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Desh or *Ummah*: Bengali Muslim Literary Enigma in Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas O Bangla Sahitya, 1757–1918*

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Abstract

While the 1947 Partition has contributed to a large-scale migration of Hindus from east Bengal to India, it allowed the delta's Bengali Muslims to avail Pakistan's citizenry. Pakistan remained an experiment at best, however, for the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia, who between 1947 and 1971 conceived an ethnolinguistic nationalism. Contributing to Bangladesh's creation and the progressive constitution of 1972, the new nation rehabilitated the Hindus to redress the wrongs of the Partition. Conceptualizations of Hindu-Muslim autonomy and linguistic self-determination are the theoretical underpinnings of Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas O Bangla Sahitya, 1757–1918*. First published in 1964, this seminal study of Bengali Muslim literature, from the end of the *Nawabi* rule (1757) to the completion of the Great War (1918), measures Muslim contribution to Bengali literary culture. For Anisuzzaman, the Bengal Renaissance literary boom is the centripetal Bengali culture that is foundational to the secular ethnolinguistic vision in Bengali Muslim literature. It also exhibits the syncretism of a pre-colonial literary culture molded by Saiyid Sultan, Syed Alaol and Shah Muhammad Saghir. Subsequently, sociocultural inertia is blamed for the sectarianism in Musulmani Bangla or *dobhashi* literature and the pan-Islamic turn in fin de siècle literature is identified as a form of cultural mobility. My analysis suggests that Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas* illuminates the richness of Bengali Muslim literary culture, while it also offers critical commentary on Bengal's political faultlines that precipitated the 1947 Partition.

Keywords

Bengali Muslim, Bangladesh, Hindu, Muslim, Islam, Modern Bengali Literature

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Introduction

Unlike Partha Chatterjee's authoritative study of Indian nationalism or Ayesha Jalal's influential study of Pakistan's formation, Bangladesh's Bengali ethnolinguistic nationalism appears to have escaped rigorous critical scrutiny. Its ideologues glorify ethnolinguistic nationalism to frame their justification of the Bangladesh project vis-a-vis Pakistan's Muslim nationalism. Stakeholders such as Ghulam Murshid identifies *Bengaliness* as a tradition that have remained unbroken for one thousand years in *Hajar Bachhorer Bangla Samskriti* (*One Thousand Years of the Bengali Culture*). Identification of *Bengaliness* (*Bangalitto*) as a more elevated or a worthier marker of Bangladeshi citizenship is correlated to the Bengali nationalist unease with the reality of Bengali Muslim popular support for Pakistan in the lead-up to the 1947 Partition.

The Hindu *bhadralok* conceptualized Bengali nationalism during the anti-colonial movement in British India. The Bengali Muslim intelligentsia, opposed to West Pakistan based ruling elite's political hegemony during the Pakistan experiment, reclaimed the nationalist discourse. This ideology also inspired the Liberation War. Thereafter, it developed significant tension with Bangladeshi nationalism, an ideology that foregrounds the deltaic Muslim identity (van Schendel 2009, 202–206). The squabble between Bangladesh's two nationalisms is demonstrated in "the outcome of the first democratic elections [in 1991] after military rule [that] showed clearly that the narrative of Bangladeshiness had voter appeal and that the narrative of Bengaliness was on the defensive" (van Schendel 2009, 205). In the 2008 general election, the Bengali nationalists humbled their opponents with the promise of holding Pakistan's collaborators accountable for their war crimes during the Liberation War. Subsequently, the Awami League dominated the political theatre until their ouster in a popular

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uprising in 2024. Bangladesh's political antagonisms demonstrate the shifting conceptualizations of Bengali Muslim identity since the colonial period. The cultural registers, examined in Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas O Bangla Sahitya, 1757–1918* (*Mind of the Muslims and Bengali Literature*), demonstrate identitarian tensions too.

An active pursuit of colonial education empowered the fin de siècle Bengali Muslims to mount stiff opposition to *bhadralok* cultural and political domination. Subsequently, they developed their separatist political agenda as Muslims in British India, as well as a pan-Islamic intellectual strain. In Bengal, the formation of the Muslim League in 1906 challenged the *bhadralok* project of anti-colonial nationalism. This separatist expression opposed the Swadeshi movement. With the separatists drawn to the emergent Muslim nationalism, the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia drew from Bengal's Islamic past as well as from the political developments in the Ottoman empire.

In fact, the Bengali Muslim nationalists pursued a revisionist history in the early twentieth century climate of increasing Hindu-Muslim antagonism. Identifying their Hindu counterparts as averse to their economic and political interests, they mounted political opposition to the *bhadralok* class that they saw as the beneficiaries of the colonial system that evolved in the mid-nineteenth century British India. To the *bhadralok* class, the Bengali Muslims were culturally inferior. Subsequently, they blamed Muslims for Bengal's partitioning in 1947. Political antagonism marginalized the cultural syncretism — constellated in Mir Mosharraf Hossain's early novels, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Nawab Faizunnessa — that also enriched nineteenth century Bengali Muslim literature.

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Imbricated in the decolonial era (1930–1960) cultural debates, Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas* is a scholarly testimony to the Bengali Muslim contribution to literature in the backdrop of Partition. During these political debates, the proponents of syncretism were pitted against the separatists. With "his insistence on the necessity of an original, creative culture grounded in the ideals of Bengali-Muslim life," the separatist Bengali Muslim intellectual Abul Mansur Ahmad defined culture as an embodiment of *Muslimness* (Sartori 2008, 221). Conceptualizing the heightened literary excellence of the Bengal Renaissance as "an exclusively Hindu tradition," Ahmad seeks to address the Bengali Muslim grievances against the Hindu *zamindar* oppression (Sartori 2008, 221). Culturalist positions such as Ahmad's became trendier as Bengal was heading towards Partition. Opposed to this triumphant separatism stood the literature of Jasimuddin and Kazi Nazrul Islam as evidence of syncretism that blended Indic and Islamic elements.

Anisuzzaman contends that modern Bengali Muslim literature's separatist and syncretistic trends conceptualize *ummah* and *desh* respectively, as his Eurocentric classification of Bengali literature in *Muslim-manas* offers a historical arc encapsulating *dobhashi* literature, nineteenth century Bengali high culture's influence on the Bengali Muslim writers and pan-Islamic nationalism as a representative of Pakistan's secular vernaculars (Anisuzzaman 2012, 16). Opposed to Muslim Bengali Muslim intelligentsia, Anisuzzaman's commentary on literature during the formation and consolidation of the Muslim League in Bengal is insightful to make sense of the cultural conundrum in Bangladesh. The intelligentsia's anti-Pakistan posturing, developed through the 1952 Language Movement, is integral to the vernacular elite's Bengali ethnolinguistic nationalism. *Muslim-manas* enunciates a Bengali Muslim literary history, finding in the eighteenth century *Musulmani Bangla* literature a predisposition towards

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the *ummah* or Muslim community consistent with "the [nineteenth century cultural] camp of Muslim distinctiveness and revivalism" that opposed "the drive of Hindu and missionary standardization" (Bose 2014, 9).

Originally published in 1964, Anisuzzaman's meditation on the discursive formation of Muslim literary culture takes into consideration literary convergences, such as, the Bengali Muslim imitation of the prose style of the *bhadralok*. However, *Musulmani Bangla* literature escaped the ideological influence of the Bengali *bhadralok*. This literature was thereafter defined as the authenticating cultural identity of East Pakistan. A culturalist endorsement of the Bengali Muslim intellectuals wedded to the idea of Pakistan, Anisuzzaman questions this narrow conceptualization. Moreover, he examines the pan-Islamic nineteenth century vernacular literatures that existed alongside the modern Bengali literary tradition. Anisuzzaman asserts that the syncretic culture's invocation of *desh* accommodates both the Hindu and the Muslim contributors.

This article is structured in four sections with the first section providing a summary of Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas* and the social context of Bengali Muslim literature. The next section focuses on the Muslim separatism of *Musulmani Bangla* literatures. Then, I discuss what Anisuzzaman considers secular Bengali Muslim literature developed in the process of interaction with Bengali high literary tradition. Embodied in *desh*, secular literature is identified as the cultural logic of Bengali ethnolinguistic nationalism. Subsequently, I focus on Anisuzzaman's discussion of nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengali Muslim vernaculars in *Muslim-manas*. Written in Sanskritised Bengali prose, these vernaculars convey *ummah* as they disavow *bhadralok* culture. Separatism that informs the Bengali Muslim intellectual's obsession with the Pakistan idea in the late colonial era and religious nationalism

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is not significant to this vernacular culture. Instead, the literary culture fostered pan-Islamic solidarities evident in the works of Reazuddin Ahmad Mashhadi, Manirujjaman Islamabadi and Ismail Hossain Siraji.

The Social and Political Context of *Muslim-manas O Bangla Sahitya (1757–1918)*

What inspired Anisuzzaman to undertake the challenge of investigating Muslim literature intersecting the conclusion of the *nawabi* rule and the Great War? The answer is his realization, as an up-and-coming scholar in the 1960s, that the precipitation of the Hindu-Muslim split during the Partition necessitated a reinvestigation of Bengali Muslim literatures. Bengal's partition also forced his family to migrate to Khulna from Calcutta in 1947 (Anisuzzaman 2012, 15–16). The immediate context that prompted Anisuzzaman to undertake this compendious project is his being subjected to hostility after expressing interest in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's literary works in newborn Pakistan (2012, 16).

Muslim-manas suggests that the Bengali Muslim proponents of two-nation theory regarded *punthi* literature as the mainspring of East Pakistan's literature (2012, 17). Subsequently, Syed Ali Ahsan's *Essays on Bengali Literature* praises *punthi* for its "vitality," (Ahsan 1960, 22) but concedes that "its adherents could not march in step with the rapid changes in the national outlook that were taking place as a result of the infiltration of Western ideas" (Ahsan 1960, 20). Western cultures undoubtedly shaped modern Bengali literature, but they eluded *punthi* literature, considered as East Pakistan's living tradition by a section of the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia. Anisuzzaman does not give in to the enthusiasm with *punthi* literature because of his conviction in the standard established by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar,

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Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt to uphold modern Bengali literature (Anisuzzaman 2012, 25). In a fast-evolving cultural landscape, suffused with the spirit of the 1952 Language Movement, *Muslim-manas* reexamines Bengali Muslim literature's syncretic tendencies — a salient feature of Bengal's pre-colonial literary landscape — next to Bengali literature's secular embodiments and the pan-Islamic vernaculars.

It should be noted that Islam's mediation in literature remains a fascinating chapter in Bengal's history. The dominant literary history of the region appears to elide "the complex 'place' of Islamic culture in Bangla literature" (Kaviraj 2015, 41). In Anisuzzman's estimation of the complexity, his ideological affiliation with ethnolinguistic nationalism governs his assessment of Bengali Muslim literature in *Muslim-manas*. Thus, his conceptualization lacks the excitement with which Sudipta Kaviraj regards Islam's influence on pre-modern Bengali literature:

> Islamic courts often patronized composers of Vaisnava *padavali*, and there is considerable evidence of a slow extension of Islamic influence into various branches of Bangla literary culture. The Islamic strand of literary composition that developed, in turn, elaborated a cosmopolitanism parallel to the Sanskritic literary universe. Critical analyses of Islamic composition in Bangla point out that the language was full of loan words not only from Arabic and Persian but also from the North Indian vernaculars with which Islamic high culture bore a particularly close connection. Just as for Hindu literature Sanskrit was a vehicle for a high cosmopolitan culture from which vernaculars drew many of their literary principles, this Islamic literature shows a similarly transregional culture that gave its intellectuals access to an equally varied Islamic

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> cosmopolis. They were the bearers of a second and parallel vernacular cosmopolitanism (2015, 73).

The confluence of Islamic tutelage and Hindu literary authorship resulted into a "vernacular cosmopolitanism," comparable to Sheldon Pollock's analysis of Sanskritic literary cosmopolis (Kaviraj 2015, 73). In pre-colonial Bengal, cultural convergences, similar to Muslim Spain's *Convivencia*, shaped Mukundaram Chakravarti's *Candimangal* and Bharatcandra's *Mansinha*. Under the influence of European culture, however, colonial Bengal's modern Bengali literature developed an antagonistic with Islam, suggests Kaviraj.

Rammohan Roy is perhaps the last remnant of "a mandatory initiation into Islamic culture and a fluent grasp of Persian" before modernity's assault on Bengal's Islamic past (Kaviraj 2015, 75). "By the time of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), roughly a century later, literary high culture had gone through a striking conversion to become a more solidly Hindu sphere" (Kaviraj 2015, 75). The more pronounced Hindu cultural sphere was a result of the emergence of modern Bengali literature in the 1860s, signifying a shift from "a much older tradition of linguistic and cultural versatility" (Kaviraj 2015, 75). Envisaged as a response to Partition's denying the confluence of Hindu-Muslim cultures in Bengali literature, Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas* relegates *dobhashi* literature to a Muslim separatist tradition emerging out of the sociopolitical uncertainty of the interregnum between *Nawabi* rule's ending and British colonial rule. The writer's task is to produce cultural propaganda denigrating the Hindus, as opposed to Krishnaram Das' *Raymongal* and *Shunnopuran*, Vidyapati's *Satyanarayan Panchali* and Bharatchandra's *Anandamangal* that experiment with the *dobhashi* language.

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The consolidation of modern Bengali literature, with its development linked to the institution of Orientalism and upheavals within the upper echelon of the Hindu society, drew Bengali Muslims to the literary conversation too. Written in the early part of his career, Mir Mosharraf Hossain's *Bishad Sindhu* engaged Muslim elements to a literary tradition that was mostly concerned with the *bhadralok* classes. Hossain's late works, however, capitulated the societal demand for literature that glorified the Islamic past, due to the widening shadow of religious reform and Muslim separatism.

The Bengali Muslim men that dominated the emerging space of reformist literature were very much concerned with the theme of Hindu-Muslim conflict. In contradiction, the works of Nawab Faizunnessa, the author of *Rupjalal*, and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, evoked a secular literary consciousness. Their addressing structural oppression against women was a form of resistance against their patriarchal male contemporaries.

A literary outlook simultaneously existed without capitulating to sectarian ideology, according to Anisuzzaman's discussion of Mohammad Kazem Ali Qureshi (Kaikobad), Mohammad Mozammel Huq and Nowsher Ali Khan Yusufzai. Identifying the Sufi influence on their literature as significant to understanding Bengali Muslim literature, Anisuzzaman notes that sectarianism and pan-Islamic influences dominated fin de siècle and early twentieth century literatures. At the same time, Muslim thinkers responded to Hindu nationalism's growing influence and the Swadeshi movement's resurgent anti-colonialism in a complex way, as is elicited in the works of the intellectuals Abdur Rahim, Reazuddin Ahmad Mashhadi, and Ismail Hossain Siraji.

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Anisuzamman credits Siraji, Mashhadi and Rahim for imparting Islamic knowledge to a socially mobile Bengali Muslim community. In Anisuzzaman's conceptualization, these writers were not inimical to Hindu-Muslim coexistence, in contradiction to *dobhashi* literature's aggressive anti-Hindu posture. Destined to remain marginal in comparison to the literary corpus of Bengali high culture, Anisuzzaman highly esteems the secular credentials of these writers, who were imparting Islamic knowledge in a political atmosphere encouraging separation between Hindus and Muslims. It is with this premise that I discuss *Musulmani Bangla* literature before I explore the cultural dialogue between Bengali high culture and Bengali Muslim writers. This discussion of a secular literary syncretism precedes my engagement with the pan-Islamic literature tasked with the duty of creating *jatiya sahitya*, according to Epsita Halder.

Dobhashi* literature as East Pakistan's *Tamaddun

Opposed to "a euphoria about a pan-South Asian Muslim nation," Anisuzzaman perceives *dobhashi* literature as the cultural mainstay of Muslim nationalism in Bengal (Basu 2023, 126). Subsequently, both the East Pakistan Renaissance Society and East Pakistan Literary Association endorsed Musulmani Bangla literary culture. On the other hand, East Pakistan's intelligentsia of the 1950s and 1960s reconceptualized Bengali Muslim identity as secular, in opposition to Pakistan's two-nation theory. Anisuzzaman belonged to this secular intelligentsia that contributed to "the formation of an overarching Bengali cultural identity encompassing Bengali Hindu writings" (Basu 2023, 127). Subsequently, he attributes *dobhashi* literature as sectarian because the genre elevates Muslims and denigrates Hindus. *Punthi*

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literature is also identified as lacking modern Bengali literature's refinement due to its interlocution with both Western liberal tradition and European literature.

Eschewing *Mangalkavya*'s sophistication — a result of the syncretism inspired by the coming together of the Hindu and the Muslim traditions — *dobhashi* poetry relied on popular religious faiths to illustrate Islam's triumph over Hinduism. Supernatural events triumphed in their delineation, as *dobhashi* poets like Syed Hamza responded to the social condition of the interregnum. Compared to the *mangalkavyas* that capture the human world over gods and goddesses with details of the Bengali milieu, *Musulmani Bangla* literature can be characterized as a distortion of Islam as its composers were catering to the taste of the lowbrow masses (Anisuzzaman 2012, 144; 145). Shah Garibullah, a key figure among the *punthi* writers of his time, is rather unremarkable, in Anisuzzaman's assessment. This opinion contradicts his later discussion of Garibullah's oeuvre that elicits his contribution to three specific *dobhashi* genres: romantic tales, quasi-historical and popular communal narratives, as well as his association with the Islamic tales pertaining to religion, history, the life of the prophets and rituals. Indeed, Shah Garibullah's *Yusuf Zolaikha*, *Sonabhan*, *Janganama*, *Satyapirer Katha* and the first part of *Amir Hamza* are notable contributions to *dobhashi* literature.

In fact, Anisuzzaman praises Garibullah's *Yusuf Zolaikha* as a great work in which Pir Badar is the narrator and Gazi Pir is the listener. Invocation of *Janganama* encapsulates the Shia sentiment that prevailed in Bengal after the dethroned Safavid monarch from Iran took shelter in the subcontinent. On the other hand, works such as *Sonabhan* are reproached for their degradation of the Hindu deities to elevate Islamic rituals. Perhaps, Anisuzzaman's treatment of *dobhashi* literatures is influenced by his appreciation for the pre-colonial Bengali Muslim

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literature's syncretism, as well as his preference for the socio-cultural complexity of the literary works of Bharatchandra Ray, or the *Mangalkavyas*.

A proponent of the standard Bangla (Sanskritized) as the authenticating language of Bengali literature that grew in confidence after the Language Movement in East Pakistan, Anisuzzaman exhibits disregard towards the language of Musulmani Bangla literature. While observing the stark difference between the language of Musulmani Bangla literature and the spoken dialect of the rural Bengali Muslims, he concedes that *dobhashi* literature had immense popularity. A testimony to their popularity is the mass circulation of texts that were printed from cheap Calcutta printing presses (Anisuzzaman 2012, 113). Despite their popularity, Anisuzzaman's treatment of this literary culture is condescending.

Anisuzzaman's cynical treatment of Musulmani Bangla literature's excessive borrowing of Hindi, Persian and Urdu words is illustrative of his disregard for the linguistic environment of Bengali literature during the time of the *punthi* poets. These poets may have yielded to foreign influence as literature lacked the traditional court patronage it was offered during the Bengali sultanate. Positing mixed language as a contradiction to Middle Bengali literature's syncretism—touchstone examples of which include Krishna Ram Das' *Raymangal*, *Satyanarayaner Panchali* and Bharatchandra Ray's *Anandamagal*—due to Muslim influence, *Musulmani Bangla* literature is criticized for disavowing Hindu influence. Bereft of Hindu influence, a section of the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia perceives the literary tradition as appropriate for Pakistan's culture. Subsequently, *dobhashi* literature generates fresh interest in late colonial Bengal. Influence of Islamicate themes and symbols undoubtedly enrich this literary tradition, which allows the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia to identify it as radically

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appealing to their favored nationalist cause. Shaken by the sectarianism of Partition, Anisuzzaman disowns the tradition because of his preference for syncretism.

Anisuzzaman's perspective of *dobhashi* literature has influenced Ahmed Sofa's "Bangali Mussalmaner Mon," the signature essay of his essay collection *Bangali Mussalmaner Mon: A Collection of Essays*. Sofa compares *Musulmani Bangla* literature's forceful exaltation of Islam over indigenous Hindu life-worlds — a cultural product of the eighteenth-century political transition from *nawabi* rule to British East India Company — to post-1971 Bangladesh's return to Muslim identity politics (1981, 1–27). Bangladesh's ethnolinguistic nationalism emerged out of the Bengali Muslim grievances resulting from the denial of their linguistic and cultural autonomy by the West Pakistan based elite. Reinventing a Bengali ethnic sense of belonging, premised on Hindu-Muslim coexistence, Bengali nationalist ideologues discarded overt Muslimness (Chatterji 1996, 19). Ideologically, they jettisoned Pakistan. Political turbulence from 1975 to 1981 paved the return of Muslim nationalism in Bangladesh. Both *dobhashi* literature and the fin de siècle vernaculars exalts Muslimness, as opposed to the shared Hindu-Muslim legacy.

Constellating *Desh*: The Secular Bengali Muslim Writer

In Anisuzzaman's contention, Hindu writers developed a literary culture in the nineteenth century Bengali Hindu society that included the writers Peary Chand Mitra, Kaliprasanna Singha and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Their novels encapsulate socioeconomic and political changes. Exposed to Western education, their response to cultural and religious transformation within the Hindu society was distinctively modern. Writers contributing to this

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substantial literary blossoming were exclusively Hindu who adopted Western education introduced in British India to outshine their Bengali Muslim counterparts. Bengali Muslim responses to colonial politics were often reactionary. Subsequently, they could not participate in the development of literature that adopted a *sanskritized* form of the Bengali language as the vehicle for literary expression. The Bengali Muslim intelligentsia's belated response to what Epsita Halder identifies as an undertaking to create a Muslim *jatiya sahitya* can be attributed to the broader societal crisis that retarded sociocultural development due to the sudden end of the *nawabi* rule. Failing to construct an enriched literary culture that inspired the Bengal Renaissance, the *dobhashi* writers produced salacious literature to fulfill the demand of the masses. *Yusuf Zolaikha*, *Janganama*, etc. gained popularity because of their investment in the demotic.

Anisuzzaman attributes the belated Bengali Muslim engagement with literary high culture to social decline, as he postulates that "the Muslim literati of this period lacked Vidyasagar's vigor, Madhusudan's intellect and Bankim Chandra's poetic talent" ("*ekaler musulman lekhoker moddhye je biddasagorer pourush, modhusudoner panditto o bankimer kobiprotibha dekha jayni tar shongoto karon amader samajik poribesher moddhye pawa jabe*"; 2012, 184).[1] Drawing connection between social decline and Bengali Muslim literary backwardness allows Anisuzzaman to foreground a few literary figures who jostled to find a place in the alter of modern Bengali literature. Hossain, Faizunnessa and Begum Rokeya are credited for possessing the right literary talent required to navigate a literary culture whose stakeholders may have bypassed sectarianism to accommodate Bengali Muslims. Despite gaining prominence as nineteenth century Bengali Muslim literature, the Sufi encomiums of Mohammad Mozammel Huq, Maniruzzaman Islamabadi and Sheikh Fazlul Karim did not

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quite make it to the altar of great literature. However, they offered an alternative to the encroachment of religious conservative movements.

Literature, however, came under the influence of the orthodox religious movements. *Musulmani Bangla* literature gained popularity at a time when the great works of Bengali literature were being produced. The creative spirit of the Bengali Muslim society soon became exhausted due to these movements. The non-sectarian Muslim literati was forced to turn to the vernacular prose writers and poets like Ishwar Chandra Gupta, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Nabinchandra Sen (Anisuzzaman 2012, 185). *Punthi* texts such as *Janganama* and *Qasasul Ambiya* influenced them too (2012, 185). Anisuzzaman contends, Mir Mosharraf Hossain's *Bishad Sindhu* or Hamid Ali's *Kasembadh-Kabya* would however remain unaccomplished if the influence of Syed Ahmed [Khan], Titumir or Haji Shariatullah persisted (2012, 184). Even the religious works that aimed to impart a theological message had to negotiate with the orthodox purification movements. Writers, therefore, took up the challenge to correspond with high Bengali literary culture.

Mir Mosharraf Hossain is singled out as "the foremost" ("*nisshondehe sorbosrestho*"; 2012, 185) Bengali Muslim writer who in his early career used *sadhu* Bangla to reach a wider readership. Despite lacking fluency in either Persian or Urdu, the writer could relate to his readers because of his secular outlook and his conviction in Hindu-Muslim coexistence at an earlier stage of his career. The author of *Ratnaboti*, Hossain made significant contributions to Bengali literature between 1869 and 1899 until his capitulation to religious orthodoxy — and to the politics of Muslim separatism — between 1900 and 1910.

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His play *Basanta Kumari Natok* is executed in the Sanskrit dramatic tradition. In Anisuzzaman's understanding, the play's prologue offers an insight into the Bengali Muslim society within which it was produced. A conversation between an actor and an actress suggests that the Hindu *bhadralok*, then dominant in the cultural arena, was uncomfortable with the Muslim identity of the playwright. In response to the actress's discomfort, the actor opines that a dramatist's religious identity should not be the measure of a work's quality. The Prologue therefore indicates Hossain's conviction in Hindu-Muslim coexistence at this stage of his creative career.

Anisuzzaman also refers to the criticism of *Gorai Bridge Othoba Gouri Shetu*, published in the Bengali literary magazine *Bangadarshan*, to suggest that Hossain's commitment to Indian national unity is evident in his command over the Bengali language (2012, 188). Moreover, the earlier phase of his literary career is indicative of the writer's commitment to national unity in defiance of the growing communalism. According to Anisuzzaman, *Jamidar Darpan* and *Go-Jibon* elicit the author's secular outlook. *Jamidar Darpan*, a three-act play, is interesting because of its portrayal of a Muslim landlord's oppressing a Muslim family from poor background. The play's interlocutor is Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nil Darpan*. This dialogue illustrates that Hossain is addressing the specter of economic exploitation that characterizes colonial Bengal's economy, as did major literary figures concerned with *zamindar* exploitation of the tenant.

Anisuzzaman makes a specific mention of *Bishad Sindhu*, which skillfully adapts the Karbala tragedy into a modern Bengali literary account. He claims that the literariness of the work is evident in its portrayal of the human aspect of the tragedy. Imbued with a secular characteristic, Hossain's work does not encourage religious reverence or promote a

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theologically driven "historical consciousness" ("*oitihashik chetona*"; 2012, 194). In the text, Yazid is as much as a slayer of Prophet Muhammad's grandsons, as he is tormented by a romantic love that consumes him. In its encapsulation of the Karbala tragedy, *Bishad Sindhu* is attentive to human desires and impulses, as they shape the unfolding of the events. That Hossain has moved away from the propaganda literature of the *dobhashi punthis* and that he is not engaging with the tradition of religiously motivated textuality suggests the author's goal to participate in conversation with the literati who gained prominence during the Bengal Renaissance.

According to *Muslim-manas*, in the latter part of his career, Hossain eschewed commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity of the earlier works. Unsurprisingly, Hossain's late works, written at a time of growing Hindu-Muslim hostility, reneged the secular ethos of the earlier works. Hossain's late style illustrates a retreat to religious obscurantism. Subsequently, Anisuzzaman accuses the Bengali Muslim author of betraying his earlier commitment to Hindu-Muslim coexistence. The author's newly developed religious sentiment also contributed to the tone of anti-Hindu intolerance in *Gazi Miyar Bastani*, a work that was modeled on Bankim's *Kamalakanter Daptar*. *Muslim-manas* thus contends that Bengali Muslim sociocultural decline and the ever-widening schism between the Hindu and Muslim communities influenced Hossain's retreat from progressive social values.

Capitulating to obscurantism also meant an overt glorification of religion without any consideration for anti-colonialism, laments Anisuzzaman. Indeed, the influence of communal politics on Hossain's literature demonstrates that fin de siècle Bengali Muslim authors became more conscious of their Muslim identity. Hossain may also have experienced hostility from the Hindu *bhadralok* – a common Bengali Muslim experience in the early twentieth century.

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Subsequently, his late works became distinctive from the earlier works that were authored with a sense of shared Hindu-Muslim experience. His late works — including *Modinar Gourab*, *Moslem Birotto* and *Islamer Joy* among others — exhibited *Muslimness*. Hossain's late works exhibited separatism in complete contrast to his early works that could be characterized as syncretic. This was also a time of Swadeshi anti-colonial nationalism – an event deftly captured in Rabindranath Tagore's *Ghore Baire*. In his recounting of Muslim separatist politics vis-à-vis the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, Andrew Sartori notes that the political formation of communalism significantly drew from the cultural contests. This included the Hindu *bhadralok* considering the Muslims as "both external to the aspirations of the nation, and qualitatively incapable of participating in its cultural ideals" (Sartori 2008, 217) and Abul Mansur Ahmad's distinguishing Bengali Muslim culture as "the life practices of eastern Bengal's cash-cropping peasantry" (Sartori 2008, 223).

If politics was gradually shaping a resurgent Muslim separatism, as well as framing the culturalism of male literary output, two prolific female writers, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Nawab Faizunnesa, contributed to the existing literary high culture. Both the writers militated against the confines of patriarchy, while also operating against Muslim separatism. The presence of Malini and Dyuti in Faizunnesa's *Rupjalal* is evidence of Bharatchandra Ray's influence on the author. Rightly, Anisuzamman highlights the work's use of Sanskritized Bangla, but his conclusion that *Rupjalal* portrays women as meandering, according to the convention of Middle Bengali Literature, is perfunctory. Fayeza Hasanat's translation of *Rupjalal* interprets the text as "a manifesto of Muslim women's sexual defiance and subordination in nineteenth century Bengal" (2009, 2). Despite quoting a few erotic lines from

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the text, Anisuzzaman misses *Rupjalal*'s radical sexual politics. Forgoing critical discussion of the erotic dimension of Faizunnesa's *Rupjalal* means Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas* overlooks the Bengali Muslim author's decentering the cultural separatism of Mir Mosharraf Hossain's late works and the subsequent Muslim writers with political commitment to the Muslim League and the Khilafat Movement.

The precolonial era literature of Shah Muhammad Saghir, Alaol, Saiyad Sultan elicited a secular strain, as did the Bengal Sultanate's patronage of Hindu authors (Uddin 30–31). These instances may have inspired Anisuzzaman to trace the secular character of modern Bengali literature significantly shaped by the influence of European literature. Attentive to literature's exclusive male domain, *Muslim-manas* ignores the interrelationship between nationalism and women's societal marginality. On the other hand, *Rupjalal*'s translator Fayeza Hasanat discusses the literary texts of Rashsundari Devi, Krishnabhabini Dasi and Binodini Dasi with reference to Partha Chatterjee to note that women's bodies became the source of nationalist anxiety in an era that also produced Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Nawab Faizunnesa (Hasanat 2009, 14–22).

Denoting the absence of "a Muslim woman's text" (2009, 22) in Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Hasanat points out that the Bengali Muslim society exhibited very similar discomfort about women. Anisuzzaman also fails to mention that Nawab Faizunessa uses language very skillfully, as "*Rupjalal* is written partly in *punthi* style and partly in prose" (Hasanat 2009, 32). In contrast, Anisuzzaman's assessment of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain is based on her contribution to literature and to the spread of women's education in the Muslim society (2012, 318). Author of *Motichur*, *Padmarag* and *Oborodh Bashini*, Hossain is credited for using satire in literature to criticize

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social outlook in *Muslim -manas* ("*Begum Rokeya bidruper shanita kosha niye shahitto-khetre namlen aar aghat korlen byktike noy, shomajer monobrittike*"; 2012, 318).

Unlike the separatist and communal tone of her male contemporaries, Begum Rokeya took an interest in anti-colonial nationalism and pursued Hindu-Muslim unity, as her 1907 essay "*Muktiphol*" suggests. Utopian in outlook, the essay urges women to actively mediate in politics, as communal factions come to the forefront of the national question in British India. Obfuscating the political concerns of Hossain's literary works, Anisuzzman limits his discussion to the author's addressing the societal inequality between men and women (2012, 319–320). Terse discussion of Begum Rokeya's battle against the strict codes of *purdah* precludes any reference to the Hindu-Muslim crisis in the satirical literary works. *Muslim-manas*, then, guides the readers to another male literary domain, in its discussion of Mohammad Kazem Ali Qureshi (Kaikobad) and Mohammad Mozammel Huq.

Anisuzzaman suggests that Kaikobad did not follow Tagore's literary idealism. His romantic poetic vision encapsulates the poetry collections *Kusumakanan* and *Ashrumala* that invoke Islam's glorious past to garner a Muslim audience. Shaped by the Aligarh Movement,[2] Kaikobad later switches to epic poetry in the form of *Mahashmashan*. Anisuzzaman considers this epical text dull in comparison to Altaf Hussain Hali's *Musaddas e Hali*. The shortcoming of *Mahashmashan* is attributed to the license given to fate in dictating terms over the course of the Panipat battle. Anisuzzaman posits that Kaikobad's secular stance, evident in the non-sectarian portrayal of the war between Hindus and Muslims, fails to give the epic poem the durability of Bankim's historical romances or Romesh Chunder Dutt's novels regarding the Hindu tradition. Another author and poet who earned repute like Hossain is Mohammad Mozammel Huq. His *Apurbadarshan*, imitated the style of Rangalal Banerjee, is a historical

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poetry that invokes courtly politics. Anisuzzaman considers the long poem to be of high quality, if not excellent. Huq was influenced by the Sufis – his lyric poetry collection *Premahar* suggests the influence of English literature as well as the Sanskrit and Persian classics. Huq's literary accomplishment included a translation of *Shahnameh*; this translation was also influenced by the *punthi* imitating the Persian classic in Musulmani Bangla. Comparing Huq to Hossain, Anisuzzaman suggests that their literature was not subsumed by the orthodox religious movements. Huq's literary magazines, including *Lohori*, offer a pan-Islamic outlook but they do not advocate sectarianism (2012, 227–228).

Humayun Azad exalts nineteenth century Bengali literature as "a great capital" (390) because it was "a new literature composed by the 'new' Bengalis" (390). *Muslim-manas* may have inspired such praise because of its preference for writers using s*adhu bhasa* in literatures that portray Bengali Muslim life-worlds (Anisuzzaman 2012, 344–348). With European traditions and the modern outlook of Rabindranath Tagore, Michael Madhusudan Datta and Jyotindranath Thakur shaping Bengal's literary space — that in Anisuzzaman's conceptualization is the cultural inheritance of Bengali ethnolinguistic nationalism — the secular Bengali Muslims were extended an invitation to this heritage.

Vernacularizing Islam

As the Muslim question found a place in the fin de siècle subcontinental political discourse, Bengali Muslim writers began to curve a literary identity that used the vernacular medium, now ubiquitous due to the support of the printing press, to project an Islamic identity. Anisuzzaman contends that this vernacular model was distinct from the secular literature

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discussed in the earlier section. The intelligentsia producing this literature glorified Islam to stir the socially mobile Bengali Muslims competing with the *bhadralok* middle-classes. Anisuzzaman's assessment of these Islamic literary vernaculars is established on his suspicion of Muslim separatism. The tradition resorted to Bengali Muslim sectarian political ideology as doctrine and invoked the past to excite nostalgia for the *ummah*, as its pioneers discarded the syncretistic literary culture of the early works of Hossain, Anisuzzaman has noted. Bengali Muslim intellectuals conspired as well as collaborated to increase their political clout as is evident from the discussion of Abdur Rahim, Ibn Maazuddin Ahmad, Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad and Reazuddin Ahmad Mashhadi in *Muslim-manas* (Anisuzzaman 2012, 243).

One such intellectual is Abdur Rahim, who in tandem with the *bhadralok* tradition of *atmacharita*, compiled a Bengali-language biography of Prophet Muhammad PBUH entitled *Hazrat Mohammoder Jibon Chorito O Dharma-Neeti* (1887). The bibliography exemplifies the influence of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Syed Amir Ali, Imam al-Ghazali and Shibli Nomani on Karim. The religious reform movements undoubtedly influenced Rahim, while his work relies on reasoning to paint a picture of the Prophet's life. The biography's contradictory juxtaposition of religious obscurantism and rationality suggests Rahim's engaging the miracles of the Prophet with commentaries that rationalizes the miracle narratives within Islam. Anisuzzaman opines that Abdur Rahim's engagement with Islam is very different from Mir Mosharraf Hossain's exaltation of Islam in the latter part of his career. Written in classic Bengali prose-style, Rahim's style of rationalizing Islam is in dialogue with the then growing trend of interpreting Hinduism in consideration of science. Modern education that empowered the Hindu *bhadralok* also influenced Abdur Rahim too.

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Contrary to the literatures that focused on Hindu-Muslim coexistence, Abdur Rahim tilted towards Muslim separatism, asserts *Muslim-manas*. Anisuzzaman compares Abdur Rahim's Muslim separatist outlook to Bankim's portrayal of Bengali Hindus as victims of Arab-Islamic invasion (2012, 244–245). While disapproving Abdur Rahim's Muslim separatist politics that may have left an impression on Muslim politics in favor of Bengal's first partition in 1905, Anisuzzaman acknowledges his contribution to "Bengali Muslim self-confidence" ("*Bangali Mussalmaner Moddhye Attoshochetonota*"; 2012, 248). Rahim's legacy, encapsulated in the biographical *Hazrat Muhammader Jibon-Charito O Dharmaniti* as well as *Dharmajuddho/Jihad*, *Islam*, *Namaj Totto* and *Haj Bidhi*, resonated with the intellectual tradition that developed immediately after the British government's passing "a Resolution on Muslim Education" in response to the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny and the militant religious orthodox movements (Sartori 2008, 201). Rahim's works circulated among the socially mobile Bengali Muslims who were hungry for Islamic knowledge produced in the vernacular. According to Anisuzzaman, they also imparted separatism at a time of growing tension between the Hindus and the Muslims. Subsequently, the Hindu middle-classes became concerned with Muslim empowerment. Hostility against them informed *bhadralok* politics that shaped anti-Muslim bigotry. The stereotyping of Bengali Muslims began in "the realm of [*bhadralok*] identity politics from the 1910s onwards," Neilesh Bose has noted (Bose 2014, 17). Referring to Nirad Chaudhuri's documentation of Hindu antagonism towards the Muslim in *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, he writes that anti-Muslim biases dominated the *bhadralok* cultural and political discourses (Bose 2014, 17–18). Subsequently, "Muslims writing in Bengal, with the background of propaganda about backwardness and upliftment, formed narratives in reaction to this highly specific type of bigotry" (Bose 2014, 18). It is reasonable to surmise that Abdur

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Rahim's vernacular works were responding to anti-Muslim discourses while simultaneously establishing a distinctive Bengali literary identity.

As confrontation with the Hindu *bhadralok* emboldened the political consciousness of the emerging Bengali Muslim middle-classes, the Muslim intelligentsia drew from the Muslim separatist politics, as it unfolded in the backdrop of the Swadeshi movement. Speaking from the vantage point of Bengali nationalism, Anisuzzaman is sympathetic to Swadeshi anti-colonialism. Andrew Sartori (2008) invokes the Bengali Muslim Swadeshi activist Abdur Rasul who opposed Bengali Muslim identity politics believing that its separatist outlook would only benefit the Bengali Muslim *ashraf*. While the colonial government's land reforms and the rural religious reform movements influenced Bengali Muslim politics, the Swadeshi Muslims, Sartori argues, misconstrued the spark generated within the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia that drew from various Western and non-Western sources, as well as translated works to glorify Islam. These Muslim initiatives were also responding to Christian missionary objective to proselytize Bengali Muslims who did not possess sufficient religious teaching, as well as contributing to collaborations and translations when the tension between Hindus and Muslims was escalating.

An ideologue of Hindu-Muslim political unity, Anisuzzaman not only opposes Abdur Rahim's literature as having a separatist agenda and, therefore, comparable to Bankim's anti-Muslim posturing, but also accuses Abdul Rahim and his Bengali Muslim intellectual interlocutors of displaying overt fascination for Arabia and Turkey in comparison to the Indian subcontinent (Anisuzzaman 2012, 244–245). Separatism encouraged Muslims to identify British India as an alien territory just as for Bankim the Indian subcontinent is a non-Muslim space and the Indian is a Hindu, conjectures Anisuzzaman (2012, 245). The irony of this

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myopic understanding of the pan-Islamic solidarities, forged to disrupt anti-colonialism's normative association with territorial nationalism, is further compounded by Anisuzzaman's suspicion that Abdur Rahim was dedicated to *ashraf* Bengali Muslim interests. A reputed journalist in fin de siècle Bengal — who build his career first with the weekly *Sudhakar*, later switching to become the editor of *Mihir*, and, thereafter, assuming editorial responsibility of *Mihir O Sudhakar*, a weekly resulting from the merger of the two outlets in 1895 — Abdur Rahim dedicated himself to Bengali Muslim sociocultural issues and took the lead to present Muslim concerns to the colonial government (2012, 245–246). Despite listing Abdur Rahim's accomplishments, Anisuzzaman notes that *Mihir O Sudhakar* became the mouthpiece of *zamindar* politics, as is evident in the weekly's eulogy of the British government, and emphasis on separatism under the pretext of Muslim backwardness (2012, 246–247). If as a pan-Islamic intellectual, Abdur Rahim was envisioning "a global political unity" in an imperial milieu when "the classic, theological notion of *ummah*, pan-Islamism sprang up in the late nineteenth century" (Reza 2025, 3), Anisuzzaman reprimands the Bengali Muslim intellectual for not opposing Hindu-Muslim disunity that encouraged separatism.

On the other hand, Reazuddin Ahmed Mashhadi was averse to separatism that he considered to be counterproductive to the anti-colonial momentum in British India. An admirer of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and the author of *Samaj O Samaskarak* and *Agnikukkut*, Mashhadi's secular viewpoint, evident in his warning the readers to not repeat the post-revolution social decline following the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny and the Wahhabi Movement, captures Anisuzzaman's attention. An avid advocate of Bengali Muslim societal reform, Mashhadi appears to underscore Hindu-Muslim unity, as he believed that the two communities had a shared political destiny in Bengal. With Muslim separatism growing in the leadup to the

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first partition of Bengal in 1905, Mashadi's political commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity informs his pan-Islamic ideals, evident in his invocation of the Muslim glories of the past as well as in his insightful commentary on the present ills of the Bengali Muslim society. Anisuzzaman opines that intellectuals like Ismail Hossain Siraji shared Mashhadi's secular position as he did not extend support to Bengal's partition in 1905. Involved with the Khilafat Movement, Siraji invokes Islam's past glory without compromising his conviction in Hindu-Muslim unity. Anisuzzaman's commentary endorses the cosmopolitan pan-Islamic outlook of his poetry collection *Anal Prabaha*, the travelogue *Turusko Bhromon*, and the long poem *Spain-Bijoy Kabbo* — modeled on the first canto of *Meghnadbodh Kabya* — because it eschews the civilizational distinction of subcontinental Muslims. Rather, their pan-Islamic basis reflects the author's progressive understanding of Islam. Siraji also discusses the freedom of Turkish women in comparison to Bengali Muslim women's confinement within the *purdah*.

The novelist Siraji is revisionist in the fictionalization of Hindu-Muslim conflict, as he contradicts Bengali Hindu writers. A rebuttal of Bankim's historical novel *Durgeshnandini*, Siraji's novel *Tarabai* depicts the romance between Shivaji's daughter Tarabai and the army chief of Bijapur Afzal Khan. While Shivaji is portrayed as deceitful and Maloji ungrateful, Amina Banu is courageous, and Afzal is heroic in the novel. *Tarabai* elevates Muslim characters over the Hindus as does *Nooruddin*. This glorification of the Muslim character over the Hindu characters in Siraji's novels retards the development of Bengali Muslim literature. Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas* therefore identifies the novels as a reaction to the cultural practices of Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Romesh Chunder Dutt.

The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Bengali Muslim literati weaponized the vernacular to address the concerns of their own community. Moreover, they

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were drawn to the political developments — Bengal's Partition in 1905, the formation of the Muslim League and the Hindu *bhadralok* obsession with Indian nationalism — that shaped their identity politics founded on the growing antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims. With the Bengali Muslim politics falling back on the logic of economic backwardness and religio-cultural regeneration, pan-Islamic intellectuals like Reazuddin Ahmad Mashhadi and Ismail Hossain Siraji searched for solidarity across the *ummah* without compromising the imperative to address the growing cultural and political divide between the Hindus and the Muslims. Their compatriots Qazi Imdadul Haq, Mohammad Mozammel Huq, and Syed Emdad Ali participated in the cultural politics of rejuvenating the Muslim past to encourage the community. Their political fervor evolved into communalism in a political milieu that augmented Bengal's Partition in 1947.

Conclusion

My engagement with Anisuzzman's *Muslim-manas O Bangla Sahitya, 1757–1918*, published in 1964, has tracked the text's intellectual mission to conceptualize distinctive Bengali Muslim literary spaces in conjunction with the political events that have shaped the history of Bengali literature. Subsequently, Anisuzzaman critiques the East Pakistan literati's idealization of *dobhashi* or *Musulmani Bangla* literature due to the tradition's erasure of Hindu influences and its demotic glorification of Islam over the indigenous traditions. The Bengali Muslim literary figures, in conversation with the literary high culture of the Hindu *bhadralok*, are mentioned admirably in *Muslim-manas*. Anisuzzaman's conviction that the socially mobile Bengali Muslims were drawn to modernity through the dialogue between the European

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traditions and an Indic past is evident in his concern for a community on the verge of collapse following the end of Muslim rule.

Inevitably, Bengali Muslim literature was influenced by the tension between the Muslim middle-classes and the Hindu *bhadralok* that began in the late nineteenth century. The conflict's intensification led to Bengal's Partition. Frenzied communalism, however, could not swallow the late colonial era cultural efforts seeking to establish intercommunal harmony and to regenerate a secular Muslim consciousness in contradiction to sectarianism. The brief life of *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* and Kazi Nazrul Islam's rise to literary prominence elicit the Bengali Muslim cultural resistance to the sectarian outlook that contributed to two-nation theory's popularity in eastern Bengal, a region with significant Muslim population.

More so, Anisuzzaman's prologue to the fourth edition cited here suggests that the violent reaction meted out to his essay "*Anandamath O Bankim Proshongo*" in 1950s East Pakistan, still under the siege of communalism, a spectral remnant of Bengal's Partition, was responded to when *Muslim-manas* was first published in the 1960s. Interestingly, Dipesh Chakrabarty's essay "*Anisuzzaman-manas O Muslim Bangla Sahitya: Upokromonika*" focuses on the debates regarding the language of Bengali Muslim literature in Bengal before Partition and then anecdotally refers to post-Partition Indian textbooks that exclude Bengali Muslim intellectuals like Abul Mansur Ahmad. Chakrabarty concludes that Anisuzzaman is excavating the Bengali Muslim mind, as he puts to use the title of Ahmed Sofa's fascinating 1977 essay (2012, 13; 14–15).

Without a doubt *Muslim-manas* is a foray into the Bengali Muslim literary traditions in consideration of the Hindu-Muslim antagonism and the 1947 Partition (*Deshvag* in Bengali).

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Moreover, as my analysis suggests, the young Anisuzzaman of *Muslim-manas*, under the influence of growing Bengali nationalism, placed ownership on Bengali literature written in standard Bangla as an undivided Bengali tradition. However, his treatment of *Musulmani Bangla* literature is unkind. Sofa treats *punthi* literature in the same vein.

Importantly, as I have argued elsewhere,[3] Anisuzzaman and Sofa belong to a generation of Bengali Muslim intellectuals who possessed a secular intellectual vision that evolved with the emergence of Bengali ethnolinguistic nationalism. A response to the Partition, Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas* traces the heterogenous strands of Bengali Muslim literature from 1757 to 1918 and emphasizes on the secular contribution of Mir Mosharraf Hossain, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Nawab Faizunnesa and Mohammad Kazem Ali Qureshi (Kaikobad), as a legacy inscribed in the nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance. Conversely, Sofa's engagement with Anisuzzaman's concept of the Bengali Muslim mind is a response to "the collapse of Awami League control of the state in 1975" when "a new narrative of the nation developed to prop up the military regime of Ziaur Rahman" (van Schendel 2009, 202). A sardonic Sofa wonders if the Bengali Muslim mind may have forgotten the praetorian Pakistan state's genocidal violence in the 1971 war, since it seems to have renewed *Muslimness* to the detriment of *Bengaliness*.[4]

Notes

1. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are by the author.

2. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan pioneered the Aligarh Movement to initiate cultural and educational revival among India's Muslim elite who became crestfallen in the aftermath of the Mutiny of 1857.

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3. In the introductory essay to the collective translation of a segment of Ahmed Sofa's "*Bangali Mussalmaner Mon*," included in the forthcoming *Horizontal Translation: An Experiment with South Asian Literature*, I argue that the manifesto-like essay is a Bengali ethnolinguistic nationalist's evaluation of Bengali Muslim literature.

4. Joya Chatterji (1996) and van Schendel (2002) reproduce Sofa's 1977 prognosis — I doubt if they ever engaged with Sofa's essay — to inform identity crisis in East Pakistan/Bangladesh that Anisuzzaman's *Muslim-manas* captures in its illustration of Bengali Muslim literary history.

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