CHAPTER III

Currency of older forms of belief amongst the converts to Islam in their folk-literature.

After the Muhammadan conquest of Bengal Islam found easy converts among the lay Buddhist population which was still very considerable in the country. When the Hindu community was reorganised on the basis of the old Vedic religion, and caste-rules were revised and made more stringent, the lay Buddhist people found their position very uncongenial in the country. The water touched by them was unclean and the Bhikkus and the Bhikkunis—the Buddhist monks and nuns—who numbered by thousands in Bengal in the 13th century, were treated with contempt and called Neda-nedis or shaven men and women. This name, the Hindus gave them contemnuously, not only because these Buddhists represented a fallen order, from whom the Hindu revivalists had forcibly taken away all power in spiritual and even secular matters, but because of the gross immorality which a life of celibacy had brought upon the men and women living in monasteries during the days of the decline of Buddhism.
In an environment which was full of animosity, hatred and bitterness, these Buddhists found their position very uncomfortable, and they naturally preferred to become converts to Islam and thus associate themselves with the ruling race. In the 14th century, their lay order swelled the ranks of Muhammadan converts and the vast Islamite population of modern Bengal comprises the descendants of the Buddhist laity whom the Hindus still treat with the contemptuous epithet of Neddus—a title by which they used to designate the Buddhist Bhikkus.

But the folk-tales of Bengal were no more a monopoly of the Hindus than of the Buddhists, in the good old days immediately before the Hindu Renaissance, when both the communities had almost the same social and religious ideals. Their tantric ceremonies and rites of worship were so similar that none but an adept could distinguish those of the one from the other. The Buddhist monks, who in earlier times, had strictly pursued the path of jnan and led an austere life of struggle to control the passions, gradually began to yield to the softer charms of the Bhakti-cult, and in the 12th and 13th centuries their temples became resonant with the sounds of the evening-bells, of tabor and of kirtana songs accompanied with dance. The dohas of Kanupada and other
saintly poets were sung in the temples, and
prostration, fast and vigil became the order of
the day much in the same way as may be seen
in the places of Hindu worship of to-day. Dr.
Kern has noticed this growth of a spirit of
devotion in the Buddhist temples, eventually
developing into the ecstatic fervour of the latter-
day Vaiṣṇavism. In fact the Mahāyāna
Buddhism from the time of Nāgāryuṇa in the
1st century A.D. gradually assimilated the
doctrines of the Gītā and other Hindu scriptures,
till, before it finally lost its hold upon the Indian
communities, it had practically demolished all
barrier between Buddhism and Hinduism, bring-
ing the former many steps nearer to the mother-
cult, from which it had sprung in the 6th
century B.C.

So the folk-tales told in those days in the
Hindu and Buddhist families were very much
alike. It was a pleasant occupation of the
Bengali women to relate such stories in the
evening, and it was an engaging pursuit of young
children to follow the adventures of the heroes
through their great perils and trials,—in the
mansions of ultra-human and demoniac creatures,
in the tanks from which huge cobras sprang
with jewels shining from their hoods, or, in the
dark wilderneses infested with aerial beings
where our heroes had lost their path in the night.
But still more was the effect of the tales on the
young listeners of the fair sex, who heard with beating hearts all that the heroines suffered, now from their merciless and grimly cruel sisters-in-law, now from the persistent indifference and maltreatment of princely fathers-in-law and not infrequently from their own prejudiced husbands, whom, in spite of all imaginable ills, they dearly loved.

Islam gave new faith to the Buddhists and the low-caste Hindus from whose ranks it counted its largest number of recruits. A few drops of the Iranian and Semitic blood that now run through the veins of 90 per cent. of the Bengali Muhammadans will scarcely admit of detection by scrutiny, any more than an element of the mother-tincture in a high dilution of a Homeopathic medicine. Those Bengalis who were Hindus and Buddhists at one time, but became Muhammadan converts mostly in the 14th century A.D., did not, in some cases, give up their ancestral calling, though it was connected with the religion that they had shunned. A large number of people in this country used to earn their bread by singing hymns in praise of some gods or goddesses from door to door. At the present day the Āgumani singers among the Sāktas do so, and the Vaiṣṇava mendicants are of course the most typical.
of this class of people. In good old days before the Muhammadan conquest, the singers of hymns in praise of Lakṣmī—the harvest-goddess—visited every house of the peasantry, and the women of Bengal delighted to hear from their lips the signs of a lucky woman—of the duties to be performed by the virtuous wife and the ways of the evil-eyed one—of the hastini

"who walks with eyes fixed on the air and speaks like a trumpet," of the noble padminī

"who rises with the first crowing of the crows and lights the lamp at the dusk, who does not touch any food before her husband has taken meal" and fulfils other conditions becoming a true housewife. These hymns and doggerels pertaining to domestic duties are addressed to Viṣṇu by his consort Lakṣmī. The goddess in detailing the virtues of a good wife and the vices of a bad one, thus says of their respective husbands, "The husband of a chaste wife is glorious like the summit of a mountain, but that of an unchaste one is like the prow of a rotten boat." This adulation of the virtues of a good wife by the Goddess of Harvest herself is no mean compliment, making the peasant's wife proud of her loyalty to her mate, and she fills the bag of the professional mendicant with rice, brinjal and potato, and even sometimes puts a
hard-earned copper-piece in the mendicant's hands. But though it is known to all in Bengal, the fact may yet sound strange to those who do not know it, that these singers of hymns on Lakṣmī, the goddess, are not Hindus, as it should be, but Muhammadan mendicants. It proves beyond doubt that those professional Buddhist and Hindu mendicants, whose avocation it had been to sing these songs before Muhammadan conquest in the 13th century, did not give up their calling after having embraced Islam, but have continued to sing the same songs in praise of the Hindu goddess up to now. The language in which the songs are couched have undergone no alteration and is in every respect that crude Prakritic Bengali in which the Maināmati songs or the Čunyapurāṇa were composed in the 11th or 12th century. The Muhammadans, inspite of their religious and iconoclastic zeal, have been tolerant so far as not to interfere with the avocations of the new recruits to their religion. The Buddhist and Hindu converts to Islam in the island of Java are allowed to perform the worship of Lakṣmī with all the devotion of a pious Hindu. The Muhammadans are now mostly the "rojāhs" or physicians of serpent-bites in Bengal. They recite incantations and mantras for the cure of not only those who are bitten by serpents but also of those said
to be possessed by spirits. From generation to generation, these "rajhās," mostly Muhammadans, as I have said, have been practitioners of this art. They no doubt sprang from the Hindu and Buddhist families and did not, after they were converted to Muhammadan faith, give up a calling which had been a source of their maintenance from remote times. A manual of these incantations and mantras has lately been published by Mir Khoram Ali from 155-1 Masjidbāri Street, Calcutta. This writer says in the Introduction to his Manual that his name stands first in the list of those physicians who cure by charms and incantations. In all cases of snake-bite, or where the patient withers away from being possessed by a spirit or under the malignant spell of a witch, the mantras that he knows are infallible. Hence many people seek his help in distress. But as he travels from place to place, they have often to return to their homes disappointed. "Aged am I," he says, "and know not when the final call will come upon me." So he is afraid lest the art that has been practised from generation to generation in his family, would die with him, as there is none who knows the charms so well as he does. With these preliminary remarks he introduces his subject which is full of Hindu ideas from the
beginning to the end. The language of these *mantras* sometimes bears a striking kinship with the Bengali style of the 10th and 11th centuries and at others with those of the 15th and the 16th. This proves that some members of the rojhā families were converted to Islam in the 13th century, when the Muhommadans first raided Bengal, and others in the 15th and 16th centuries. The language of these *mantras* does not seem to have changed at all from the form in which they were originally composed; for if a word is altered then the charm loses all efficacy. It may be said that the Muhommadans might have learned these *mantras* from some Hindus, just as in the country-side they learn their alphabets from Hindu Gurn Mahācayas. But this is not at all likely. Whole families of Muhommadans in many cases know the *mantras*, which are full of praises of Hindu gods and goddesses; the Rojhās, who cure snake bite and spirit-possession, are generally Muhommadans, at least they are the best of the doctors of such charms in the country-side. Like the singers of Lakshmi’s glories, who, turning Muhommadans, did not give up the calling they practised in their ‘heathen days,’ these Rojhās also followed an avocation while they were ‘heathen’ which has not been afterwards found incompatible, as a profession, with the conditions of their new society, though
from a religious point of view, such a thing could not be tolerated. Thus we conclude that long before the 13th century the ancestors of these Muhammadans had followed callings for earning their bread associated with the Hindu and Buddhist religions, and the Mollas or the Muhammadan priests relaxed their orthodoxy so far as to allow them to follow those pursuits which had been the main source of income to their families for many generations. In the Manual referred to, the compiler Khoramali invokes the aid of 64 Dakinees of the Hindu Tantras and their "60 sisters" possibly of the Buddhist Tantras. The first Mantra for snake-bite runs thus:—

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हस्त सारम्, गला सारम्, आर सारम्, भूक।
पेट, पिट, चरण सारम्, आर सारम्, भुक॥
पेट, पिट, चरण गाति मनसार बरे।
लक्ष लक्ष बाग—अयुक्ते कि करिते पारे॥
कांडेर कामिक्या, देवी दिया, गेल बर।
बालिर बिन्न राजा बले अमुक है, अमर॥
``

The language has evidently some Prakrit elements in it; the word सारम् is one of such, the word कांडे for Kamrup is one, as we find it in the early Dharma-mangala poems. We profess our ignorance in regard to the historical reference in “बालिर बिन्न राजा दिया, गेल बर.” It is probable that a Raja of that name flourished in Bali Uttarpura, in the pre-Muhammadan days
who had achieved a great fame as a healer by mantras. The appeal to Manasā Devī shows that the mantra was inculcated by her followers in olden times, and Kamakṣā is certainly one of our earliest shrines. The next mantra is in a style which closely resembles that of the Čunyapurāṇa of Rāmāi Pundit, written in the 11th century. There are occasionally to be met with in this Manual Arabic incantations invoking the aid of the Prophet, and this is but too natural. Within more than 7 centuries of conversion to Islam, these people could not help adding some exotic element to the hymns, in accordance with the faith they had embraced, but the main portion of the book discloses purely Hindu ideas. There are references and appeals to Ĉiva, Kāli, Kṛiṣṇa, Garuḍa and other deities of the Hindu pantheon almost on every page. In the mantras relating to snake-bite, Kṛiṣṇa, as the vanquisher of the snake Kāliya, is frequently invoked. Hanumāna, the great ape-god, is also addressed for helping in the cure of the patient, and an appeal to Rāma and Lakṣmīna comes off as a matter of course. Kamakṣā and Kāyunr, the two-notable shrines, are mentioned and it is a curious thing that the Muhammadan prodigy in the use of spells recites “ও সাহা ফট” like a Hindu Brahmin. Chandi, the goddess, as daughter of a Hādi, “হাড়ির হি চণ্ডী মা” is a familiar line which occurs often in the colophon. We know
that Hādis, in olden times, used to perform priestly functions in some of the Kāli temples, and they even do so now in some parts of Bengal. They are also the custodians of many temples of Çitalā, the small-pox-goddess; and in Hādisidhyā of the Maināmatī songs, we find one of the Hādi caste elevated to the rank of a great sage. The Hādis seem to have at one time occupied a decent position in society, and it may not be improbable that their present degraded position is due to the antagonism and resistance they offered to the Brahmins of the Renaissance. This invocation of Chandi, as daughter of a Hādi, raises the problem of a far-reaching character as to how some of the non-Aryan deities found entrance into the temples of the Aryans. For this Chandi, who is described as daughter of a Hādi, and whom originally the Hādis worshipped as priests in temples, gradually became identical with Pārvatī, the consort of Çiva. The tradition of her origin from Hādi parents was in course of time totally ignored or suppressed as that caste sank in the humblest social scale. There are many lines in this Manual which are full of suggestions on other lines. We find invocation in it of the god Dharma, who in the popular belief is no other than the Buddha himself. Besides there are allusions to Ballukā Sāgara. This Ballakā or Ballukā is frequently mentioned in the
early Dharma Mangal poems as a Buddhist shrine.

The Manual, as I have already said, contains archaic forms of old Bengali, often reminding us of the style prevalent in the 10th and 12th centuries. There is another book, written by one Munshi Enayetulla Sircar, in which the birth and adventures of Jarāśura or the Demon of Fever, are recorded. This is evidently a record of a Hindu tradition which now seems to be lost amongst the Hindus themselves, but is still current among the Muhammadan population, transmitted from that remote time when they eschewed their belief in the older religions. Munshi Enayetulla Sircar begins with the line “श्रीराम गणेशाय नम्” (‘obeisance to Rāma and Ganeṣa’) and then goes on to tell how a rich Brahmin’s beautiful daughter fell in love with a man of the Chandāla caste. This youth absconded with her, but was detected by a ferry-man in the way. The latter threatened to bring the matter to the notice of the Rājā’s men, but desisted from that course on the Chandāla giving him an undertaking that he would leave the girl with the ferry-man. The woman who was enceinte gave birth to a child on Tuesday in the month of September:— it was the night of the new moon and the moment when the baby came to the world was
very inauspicious. It was thrown away into the jungles on that very night by the woman with a view to escape scandal, but the foxes nourished it by their milk. In course of time this child grew to be the Demon of Fever and his adventures are related fully in the latter portion of the book. It is also mentioned how a Brahmin succeeded in gaining wealth by the help of this deified Demon, having cured a princess of persistent fever. This disease was unknown in the country before the birth of Jarāsura.

Now what we have already written proves two points, viz., that the Hindus and Buddhists who had renounced their faith in their religions and turned Islamite converts, still retained some of their older religious traditions, particularly those which were associated with the callings by which they had been used to earn their bread. The vernacular hymns to Lakṣmī, which used to be sung by the Hindu or Buddhist mendicants, are now sung by their descendants—the Muhammadan Fakirs. The charms for the cure of snake-bite practised by the Hindu Rojhās (Rojhā or Ojhā, a corrupted and abbreviated form of the word Upādhyāya; Ujjhāya and Ojhā being the gradually changed forms in Prakrit from which the Rojhā of Bengali has been derived) are still known to a class of Muhammadans—the descendants...
of the Hindus and Buddhist doctors of spells and charms; the traditions of the Hindus with regard to the origin of fever, at one time current among their peasantry, are now recorded by their descendants who are Muhammadans. Other evidences on this line will not be difficult to trace. The songs on Manasā Devī, on Kāli and even Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā, sung by the Hindu and Buddhist professional singers, are still current among a large Muhammadan populace in Eastern Bengal where recruits to Islam from the ranks of lay Hindus and Buddhists have been the largest. Songs of Manasā Devī are sung by professional Muhammadan minstrels in Mymensing and other districts. The converts have not been able to give up the traditions of the older religions during the long centuries of their renunciation of 'heathen faith,' and the Bengali Muhammadan to-day, inspite of the injunctions of his Molla, who is ever busy in his efforts to root out every form of 'superstitious beliefs,' has remained true to his instinct nurtured and developed in a different atmosphere of religious and social life during long centuries.

The second point that we want to establish is that the origin of their callings and of some of the beliefs enumerated above, is to be traced to a far remoter period than the 14th or 15th century when most of the ancestors of the present
Bengali Muhammadans embraced the Islamite faith. During the 7 or 8 centuries that have passed, the Hindu or Buddhistic elements in their forms of belief have scarcely received any new light from those older religions, ever-growing under fresh social conditions and turning new leaves in the history of their gradual advancement. The Muhammadan peasantry inspite of keeping up these faiths and ideas transmitted to them from unrecorded times previous to their conversion, are now solely under the guidence of the Mollas. They have shut their gates against all fresh accretions of faiths promulgated by the new Brahmin of the Renaissance. The Purānas and the Epics which have been so popularised among the Hindu rural folk, by the new Brahmin—the creed of devotion which has been proclaimed with the sound of cymbal and tabor to the peasantry for these five hundred years,—have not made any perceptible impression on the lay Muhammadan populace. It is the older forms of faith anterior to the Hindu Renaissance, that have still some hold upon them, and the origin of these, as I have already stated, is to be traced to a period much earlier than the 14th or 15th century when the largest number of these Bengalis accepted Islam. The linguistic evidence and that of the forms of faith traced in the hymns to Lakshmi and in the Mantras and spells prove their affinity to those
current amongst the Hindus and Buddhists of Bengal mostly in the 10th and the 11th centuries.

But if they do still cultivate the older forms of faith by songs, hymns and spells and by appeals to gods and goddesses of the heathen pantheon, how could their women forget those tales and fables which they had heard when girls, recited to them by their grandmothers, and which they themselves related to their children when they in their turn became grandmothers themselves? In fact all the folk-tales current in this country during the 10th and 11th, and even earlier centuries, they still tell to their children, and in this matter the Hindu and Buddhist elements form a great factor of training of the Muhammadan child from its birth. References to the Indrasabhā, appeals to Manasā Devī and to Saraswatī, the goddess of learning, are occasionally met with in those fables; and the Rājakumārī, the princess, and her lover the prince—his friends, the minister’s son and the son of the prefect of police, are all Hindus in these tales. The grandmothers in Muhammadan harems still tell these stories, which are as old as the 10th and the 11th centuries, treasured up and transmitted to the family by elderly women, and the continuity of the strain from the time when they were pious
THE EARLY ORIGIN OF THESE TALES

Hindus down to the time when they have been pious Muhammadans, has not been broken; the stories of Mālanchamālā, Bhānumatī, Sakhisonā, Amritabhāna, Chandrāvalī, Mālatikusum, Madhumāla and lots of others with which we are all so familiar, are still told in Muhammadan homes and listened to with eager attention by the young Muhammadan peasantry of Bengal. This fact was not at all known to us till recently, and the discovery has been very interesting as it shows that after the lapse of the 7 or 8 centuries of their alienation from the older religion, the sorrows of Kāunchamālā and Sakhisonā still create throbblings in the hearts of Muhammadan girls, as it does of their Hindu cousins. This proves beyond doubt the origin of the stories to be long before the Muhammadan conquest and their proselytising activities in the 14th and 15th centuries; for these Hindu and Buddhist tales could not have found entrance into the Muhammadan harems after the light of Islam had fallen on the Hindu homes. The very form in which the stories are current among Muhammadans show the earliest type, though Arabic and Persian influences have, to a certain extent, changed the original spirit of the tales.
CHAPTER IV.

Classifications of Muhammadan folk-tales in Bengal.

The Muhammadan folk-tales that I have discovered may be divided into three classes, viz.:

I. Those that relate to saintly men who have been given the ranks of prophets in Hindu and Muhammadan communities alike. These men are called pîrs, such as Mânîk Pîr and Satya Pîr, who have been now raised above the level of mortals in popular legends, but were once men of the flesh, and had, by reason of their Hindu extraction, and of their catholicity of views, won the respect of both Hindus and Muhammadans, though they themselves seem to have adopted the Muhammadan faith. These legends were composed mostly during the 15th and 16th centuries.

II. The folk-tales which relate to the heroic deeds of those Muhammadan zealots who carried the religion of Islam at the point of their swords, and obtained celebrity by overthrowing the Hindu faith and breaking the Hindu temples and also by marrying some noted beauties of the Hindu Zenana, after having converted them to Islam. These stories,
some of which were derived from the Persian and Arabic sources, relate to events from after
the 11th century.

III. Those that have been current in Bengal from a remote period, and which the Hindu converts to Muhammadan faith have not been able to give up, though they all have direct references to Hindu and Buddhist religions. These stories all belong to a period much earlier than 1299 A.D. when Bengal was conquered.

We may still mention a fourth, viz., those tales which tell us of the adventures of the heroes and prophets of Arabia and Persia, written in the vernacular of Bengal with a very large element of admixture of Arabic and Persian words. We shall not, however, concern ourselves with these, but merely touch the first and second classes of folk-tales, reserving a deservedly large space for the critical analysis of class III of these tales, which directly falls within our scope.

Class I—Satya Pir.

The first rank in the list of prophets comprised in No. I of the above classification is occupied by Satya Pir, whom one legend describes as son of a princess—probably the
daughter of Hushen Shah, the Emperor of Gour.¹ We gather this legend from two accounts of the Pîr, one by a Muhammadan poet named Arif, and another by Sankarāchārya. The manuscript of Sankarāchārya’s poem is dated 1062 of the Bengali era, i.e., 1664 A.D. But there are other legends also about Satya Pîr which I shall mention hereafter. In the 16th century, the Hindu poet Fakir Rāma Kavibhuṣaṇa, who rendered some of our folk-tales into elegant Bengali verse, gave an account of Satya Pîr in animated poetry, and since then many of our poets have sung eulogies of this deified Pîr in Bengali. Gradually, however, the Muhammadan element was totally ignored or eliminated from this tale and Satya Pîr became in the hands of our Hindu poets, Satyanārayan or Viṣṇu himself, of the Hindu pantheon, deriving all his glories from the texts of the Rvākhanda of the Skanda purāṇa. Some of our greatest poets have written adulatory verses in honour of this deity, who has now become a Hindu god in plain dhuti and chāḍara of the Bengalis, throwing off his Muhammadan’s trousers and Fakir’s loose mantle. And such we find him in the works of Bhāratachandra and in the magnificent poem called the Harilīla by Jayanārayaṇa Sen who flourished in the 18th century. We have come across

¹ The Bengali Encyclopædia—The Viśva Koṣa, Part 18, p 159, See the words—বাঙলা নাভিত্ত।
many poets in the 17th and 18th centuries writing in the strain of Fakir Rāma. But though Satyanārayana enjoys a great popularity among the rural people of Bengal and though he is divested of his Muhammadan elements and is now a Hindu god in every respect, yet curiously the offering of flour and milk mixed with banana and sugar, that he receives at the hands of his worshippers, is not called bhoga, a name by which such offerings are generally called in the Hindu temples, but shinā, a name given to offerings by Muhammadan worshippers. This certainly reminds one of that exotic element which the Brahmin priests have always tried to eliminate from their religious rites and functions, but which in the present case has been allowed to remain as if by oversight.

Many of the songs in praise of Satya Pīr have been written by Muhammadans themselves. Some of these breathe a catholicity of views which doubtless accounts for their being appreciated by Hindus and Muhammadans alike. One of these poems was written some time ago by Krṣṇahari Dāsa, about whom nothing is known; but it appears to me that though the writer’s name is Hindu, he was a Muhammadan; for he begins by invoking the aid of Allāh and gives an account of the Vehest and of the prophet in the devotional spirit of a devout Muhammadan. The poem is printed in the right Arabic style,
beginning from where our books end and ending where our books begin. The language has also a considerable admixture of Persian and Arabic words. This work which runs over 250 pages, Royal 8vo, was printed at the Garanhata Bengal Roy press, and is generally sold in Muhammadan book-shops. The name of the book is Satya Pir or the story of Sandhyāvatī. It begins with an account of a Rāja named Maya-Dānava, who took it into his head to imprison and oppress all Muhammadan fakirs who visited his capital. This was reported to Allah in Vehest by the angel Gabriel, and the matter engaged the earnest consideration of His Divine Majesty. It was eventually decided by the counsel of the Rasul, that Chāndbibi (who lived in Vehest) should be ordered to be born on the earth in fulfilment of a prophecy which had for long ages been current in the Vehest, that Satya Pir would be born on the earth in the womb of Chāndbibi, in order to redress all human ills in the Kaliyuga. Chāndbibi was thus by Divine commandment born as Sandhyāvatī, and she remained a maid all her life. Satya Pir was born of her womb by Divine will; and was nourished by a tortoise while an infant. As he grew up he gradually began to show his superhuman powers. There are many heroic achievements related of him in this interesting poem, and not the least of which is his encounter with Mansingh. This
brings us to a definite historical time; and as we have already noticed another story which says that Satya pîr was the son of Hushen Shah's daughter, the two accounts practically assign the same point of time to Satya pîr's birth. It will not, therefore, be out of mark to say that the origin of the Satya pîr cult is to be looked for in the 16th century. Satya pîr in the poem of Krişnâhari Dās, whom we suspect to have been a Muhammadan, though he retains his Hindu name, described his deified prophet as having in his hand a long stick called the āṣā; his hair is knotted, and on his forehead is a large sandal mark; in his left hand he carries a flute; he has sacred threads on his breast and these are golden; he wears the ochre-coloured cloth of a yogi and has a chain for belt. The only Muhammadan element in this description is this chain which a fakir is often-times seen to wear round his waist.

An interesting story is told of Satya pîr and of his power to help the honest people that adhere to him in times of distress, by one Oazid Ali. I give a summary of this story below.

In Chandan-nagar, in the district of Hooghly there lived a merchant named Jayadhara who had three sons. Their names were Madana, Kāmadeva and Sundara. The merchant at the
time of his death called his two sons Madana and Kāmadeva to his presence, and desired them to take particular care of his youngest son Sundāra. They promised to do so. On the death of their father, the two brothers started on a sea-voyage leaving Sundara in the charge of their wives Sumati and Kumati. As the three brothers had lost their mother long ago, and Sundara was a young boy and orphan, his brothers made all sorts of arrangement for his education and domestic comforts, before leaving home. The author here gives a description of the sea-voyage of the brothers detailing among other things the particulars about the route to the sea from Chandan-nagar.

The wives of the brothers, however, were no human beings, but witches. Every night they cast their spell on Sundara which made him sleep soundly till the morning, and doing this they left home and ascended a tree which by their spell moved fast in the air and carried them to Kāynur (Assam) which was their native place. Sundara knew nothing of their doings, for when he awoke in the morning, he found his sisters-in-law at home as usual; for they returned home by the same vehicle before the dawn, every day. One night when Sundara slept quietly in his bed, Satya Pīr appeared in the room and made a sign by which the spell of the witches was broken and he awoke. He
found that the sisters-in-law were not at home, so he spent the rest of the night in great anxiety and fear. At the dawn of the day the witches left aside their own forms and returned home in those of human beings, Sundara took them to task for leaving the house at night and they were very much frightened lest he should report this to their husbands on their return. They were, however, shrewd enough to conceal their mental confusion and produced some pleas for explaining their absence at night. They then fed him better than on other days, and, when he fell asleep in the night, went to the river-side and worshipped Kālī with incense, flowers, and sandal. They wanted the boon of killing their brother-in-law and the power was granted to them by Kālī. They returned home vaunting between themselves that being witches of Kāynur they could put men to death and restore them to life if they so wished. They then cast their spell on the sleeping youth who vomited blood and died in their presence. Before death, he had asked of Sumati and Kumati a cup of water for quenching his thirst, but they smiled and ridiculed him in his agonies, and looked at him, all the while, with their malignant eyes. When the young Sundara, who was exceedingly handsome, died, they carried his body to a forest and left
it there to be eaten by jackals. Now Satya Pīr, who was at that time in the company of his brother Amin, felt uneasy and perceived through his all-seeing eyes what had happened, he came to the spot and restored the dead youth to life; for Sundara was one of his most devoted servants. The youth, on getting back his life, said, "No more shall I enter a house in which my sisters-in-law are witches. They will torture me and kill me again; let me follow you and serve you the rest of my life. You have been my life-giver, and there can be no higher gratification of my soul than being permitted to offer my humble services to you." But Satya Pīr insisted on his return home, saying, "Take my word, if they do you any harm, I shall forthwith come to your rescue." He was thus obliged to come back; the sisters-in-law, who seeing him revived felt a thrill of horror in the heart of their hearts, outwardly showed no sign of their feelings, and received him with kindness. In the night, however, they put their heads together to devise means for killing him. This time they took a sharp knife and cut his throat with it. They then cut his body into seven parts and carried the parts in a bag to a forest, where they buried each of these in a different place. The scrutinising eyes of Satya Pīr, however,
saw the foul deed through all its stages. He secured the parts and restored the murdered youth to life. The disconsolate youth could by no means be persuaded, this time, to return home; so the Pir took him to a tree and ordered him to ascend it and keep himself concealed in one of the branches thickly overgrown with leaves. Now the witches had this time been perfectly satisfied that even the god Satya Pir could not have possibly found out the parts of Sundara's body and restored him to life. In this hope they were confirmed by the fact that Sundara did not return home that night. They had in the meantime heard that the princess of Käynur would elect a bridegroom from amongst her suitors that very night, and there would be consequently a great festivity in the king's palace there; so they resolved to go there and witness the ceremony, relieved as they were from all anxieties about their brother-in-law whom they now took for dead once for all. They came to the self-same tree where Sundara lay hidden, and ascending its top, cast their spell on it; the tree moved in lightning's speed through the air and reached Käynur in the twinkling of an eye. One of the sisters had remarked on ascending the tree, "sister, why does the tree seem heavy this day?" But the other made light of it and no further notice was taken. After the
Sundara also got down and Satya Pir led him to the Hall where the princes were assembled, from amongst whom the king’s daughter would elect her bridegroom. Sundara took his seat among the princes and Satya Pir, whom the king’s daughter also worshipped daily, privately instructed her to offer the garland of flowers reserved for the bridegroom to Sundara. The princess was right glad to do so, as Sundara was the handsomest youth in that assembly. In the night Sundara slept with the princess in the same room, but towards the last part of the night, he felt very uncomfortable at the thought that his sisters-in-law would return home by means of the flying-tree and he would be left alone in the palace of the Kāynur king; so having none of his own people there, he would be taken for a vagabond, and the princess would be ridiculed for her choice. He therefore resolved to return home with the two witches; but before he left his wife, he wrote in her apron all particulars about himself, expressing his wish that, should she feel miserable at parting with him, she might go to Chandan-nagar with her royal father’s permission. He thus came back to the tree and unperceived by his sisters-in-law, hid himself in one of the leafy branches. A few moments
after the witches also came there, and ascended the top of the tree which moved under their spell towards the city of Chandan-nagar. They alighted from the tree on reaching the city and Sundara followed them. What was their dismay, rage and vexation when they saw their brother-in-law return home in sound health and excellent spirit.

They now resolved to get rid of him by some means other than assassination. In the night they tied a charm with the hair of the youth, which effected his transformation to a Suka (a bird). This done, they took the bird to a great distance from home and let it fly in a dense jungle. When the hunters came they caught the bird and carried it to the sea-shore for selling it to some merchant.

Transformed into a bird. Just at that time Madana and Kāma Deva, two brothers of Sundara, were returning home with their ships laden with riches. One of the brothers said “Look there, a hunter goes with a Suka bird. I remember that my brother Sundara had asked me to get a Suka for him and it is such a beautiful bird! I shall purchase it at any cost for my dear brother.” The price was settled at one thousand rupees and the brothers took the bird with them little suspecting that it was their dear brother himself transformed into that shape by the spell cast on him by their wicked wives.
Meantime the princess of Kāynur awoke in the morning and was greatly alarmed to find that the bridegroom was not in the room. The whole palace was in a state of agitation over the mysterious disappearance of the merchant’s son. They now discovered the writings on the apron of the princess, who insisted on her royal father’s giving her permission to go to Chandan-nagor in quest of her husband. Several ships were made ready by the order of the king and the princess was on board the show-ship with her maids. The ships were laden with rich dowries and it took them several days to reach Chandan-nagor, and when they did so, the witches tried to turn her out on various pretenses. But she preferred to stay at her husband’s house in spite of all dissuasions; for Satya Pīr in the shape of a white fly had instructed her to stay there.

The brothers Madana and Kāmadeva arrived at the city a few days after. They were greatly grieved to hear from their wives a story about Sundara (which they had fabricated) to the effect that Sundara’s character had grown very bad after their departure; he mixed with bad women and wandered away from home for the last two months; they could not get a clue as to his whereabouts though they had tried
their best; a woman had in the meantime come to their home calling herself a princess and wife of Sundara; but of this marriage they knew nothing. The brothers loved Sundara very dearly and their minds were filled with grief at this report. They joined their tears with those of the princess whom they took to be Sundara's wife inspite of the insinuations made against her by Sumati and Kumati in their report. The princess was presented with the bird Suka which the brothers had brought for Sundara. She wept as she caressed the bird affectionately thinking it to be a thing which rightly belonged to her husband. One day as she touched the head of the bird, she discovered something tied with its crest. This was the spell of the witches by which they had changed Sundara into a bird. Instantly, as the spell was removed, her husband assumed his own shape, and stood before her. He told her all about the witchcraft of his sisters-in-law which had changed him into a bird, but whispering something into her ears, asked her to tie the charm again with his forelock and not to noise about the matter. She did as she was bid and Sundara became a bird again. Next day she invited her two brothers-in-law to a dinner. She said that she would cook the meal herself to serve them. They came to dine
at the usual hour but were surprised to find three seats and three sets of golden plates and cups with food before them. They were only two; who was the third one invited? The princess appeared before them at this stage and said "You two are here, but where is your youngest brother gone? Call him to dine with you." The brothers thought that the princess' head had gone wrong owing to her grief, and they wept at what she said, and would not touch the meal. But the youngest lady of the house insisted on their calling their brother aloud and asking him to come and dine with them. Weeping they called out for their brother, only for quieting one whose brain, they thought, had gone out. But she had removed the charm from the bird's head and as soon as Sundara, who was himself again, heard the call of his brothers, he came out and joined them. Their happiness knew no bounds at meeting one whom they had given up for lost. After the dinner Sundara told the story of her sisters-in-law and convinced his brothers that they were witches by many proofs. Upon this they ordered a big hole to be dug in their courtyard and told their wives that as robbers were reported to infest that locality, they meant to put all their riches in a secure place under-ground and they had thus made a deep hole in the
court-yard of their house. The two wives eagerly wanted to see the hole which would contain the wealth of the family. But as they stood near it in an inclining posture to look down into it they were pushed down from behind; and as they fell into the pit, it was immediately filled up with earth and they were thus buried alive. The two brothers next married two very accomplished and beautiful girls of Kàynur, and we need not say that in the marriage settlements the princess had taken an active part. A *sinni* on a very grand scale was offered to Satya Pîr for befriending the family in their distress.

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The story of another deified saint.

Another saint who has also been deified by the Hindus and Mahomedans alike, second only to Satya Pîr in popular esteem—whose achievements and deeds have been extolled in many rural legends of Bengal—is Mânîk Pîr, a Mahomedan Fakir. Among many works written about this saint we shall confine ourselves to the account given of him by Munshi Pijiruddin.

Gaza and Mânîk were the twin-sons of Saha Kamaruddin by Dudh Bibi. The Saha was in
prosperous circumstances, and his wife Dudh Bibi was a remarkable beauty. The twin sons were very handsome, and Hirā, the maid-servant of the house, one day told her mistress Dudh Bibi that she should be thankful to God for giving her such lovely babies. But Dudh Bibi said "the babies are handsome because I am handsome; don't you see they are exact copies of myself? where do you find the grace of God in it? If I and my dear husband live, we shall have many more children like these." Hirā did not like this reply, but did not dare contradict this blasphemous speech. But God Almighty heard all that she said and was wroth. Gabriel, by divine command, was appointed to punish the wicked Dudh Bibi who had belittled his Divine Majesty. She got a severe fever and Saha Kamaruddin, when advised by Hirā to pray to God for her recovery, said "I shall cure the fever by my own power and by the help of the physicians." Allah heard the boast and was wroth. Gabriel by his command afflicted him also with fever. Kamaruddin went in quest of a physician and Satan led him to a wine-shop. He drank profusely at the Evil One's instigation, came home and gave some wine to his wife also. This caused an aggravation of their disease and they
gradually lost their wealth and were reduced to poverty. When verging on starvation they found themselves compelled to sell Mānik, one of their twin sons, only five years old, to a man named Badarjanda, a merchant, for ten rupees.

Now Badarjanda, making over the beautiful child to the care of his wife Surath Bibi, went to a distant country for trade, and came back home after 12 years. By this time Mānik had grown to be a handsome youth, and Badarjanda on returning home found his wife in the company of the handsome-looking young man whom he could not recognise to be the child that he had bought for ten rupees before he had left home. He called in question the propriety of his wife’s conduct in receiving an unknown young man into the house with familiarity. And in spite of his wife’s reminding him of his having made over the child to her charge when he was only five, and of her having nursed and brought him up ever since that time as her own son, the infuriated merchant put the youth into a wooden box and set fire to it. Mānik prayed to Almighty Allah to save him from the danger, and He took compassion on the innocent youth and sent Gabriel to render the help he needed. The fire burnt not the box
though it was fed by oil; and finally when the fire was extinguished the wooden box was found intact. But what was the astonishment of Badarjanda when on opening the box he found Mānik in good health and spirits in the attitude of prayer like a second Prahlāda of the Hindu legends. Surath Bibi, whose grief had known no bounds, for she had loved Mānik as her son, now came with open arms to receive the youth, and Badarjanda himself felt greatly repentant for his act. But Mānik said, “No more, dear parents, for, though I am not your son by birth, I have always looked upon you with the affection which only a child may feel for his parents. No more shall I stay in this world to suffer miseries from which even innocence cannot escape. The Lord has shown His mercy to me, and Gabriel has lighted the torch to guide my path of life; I belong to them and to none else.” Saying so he took a staff in his hand, and put on the ochre-coloured cloth of an ascetic and saying “Blessed be the name of Allah” left the house as a mendicant. God took mercy on him and gave him supernatural powers.

From that time he gave many proofs of his miraculous power. He did so first of all in the house of a Rājā whose queen Ranjanā had treated him rudely. He had gone to the palace for begging alms but the queen had turned him out
and when the Fakir had spoken true words without flattery, the angry queen ordered one of her maids to kill him on the spot by a stroke of her sword. The weapon however did not do any harm to the Fakir but killed the maid-servant who wielded it. The Fakir disappeared from the spot after having pronounced a curse on the queen. The curse was that the queen would wander in the forests for twelve years, forsaken by all and suffer great miseries. As a matter of course the queen suffered all that the prophet had said, and was eventually restored to her good fortunes by Mānik Piṅ’s kindness, whom she had propitiated by repentance and prayers. This part in the story is an exact repetition of a part of an old folktale which we find recorded in the story of Mālati Kusuma Māḷā compiled by a Muhammadan writer and also in that of Sankha Māḷā edited by Dakshināranjan Mitra Majumdar. The only difference between the above two tales and that of Mānik Piṅ, so far as this portion is concerned, is of course that the merchant’s wife (in the above two stories she is not a queen but a merchant’s wife) is restored to her former good fortunes by other agencies than the intervention of Mānik Piṅ.

The chief act of Mānik Piṅ, however, by which he revealed himself as an authorised prophet of God, is his treatment of some of the
Goālās of the city of Virāt. Here is the account (considerably abridged in translation from the original), given by Munshi Pijiruddin.

"By the command of Gabriel the, Pīr came to the house of one Kinu Ghosh in Virat Nagar. Kinu had a brother named Kānu, and they belonged to the milkman caste. A short while before the Pīr went there, the brothers had gone to their cow-shed to bring milk. Their dairy contained a considerable stock of milk, curd and butter, and they made immense profits out of their sale; so that Kinu and Kānu were noted in the city for their great wealth by the favour of the Almighty. They had besides many cows and bullocks. One of the brothers had a son, who was handsome as a cherub. Coming to the door of the house the Pīr cried aloud, "Lāi Lāhā" and called the mother of the two traders from outside. She sat inside the house, and hearing the loud call, said to a maid-servant, "Just go and see who calls me so loudly at the door." The maid-servant approached the Pīr, and asked him as to what he wanted. The Pīr, who was accompanied by his brother Gaja, said in reply, "We are Fakirs and have not tasted any food for these seven days, if you will give us some milk and curd, we shall satisfy our appetite and bless you and go away." The maid-servant reported
this to the old lady, but she instructed her to say that the brothers had gone to bring milk, and there was nothing at that moment in the house to offer them. Upon which Mānik Pīr told the maid servant, "The mistress of the house tells a lie; there are 20 lbs. of milk and 40 lbs. of curd in the house at this moment." The maid-servant reported it again to her mistress, who became angry and said, "Why should we be tormented in this way early in the morning when we have not yet commenced our domestic duties. If the prophets can say what is in the house and what is not, without seeing with their own eyes, why do such big people wear rags and live by begging?" Saying so she came out and asked "Why do you not believe my statement that there is nothing in the house to offer you?" Mānik Pīr said, "There are 20 lbs. of milk and 40 lbs. of curd in the house. Why do you tell a lie?" The old woman was very angry and said, "Let me see how truthful you are. There stands a cow, milk it as much as you like, and satisfy your hunger." Now the cow the old woman showed to the Fakirs was barren, having never given birth to a calf, but by the help of Gabriel and the will of Almighty God Mānik Pīr touched the nipples of the animal and profuse quantities of milk came out to the wonder of the old lady and her maid-servant. When, however, he wanted a pitcher, the old woman gave him one
which leaked in a hundred places, but the Pir filled that pitcher and several others which had similar holes at the bottom with milk, and not a drop was lost. As Mānik Pir milked the cow, two of her nipples gave milk and two butter, and seven big pitchers were filled with these. The old woman carried them to her house and did not give a drop of them to Mānik or his brother Gaja. Sanakā, her daughter-in-law and wife of Kinu Ghosh, said, "How is it that not only did you not give any food to the Fakirs from the house, but you have taken away all the milk that they have got by their miraculous power?" The angry mother-in-law exclaimed, "You call it miracle, that is nonsense. They secretly got the milk from their house and they have produced it here. How can it be believed that a barren cow will yield so much milk and butter? The two Fakirs are great impostors." The young wife said, "If they got it from their own home, it is their property; why then have you usurped it?" The old woman said nothing, but left the place evidently annoyed with her daughter-in-law. Now Sanakā, the good wife, took with her a small quantity of milk and offered it to the Pir and his brother. They drank milk and Mānik touched the head of the young wife and blessed her. Just at that moment the old lady came up, and very much resented the conduct of her
daughter-in-law. Not satisfied with merely scolding her, she ran out of the house and met her son Kānu Ghosh, and said, “Just come, and see your wife’s conduct. Two young Fakirs have come, and she is very jolly in their company.” Kānu Ghosh came in all haste and struck the Pīr on the head with his stick. The Pīr threw his turban on the earth and disappeared with his brother. The turban became a cobra and it stung Kānu Ghosh who fell instantly senseless on the ground. Sanakā, the good wife, was struck with great grief, her husband being taken for dead; but the Pīr took pity on her and came there in the guise of a Brahmin who professed to be a healer of snake-bite. The old woman promised him half of her property if he could restore her son Kānu Ghosh to life. But when the Brahmin actually did so, she fainted in fear lest the physician should lay claim on one half of her property. The Brahmin, who was no other than Mānik Pīr himself, went away greatly enraged at her conduct, and, as a result, the cows and bullocks of their family-dairy died in the course of a week, and all their property was destroyed. Kānu Ghosh was in great distress; his wife Sanakā told him that all this was due to his mother’s misbehaviour towards the Fakir. Kānu asked her to seek him out and propitiate
by all means. For six days Sanakā sought him, observing fast and vigil, and on the seventh day the Pīr, who had known all about her wanderings in search of him and waited only to try her patience and devotion, appeared before her. She fell prostrate before him, and prayed him to save the family from utter ruin. The Pīr came to the house and, by his blessings, the cows and bullocks that had died long ago revived and "began to cut grass with their teeth." The Ghoshes were restored to their former prosperous condition. Kānu Ghosh was highly gratified and presented the Pīr with a cow and ten bighās of rent-free land. But the Pīr said, "God Almighty has made me a Fakir. What shall I do with your presents? I do, however, accept them. But return them to you." He ordered all Goālās thenceforth to offer the first milk of a cow, which would bear a calf, to the earth. His glory had now spread far and wide, and he departed from the house of the milkmen after having blessed them.

Who this Mānīk Pīr was is a difficult problem to solve, shrouded as the account of him is in all manner of rural fiction. His own name and that of his brother are Hindu; his mother's name Dudh Bibi is also Hindu; the maid-servant of the house was Hīrā, and that is also a Hindu name. His father alone bears a Mahomedan name. From this we can only guess that he
may have been of Hindu extraction; or more probably he may have been born in a family converted from the Hindu to Islamite faith. The anecdote which describes his restoring the dead cows and bullocks to life may be a legend based upon some healing power that he possessed in regard to the diseases of the sacred animals of the Hindus. This probably explains the reason of the extraordinary respect paid to him by the rural agricultural Hindus who are worshippers of cows. But all this is a mere guess. In the legendary account that we have, he does not appear as a mortal but as one whose acts are all super-human. Inspite of all these legends, however, he is not an imaginary character and must have lived as a saint or prophet in Bengal sometime after the Muhammadan conquest. We have already noticed that a portion of an old folk-tale is now found dovetailed to the account of his life in the popular legend.

Class II. Pioneers of Islamite faith.

We now come to a consideration of the second class of the folk-legends according to our classification. These relate to the pioneers of Islamite faith, who made it the mission of their lives to carry the Koran in one hand and
the sword in the other as alternatives; those that declined to accept the former were put to the sharp edge of the latter. There are many such tales in the vernacular literature of Bengal, written by Muhammadans, in a style bearing in a very considerable degree an admixture of Arabic and Persian words. We give below the summary of a typical story—the legend of Hanif's victory over the Kafirs and his marriage with the accomplished daughter of Rājā Baruṇa.

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The story of the Princess Mallikā.

In the city of Medina, there once lived Ali, the famous wrestler. He married a far-famed beauty named Hanifā. They got a son whom they called Hanif. This son grew to be a great wrestler and hero in his youth, so much so that no one ventured to challenge him to a fight. He waged war against the 'Kafirs' and made many of them converts to Islam.

Now one day he heard of a great Hindu king named Baruṇa. It was reported that the Rājā was invincible in war, and that he had a daughter whose beauty was unmatched in the three worlds. This report inflamed the imagination of Hanif—the wrestler. He asked permission of Ali,
his father to fight the Rājā. Ali referred him to Fathema Bibi, and she again to his mother Hanifā. Fathema said that Hanifā knew everything about the Rājā, so if she granted him the permission, there could be no hindrance in the way. Hanif accordingly called on his mother and sought her permission to fight the invincible Rājā and win the hand of his handsome daughter, the princess Mallikā, after having defeated him in the open field. The mother opposed, saying that the Rājā was a very great hero and that there was every chance of Hanif being killed in the field should he try to match his strength against the Rājā. But Hanif, who was full of fire to punish the infidels, was not to be dissuaded by fear. So the mother was obliged to give him the permission.

Hanif gathered a great force. He took with him a large number of war-horses and camels outside the city of Medīna and the people of that city blessed him before he departed, saying “May you succeed in the cause of the propagation of Islam.”

Now the Rājā’s daughter Mallikā was not only the handsomest woman that lived in the world at the time, but was possessed of a herculean strength of body. She used to go a-hunting in the remotest parts of her royal father’s dominions, and kill tigers with her own
hands without using weapons. With her short sword that hung by her side, she would sometimes strike wild elephants across the root of their trunks which she would cut off with one blow. The animals turned from her, fell down and expired.

When she came of a fit age, her father thought of sending (match-makers) ghatakas all over the neighbouring countries in quest of a suitable bridegroom, whose personal qualifications and social status would be worthy of the gifted princess. But she told her father, "Not only are these qualifications required, but the prince who will seek my hand must bind himself by a promise that he will conquer me in fight. If he can do so, right glad shall I be to offer my hands to him; if not, him shall I kill with my own hands; let this be the condition, for it will preserve me from an undesirable rush of suitors." And the messengers were sent out accordingly to proclaim these conditions to the intending bridegrooms. Many a prince came and fought with Mallika and at the end was beheaded by her hands; and when a prince struck with terror fled from her presence, she would pursue him till she caught him by the hair of his head, and would indignantly cry out "You coward of a prince, you coveted my hand, here take the reward" and saying so she struck him down with her sword and killed him on the
spot. So the whole of the neighbouring kingdoms were filled with a feeling of great terror, and no prince dared to approach Baruṇa as suitor for his daughter’s hand.

Now Hanif’s messenger came to the capital of Rājā Baruṇa; he was called Umhar, the wrestler; he wore skin trousers, carried a shield of paper on his back and held a wooden sword in his hand; he had besides a bow with a quiver that had no arrows in it, and he limped as he walked. When he came to the great audience-hall of Rājā Baruṇa, he did not bow to the king, nor observe any form of courtesy current in the court. The Rājā was angry and the courtiers hissed, saying that the unmanly fellow should be punished for his folly. The messenger said “I am a servant of God—the one God who reigns supreme. I will not bend my head before a Kafir.” Then the whole court cried out “Lo, a vile Turk has come, purify the city by sprinkling holy water over it and wash the temples with cow-dung and sandal-paste. The city is defiled by his presence.” “Kill him,” “Kill him” ran the cry everywhere; but nobody could see him, being made invisible by the power of the Lord in whom he believed. He remained there unseen by others. After a short while, however, he appeared to the view of the court, and, approaching the king, gave him a blow. And when the guards again
tried to catch hold of him, he disappeared mysteriously as he had done before.

The king was perplexed and when Umhar, the messenger of Hanif, became visible again, he did not try to seize or molest him but asked what he wanted; upon this he delivered a letter from Hanif addressed to Raja Baruṇa. The letter ran thus—"You king Baruṇa, abandon your belief in false gods and goddesses and become a convert to Islam. And give your daughter Mallikā in marriage with me. If you do not do so I will come to your kingdom like a thunderbolt, destroying your temples and seizing your property, and I will take away Mallikā by force from the royal harem. So be advised, and, with the whole of the citizens accept Islam and secure your place in Behest and be on terms of amity with me."

The letter was read aloud and hisses of indignation and cries of "Kill the upstart, the vile Turk" was heard all around. The Rāja whose face showed the deep purple of anger, exclaimed, "Messenger, tell your chieftain, the vile Turk, that if he comes with his force here, he will find his burial here, and none of his followers will be allowed to go back to his native country. With my whole city I will observe fast for three days for expiating the sin of seeing you, a javana, in this city." The messenger
departed, and in the meantime the king said to his courtiers, "The Turks will be in this city in a short time; they will desecrate the temples and throw cow-bones and beef in the sacred places. We cannot allow it. Let us go forth with our army to the open ground in the outskirts of our city. There shall we meet the foe."

Saying so he ordered a general march of his army to a place 20 miles off from the capital. He had 10,000 trained elephants, and an immense number of foot-soldiers, besides his invincible cavalry, dreaded by the kings of other countries. An extensive field was fixed as the battle-ground where flags were raised in several spots with the name of the King Baruna inscribed on them. Hanif met him in that field. In the morning of the first day with the sound of the war-drums his soldiers marched to meet those of the Rāja. Hanif's general Umhar did great havoc in the enemy's ranks. In the evening when the drums sounded the signal to close the battle Rāja Baruṇa called his generals and ordered them to assemble together at one point the next day, with elephants carrying maces by their trunks and with chargers going ahead of them; and thus united, to make a rush at the enemy and crush them by sheer dint of
their number. "Desultory fight at several points" his Majesty said "will do us no good. All, all must attack simultaneously." The next day this was done but the general for that day on the side of Hanif was Ali Akbar, whose nerves seemed to be made of steel. He made even greater havoc in the Rājā's army, than Umhar had done the day before. On the third day the Rājā himself led the army and fought with Hanif a hand to hand fight, but could not maintain his position, so that in the evening he had to make a precipitous retreat with his army and come back to his capital, losing the finest of his cavalry, a large number of elephants and foot-soldiers.

But when Mallikā, the princess heard of this disaster, she trembled in anger, thinking of the insult and loss done to her country by the Turks. She armed herself then and there, and rode a horse, the speed of which could be compared to that of the wind alone.

She met Hanif in the field and cried out, "You vile Turk, do you know that with my own hands I have beheaded many a prince, so that young men of the neighbouring aristocracy shudder at my name for fear? You have come with a vile proposal and know not my lineage and qualifications. Here do I spit at your proposal. But I will not leave this
field, until I have killed you with my own hands as I have done others.” Hanif smiled and said, “Better would be your place in the harem, from which I could pick you up as one plucks a flower from the garden. Your father would have been well-advised to deliver you to me; for I am really sorry for the sanguinary battle that raged here for the last three days and the loss of lives caused by it. Be advised, read the kalma, give up ghost-worship; you will be happy in this world, and, following Islam, you will secure permanent happiness in Behest.”

The princess did not wait to listen to a further eloquent discourse from the enemy, but hit him on the head with a dart which tore his turban and gave a rude shock to his head that reeled for a moment. Hanif felt in the force of the dart that his antagonist, though looking like a tender flower, really possessed a masculine strength and might prove to be more than a match for him. For the whole day they fought; they fought unceasingly with guns, arrows, spears and maces, but the hero of Medina could not conquer his lotus-eyed opponent. And when the war drum in the evening announced the close of all action for the day, Hanif returned to his camp with eyebrows knit in wild astonishment over what he had experienced during the day and for which he was not prepared. He was
determined to gain the woman for his bride; and love evermore gave him strength to strike where he would fain pay the tribute of worship. The next day the fight was resumed. The princess rose from her bed first, came to the field first and was the first to challenge her antagonist. That day Hanif killed the horse of Mallikā, but she rode another horse and showed no sign of losing heart. For twenty days they fought, still Hanif could not conquer her. ’She looked soft like a shiri-sha flower, but at the time of battle seemed like a marble statue on whom the unceasing gust of rain-like arrows and gun-shots left no trace. On the twenty-first day Hanif said, “Look here, princess, you have fought enough and a liar shall I be, if I do not say that I have admired your strength no less than your beauty, both of which are more than what I have seen in others. To-day I offer you a challenge, which should you accept, the close of this fight might be expedited. Here do I lie on the ground with my back above and hands clasped below. If you have strength enough, fair princess, raise me up from the ground and throw me away as one would do a ball. If you cannot, place yourself in the same position and I will lift you up and throw you away.”’ Mallikā, the undaunted woman, accepted the
challenge. Hanif placed himself on the ground with his back above and hands clasped below his breast. And she tried all her strength to lift him up. She could not do it first time; her face reddened with toil; she tried a second time, and on her brows stood big drops of sweat, but she failed to move that body lying like a hard block of stone. And she tried thrice, she applied all her might; not an inch she could move him and she stood exhausted and ashamed failing in her attempt. Then she placed herself in the self-same position, with her back above and breasts below, and between them and the earth she clasped her both hands in firm fists. Hanif seized her body, covered with armour, and applying all his strength threw it up with such a force that for a moment she looked like a ball high in the air, and then fell. The fall would have reduced her to atoms, had not Hanif, whose love for her had not ceased but grown from day to day, caught her half-way and placed her on his knees. With a look of tender love he watched her, for she had fainted, and sprinkled scented water on her eyes. As she recovered her senses, she found herself in the embrace of a Turk, and had no other alternative left than to consent to be his bride.

Now the King Baruṇa had heard of this disaster and stood at the main gate of his
capital, determined to oppose the aggressive Islamite force and to die rather than yield. Ali Akbar, the general of Hanif, after a severe fight caught hold of him and brought him before his master, bound in chains. Hanif said "I have no mind to molest you further.

Much blood has been shed and I will not willingly do a cruel act to the parent of my consort. I charge you to accept Islam, to demolish the temples of evil-spirits that you have erected in your city, calling them gods. I charge you further to sanction my marriage with your daughter and tell your citizens to read the kalma, erect mosques and do as our Mollas bid. If you will do all this, I shall restore you to your kingdom and revere you as father; or else you know by bitter experience what will befall your kingdom."

And the king Baruna did all this, not daunted by fear, nor for saving his life, nor for any love for Islam, but for the shame that his beloved daughter had accepted a Turk for husband. The shame of this would be on him, even if he gained victory, and make him an outcast and given up by his kith and kin.
This tale so often told in the vernacular verse, has been retold by Munshi Aminuddin—a native of Kharda, though he tells us that his version is the first. Hanif’s adventurous life, his heroism in the field and carrying off of handsome girls from Hindu homes, have formed the themes of many vernacular poems. We have the story of his love with Jaygun in animated Bengali verse, another with Samrita-bhāna and a third with Sonadhān. These poems show much fire of enthusiasm for the Islamite propaganda which characterised the 11th and 12th century Moslem zealots. Love was subservient to the zeal for propagation of faith and iconoclasm. These legends and popular tales, our Muhammadan brethren derived from other sources than the indigenous, and the contrast between these and the Hindu and Buddhistic stories, which are still found current amongst Muhammadans, is obvious; the latter are characterised by quiet virtues and martyrdom at the altar of domestic duties.

Along with these tales of heroism and love-making of the pioneers of Islamite conquests, may be classed historical ballads and songs which have formed a part of the popular literature of this country. These have not reached the level of decent literature owing
to the crude language in which they are couched being composed mostly by the illiterate rural people. But some of these songs contain authentic accounts of some local historical events, or sketches of some noted village-chiefs. Such for instance is the Chaudhuri's Lārāyi, a book written in the 18th century, describing a skirmish between two zemindars of the Noakhali district. But "Samsher Gāzir Gāna," a ballad of Samsher Gāzi, is the most remarkable of this class of songs. There is not much of exaggeration in the tale, and the author whose name I do not find in the book must have taken a good deal of notes and collected considerable historical materials before he began to write the book.

It was written not long after 1752 A.D. when the Gāzi was murdered and has lately been published by my friend Maulvi Lutful Khabir from Noakhali. The book discloses a condition of the country that existed before the battle of Plassy, showing how, with the decadence of the central Moghul power at Delhi, the local chiefs tried to assert their independence in various parts of the country. But they could not often cope with the gangs of robbers and leaders of bandits who infested the land, taking advantage of the relaxation in administration—the natural sequel of the fall of a great monarchy.
The Gāzi was the son of a poor man, who verging on the point of starvation with his family, had left his native home in the village of Kachūa, in the Tipperah district and came to a place called the Daksın sika—further south. Here Piru, the Gāzi’s father, stole a few long gourds when he saw no way to provide food for his son and nephew Sadi. But he was caught in the act, and taken before the zemīndar Nasiruddin. Here he made a confession and told the story of the extreme poverty from which his family suffered. The boys were without any food whatever for two or three days and on point of death, and seeing no way out from this peril, he had taken away seven long gourds without the permission of their owner. The pathetic story moved Nasir, who paid the owner the price of the gourds, and made provision for Piru’s family.

Nasir Mahammad, the Zemīndar had ten anna shares in the extensive zemīndary of Pargannah Daksın sika; the remaining six annas belonged to Ratan Chaudhury, a native of Khandal in Tipperah. Nasir’s father Sada Gāzi, who was an ordinary peasant, had found
valuable stones in a copper vessel under the earth when ploughing land. He took the vessel to Jagat Mānikya, King of Tipperah, and made him a present of this valuable property. Whereupon the Rājā was very much pleased with him and gave him the zemindary of Dakṣin sika. Nasir Mahammad, after his father's death, inherited this property.

Here under the patronage of Nasir, Piru-throve well. His son Samser Gāzi and nephew Sādi read in the same school with the sons of the zemindar, who treated them with affection and kindness. In this school the teachers were struck not only by the proof of the singular intellectual power and manly valour showed by the Gāzi but by the extraordinary physical strength which his cousin Sādi displayed; this appeared more than human to everyone; for, it is said, Sādi strangled a big tiger to death without using any weapon. About this time the zemindar trusted the Gāzi with the collection of rents of his landed property at Kud Ghat. Here the Gāzi found a considerable number of robber-gangs looting the property of the ryots and doing many other acts of violence upon them. He collected a force and held these gangs in check for some time; and at last his cousin—Sādi defeated them in several skirmishes and brought them fully under
his control. The robbers were allowed their lives and freedom on two conditions, viz.: (1) that they would not further do any act of oppression on the ryots of Nasir Mahammad, (2) that they should pay half the amount of the wealth they might loot elsewhere, to the Gāzi and acknowledge him as their leader. They agreed to do so and the Gāzi came in possession of extensive riches by this means. He and his cousin Sādi found their position quite impregnable in that locality. And being inspired by one Goda Hossain Khondakar, whom they regarded as their religious guide and preceptor, they now aspired at far greater achievements than what the sons of poor men generally dream of. The Khondakar had prophesied that the Gāzi would one day become the King of Tipperah.

Nasir Mahammad, the zemindar, who had treated them with such kindness and under whom they still served, had a beautiful daughter and Sādi suggested that the Gāzi should stand a suitor for her hand. But the Gāzi said, it was impossible. Nasir’s family-status was much higher, and their own status in society was low. Secondly they were picked up as street-beggars by Nasir and given education and position merely out of charitable considerations. A proposal like the one suggested would be highly offensive. They hold the robber-gangs in check and become their head. The disastrous proposal of marriage.
to Nasir and prove to the world that the Gāzi and his cousin were ungrateful. But Sādi persisted, and the Gāzi, half in fear and half in anxiety to please Sādi, sent a messenger to his master proposing the marriage. Nasir took it as a regular insult and felt that the kindness he had shown to the Gāzi and his family was thrown away to ungrateful men, who might afterwards prove his deliberate enemies; a proposal like that could not, he thought, have come from one who had, not harboured some further base ambition in his heart. So he instantly sent men to behead Gāzi and his cousin, so that he might "see their heads rolling in a pool of blood with his own eyes." The Gāzi had a scent of the order beforehand, and with his cousin fled from Nasir's jurisdiction and went to live in the estates of Noor Mahammad, the Talukdar of Pargannah Kachua. The latter gave him permission to build a house in his city on receipt of Rs. 500 as nazar from the Gāzi. Nasir Mahammad, however, pursued the Gāzi with a dogged persistence, and Sādi in his turn was determined to kill Nasir should an opportunity offer itself. The Gāzi had many hot discussions with his cousin on this point as he was not willing to be treacherous to his old master. Sādi said that not only would it be foolish to excuse one who was now their sworn enemy but
it would be positively unsafe to allow him to live, should they themselves care for their own lives. In the course of a dogged pursuit on the part of each side to find an opportunity to kill the other, Sādi's spies brought the report one day, that Nasir was in an unguarded condition at a place named Banspara. Sādi sent messengers to him with many presents, again proposing the marriage of the Gāzi with Nasir's daughter. The latter was beside himself in rage when he read the letter of Sādi, which was deliberately written to provoke him. He ordered his men to throw away the presents in his presence and kick out the bearers. When this was being done, Sādi, who had also accompanied the messengers with an army and lay at some distance, came forward and attacked him all unguarded, and then and there despatched him with his sword. A pitched battle was fought between the Gāzi's army led by Sādi and those of Nasir's sons. But the latter were defeated and obliged to beat a retreat, and the Gāzi came in possession of Nasir's landed property. He made extensive charities and granted remission of rents and by these means secured the good will of the ryats there and became very popular. Meantime Nasir's sons had applied to the King of Tipperah for help, reporting the murder of their father and other violent acts of the Gāzi. The king was very angry and sent 3,000 soldiers
with his Uzir Jaydeva at the head in order to
punish the rebel. Jaydeva was
assisted by his two generals—
Shobhā Datta and Indra Mandal.

The Gāzi lived at a fortified
place in Chagalmuri which was surrounded by a
deep ditch. The Uzir laid siege to this fort. But
in the night when the Uzir lay asleep in his
camp, the Gāzi with the help of some local
people entered the camp like a thief and carried
the Uzir off to his fort. This was done so quickly
that the Rājā’s army could scarcely offer any
resistance. Now by the Gāzi’s order, the Uzir
was placed at the top of the gate of the fort, so
that when the king’s army attacked it, they
could not shoot arrows or guns lest they hit the
Uzir. The fort was besides, as already stated,
surrounded by a ditch which the army could not
easily cross, owing to the volley of shot the Gazi
had opened. The Uzir called out to his soldiers
from the top of the gate and
ordered them to desist from
fight. “If you shoot, there is
the risk of myself being hit; if you succeed, the
Gāzi will cut my head off. In either case my
death seems certain; so go back and report this
to the king and do as he will bid.” There was
therefore no alternative for his army than to
retire. As soon as the king’s army had gone
away the Uzir’s chains were removed and the
Gāzi fell at his feet and gave him a nazār of Rs. 500. A Brahmin cook was engaged to prepare a rich meal for the minister to whom the Gāzi made many apologies for fighting against the Rājā. He attended the Uzir as a servant does his master, ministering to his comforts in every respect. He implored the Uzir to persuade the king to grant him a sanad for Nasir’s landed estates and give him besides the lease of Chakla Roshanabad for an annual rent of Rs. 10,000. The Gāzi said “If you can make the king agree to this, here is a thousand rupees for you as my humble present to you to spend on perfumes. But if your king does not agree, I shall cut you to pieces and present the relics of your body to his Majesty.” The Uzir wrote a letter to the king stating that the Gāzi behaved very well, and that he was the fit person for taking the administration of the zemindary in hand, his efficiency being undoubted. If he assumed a hostile attitude, he might prove dangerous to the State. With this remark the Uzir recommended his Majesty to grant the Gāzi his prayer. He also reminded the king of his own peculiar condition, for the Gāzi would surely kill him in the case of denial.

The Rājā of Tipperah grants him lease of landed estates of Nasir and of Chakla Roshanabad.

The Rājā held an advisory council and finally decided to grant the prayer of the Gāzi. A sanad was issued accordingly granting
the Gāzi the lease of Chakla Roshanabad on an annual rent of Rs. 10,000. The sanad came to the Uzir and as soon as it was presented to the Gāzi he offered his promised reward of Rs. 1,000 to him. To the prime minister he sent a nazār of Rs. 300. He, besides, sent to the Dewans and Mukhshuddis of the court a sum of Rs. 400. Those messengers who had carried the sanad from the chief city got Rs. 10 each. He also submitted to the king a nazār of Rs. 1,000. The Uzir now returned to the capital and the officers of the king who had been with the Uzir thus reported, “Your Majesty has now appointed the fit man in the fit place. The Gāzi is a very powerful man with handsome features; his mind is liberal and his words are sweet; it is a blessedness to hear him talk; he always wears rich apparel and remains surrounded by his friends who all look resplendent. He is kind to those who seek his help, but rude to the rude. We were a fortnight with the Gāzi. He treated the Uzir with the respect that is due only to gods. Every day a goat was sacrificed for the Uzir’s dinner and the Gāzi approached him like the humblest of his servants.” The Uzir himself spoke to the king that all that the officers had said was true. “The Gāzi has killed Nasir but hunters also kill birds for no fault. If that melancholy event had not taken place there would have been no chance for the only fit man of that district to
come in and occupy the fit place." The Rājā's anger for the assassination of Nasir was thus removed, and he was well pleased with the Gāzi for his good treatment of the royal officers. The Gāzi next got the lease of Pergana Meherkul from the king for ten years on an annual rent of Rs. 8,000. He had in addition to pay a nazār of Rs. 1,000 to the king for this lease.

But the Gāzi gradually grew bolder and resolved to fight with the Rājā of Tipperah and assert his independence. With this end in view, he collected a large army, and when he thought he was sufficiently strong, stopped paying revenue to the king and declared his independence in a most defying manner. A fight ensued in which guns and cannons were freely used by both sides. It is written in the book that the Gāzi had worshipped Kali, the presiding deity of the Udaipur hills, before he declared war against the king. He had engaged a Brahmin for this purpose, and it is said that the goddess appeared to him in a dream and promised him success in his campaign. For seven days the fight continued incessantly, and on the eighth, the Rājā's army began to lose ground and towards the end of the day his Majesty left the field and made a precipitous retreat towards Manipur. The Rājā of Manipur gave him shelter in this distress. His nephew Lakṣmana Manikya
was placed by the Gāzi on a mock-throne built with bamboos. The Gāzi thus became master of the field. His reign was characterised by justice, liberality and foresight, and the Emperor of Delhi gave him a sanad confirming him in his high position. In every department of administration his great personality made its mark. He fixed the scales of measurement and weight, and the prices of goods. We find that a grocer was obliged to take up the standard weight of a maund to be 82 shikkas; the price of oil was fixed at 3 annas per seer and that of ghee (clarified butter) at four annas. He placed Abdul Rajjak, one of his generals, in charge of the collection of rents on the Hill-side; the administration of Udaipur and Agartala was also entrusted to this general. The Gāzi kept to himself the monopoly of cotton in his territories, and that of salt that came by the Ganges and the Feni. He established rest-houses where guests were entertained from the royal-store, and a boarding school where he made provision for a hundred students. The principal of this institution was a blind scholar of Shondwip who taught the Koran; He was assisted by a Moulvi, brought from Hindustan, who taught Arabic and another professor from Jugdia who taught
Bengali. The classes remained open from 6 A.M. to 10 A.M. and from 12 A.M. to 4 P.M.

When the Gazi was at the zenith of his power, his cousin Sādi began to show a feeling of jealousy towards him. The cousin was older than the Gāzi by some years and had rendered him great help in his rising to that eminence. He now, however, showed chagrin and malice in every action, so that his conduct gradually became intolerable. He publicly vaunted that the Gāzi had secured his high position merely by his assistance and declared that it was wrong on the part of the Gāzi to usurp all power to himself. Not satisfied with this, he openly demanded of the Gāzi to make over the administration to him.

“A nice arrangement it is that I should win your battles and you should enjoy the fruit: It is I that killed Nasir Mahammad and gained his property for you; the Rājā of Tipperah was beaten in the field by me. You have enjoyed this high position long enough, and now is the time for you to retire.” Sādi after this was engaged in conspiring against the Gāzi, and the latter found it unsafe to tolerate his cousin any more. He was constantly in a state of alarm that Sādi would assassinate him. So he appointed some soldiers privately who murdered Sādi.

The Gāzi’s name, as an efficient ruler, now spread far and wide; and the Nawab of Dacca,
whose ancestry was high, did not feel it beneath his rank to marry the daughter of the Gāzi to his son. The Gāzi’s charities were very extensive. We have many interesting anecdotes, related of his great physical power—as to how he killed tigers and wild boars without using weapons. An anecdote is mentioned of how two barbers Chandra and Utsava received valuable presents from him for shaving him when he was asleep. They did it so cleverly that when they cut his nails and shaved him the Gāzi’s sleep was not broken.

Now the Gāzi had once gone to travel in the Chittagong-side, and there ordered fish to be caught from some big tanks. This country belonged to Alivardi Khan, Nawab of Murshidabad, whose deputies Agā Bakhar and Sheikh Onich ruled the districts from a place called Nizamgunge. The Gāzi did not ask permission from them, nor give them any share of the fish that were caught. They took umbrage and reported to the Nawab that the Gāzi had grown very powerful, and the reason of his visit to Chittagong was probably a sinister motive—to seize and occupy some of the Nawab’s dominions in the eastern side. The Nawab treated this with contempt and said that the Gāzi was a reputed administrator of great abilities; he had caught fish from
some of the tanks of Chittagong; that was a trifle and he blamed his generals for bringing such a petty matter to his notice. The disappointed generals now outwardly professed a great friendship towards the Gāzi and invited him to a dinner at their house. The unsuspecting Gāzi went in due time, and when the dinner was over, found himself waylaid by some assassins appointed by the generals. With his wonderful dash and physical strength he kicked two of the horse men out of his way, mounted on one of their horses and speedily passed out of sight before the others could realise their situation. He was, however, surrounded by many more soldiers of Aga Bakhar and had to hide himself in a potter’s house, whence he returned home safely after an adventurous course, after many hair-breadth escapes from the pursuing enemy.

Constantly hearing reports of the Gāzi’s brave deeds, the Nawab of Murshidabad now felt that it would not be safe to encourage the growth of his power any more. So he sent a messenger asking the Gāzi to visit his capital. The Gāzi, however, was advised not to hazard such a visit. The Nawab, it is said, promised a high reward to one who would succeed in inducing the Gāzi to come to Murshidabad on a friendly visit. A Hindu sannyasi succeeded
in doing so; for, this man had so absolutely ingratiated himself into the Gāzi’s confidence that he heeded not the remonstrances of his friends and relations, but paid a visit to Murshidabad in the company of the ascetic. The Nawab received him with seeming courtesy and friendship, but one of his men, named Shamsher, killed the Gāzi when he least suspected foul-play. Thus ended the great career of Shamsher Gāzi whose name and achievements are on record in the Rajamālā—an authorised history of the Tipperah Raj—and which are very minutely described in this old rural song, published in a volume Demy 8vo. of 115 pages, by Moulvi Lutful Khabir, Sherestadar of the judge’s court, Noakhali. Even up to this time the woodmen who enter the deep forest of the Udaipur hills and strike their axe on big Shal trees there, sometimes find a large number of golden coins which the Gāzi had placed inside their trunks in the course of his plundering expeditions. The treasures were preserved in this way by the help of the carpenters, whom the Gāzi, it is said, put to death immediately after they had cleverly covered the openings in the trunks with wood and bark in his presence. This he did for fear of disclosure and of the carpenters’ appropriating the wealth to themselves.
There are many ballads and songs composed by the rural people of Bengal, Hindus and Muhammadans, which may still be found out, illuminating some of the obscure corners of the the history of Bengal. We know that the Bhātas of Sylhet used to record the leading historical and social events that transpired in this country from time to time in ballads which they had made it their profession to sing from door to door. A very stirring account of how a big zemindar was poisoned by his chief officer when the former had called upon him to submit an account of the money that he had defalcated, formed the subject of one of the Bhāta songs that we heard in our childhood. The zemindar was Babu Rājkumār Roy and his chief officer was Kishory Mahālānabis. They belonged to the village Kirtipāsā in the district of Backergunge. The song gives a vivid account of the zemindar's death in the arms of his faithful servant Baburam Bhandari, and relates to the providential retaliation that came upon the chief officer, who, trying to make his escape, fell a victim to a royal tiger of the Sundarbans. This song describes events that took place more than a hundred years hence. There are several Bhāta songs that relate to the floods which inundated particular localities of Bengal at different periods. There are besides
those that describe anecdotes of some princes and other noble men of the pre-Muhammadan period. One of such that we heard long ago related the tragic death of a young and beautiful princess, who in order to escape from a tyrant, fell into a tank and drowned herself.

These songs, which the Bhatas used to compose and sing in the countryside, have now grown out of fashion, and the descendants of these minstrels have long ceased to follow the profession of their ancestors for lack of encouragement. They kept afresh the memory of stirring events and historical episodes and of village politics that led to the subversion of the power of a particular line of aristocracy and the growth of power of new families in their stead. The simple village-folk did not care to know what transpired beyond the Himalayan ranges or Khaibar Pass, but they knew what were the historical events that occurred in the province of Bengal in those days when newspapers and journals did not bring a report of daily occurrences to their doors every day.

Classification—The Folk-tales.

We now come to treat the rural literature included in class I of our classification. This is by far the most important section and deserves a prominent and elaborate notice.
After the fall of Buddhism, the Hindus felt that the whole of their social organism should be remodelled according to their own ideas. With this object in view they took up the education of the masses in their own hands. Not only did they obliterate all history of Buddhism from the Purāṇas but the very legends and traditions of the country were changed, so that no trace of Buddhism might be found in her annals. In the temples the images of Buddha were still worshipped but the priests called him by the name of a Hindu God, such as Čiva or Viṣnu. In one place I found an image of the Buddha worshipped under the name of the feminine deity—Chandi. In the temple of Tilaṅga-chī at Benares a very glorious image of the Buddha is called Jatacakṣūka or Čiva “with knotted hair.” This ‘Jata’ or ‘knotted hair’ is nothing but the historic fig tree under which the Buddha attained his Nirvāṇa. Though the Buddha is recognised by the Vaiṣṇavas as the ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu, the Hindus did not tolerate his worship or any thing connected with Buddhism in this country, during the early days of Renaissance. The folk-tales were of course still told in the Hindu homes conveying the lofty ideal of the Buddhistic self-control and sacrifice, but the kathakas introduced the stories of Dhruba, Prahlād, Harischandra, Ekalavya and...
a hundred others from the Purāṇas, which emphasised devotion as a more potent factor in the salvation of a man than a development of his moral qualities. The Puranic stories indicated the beauty of faith and its power more than good action and self-control on which Buddhism had laid a far greater stress. So, though the rūpakathās or folk-tales still found favour in the 15th and 16th centuries, they ceased to exercise the same influence in moulding the characters of men and women that they had done in a previous age. Poor Mālanchamālā and Kānchamālā could not hold their own before Sītā, Sāvitrī and other heroines of the Puranic tales, though the characters of the former carried an undoubted fascination and showed at least an equally high ideal of womanhood.

But the best of these folk-tales are those that have for the most part yet remained unwritten. Unfortunately, many of the folk-tales which have been printed, have lost their genuine forms, their compilers have tried to embellish them by their scholarship and pedantry. The Muham-madan half-lettered Munshi as well as the Purānic exponent amongst the Hindus thought these tales to be too humble to be brought before the public in their original shape, and tried to improve upon them by introducing a high-flown classical style. The influence of Arabic and Persian, no less than that of Sanskrit,
has therefore greatly marred the simple charm of these tales.

For these seven or eight hundred years, the Mollās have not allowed the Muhammadan peasantry to accept any story or folk-tale from the Hindus, developed under Purānic influences. The whole Hindu atmosphere of Bengal has rung all this time with songs and ballads based on the Purāṇas and the Epics. The Muhammadan peasant saw the yatrā-performances in the homes of their neighbours, but they took a superficial and momentary interest in them. The kathakas gave no permission to the Muhammadan rustic to enter the circle of their audience, where recitations and songs and narrations of Purānic stories went on. The Bengali Muhammadans, however, amused themselves still with those folk-tales that had been transmitted to them from generation to generation, from times much anterior to the Muhammadan conquest.

We have got a number of these tales published by Muhammadans. They are evidently Hindu and Buddhistic in spirit, though the Hinduism to be found in them is different in many respects from the type developed by the Purānic Renaissance. They represent the earlier forms, and this I have already indicated in a previous lecture.
Here lies on my table a heap of these tales by Muhammadan writers. We have the story of Kāñchana mālā by Mahammad Munshi and published by Maniruddin Ahmad from No. 337, Upper Chitpore Road, Calcutta,—that of Madhumālā by Syed Shaha Khandakar Javedāli published from 155, Masjidbari Street, Calcutta,—of Mālanchamālā by Aizuddin Munshi and published from 337, Upper Chitpore Road,—of Shakhisonā by Mahammad Korbar Ali, published from 11, Mechuabazar Street, Calcutta,—of Çīta Vasanta by Golam Kader, published from 335, Upper Chitpore Road, Calcutta. There are besides the stories of Mālatī Kusuma, Chandrāvalī, Lajjāvatī, and lots of others which in spirit and language are quite different from genuine Muhammadan tales.

If it is urged that these tales, most of which are Buddhistic, have no reference to gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon; but are based on moral qualities which appeal to all sects of humanity and for that reason found an access into the homes of the peasantry of Bengal after their conversion to Muhammadan faith, I should say that this could never be. Why should the Muhammadan converts whogave up their old religion and accepted Muhammadan names, obliterating
all traces of their ancient faith and traditions, care to introduce the stories of Hindu princes and merchants into their zenana? After they turned Muhammadans, not even their own kinsmen amongst Hindus would visit them within their houses, with the object of telling to them the Hindu folk-tales. The women generally tell these stories, but no Hindu woman would come in contact with a Muhammadan home, its kitchen savouring of beef and chicken roasted in onion-juice, at which she shuddered. Besides it is not true that these stories do not contain references to Hindu gods and goddesses. They sometimes do. I ought to tell you here that the Hindus and Buddhists often worshipped the same gods and goddesses. So that the mere mention of a god or goddess does not indicate to which of the two religious pantheons the deity belonged. In the story of Kānchana-mālā by Mhammad Munshi we find the heroine Kānchana-mālā suffering all that a woman could, from the maltreatment of her husband, who, out of prejudice and contempt, never looked at her face. She was a remarkable beauty; but she could not show herself to her dear lord, who shut his eyes against her, following the wicked counsels of her sisters-in-law who had reported to him that her look was malignant. Despairing of gaining love from him, Kānchana-mālā prayed to the

The reference to Hindu or Buddhist gods and goddesses in these stories.
goddess Sarasvatī for taking her away from this earth, for she could bear no more. She was a nymph and wanted to go back to her father's place at Alakā. The goddess came; and Kānchana must go back to her father's home with her. But her steps were slow; she glanced at her husband and found herself unable to move—a deep affection, inspite of all bad treatment, bound her to him and how could she give up the opportunity of seeing him, though he never looked at her? She now prayed for a little time to the goddess on some pretext or other. Here are the verses which are no doubt very old—

“Oh goddess, Oh mother, wait a while, I must wear my apparel before going to father's home.”

And then again that little while passed, the apparel was worn, but she said again:

“Oh mother, Oh goddess, wait a little more.
I must wear my eight ornaments before going to father's home.”

This attachment to her lord is charming, for she secretly wept as she prayed for a little time to the goddess whom she had invoked to help

**“রহ মায়ের নুন চারি, গারের বসন আমি পরি,
আমি যাব যায়ের বাড়ী।
রহ মায়ের নুন চারি, অল্প অবকাশের পরি,
আমি যাব মায়ের বাড়ী।**
her in going to her father's home. The merchant caught a glimpse of her for the first time in his life as she passed out of sight like a flash. He had never thought that his wife was so beautiful; he was dazzled by her remarkable beauty, but it was now too late. The remorseful husband passed through great adventures and perils with hairbreadth escapes, till he reached the fairy land. The condition of gaining his wife back was to recognise her and take her by the hand from the company of her sisters, all of whom assumed the same appearance; for they were nymphs and could take any shape. How could a mortal discover the subtle difference if any existed at all? She was dancing before the god Çiva with her sisters. Rûpachând, the youthful merchant, sang a song understood by Kâñchanamâla alone:

"Dance with one hand raised, my darling, so that I may know you.
Dance, my darling, behind your sisters so that I may know you by your position.
Shut one of your eyes, darling, and dance so that I may know you."

From a mere mention of Çiva and Sarasvatî we cannot say to which pantheon, the Hindu or the Buddhistic, the deities belonged as they are common to both. There are also invocations by Kâñchana of Pârvatî and Gângâ in this story. We can cite many examples like the above, showing
that in the Muhammadan versions of the tale, the gods and goddesses of the Hindu and Buddhist mythologies have found a place as in the Hindu versions themselves. This undoubtedly proves that the stories were current amongst the Muhammadans of Bengal, before they had renounced the older religion.

The only unfortunate thing about these stories is that we have had no opportunity to hear them from Muhammadan women. In that case it could have been understood they have been preserved by the Muhammadan country-folk in their original shape. As far as the printed versions go, they have not been preserved in this way. The Munshis have evidently introduced changes into the stories on the lines of Arabic and Persian tales; and, as I have already stated, the Hindu printed versions themselves are not free from Sanskritic influence. In the story of Mālatī-kusumamālā, the heroine Mālatī goes by her Hindu name, but her husband is called Alam which is a Muhammadan name. A clear influence of Persian is in evidence in the descriptions of the King's court; the language which is Bengali, has an admixture of Urdu and Arabic. But in spite of all these exotic traces, the original spirit of the story has, to a very considerable extent, been retained. The gander, the 'rājahansa,' has been the traditional carrier of all news and a help in love matters, in the
Hindu tales ever since the time of Nala-Damayanti. And here also the bird appears discharging the same function. Alam, the merchant, appears before a 'muni,' a Hindu or a Buddhist sage, and a tāntric who is engaged in tapa or religious austerities practised by the people of his order, with head bent downwards before a fire and legs raised above. These self-tormentings characterised the tāntrikas of the 8th and 9th centuries, when these stories were probably composed, though it cannot be said that there are not instances of similar self-torture among the tāntrikas even of this day. One curious point in regard to these tales compiled by Muhammadans is that we come across many examples of Buddhist phraseology in them, such for instance is the word 'niranjana' which we find frequently in almost every one of these stories. The word is used for God. It often occurs in the Buddhist works like the Cūnya purāṇa and Dharmamangala poems. The "niranjāner usma," or "the anger of Godhead," forms one of the most stirring incidents described in the Cūnya purāṇa. Another word of Buddhist currency is 'Kāynur' for Kāmarupa, which is also to be met with in many of these stories. The Hindu and the Buddhist elements, as they were before the Purānic Renaissance, form the characteristic features of these tales.
In the story of Jaminī Bhāna told by Munshi Muhammad Khater Marhun, the nymphs of Indra’s heaven, that we find them in a similar tale told by Hindu writers, are changed into fairies. The deer in this story was a fairy; this will naturally remind one of the nymph who attracted the attention and love of the king Dandi in the guise of a deer. This legend of the king Dandi and his love with a nymph of Indra’s heaven, who remained as a deer during daytime under a curse, is treated in detail in the Bengali Mahābhārata. The name of the hero—Jaminī Bhān seems to be an abbreviation of the word Jaminī Bhanu (lit. ‘Sun of the night,’ whatever it may mean) and reminds us of the hero of the poem of Harilīlā by Jaynara- yan Sen, whose name is Chandra Bhān (moon- sun, an equally meaningless word). The other characters of these tales Jagatchandra, Mrigavati and Rukmini bear Hindu names.

As already stated by me, these folk-tales, common to Hindus and Muhammadans alike, and a common heritage to them both, have got, in the Muhammadan versions, an exotic flavour, which is unmistakable. The story of Kānchana- mālā, compiled by Munshi Muhammad, has a Hindu ground-work, and is essentially a Hindu tale in every sense; but even here, the Muhammadan compiler has
introduced some of the peculiar ideas current in his society. One of the brothers of Rupalal goes by the Muhammadan name of Aftab. The name Taimus is also a Muhammadan one in the story. But these innovations are after all very superficial. Sometimes a deterioration in the standard of sexual morality in the Muhammadan versions of these stories is striking. This is what has shocked us in several places. The Hindu ideal of womanly virtues, of devotion to husband, of brahmacharya in widowhood, is the highest. Whether a woman should stick to her husband selected by her parents, or have a free choice in the selection of her mate, and change one who has ceased to interest her for the latest winner of her heart, is too complicated a question, raised by the modern rationalists, for me to enter upon in the present topic. In our social organism no doubt a change or rather revolution is coming on, and the time-honoured traditions and beliefs are now being scrutinised in the light of the reformer's new ideas, and the ground we tread upon, however firm in the past, has grown shaky in the present. But let us not fail to appreciate the type of the highest devotion and highest sacrifice in women, though we may break and rebuild our ideals. In the Muhammadan community here, a woman may take another mate if her husband dies. The fasts and vigils of widowhood, its austerities
and resignation,—the ideals set forth by the Hindu society, lost all its hold on the lay Muhammadan converts, and sexual depravity was not viewed by them in their lowest ranks, with the same feeling of horror. The Hindu folk-tales are free from all blemish in this respect. They were told by women to women and children, and every word that fell from the lips of their tellers was cautious and carefully weighed. The purity of these folk-tales strikes all the more, when we see that the poems and other literary works of the period, written by Hindus themselves, are not free from indecency and moral defects. The latter works were mostly written by men for men; the fair sex had scarcely any thing to do with them. Female education, as we now understand by it, viz., a knowledge amongst women of the art of reading and writing, had not spread so widely in those days as to enable the womenfolk to read the literature written in the vernacular. The writer therefore had not that sense of responsibility that he has at the present day. When men write something for themselves and not for the other sex, they may take some license and may not observe the too hard and fast rules of decency. But the folk-tales which used to be narrated to women, were generally composed with a far greater caution and sense of appropriateness than the ordinary written literature. In the
Muhammadan version we are shocked to find in the story of Kāñchana-mālā, descriptions of sexual vice that prevailed in the harem of the six brothers of Rupalal. This youth revelled unrestrained and gross incest with his sisters-in-law. In the story of Čīta-Vasanta by Golam Kader, we are again shocked by the intriguing queen's throwing the two princes into the meshes of her abominable design. With what a sense of relief does the reader turn over the pages of a Hindu version of the stories. The situations are completely changed, and no suggestion of wicked indecency is to be found in them.

We are afraid that our critical review of this folk-literature may not appeal to you, as most of you are not acquainted with the stories. I propose here to compare several versions of the same tales obtained from different sources. First of all, let us take for example the story of Čīta Vasanta. There are altogether four versions of this story that we have come across. We shall first take up the Muhammadan one. It is compiled by Golam Kader and published by Afazuddin Ahmed from 155-1, Musjidbarea Street, Calcutta. A brief summary of this tale is given here.

In the city of Shahabad reigned a king named Ada Nasa. He got twin sons by his queen; they were called Čīta and Vasanta. One
day the queen saw two birds near her compartment. Seated on the bough of a tree, they endearingly touched each other with their beaks and seemed bound in great love. They had several young ones. The queen was pleased to see the happy family. But a few days after, the female bird died, and for a day or two her mate screamed wildly in grief; but not long after, he brought with him another female bird, and they lived as husband and wife. The new comer killed the young ones, one by one, during the absence of the male bird. This incident moved the queen so deeply that she fell ill. She told the king of her fears, lest if she died and he took another mate, the condition of her dear sons might be like that of the young ones of the bird. The king of course swore that this could never be, that it was impossible that he would take another wife, if, God forbidding, such a calamity, as she spoke of, ever happened.

But the queen really died, and the Prime Minister gave a long course of religious advice to quiet the mind of the disconsolate king. His Majesty distributed charities amongst the poor, and did as he was advised for the good of the deceased queen’s soul. In course of time, however, the king took
another queen. Çīta and Vasanta had now grown up into manhood. The young queen was enamoured of the brothers and she did not make a secret of it, but plainly told them that she had conceived a passion for them. The brothers were shocked at this confession from their stepmother and fled from her presence in horror. But the infuriated queen maligned them before the king and gave out a false story complaining against their conduct. The king was very much enraged and gave an order next morning to execute the princes, and bring their blood before him. The executioner took compassion on the young princes, killed a goat and filled a cup with its blood to be shewn to the king, and set the two brothers at liberty in a deep jungle, advising them never to return to their motherland.

The brothers wandered in the forests for a long time, and heard two birds, endowed with the power of speech, talking to one another in the following strain: "If some one kills me and eats my heart, he will immediately become a king," said the one. "If any one eats me," said the other, "he will be in possession of a diamond every morning." The brothers were fine archers. They killed the birds. Çīta ate the heart of the