lead one to think that he believes in the supernatural power. After the disappearance of the head of Hōsen, Masarraf comments: "How strange - The fact of that All powerful, All skillful, can never be told."  

In his autobiography Masarraf categorically says that he

29 *Amar Jībanī*, p.122.  
used to practise magic and charms in his early life. He even tried to ward off the evil influences of the spirit that betook the girl whom Masarraf intended to marry. He speaks of the magical power of water of the river Gauri. He said: "The river Gauri is very dear to the writer. The water of Gauri is very sweet and dear to the author. Whenever he is ill he wants to drink the water of Gauri. While he was sick in Calcutta he brought water of Gauri to drink and was relieved."

In his attitude towards the zamindars it seems that he had some conflict in his mind. Though he himself descends from a zamindar family still he has very bad impressions about them. In the drama Jamid Darpan he describes a landlord who is unscrupulous. But the book is dedicated to his cousin, a zamindar, later a Nawab. He dedicates his first drama Basanta Kumari to Nawab Abdul Latif. He dedicates his Bigad Sindhu to his employer zamindar Begam Karimannes. In his autobiography he refers to a zamindar family who made their fortune by unfair means. However, it seems

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33 Ibid., pp. 395-8.
34 Ibid., p. 76.
that though he has unfavourable attitudes towards the so-called rich people, in his inner mind he wanted the sympathy of the big persons.

That Masarraf was a representative of mixed culture, i.e. Hindus and Muslims, is clear from his writings. Though he began his early education in a way customary to a Muslim family, he also attended a school run by a Hindu teacher. There he learnt Bengali and, along with other things, the salutation to the Goddess of Learning, 'Sarasvati Bandana'. Later he attended a school at Kripanagar where he followed Hindus in respect of dress. His first three books give pictures of Hindu life. In his early life he used the title 'Sri' before his name, which is generally used by the Hindus.

He used to read Ramayan and Mahabharat, and also the Koran. In some writings like Udasin Pathiker Maner Katha, Gaji Miyar Bastani and Jamidar Darpan a mixed society of Hindus and Muslims has been described. However in later life he wrote

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36 _Amar Jibani_, p.106.
37 _Ibid._, p.286.
38 _Ratnabati_, Gauri Seta, Basanta Kumari.
39 'Sri', a Sanskrit word, meaning beauty used by Indians before proper names.
40 _Bibi Kulsum_, pp. 158, 162, 163.
on Islamic subjects.  

Massarraf had every respect for other communities of Bengal, especially the Hindus. He wanted the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal to live in harmony and co-operation. Even, he supported the non-slaughter of cows so that there was no rift between Hindus and Muslims over this issue. He criticises those who instigate the ill-feeling between these two great communities. He wrote a farce on this subject.

Though he had every respect for the Hindus, he comments on them like this: "... in this matter Hindus are very clever. They are efficient in the fulfilment of their objectives. They do not hesitate to have recourse to falsehood, deception, cheating, flattery, falling at one's feet, etc...." In the same book, Gaji Miyar Bastani, he condemns the attack on Hindus, including some women, by some Muslims. It seems apparently quite contradictory that he criticises Hindu employees of a woman zamindar. "fie upon these ungrateful Hindu employees". He moreover makes sarcastic remarks

41 Eslamer Jay in prose, Bibi Khodejâr Bibîha, Moslem Bratva, etc.
43 "Tala Abhinay", a farce published in a journal, vide, K. A. Manna, Adhunik Bangla Sahitye Muslim Sadhana, p.236.
44 Gaji Miyar Bastani, ch. XIII, p.214.
46 Ibid., ch. VIII, p.96.
about *Krīṣṇa*, the god of the Hindus. In his private life he was influenced by Hindu culture and tradition. After the death of his wife, Maśārafat entertained the Hindu employees of the Estate (where he was also working) in the ceremony which is a part of the funeral ceremonies.

Some more examples of similar inconsistencies can be given from his life. He spelt his own name differently at different times. In *Ratnabati* he writes 'Śrī Mīr Maśārafat Hosen'. In the next book he writes his name as 'Śrī Mīr Maśārafat Hosen'. In *Basanta Kumāri* he spells it: 'Śrī Mīr Maśārafat Hosen'. Here for the first time he spells it with two 'r's' and a palatal fricative (*ś*). In *Jamīdār Darpan* the same form is retained. In *Bīšād Sindhu* Maśārafat leaves out the title 'śrī' and writes 'Mīr Maśārafat Hosen'. In a book *Bibi Khodejār Bibaṭa* it is written as 'Śrī Mīr Mūsārafat Hosen'. 'Śrī' reappears here and he uses a closed vowel (ō) instead of an open one (a). In his autobiography he writes his name 'Mīr Maśārafat Hosen', and in the last of his published books he again uses 'Śrī'. These inconsistencies he could have

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47 *Gāji Miyar Bastānī*, ch. XII, pp. 179-80.

48 This spelling is given by the publisher. Since the title page of the book in I.C.I. is missing, it cannot be definitely said what spelling Maśārafat used.
avoided if he had been a little careful.

Masārraf was alive till the beginning of the 20th century, but it is found that he kept aloof from the political or social activities of that period. However once he attended a meeting for the preaching of Islam, and there he recited 'Maulud Sarif' of his own composition. Masārraf had every respect for the past glory of Islam. From that spirit he wrote Moslem Bīratya, Hajrat Belāler Jībānī, Eslāmer Jay and some other books.

Masārraf despises the professional mollas, the learned men among the Muslims. In his drama Jamīdar Darpan he ridicules the molla who offers sinni, sweets, at the tomb of 'Manik pir'. But in his private life he follows traditional customs, such as his wife observing purdah, veil. In Gāji Miyar Bastānī, Masārraf describes an imaginary picture of torture of hell which corresponds to the description of the torture and punishment of hell given by orthodox Muslims.

Masārraf's attitude towards music is not clearly known. In an orthodox Muslim society music is a forbidden thing. It is

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49 Sekh Jamiruddin, Meher Carit, p. 57.
50 Jamīdar Darpan, Act III, Sc. 3, p. 60.
51 Bibi Kulsum, p. 35.
found that Masarraf's father used to practise music. 53

It is seen earlier Masarraf's disconcernment about politics. One of the reasons may be his family liabilities. Since he had a big family and he had had a long struggle to earn money. It is interesting to note how he glorifies the importance of money in his different works. In Bigād Sindhu he writes, "most of us say money is trifle, money is the root of all evils; but the world is such a terrible place, that he who has no money has no place anywhere, not in society, and not among his kith and kin... none loves a man as wife loves her husband but if you have no money, even your wife will not love you". 54 In Uḍāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā also he writes similar remarks. 55 In the second part of Gajī Miyaṅ Bastānī he comments, "you are so sweet, so bitter", 56 a paradoxical epigram on money.

It seems that Masarraf believed in fate. In his drama Basanta-Kumāri the heroine, Basanta Kumāri, dies through no fault of her own. In Bigād Sindhu Hasan embraces death since Hasan takes it as a decree of God. In the concluding chapter of

53 U.P.M.K., pp. 40, 137, 168.
55 U.P.M.K., pp. 192.
Bisād Sindhu he writes, "God's desire is fulfilled..." 57
In the same work he comments, "there is none to obstruct in the ways of Providence". 58 Exactly similar remark is found in Udasīn Pathiker Maner Kathā. 59

Masārraf's philosophy of life is didactic in spirit. He contends that virtue wins at last (except in Jamidār Darpaq, where Hayoyān Ali never repents nor is he punished). The fall of Ejid, Rebatī, Kenny, Payjārannēsa, are examples of this. Ejid horrified by the valiant fighter takes refuge in an underground chamber. Payjārannēsa harrassed during her life time, leading a disgraceful life, sunk into the abyss of debt. Mani Bibi experiences the tortures of Hell before her death. 60 Masārraf believes that in the long run God's desire will be fulfilled and no one should stand in his way and a sinner is punished in this world.

60 G.M.B., ch. XVII, p. 297.
CHAPTER IX

HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF REVIEWS ON MASARRAF

Contemporary criticism:

During Masarraf's lifetime there was no full discussion of his literary achievements, whether as a prose-writer or as a verse-composer. However in the then journals and newspapers, both English and Bengali, some of his books were reviewed from time to time. A brief summary of contemporary criticism as well as later reviews has been attempted in this chapter.

His first book Ratnabati was reviewed in an English journal, The Calcutta Review. The criticism is quoted in full:

"This is a romantic tale designed to shew that knowledge is of greater importance than wealth, but as it is founded on the marvellous and the supernatural, it is not likely to be of much use. The author's argument is to the effect that knowledge is more valuable than wealth, since the former enabled one Sumantau to turn some women into apes, while the latter was ineffectual to produce that wonderful result. But as no knowledge that we know of can turn women into apes, the superiority of knowledge over wealth may well be doubted. But we dare say the writer did not intend either to instruct or to argue, but merely to make his readers laugh. We take it that the author has concealed his name under the nom de plume of a Musalman."

It is noteworthy that the critic says nothing about the merit of the book and moreover he doubts that a 'Muselman' could have written such a book.

Maśarraf's second work, Gaurī Setu, in verse, was reviewed by Baṅkim Candra Caṭṭopādhyāy in his well known journal Baṅgadarśan in Bengali. Caṭṭopādhyāy writes,

"The book is written in verse; the verses are not bad. The author has published a few other books. Even a Hindu cannot write such a chaste Bengali as he writes. Such an instance is an exemplary one - Bengal is a land of both Hindus and Muslims - not of Hindus alone; but now-a-days Hindus and Muslims are separated having no good feelings between them. For the progress of Bengal it is desirable that there should be unity between Hindus and Muslims. The unity will not be achieved as long as upper class Muslims take pride in the fact that they come from a different land, that Bengali is not their mother tongue, that they will not learn or write Bengali, and that they will learn and read only Persian and Urdu. The root of national unity is unity of language. So Mir Maśarraf Hosen's love for the Bengali language is really very pleasing to Bengalis. It is hoped that educated Muslims will follow his example."²

Here also the critic says very little about the book.

The main point on which the critic places stress is that Bengali Muslims should cultivate Bengali instead of Persian or Urdu.

It is not known whether Maṣarraf's first drama Basanta Kumārī was reviewed by any journal, but his second drama, Jamīdar Darpaṇ, was reviewed by Baṅga Darśan. The review reads:

"The drama has been written in pure Bengali by an educated Muslim. There is no trace of Musalmani Bengali in it, besides, his Bengali is more graceful or pure than Bengali written by many Hindus. Its aim is to depict the oppression of landlords. It has the same objective as the famous Nīl Darpaṇ had with regard to the indigo planters. We do not want to discuss whether the image of the landlord which is on this mirror is real or distorted - it is not the proper time to discuss it. Since its birth Baṅga Darśan has been a well wisher of the peasants, and we will never cease to be the well wisher of the peasants. But we are annoyed by the conduct of the peasants of Fābna district. It is not fair to add flame to the fire. We advise the author to stop selling and distributing the book at this moment. But while reviewing the book, it is our duty to say that the drama is good in many respects. We do not want to speak about peasants and landlords, but this much we can say, that the scene of the court of the Sessions Judge is well painted. We had in mind to quote some passages but we could not do so due to lack of space. The play has however included many irrelevant topics as has the drama sarojinī".\(^3\)

In this criticism also no detail of the dramatic power of Maṣarraf has been described. The critic refers to certain agitation which is more political than literary. However the critic praises at least one scene of the drama.

\(^3\)Ibid, August 1873 (Bhadra, 1280, B.Y.), p.237.
The book *Upay Ki*, said to be a farce, is not available; but however a review on it is available. It seems that the reviewer commented unfavourably on this book, and remarked it to be a sign of 'bad taste' and 'profusion of vulgar padabalis' made it still worse.

Masarraf's next book *Bigad Sindhu*, part I, was reviewed in the leading English newspapers, journals, *The Englishman*, *The Statesman and Friend of India*, and also in leading Bengali periodicals, *Bangabasi*, *Bharati*, *Grumbartta Prakasika*, *Carubartta*, *Sulabh samacar*, etc. *The Englishman* writes,

"A history of the Moharram in Bengali is a novelty, probably it is a labour of love. Mir Mosharraf Hussain has brought a full account of one of the important phases of his national faith within the reach of Bengali readers. The *Bishad Shindhu* is published in a cheap form and is interesting apart from its religious character."  

*The Statesman and Friend of India* writes:

"'Bishad Sindhu' or the 'ocean of grief' is the title of a book published in Bengal by the Corinthian Press. The author is Meer Mossharruf Hossein, an Honorary Magistrate. In this work the author has undertaken to write a history of the Muharram, being nothing more than a recital of the tragic event of the massacre of Hussein on the plains of Karbala. The sect of Mahomedans known as Shias still keep up this festival with religious fervour. The main facts are taken from various Persian and Arabic works and the author

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5 *The Englishman*, Calcutta, 4 May 1885.
has endeavoured to give a faithful and detailed account of tragedy. The name of the book has been chosen we presume, to convey an idea of the most intense grief, which is at the same time as 'boundless as the ocean', and which Mahomedans affect to simulate during the Muhurrum festival. The work will no doubt prove of much interest to the Mahomedan community."

The following extracts of reviews from some Bengali journals are quoted in translation. Carubartta7 writes:

"Many thoughtful persons have realised that the real development of this country depends upon the unity and harmony of Hindus and Muslims. The unity of language is at the root of national cohesion or unity. .... The homeland of this three crore of Muslims is Bengal and Bengali is their mother tongue .... but they think of Persian or Arabic as their first language .... But recently educated Muslims are engaged in cultivating the Bengali language. Mir Masarraf Hosen is a pioneer among them. The command he possesses over the Bengali language is really praiseworthy.... Most of the educated Hindus are not able to write such pure and sweet Bengali. Is it not something glorious and admirable for a Bengali Muslim. Bisad Sindhu is an excellent book in Bengali. Masarraf Hosen's penmanship or writing is captivating and charming. It does not seem to us we are reading of some unknown foreign occurrences and customs, and it is all due to the accomplishment of his writing.... its language is faultless, pleasant and elegant."

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6The Statesman and Friend of India, Calcutta, 31 May 1885.

7Carubartta, Calcutta, 8 June 1885 (23 Jyaistha, 1292 B.Y.).
The text of reviews from 7-12 are appended to the first edition of Bisad Sindhu, pt. II.
Sulabh Samacar writes,

"... events read like a novel; the penmanship and sweetness has given it the form of a novel. We did not know earlier that a Muslim of this land could write such Bengali. We salute him sincerely from our hearts for the excellent presentation he has offered to us."

Bharati writes,

"... It is a historical novel of Muharram... its language is clear, events are vivid, the heroes and heroines are well painted. We do not remember to have seen before such elegant Bengali written by a Muslim."

Baṅgabāsi writes,

"... the history is a beautiful novel, we are admiring Hosen, for the sweet pleasant, heart appealing language he uses in the book."

Samay writes,

"... Its language is so charming and excellent that we cannot but pay him the highest tribute... we are glad that our Muslim brothers are interested in the Bengali language... he is really a good writer."

Grāmbartta Prakāṣikā comments,

"We praise our brother Masarraf and ask him to publish more books on similar lines."

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8 Sulabh Samacar, 4 May 1886 (19 Baisakh, 1293, B.Y.)
9 Bharati, March-April 1887 (Falgun, 1293, B.Y.)
10 Bangabasi, May 1885 /27 Baisakh, 1292, B.Y.)
11 Samay, May 1885 (6 Jyaista, 1292, B.Y.)
12 Grāmbartta Prakāṣikā, May 1885 (11 Jyaista, 1292, B.Y.) Also quoted by B. N. Bandyopadhyay, Mir Masarraf Hosen, (1st ed.), p.17.
At the end of the appendix of the first edition of 
Bīgād Sindhu, part II, there appears a letter written by an anonymous reader which is also full of tribute to Masarraf. All the above criticisms are of general type. No detailed or critical study has been made on the writings of Masarraf.

A review of his essay Go-Jīban was published in Bharatī 0 Bāak. A few lines may be quoted here,

"... we are very glad to read this book. The writer, being a Muslim, has shown the sign of liberalmindedness and he supports the cause .... (i.e. of the non-slaughter of cattle)"13

A review of Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā appeared in Bharatī and reads,

"The book under review is not really a novel, but it has some of the characteristics of a novel. It narrates stories of oppression by indigo planters. The description of oppression is worth reading - but the plot is not well-knit."14

The next review available is on Gāji Miyyār Bastāni, part I, by the Calcutta Gazette. It commented in English,

"It is a story relating mainly to the quarrel between two female Muhemedan zamindars in Northern Bengal. It is full of graphic realistic

13 Quoted by B. N. Bandyopādhyāya, op. cit., p.21.
sketches illustrating the life led by the local Mahammedan\textsuperscript{15} gentry, the roguery of the zamindari amlā, the corruption of the police, and the highhanded proceedings of the native judiciary and magistracy in the Mufassal. Among the characters that of Begum Sāheb is very cleverly drawn. The writer is no friend of female emancipation and he comments in strong language on Begum Sāheb's not conforming to a system of purdah prevalent among high class Mahommedan ladies. The writer though a Muhammedan, writes Bengali with ease and possesses a wonderful command over the vocabulary of the language. But his style is nevertheless ungrammatical and marked by East Bengalism \textit{sic}\ and an absence of literary grace.\textsuperscript{16}

The same book was reviewed by a historian, Akgaykumar Maitreya, in a journal, \textit{Pradip}.

"Gāji Miyaar Bastani is a varied, well illustrated social picture, and a well-written, well-painted novel. It hardly misses any sentiment...... above all it is full of pathos. If an author is straightforward he cannot avoid harshness \textit{vulgarity} A plain word may be true, but plain truth is not sweet in all cases. So in some places Gāji Miya's words are very rude. He has held the whip in a tight grip and hit all.... and blood oozes out along with the cry ...... the picture of villages is a disgrace to the British administration ....... there are laws as well as courts. There may be provision for appeal, but there is no justice ... the native officials are responsible for it. Such a language, idea and construction of plot can be found only in the writer of Bisād Sindhu."\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}The critic is not consistent in the spelling of 'Muhammedan'.

\textsuperscript{16}The Calcutta Gazette, 31 October 1900, Appendix, pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{17}B. N. Bandyopādhyāy, \textit{op. cit.}, p.27.
Maitreya writes in the same journal,

"... before Mir Masarraf Hosen there were verses written in Bengali literature by Muslim writers, but there was no readable prose. Among the Muslim writers of Bengali prose Mir Saheb is still the best and first writer.... Mir Masarraf has been a devotee of Bengali literature from his very child-

hood .... At that time there were many obstacles preventing a Muslim from writing elegant Bengali. It is a matter of no little pride that Masarraf has achieved this literary power by surmounting these difficulties." 18

It is not known whether Masarraf's verse narratives or his other later prose writings such as Amār Jībanī or Bibi Kulsum were reviewed anywhere during his life time. After his death Akṣaycandra Sarkār paid a high tribute to Masarraf's literary contribution in his presidential address at the fifth Bengali Literary Conference held in Hugli (cūcu) in 1912. Sarkār said,

"We have no discrimination of caste and kinship in the temple of learning. The mother makes no distinction of caste and creed, similarly, as we are lamenting today for Mano Mohan Basu and Giriś candra Ghosh, so we are bewildered in deep sorrow for Mir Masarraf. I have never met Mir Masarraf, his Bīgād Sindhu moved me deeply. I had a great hope that my heart would be gratified by embracing him with deep affection. At last I hear that he is in heaven now. Those who have heard 'marsiṣā' [elegy] songs at Murēsidabād during the month of Māharam, will understand how

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the narrative of Maharam, Bigād Sindhu or ocean of grief is trembling with overflow of pathos. How fortunate a Hindu will think himself if he can write the same language as that of Bigād Sindhu."\(^{19}\)

One thing is clear from the above criticisms, that it was unexpected for a Bengali Muslim to write elegant Bengali in those days. It is seen from the available literature that during the 19th century Muslim writers used to write Bengali which was a mixture of Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali. Hunter remarks on the language of Muslims of Lower Bengal, "it has developed... a popular dialect of its own. The patois known as Musalman Bengali is as distinct from the Urdu of Upper India, as the Urdu of North India is different from Persian of Herat".\(^{20}\)

It is interesting to study why Muslims did not learn to write Bengali, though their mother tongue was Bengali. The subject, the 'structure of Muslim society' during this period, is too big for the present thesis. However a brief survey is made as to the structure or condition of Muslim society elsewhere in the present volume.\(^{21}\) In this respect the main point is that during the 19th century some upper class Muslims

\(^{19}\)B. N. Bandyopadhyay, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.


\(^{21}\)See pages 243-88 of this thesis.
used to speak Urdu or Persian, whereas lower class Muslims used to speak Bengali. Since the lower class got very little schooling, no literary genius was born in the society of Bengali speaking Muslims. Masārraf is the first Bengali Muslim who showed commendable proficiency in Bengali creative literature. The critics of Masārraf's works were all non-Muslims and their appreciation of his work is very significant, though their comments are short and unsystematic, and of general type.

The situation remained the same even after his death. True, there are a few books on history of Nadiya or Maimansimha districts, and biographies of Kangal Harinath and Meherulla in which Masārraf's name incidentally appears with some appreciation. Among these writings Jaladhar Sen's book on Kangāl Harināth is worth quoting. Sen writes about Masārraf and his acquaintance with the great social reformer and devotional song composer Harināth Majumdar of Kumar Khāli.

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23 Kedārnath Majumdar, Maymansimher Bibaran, p. 83.
25 Sekh Jamirddin, Meher Carit, pp. 57-58.
of the Nadiya district:

"Mīr Masārraf Hosen was a disciple of Kāŋgal in his literary pursuits.... Though he was a Muslim, he regarded Bengali as his mother tongue.... His Bigād Sīndhu will make him immortal.... when we were school students we were very eager to read his writings."^26

In the journal Bahāgya Mūsālām Sāhitya Patrika^27 a reference is made to a clash between one Naimuddin Ahmad and Masārraf. After the publication of Masārraf's essay Go-Jīban in which he advocated a ban on the slaughter of cattle, Naimuddin, an editor of Akhbār Islāmiyā, declared Masārraf an infidel, and in reply Masārraf filed a case against him for defamation.

In the monthly journal Islām Darān of 1921 the editor Ḍabdūl Ḥakīm summarises the contributions of Muslim writers to Bengali literature. Ḥakīm writes,

"... our respected Mīr Masārraf is more or less a contemporary of Bāṅkim Babu. He is the crown among modern Muslim writers. He succeeded in transforming the language and style of Bāṅkim Babu into one more simple and beautiful. In most of the compositions of Bāṅkim such highly Sanskrit compound words are found as 'samsarpitaagulpha lambita keō, ajanulambita bhujalata..... but Mīr's writing is completely free from such flaws. His composition is as simple and lucid as it is beautiful and forceful, as if the clear current of a brooklet is flowing

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26 Jaladher Sen, op.cit., p.40.
with musical notes in its small waves."

In the same journal the same critic, though he criticised Masarraf's use of certain Bengali words to denote some Islamic ideas, praised his power of writing Bengali prose. He writes,

"Mir Masarraf is the first writer who remains outside the influence of puthi (dabhasi) literature and becomes an eyesore to the orthodox religious leaders of society by writing books in pure standard Bengali ...... Of course there are certain flaws in his writings from the religious point of view...... but when Masarraf succeeded at last it became an eye-opener to most orthodox Muslims."29

From these remarks and other criticisms quoted above it is clear that Masarraf is the first writer who abandons the style of Puthi or Dobhasi Bengali. Some of the critics categorically refer to this point and praise Masarraf for his command over the Bengali language. Though the critics did not mention any other merits or demerits of his work, as a whole, the above criticisms are useful in assessing the merit of Masarraf's works.

Later criticism

Later criticisms on Masarraf clearly fall into two groups: one, important criticisms; two, minor criticisms. The important criticisms are those based on primary sources,

29 Ibid., April 1921 (Caitra 1327 B.Y.), p.534.
and in which the critics use first hand knowledge. The minor criticisms generally use second-hand material though there are exceptions, and as a result errors of fact are to be found in them. Of course, even the major critics sometimes furnish wrong information. In the following sections the discussion of the major critics will be done first and then some of the minor critics.

The first available important criticism is that of Kāji Ābdul Oduđ written in 1934. He reviewed Masarr'ai's Bigād Sindhu in an illuminating though short article. Oduđ writes:

"... from whatever source he takes his materials, the ability he has shown in the book is an extraordinary one. Perhaps the great similarity between the 'puthi' writers and the writer of Bigād Sindhu is the belief in supernaturalism. However a belief in supernaturalism is not an offence either in literature or life; only when ignorance and fear are blended with this does it become a curse in life and an undesirable element in literature. Because of his belief in supernaturalism he at times fails in literary skill..... it is needless to cite examples in full. But his conception of life and religion etc. is not superficial..... He is sufficiently acquainted with the complexities of human life. It is a matter to think over that there is found some conflict between his natural talent and his conceptions of religion and the next world."

Kāji Ābdul Oduđ, Saśvata Baigal, 1st ed., 1951, Calcutta. The article on Bigād Sindhu, pp. 124-126. The date given at the end of the article is 1341 B.Y., which corresponds to 1934.
The critic also made a comparison between Bankimchandra, Madhusudan and Masarraf. He further says,

"there are similarities in the characterisation of this book with that of Meghnad Badh. Raban is the hero of Meghnad Badh, he has infinite power, so also is his sorrows. Yezid is powerful like Raban, but as he could not secure Jaynab, his cherished treasure, that is why all his power is upset. 'Sita' of Meghnad Badh is Jaynab in Bigad Sindhu. The soliloquy of Jaynab resembles the dialogue between Sita and Sarama of Meghnad Badh Kabya. The effusion of emotion, which is a feature of a romantic poet, is the source of power and the cause of weakness at the same time, of the author of Bigad Sindhu."

The critic also mentions the ability of Masarraf in characterisation. It is seen that Odud's criticism is the first detailed criticism of one of Masarraf's writings. The review, though a short one, brings out some salient features of Masarraf's writings.

The next important criticism is a book wholly on Masarraf written by Brajendra Nath Bandyopadhyay in his Sahitya Sadhak Caritmala series, entitled, Mir Masarraf Hosen. The booklet which contains only thirty-two pages, gives a list of twenty-five of Masarraf's writings. Brajendra Nath gives a

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31 Sahitya Sadhak Caritmala, in 8 volumes, biographies of Bengali writers compiled by Brajendra Nath Bandyopadhya. The book no. 29 in second volume is on Mir Masarraf Hosen. Each book is also separately published.

very brief biography of Masārraf and quotes some previous
criticisms, and some passages from some of Masārraf's rare
works. In the beginning Brajendra Nath comments on Masārraf:

"... if it is possible to evaluate the contributions
of the Hindus and the Muslims separately, then it
may be said that Mir Masārraf Hosen, author of
Bigad Sindhu, occupied the place similar to that
of Iśvarcandar Bidyasagar. In this country he is
still the first literary artist among the Muslims.
As Sitar Banabas of Bidyasagar was once read in
every household of Bengal, so also Bigad Sindhu is
read by all among the Muslims of Bengal. This
prose epic, which is a valuable treasure of
Bengali literature, is equally praised by all
communities. Another important point to note is
that he was above all sorts of communalism whether
in life or in literature. Throughout his life he
tried to bring about harmony between Hindus and
Muslims, the two rival sons of Mother Bengal.
His literary genius was of such a high calibre that
he could render the ancient tragedy of Karbala as
a tragedy for all Bengali speakers."\(^{33}\)

In a subsequent edition Brajendranāth added more information
about Masārraf's life.\(^{34}\)

The book on Masārraf by Abdul Latif Caṃdhuri\(^{35}\) is based
mainly on Brajendra Nath's work. Due to his inability to
procure original writings of Masārraf Latif does not comment
on Ratnabati, Basanta Kumāri and Udāsin Pathiker Maner Kathā.

\(^{33}\) B. N. Bandyopadhyāy, op. cit., pp. 5-6.


\(^{35}\) Abdul Latif Caṃdhuri, Mir Masārraf Hosen, Sylhet, 1952.
He discusses Bigād Sindhu, Gājī Miyar Bastānī, Eslāmer Jay and Bibi Kulsum. He describes the story of Bigād Sindhu and comments on Masarraf's ability as a novelist.

He says,

"Bigād Sindhu is an immortal creation in Bengali literature, it is read in every Muslim household as a national epic... it can be said to be an epic in prose, but it is not a piece of poetry, it is a novel..... In many places in Bigād Sindhu philosophical ideas are combined with poetic imagination... Though all the events are not historical, historicity has been maintained in the final events. So it may be briefly said Bigād Sindhu is a historical novel... As the conclusion of the story has been told in the introduction interest is to some extent marred."36

About Gājī Miyar Bastānī Latif Caudhuri says,

"Bastānī is a novel-type composition, not a well-written novel. In this book many men and women are assembled, the situations and events are not connected and have no logical sequence. The work lacks a central theme. For this defect of plot Gājī Miyar Bastānī is not a full-fledged novel..... it is a social sketch."

He further contends that "Gājī Miya r Bastānī is a better creation than Alāler Gharer Dulāl, and Hutom Pyācēr Naksā since the motive and sincerity of 'Gājī Miya' is more comprehensive and deep."37 He also mentions that the "language of Gājī Miyar Bastānī is inferior to that of Kamalā Kanter Daptar".38

37 Ibid., p. 21.
38 Ibid.
He discusses Eslāmer Jay, a book on Islamic history, and comments, "Eslāmer Jay occupies a special place among his creations, in construction, in language, in imaginative power and in its philosophical ideas."  

Latif is, so far as is known, the first critic who reviews Gāji Miyr Bastānī in detail. Lastly he gives a brief summary of Bibi Kulsum, a biography of Masarraf's second wife, and comments that "the pathetic story of Bibi Kulsum simply overwhelms the readers".  

The next important book is a history of modern Bengali literature by Muhammad Abdul Hai and Saiyad Ali Ahsan where some of Masarraf's works have been mentioned and reviewed. One of the authors reviews Bigād Sindhu, Gāji Miyr Bastānī, Eslāmer Jay, Maulud Sarif, Bibi Kulsum, and briefly comments on Jamīdār Darpan and Basanta Kumārī. The comments about Masarraf's work are similar to those of Brajendra Nath and Latif Caudhuri. The writer considers Gāji Miyr Bastānī to be Masarraf's masterpiece. However, Hai, the writer of the chapter on Masarraf, tries to analyse Masarraf's lack of concern  

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39 Abdul Latif Caudhuri, *op.cit.*, p.36.  
with politics. He says, "In his literary life it is seen that Masārraf had a peculiar sort of detachment (or indifference). I firmly believe that he was not directly or indirectly associated with any political or social movement...."\(^{44}\)

Regarding the diction of Masārraf Hāi makes some general comments, but he does not illustrate his point.

The latest book on Masārraf is Mir Manas by Munir Caṇḍhūrī.\(^{45}\) The title resembles that of a book Bankim Manas by Arabinda Poddār. Poddār in his book tried to bring out the conflict in Bankim Candra Cāṭṭopādhya at different periods of his life and the manifestations of this conflict as found in his literature. Similarly Munir Caṇḍhūrī tries to find out the conflicts in Masārraf in the first essay of the book.

The book is a collection of Caṇḍhūrī's eight essays, some of them published in journals. The first one, "Mir Manas", is an analysis of Masārraf's mind. Caṇḍhūrī at first gives a brief summary of previous criticism of Masārraf and he criticises some of Masārraf's critics, Kāji Abdul Odud, Brajendra Nāth Bandycopādhya, Ābdul Latif, Āsraf Siddiki and Ābdul Hāi. In fact, Caṇḍhūrī tries to expand what Odud hinted at earlier, regarding

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\(^{44}\) Muhammad Ābdul Hāi and Saiyad Ali Ahsan, op. cit., p.70.

\(^{45}\) Munir Caṇḍhūrī, Mir Manas, Dacca, 1965.

\(^{46}\) Arabinda Poddār, Bankim Manas, Calcutta, 1951. (Originally a D. Phil. thesis of Calcutta University.)
the conflict in Maṣarraf's mind, but he fails to explain what the conflict was, and what were the reasons behind it. Caudhuri argues that Maṣarraf was in a state of mental crisis at different times of his life. He also states that Maṣarraf was rather backward looking, and was not at all influenced by 'Calcutta culture' of the mid-nineteenth century. Caudhuri is sometimes careless in detail. In his review of Basanta Kumārī there are certain discrepancies with regard to Rebati and the letter. He praises the witty dialogues, and the lively atmosphere of the drama. Caudhuri claims that there is some resemblance between Basanta Kumārī and the French drama Phaēdra by Racine. As Maṣarraf did not read French any resemblance between his work and Racine's must be fortuitous.

About Jamīdār Darpan he says that it is to some extent an imitation of Nil Darpan by Dīnbandhu Mitra. It is also inferior to Nil Darpan. In Nil Darpan there is an opposite force which opposes the oppression of the oppressor, but in

47 Munir Caudhuri, op. cit., p.11.
48 Ibid., p.36. The letter was said to be addressed to her sister, Caudhuri states that the letter was address to the king.
49 Ibid., p.37.
Jamīdar Darpan there is no such force and Caudhuri claims that Jamīdar Darpan is to a certain extent obscene.

On Bigad Sindhu he says that it is the best of Masārraf's writings. In particular he mentions its power of characterisation. Caudhuri strongly disagreed with a critic who is of the opinion that Udasin Pathiker Maner Katha is Masārraf's best work. But it seems that Caudhuri has not carefully read the book Udasin Pathiker Maner Katha. Otherwise he could not have said that the book is a biography of Masārraf's early life. From these the general impression of his criticism is that he has not read Masārraf very attentively.

Caudhuri next criticises the 'prefaces' written by Asraf Siddiki and Muhammad Abdul Haq to Gaji Miyar Bastani, published for the second time in 1961. Caudhuri contends that the book was written from purely personal motives, and was born of malice. It is, he says, an obscene creation. He says, "we must admit that this mirror is very cheap, out of date and rustic... the zamindars here do not oppress the poor".

50 Munir Caudhuri, op.cit., p.41.
52 Munir Caudhuri, op.cit., pp. 64, 65, 180. In fact U.P.M.K. is a biography of Masārraf's parents.
53 Ibid., p.94.
So Caudhuri does not subscribe to the view that holds that Masarraf was sympathetic to the common people or the oppressed masses.

In another chapter of the book he discusses Bengali autobiographies and the autobiography of Masarraf. He says little about Masarraf’s autobiography, in fact he describes the other autobiographies, and in the appendix he quotes some passages from Masarraf. He tries to find a similarity between Nabincandra Sen’s and Masarraf’s autobiographies, particularly in respect of their first loves. Caudhuri cast great doubt on the facts described in Masarraf’s autobiography, some of which he describes as exaggerations. Caudhuri frequently refers to English critics, with whom he agreed on the point that when a biography is written by an author himself it must record events truly.54 He further says that Masarraf fails to render a true account of his life because he wrote the book during his old age, when his memory was on the wane.

Caudhuri praises Bibi Kalsum, the biography of Masarraf’s wife, on account of its sincerity.55 He probably forgets that Bibi Kalsum was written after the autobiography. So the


point he made about old age and failing memory in his criticism seems to lose validity.

Now something may be said in general about the minor critics of Maṣarraf. Most of the critics mentioned below use secondhand material for their criticism, and some of them do not seem to have read the works they refer to in their studies. Most of the criticisms too are very brief.

Probably the first book in English in which Maṣarraf's name appears is Bengali Literature by Annada Sanker Ray. Ray mentions Maṣarraf's name only as the author of Biṣād Sindhu and says that he was one of the best Muslim writers of the 19th century. Another book in English, published from London, written by J. C. Ghosh, says, "the best Muslim writer of this period and indeed one of the best of all periods is Mir Maṣarraf Akbar Husain. He touchingly retold the story of Karvala in Visad Sindhu, and wrote several other tales and an autobiography."


57 The writer writes the name of Maṣarraf differently, as Mir Maṣarraf Akbar Hussain.

Sukumār Sen in his history of Bengali literature discusses Māsarraf's dramas. He says of Jamīdār Darpaq that "the drama is not worthless in that it gives a true picture of society". But Sen's remarks are superficial and sometimes inaccurate. In the fourth edition of his book Sen speaks of Bibi Khodejār Bibāha, Madinār Gaurab, Hajrat Belāler Jībānī as prose works. They are in fact poetic works.

Muhammad Enamul Haq in his Muslim Bengali literature describes Māsarraf as one of the 'path-finders' among Muslim writers. He does not review any of Māsarraf's works, he merely gives a list of titles.

Āṣraf Siddiki, in Bāṅglā Ekādemi Patrika discusses briefly Māsarraf's work, including the autobiography, but he too seems to have not read his books completely. His statement regarding Māsarraf's ancestry and marriage is incorrect.

Kājī Abdul Mānān in Bāṅglā Ekādemi Patrika reviews Udāsīn Pathiker Maner Kathā which he finds to be Māsarraf's greatest

work because of the picture it gives of life in an indigo plantation district of Bengal, and the skill he has shown in giving an end to the story all well connected and having logical sequences.  

Āsutoṣ Bhattācārya in his history of Bengali dramas, refers to Masārraf. His source of information was Munir Caudhuri's and Āsraf Siddiki's essays, there is no clear indication that he had read Masārraf in the original.

The last book we are going to refer to is Muslim Manas o Bāmplā Sahitya by Anisujīmān. Though he discusses different subjects - such as Hindu-Muslim relationship - he comments on some of the important works of Masārraf.

Contemporary criticisms of Masārraf's writings are important at least from the historical point of view. From these criticisms it is evident that Masārraf's works drew the attention of critics who reviewed his works with interest. Though his works received unfavourable comments sometimes, other critics like Baṅkimcandra Caṇṭopādhyāy did not hesitate to praise him. From this it can easily be concluded that Masārraf gained some reputation during his life-time.

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65. Anisujīmān, Muslim Manas o Bāmplā Sahitya, Dacca, 1964. (Originally a Ph.D. thesis of Dacca University.)
These criticisms are important also from another point of view. They recorded the entry of a Muslim into the field of Bengali prose. Some of the critics were right in hailing the entrance of a Bengali Muslim into the literary field: they contended that it was a good sign for national unity. In these criticisms it is clearly expressed that Bengali Muslims in general lacked interest in Bengali literature.

Later criticisms have been given in this chapter though some selection has been made, only the more useful and important being retained.

It is however unfortunate that even twenty-five years after the death of Masārafrāf no study of his work has been made, and some of his books have not been reprinted. Until 1943 Bengali readers did not know how many books Masārafrāf had written.

Kājī Abdul Oudūd’s short criticism on Biqād Sindhu has been mentioned, because he was the first critic who pointed out Masārafrāf’s greatness as an author. Oudūd reviewed him as an author not as a Muslim author. His thoughtful remarks for the first time on Masārafrāf made him known to serious readers

66 Brajendra nāth Bandyopādhyāy’s book Mir Masarraf Hosen appeared this year.
of Bengali literature.

Brajendra Nath Bandyopadhyay was the first critic to give a complete list of Masarraf's works. He supplied a brief biography and made some general comments on Masarraf as a writer, though some of his comments seem over-enthusiastic. He also quoted some of the passages from his rare works. Subsequent critics are greatly indebted to Bandyopadhyay for the information he collected, particularly with regard to Masarraf's rare books and their availability.

Abdul Latif Caadhuri's criticism is important because he reviews some of Masarraf's books in detail which had not previously been reviewed. The discussions on Gaji Miyar Bastani, Balamer Jay and Bibi Kulsum were not noticed previously by any other critic.

Mohammad Abdul Hadi's criticism throws no new light on Masarraf's literary work but he analyses some aspects of Masarraf's mind, particularly his lack of interest in contemporary political or social movements.

The latest book on Masarraf is that by Munir Caadhuri, who reviews most of the prose works: but his criticism is from one angle only. His main stress is on the mind and thought of Masarraf which previous critics said little about. Caadhuri's analysis is at times vitiated by his own grandiloquence
which sometimes means very little. Nevertheless in spite of his limitations his criticism presents a wider view of Masarraf.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters Masārraf's prose work, including his dramas, have been discussed and now we are in a position to assess his merits and demerits and decide his place in the history of Bengali drama and prose narrative. Firstly his achievements in drama may be stated.

Although Masārraf appeared in the Bengali dramatic field with two dramas only, his place in the development of Bengali drama can be well-judged from this couple of dramas only. He wrote at a time when Bengali drama had not left the age of its infancy. Tarācaran Sikdār appeared in the field in 1852, with his Bhadrārjuna, a Hindu mythological drama.¹ Then comes Rāmnārayan Tarkaratna in 1857² with his Kulin Kul Sarbhasva. It may be said that Tarkaratna showed the way for one type of Bengali drama, but he had had his limitation. Madhusudan Datta

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¹ The drama is written mainly in verse.

² Two more dramas, one, Kirtti Bilas by G. C. Gupta, and the other Sapatni Nājak by Tarakcandra Curamanī, were published in 1852 and 1857 respectively. Kirtti Bilas is partly in prose, partly in verse.
experimented with mythological and social subjects. His mythological plays beginning with Sarmistha were presented in the form of a tragedy which was an innovation in Bengali literature. Din Bandhu Mitra's Nil Darpan, in which an attack was made by the author on the conditions of life on indigo plantations, was the most famous play of this period. It was popular rather for its subject matter than for its style or dramatic qualities. Its popularity was further increased by it being translated into English. One critic comments that "it gained an almost international reputation not so much on account of its intrinsic merit as for the heart-rending pathos of the story and its implication."

Masarruf appears at about this time. He took the subject matter of his drama, Basanta Kumari (1873), probably from legendary sources or from popular folklore. As a drama it has some fine dramatic dialogue, and being blended with wit and humour and pathos it is a notable work of art. The language is mostly simple and gives the impression that it is

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3 First published 1859.

4 Published in 1860 from Dacca. The first edition bears no name of author or publisher. Preface was written by 'Kasyacita Pathik', possibly a pseudonym of D. B. Mitra.

5 It is claimed that Madhusudan Datta translated the drama.

very near to twentieth century Bengali.

In his second drama Jamīdār Darpan he took a theme which had not been treated before in Bengali drama. In it a landlord is exposed for his profligate licentiousness. The drama is a satire on high (Muslim) society in Bengal. It portrays the unchecked and unlimited powers of the zamindars in Bengal at the time. It is certainly commendable that Maṣārraf had the courage to expose the behaviour of important people. The language used by Maṣārraf in this drama is colloquial in style, quite suitable for the purpose. A critic writes that "a drama is compound of many ingredients", its language is varied according to its subject matter. It represents at different times the language of uneducated village people, and the higher forms of speech used by upper class characters. This ability on the part of Maṣārraf to vary his style according to situation is one of his most valuable contributions to early Bengali drama.

In his prose narrative his mastery of language is also noteworthy. Most of his men and women are taken from the historical past and Maṣārraf unravels the tangle of their

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7P. R. Sen, op. cit., p.141.
conflicting motives, and deals faithfully with the diversities of their characters. It is mostly found that in his writings Masîrraf describes the dark side of men and women but he shows that vice cannot win in the long run, though the power of evil is so strong that a man is often like a puppet in the grip of Fate. His primary object is the artistic expression of ideas drawn from his experiences of life, though there are some indications in his Bisâd Sindhu and Gâji Miâr Bastânî of a didactic intention. In Bisâd Sindhu he does not avoid subjective ethical values, but at the same time he approaches the problem of his human character as a keen observer also. Nevertheless like a true novelist Masîrraf is able to grapple objectively with the problems of flesh-and-blood men and women with all their meannesses and magnanimity. In Udâsin Pathiker Maner Kathâ his father's fascination for a dancing girl, the girl's attempt to kill Masîrraf's mother, and Kenny's lust for a married woman; and in Bisâd Sindhu, Ejid's passion for Jaynâb is a situation of which the author does not approve, but he is nevertheless able to present it as a human problem. He takes note of human interests such as these even when as a novelist or as a moralist he is bound to condemn.

Masîrraf's Bisâd Sindhu is one of the greatest compositions of 19th century Bengali literature, in respect of its
language and style, and in respect also of its characterisation. It is a historical novel, the earliest written by a Muslim author; and as such it holds an early place in the tradition of Bengali historical writings which was initiated by Bhudeb Mukhopādhyāy and continued by Baṅkim candra and Rameś Datta, all of them Hindus. Masārraf's work is undoubtedly indebted to his predecessors but it nevertheless reached a standard which permits it to be compared favourably with theirs.

His gift for character portrayal is noteworthy in this novel, as well as in his contemporary social writings. Jāeda is an outstanding example. At the beginning of the story she is a lady of noble qualities but gradually she succumbs to jealousy and avarice and by the end of the story she has degenerated into a wicked woman.

As a historical novelist he draws his material from the history of Islam as Bhudeb Mukhopādhyāy, Baṅkim Candra Cāṭṭopādhyāy and Rames Candra Datta drew theirs from Indian history and legend and in particular from Tod's Annals of (Western) Rājasthān. Anguriyabinimaya of Bhudeb is taken directly from one of the Māraḥṭa stories. Its hero is Sibāji, the heroic king of Mahāraṣṭra, and the heroine is the daughter of emperor Aurangzeb. Most of Bhudeb's material is taken direct from a story of Sibāji as related in English by Caunter, and it is only
in the second part of *Anguriya Binimaya* that he gave a free scope to his powers of originality. Ramesh Datta attaches more importance to the historical facts than to the inner life of his characters. He was more concerned with external events than with the internal conflicts, in which his heroes and heroines were involved. Bałkim's historical novels are more developed. He is able to portray credible characters without detaching them from the historical situations in which they were placed. Maśarraf has the same ability of being able to present a historical narrative and at the same time people the historical scene with live men and women. Unlike Bałkim Candra Maśarraf is not biased against the persons of the other religious community, though this is seen more clearly in his social writings. His one historical novel is concerned solely with Muslims.

In the drama *Basantā Kumārī* all the characters are Hindus. They are portrayed as men and women, some good, some bad, but the fact that they are Hindu is irrelevant to their personal qualities. In *Gājī Miyār Bastānī*, where there are Hindus and Muslims, a character such as the Hakim Sāheb is bad because he is a corrupt and vicious person, not because he is a Hindu. There is nothing in Maśarraf's writing which is calculated to create ill-feelings between Hindus and Muslims; and this
can not be said about Bañkim's later novels, in which the majority of his villains are Muslims. In this respect therefore Masarrraf has an impartial approach to Hindu-Muslim problems, which few Hindu writers of his generation could match.

In his language too, Masarrraf is able to rise above the linguistic debate of the 19th century in which Hindu pundits created the literary style known as 'śadhu bhāṣā' by removing Bengali words of Perso-Arabic origin and replacing them by newly borrowed Sanskrit words and phrases; and some of the Muslims, particularly those who published through the Baįtala Press, retaliated by creating a hotch-potch of language which was part-Bengali and part-Urdu. This latter is satirised clearly by Pyaricād Mitra in his character Thakcācā, in Alāler Gharer Dulāl, who talks this outrageous hybrid language. At a time when extreme supporters of the Hindu and Muslim causes were strongly in favour of a Hindu or a Muslim style of Bengali Masarrraf wrote a simple Bengali which may be termed a 'simplified śadhu bhāṣā' and which retained impartially Sanskrit and Perso-Arabic vocabulary elements, which were by use established in the Bengali language.

To conclude then Masarrraf's place in Bengali literature is assured by his simple and pleasing diction, his attempt to
create living characters of both sexes, by the vividness of his descriptive and narrative passages, by the high emotion he is able to express in the rendering of Karbala tragedy in Bisād Sindhu and by his impartiality in the presentation of Hindu and Muslim characters, and by the fairness of his moral judgments.

Apart from his achievements as a writer Masarraf’s example was followed by a number of later writers. His influence may be described from two points of view: in respect of theme and style. The story of Bisād Sindhu induced other authors to write on the same subject. Some writers at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century wrote some biographies of poets, saints, and the prophet Muhammad and his descendants.

Mojāmmel Hak’s Ferdāusi Carit, published in 1898, is a biography of the Persian poet Firdausi, the composer of the epic Shah Namā. His Mahargā Mansur, published in 1896, is a biography of a saint of Bagdad, Mansur anāl Hak. The poet Kaykobad wrote Maharam Sarīf in verse. In it he tried to eliminate the unhistoric stories written in Bisād Sindhu or other similar literary pieces written on the Karbala tragedy.

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Hamid Ali wrote two works in verse, Kasem badh kabya and Jaynāl Uddhar kabya which are stories of Karbala tragedy.
Ismail Hosen wrote Maha Siksa and Fajlur Rahim Candhuri wrote Maharam Citra. Some books were written in prose, such as Girir Candra Sen's Emam Hasan o Hossyner Jibani. Later writings in prose are Cheleder Karbala by Lutfar Rahman and Karbala by Abdur Rasid. They are all to a greater or lesser extent influenced by the work of Mir Masarraf Hosen.

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10 Ibid, p. 139.
11 Ibid., p. 160.
APPENDIX 1.

Complete list of Masarraf’s Works:

A. Works available in London; (some of them are also available in Pakistan/India).

1. Āmār Jībānī, 12 parts, in 11 volumes.
2. Basantakumārī
3. Bibi Kulsum
4. Bibi Khodejār Bibāha
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B. Works available in Pakistan/India only.

1. Bājimāt
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4. Hajrat Āmir Hāmjār Dharmajīban Lābh
5. Hajrat Omarer Dharmajīban Lābh
C. Rare works (virtually unobtainable)

1. Behula Gītābhinay
2. Er Upanyās Ki?
3. Musalmāner Bāṅglā Sikṣā
4. Saṅgīt Lahari

D. Works published partly or wholly in journals.

1. Niyati Ki Abanati
2. Tahmina
3. Tālā Abhinay

E. Works intended to be published, but actually not published.

1. Bāndhā Khātā
2. Bāñbā Bāñbā Ei to Cāi
3. E Ki
4. Gāji Mīyār Guli
5. Hajrat Iusuf
6. Hirak Khani
7. Panca Nāri Padya
8. Phās Kāgaj
9. Prem Pārijāt
10. Rājiyā Khātun
11. Yusuf Jolekha (may be the same as No.5)

* After this thesis was written it is reported to me that there is a copy of this book available in Chicago, U.S.A.
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