

Impact of Urbanization on Caste-based Marginalization in Medieval Bengal

Prof Dr. Sufia Khatun

*Professor of Islamic History and Culture
Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

Abstract: *The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries brought some changes in the urbanization of Bengal. The Muslim rulers patronized the building of new cities and the reconstruction of old cities. They founded the capital city, administrative buildings, mint towns, police camps, military garrisons or thanas, military cantonments, forts, etc., which accelerated the urbanization process in Bengal. The Muslim rulers imported new technologies into their territory, which caused the founding of industrial workshops. Internal trade and international business in Bengal flourished on account of the circulation of standard coins. The growth of urban centers in medieval Bengal brought about economic, social, and cultural differences in urban and rural areas that ultimately reduced the intensity of caste-based marginalization.*

Keywords: *Urbanization, Economy, Society, Culture, Marginalization, Change.*

Introduction

With the progress of civilization, new cities rose and fell. Historians have called this continuous process 'urbanization'. The same pattern of rise and fall of cities happened in the case of Indian civilization. The topography of Bengal, its weather, climate, and changes in the course of rivers have played a major role in the rise and fall of its urban centers. The urbanization process in Bengal accelerated after the arrival of the Muslim rulers in the thirteenth century. Many Muslim rulers of the mediaeval ages patronized the reconstruction of the old cities and the building of new cities. Many of them set up urban centers for the purpose of minting new coins, and each mint town became a distinct city. Besides this, cities were also developed centering around administrative locations, cantonments, forts, and ports. The season for building cities, the techniques for their construction, descriptions of social and religious centers which developed in the cities, and various professional classes have been

elaborately discussed in mediaeval Bengali literature and archaeological evidence. The contemporary foreign travelers' accounts corroborate the same features of these cities. The present paper has been written using the analytical and descriptive method as part of post-doctoral research work with the objective of exploring how urbanization produced social, economic, and cultural differences between urban and rural areas and how these differences influenced caste-based marginalization.

Background

A good many cities and ports existed in pre-Muslim Bengal, such as Kortivarsha, Saptagram, etc. But the state of these cities was in a deplorable condition. The natural growth of the pre-Muslim cities in Bengal was at a standstill because the international trade of the country was at low ebb due to the non-circulation of standard coins. The untouchability practiced in the Hindu society was another reason for the flourishing of cities since all Hindu castes were not welcomed here. The lower-class Hindus could enter and stay in these cities for some limited hours for the supply of the everyday essential commodities of the higher-class Hindus. These cities had no fortification or appropriate defense system administered by any powerful central authority. When the city-dwellers of Nadiya heard the forecast of the victory of the capital by Ikhtiyaruddin Bakhtiyar Khilji, all fled from the city and went to distant places. The two Sanskrit punthis, *Ramcharit* by Sandhyakar Nandi and *Pabandoot* by Dhoyee, composed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, depict a deteriorating picture of the cities where people whiled away their time with enjoyment in company with the dancing girls. The city-dwellers lived their lives in expensive pomp and grandeur by unnecessarily spoiling their wealth. On account of the paucity of standard coins, cowries became the only mode of exchange in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As a result, industrial production and trade and commerce of the country turned into a stagnant condition. Circulation of standard coins was so small that Laxman Sen, the king of Bengal, himself made donations with cowries. Ikhtiyaruddin Bakhtiyar Khilji minted gold and silver coins after his victory at Nadiya.¹ Since most of the city dwellers were higher-caste Hindus, these cities became centers of Brahminic religious activities. The religious features of pre-Muslim urban settlements are thus properly reflected in the *Ramcharit*. It is said about Kotivarsha (Devikota) that the sounds of prayers of the priests and the devotees echoed from the numerous temples of the city.² It is pertinent to mention here that most of the urban centers of pre-Muslim Bengal had declined by the thirteenth century. It is found from the foreign travelers' accounts and archaeological evidence of the mediaeval period that Gaur, Pandua, Kotivarsha, Saptagram, Chatgaon, etc., flourished during the Muslim rule. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that these cities originated in ancient times. Before the description of the features of the mediaeval cities of Bengal, it is necessary to discuss a little about urbanization.

Urbanization

In common parlance, urbanization means the origin, growth, and progress of a city. Amlananda Ghose argues that the prerequisite for the development of a city is the development of administrative organization and merchant groups.³ Eminent historian Ramsharan Sharma opines about cities that the essential elements of a city are not only its size and population but also its material standard of living and diversity of occupations of its people. Although agricultural commodities or surplus products are essential for the existence of a city, not all human settlements unattached to agriculture are not cities. The technological knowledge center and the system of money-based exchange are also important for city life.⁴ Urbanization is a process through which the social lives of people get upgraded from an agricultural economic system to an industrial and commercial economic system.

The Sultans of Bengal took various steps which facilitated the development of urban centers, i.e., the introduction of standard coins, providing opportunities for the educated merchants to live in cities, rejuvenation of international trade, opening the doors for education, and reduction of distinctions among different classes. The inclination of the immigrant Muslim rulers was to live in cities. There were reasons for their inclination. Firstly, they wanted to capture the cities and take shelter there. Secondly, it was not possible for the military force, merchants, royal servants, and Sufi saints accompanying them to take part in the productive work. These are the reasons for the emergence of diverse occupational groups for supplying commodities and services to them. Thirdly, military cause and certainty of protection. Besides these, historian Irfan Habib refers to three causes for the growth of urbanization during the Sultanate period. The causes are (a) the area of cities and their population size remarkably increased in this period, (b) technical industries were developed for the prosperity and comfort of urban life, and (c) a city-centered mercantile economic environment grew in mediaeval Bengal.⁵ Eminent urbanization expert of the mediaeval period, Hameeda Khatun Naqvi, describes the structural characteristics of cities. She mentions that:

“Town planning on a large scale is a modern idea, but on a limited scale it was not entirely unfamiliar in the medieval times. Some pattern seems to have been then followed in the location of forts, mansions, mosques, hammams, gardens, bazars and others public buildings, and the principal wards of the city generally occupying sites according to their importance – Cities were protected by walls built around them, while the forts were constructed to provide against the contingency of an invasion or a surprise attack.”⁶

Hameeda Khatun Naqvi describes the characteristic structural features of the city of mediaeval Delhi. While describing the cities of Delhi and Agra, Francis Bernier records,

"The houses of the merchants are built over these warehouses, at the back of the arcades: they look handsome enough from the street, and appear tolerably commodious within; they are airy, at a distance from the dust, and communicate with the terrace-roofs over the shops, on which the inhabitants sleep at night; the houses, however, are not continued the whole length of the streets. A few, and only a few, other parts of the city have good houses raised on terraces, the buildings over the shops being often too low to be seen from the street. The rich merchants have their dwellings elsewhere, to which they retire after the hours of business."⁷

The predominant political forces and social groups that facilitated the development of the urbanization process in medieval Bengal were (a) political and administrative functions, (b) expansion of business activities of the mercantile community like the big merchants and local traders, (c) advent of different classes of artisans and labourers in the cities from rural areas and their participation in production activities, and (d) religious, educational, and welfare activities.

Migration of the indigenous people to political and administrative Centers

The Muslim rulers founded capital cities, administrative buildings, police camps, military garrisons or thanas, military cantonments, forts, etc., which speeded up the process of urbanization in Bengal. With the change of royal dynasties, the Muslim rulers of Bengal shifted their capital city according to their choice.

The cities of pre-Muslim Bengal were reconstructed and developed during the Muslim rule. For instance, Nadiya,⁸ Gour or Lakhnauti were developed in this period. When Bakhtiyar Khilji founded his capital at Debkot (present Dinajpur), the importance of this place increased a lot because administrative headquarters and many other installations were built here. Among the capital cities of mediaeval Bengal were Gour or Lakhnauti, Pandua, Nadiya, Debkot, Fatehabad, Sonargaon, Dacca, Murshidabad, etc. With the foundation of a stable political state structure in Bengal in the fourteenth century, the network of cities began to expand, and trading activities in Bengal became extensive, centering on these cities.⁹

Islam did not recognize untouchability, and the Muslim rulers of Bengal pursued no discrimination among different castes in the matter of employment in the cities. According to their policy, careers and occupations were open to all in the cities irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. Many occupational classes of people, like the carpenter, ironsmith, mason, and different classes of artisans, arrived in these cities from rural areas with the hope of earning money and got employment. People having administrative skills were required in the capital and other cities, and those who got employment in these posts lived there. Gopinath Basu, the prime minister of Husain Shah, was a Hindu Kayastha. Two

brothers, Roop and Sanatan, were scholars in Sanskrit and Persian and lived in the southern part of Gour.¹⁰ There was infrastructure in the cities for punishing the convicts. Habu, a village person, was appointed as the jailor of Fatehabad.¹¹

The Sultans of Bengal founded a good many mint towns¹² for the purpose of the production of coins from there. In the first phase of the Sultanate period, the number of mint towns was less. But their number soon increased with the foundation of the independent Sultanate rule in Bengal. There were thirty-seven mint towns in Bengal, which are evident from the coins of the Bengal Sultans. The names of twenty-two mint towns of the independent Sultans of Bengal have been discovered. These mint towns were Lakhnauti, Firuzabad (Pandua), Satgaon, Shahr Nau, Jannatabad, Sonargaon, Muazzamabad, Ghiaspur, etc.¹³ Abul Fazl mentions that twenty-one classes of workers were involved in the manufacturing of coins in the mints. Some of them put the metal in the chemical solution for making a chemical reaction for the purpose of coin production, some examined the purity of the metal, some put the pieces of the metal in the moulds to give these metals the shape of coins, and some others engraved scripts on the bodies of the coins.¹⁴ It is noticed that a developed technology was applied in each and every step for the manufacturing of coins. Bankers were associated with the circulation of coins. Jagat Seth was the famous banker in the mediaeval period.¹⁵ Agents of banker Jagat Seth were stationed at Dhaka and all other important cities in North India. The revenue officials of Purnia, Dinajpur, Rajmahal, and other places dispatched the revenue of the government to Murshidabad through the banking network of Jagat Seth.¹⁶ Besides banking business, Jagat Seth also determined the purity of metals in coins in order to evaluate them to the standard of sikka rupees. Jagat Seth also became guarantor on behalf of the zamindars and peasants for their arrear land revenues of the previous year at the 'punyaha' ceremony on the first day of the year and submitted bonds of guarantee on his behalf. He charged a ten per cent commission from the zamindars in exchange for his service.¹⁷ Some bankers associated with the business of coins in the mediaeval period were Gopal Das, Jagat Seth, Kishori Mohan, Jagabandhu Ray, Bahadur Sinha, Bijay Ram Ray, and Kashi Nath. The rulers also took loans of money from the bankers.¹⁸ The people with the surname Saraf were in the business of coins and were very influential.¹⁹ After the foundation of plants and machinery at minting places, haunts and bazars with shops and establishments were set up for fulfilling the wants and needs of people, and the population of these places increased, centering around the mint towns with the passage of time. Internal trading was carried out centering on these mint towns, and many occupational classes of people grew in Bengal centering on the mints. Generally, the local blacksmiths, goldsmiths, and other artisans, who were experts in metallurgy, were employed in the mints.

In medieval Bengal, many urban centers developed around the thanas. These thanas were located in strongly fortified garrison towns. Dhaka was an example

of it. Akbarnama mentions Dhaka as a place of some importance in connection with the Mughal war expeditions against the independent chiefs of Bhati (lower Bengal) by Akbar's generals from 1583 to 1605.²⁰ Dhaka was mentioned in those days as a thana. This period can be considered as the initial stage of development of Dhaka city or Dhaka Baju pargana under Sarkar Bajuha. Abdul Karim says,

"...the area is full of rivers and canals several of which intersect the town itself and as the surrounding areas remain inundated during half the year, arrangements must have been made for the garrison at the thana to have the support of the navy whenever necessary. Naturally, the garrison needed supplies and provisions. The exigencies must have brought the traders and shop-keepers to the place and the brisk activities that followed turned it into a town. ...Accordingly, Dhaka must have grown into a town during this period with the Mughal thana as the center."²¹

Ordinarily, there was no participation of the Hindus of Bengal in the military posts of the Bengal Sultans. The Muslim youths took employment as city kotowals, police personnel, and hired security guards in large numbers.

In medieval Bengal, cities grew centering on forts. The boundary walls of the cities and their entrance gates were constructed with hard soil or stone.²² Sometimes, a ditch was dug around the fort to further fortify it. The Basankot Fort of Lakhnauti maintained the security of the city. The rulers, together with their families, lived inside the inner circle of the forts. Different occupational classes of people lived outside the forts. Separate residential places were allotted to different occupational classes of people at Gour or Lakhnauti, for example, Tantipara, Dhurchikpara, or Chamkathipara.²³ There were three types of forts in the Mughal period, such as frontier forts, river forts, and palatial forts. In Bengal, the references of many big forts are found, like Sonakanda Fort, Rajmahal Fort, Lalbagh Fort, Janjira Fort, Hajiganj Fort, Idrakpur Fort, Ghoraghat Fort, etc.²⁴ In this context, it may be mentioned that the Ikdala Fort²⁵ of Pandua was especially important for the history of mediaeval Bengal. 'Ikdala' means a fort having only a single gateway. This fort was impenetrably located to the northwest between Pandua and Gour. Sultan Ilyas Shah constructed this fort. This fort was built to defend against the attack of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq of Delhi. Ziauddin Barani writes that Ikdala Fort is located near Pandua.²⁶ Many people belonging to nearby localities were employed to serve the ruling classes and the aristocrats living in these forts. These city dwellers did not impose any prohibition on the lower-caste Hindus or the indigenous Muslims from entering these cities or selling products and services to them or in the markets set up within the cities. The Muslim rulers did not consider the lower social position of the Hindus as an impediment for their life and livelihood.

Bengal had a long coastline and a good communication network with its coastal regions, and for this reason some famous ports grew here. Trade and commerce played an important contributive role in the development of cities in

Bengal. In mediaeval Bengal, standard coins were minted, and their circulation caused the rejuvenation of internal and international trade. Many people took their occupation related to trading. Many people immigrated to the regions near these commercial towns to take part in the export trade of Bengal's produced goods, and in this way, urbanization was expanded. International trade and commerce were conducted from port towns like Satgaon, Sonargaon, Chatgaon, and Hooghly in the Sultanate and the Mughal periods, and Bengal's import and export trade increased to a great extent compared to its previous period. Sonargaon was well-known as a port besides being a capital city. Ibn Battuta referred to the ports of Chatgaon (Sudkawan) and Sonargaon (Sunurkawan).²⁷ We get references to the commercial port towns in mediaeval Bengali literature, where Chand Saudagar took a break on his voyage on his return journey from Sri Lanka.²⁸ Dhaka was an important commercial city under the Mughal rule. Trade and commerce were some of the greatest factors for the development of Dhaka city. Three important factors contributed to the growth of Dhaka city: (a) the Mughal rulers and their administrative needs, (b) the Bengali professional people, artisans and craftsmen, and (c) the foreign traders, including the European companies. Abdul Karim describes,

“For example, the old Dhaka located in between Babu bazar in the west and Sadar ghat in the west. With the establishment of a Mughal Thana the place turned in to a town. Then the established of the capital, the Mughal rulers expanded this town. The artisan, craftsman and professional classes were attracted by the growing importance if the city expanded to the east. The Mughal, Pathan, Armenian and upcountry Indian traders then came on the scene. They settle in the developed either of the two parts. With the coming of the Europeans, the Tejgaon area settled and growth of the city.”²⁹

Bengal produced a surplus quantity of food grains and industrial items in the mediaeval period. This surplus production and the international standard ports of Bengal attracted the European merchants, such as the Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, French, and English. They made their factories and settlements in many parts of Bengal, which later became cities. Many indigenous people came to the port cities to earn money and lived at the place adjacent to the ports. Besides, many bullock cart and horse-drawn cart drivers also got employment in the transportation of goods in port cities.³⁰ Many artisans and labourers were associated with the commercial ports. The shipbuilding industry of Bengal was famous. The shipbuilding carpenters, shipmen, and porters lived in port cities and earned their livelihoods. Ordinarily, micro and cottage industries developed in each and every city where different occupational classes worked. Its vivid description has been reflected in the following words of Bernier:

“Large halls are seen in many places, called Kar-kanays or workshops for the artisans. In one hall embroiderers are busily employed,

superintended by a master. In another you see the goldsmiths; in a third, painters; in a fourth, varnishers in lacquer-work; in a fifth, joiners, turners of silk, brocade, and those fine muslins of which are made turbans, girdles with golden flowers, and drawers worn by females, so delicately fine as frequently to wear out in one night. This article of dress, which lasts only a few hours,... and even more, when beautifully embroidered with needlework."³¹

The Muslim rulers of Bengal in their city planning kept a special provision for the marketplaces. Accordingly, outside the wall of the city, there were different types of markets, such as the foodgrain market, slave market (Nakkhas), garments market, cattle market,³² vegetable market, book market, ornaments market, and weapons market, etc. It is noticed from the Chinese accounts that all types of amenities and markets were there on the roads of Pandua, for example, gosolkhana, wine shops, food stalls, sweetmeat shops, and shops for everyday essential commodities.³³ Different occupational classes like the weavers, soldiers, clerks (Katib), judges, Sufi saints, Sanyasis, traders, merchants, and artisans had their separate locality at Gour. At every locality, there were places for worship, markets, public bathing, and artisans like leather workers, goldsmiths, and dyers. People in each locality could buy their essential commodities according to their demand from within their own locality, and they were not dependent on other localities for any transaction. Tome Piers (1512-1515 A.D.) records that there were huts made of palm leaves at Lakhnauti.³⁴ The poor people lived in this part of the city. Most houses of Lakhnauti were multi-storied buildings, and these buildings contained arched hall rooms, cisterns, bathrooms, verandahs, prayer rooms, bedrooms, dinner rooms, libraries, etc. There were fountains of water and flower gardens in order to enhance the beauty of the buildings. The ceiling of the hall rooms was white-spotted and plain. Its pillars were high, straight, and smooth and were decorated with the artworks of birds having wings of brass and portraits of flowers.³⁵ We notice from the description of Mukundaram in his medieval literature (1544-1577) that human settlement was arranged according to their nature of occupation in the cities. Localities were set up and separated in the cities in accordance with the castes, or varnas.³⁶ But no trace of untouchability is found in these cities.

As we see the activities of the Public Works Department in modern times, a similar feature of construction activities can be noticed in the cities of medieval Bengal. Roads, hammamkhana, ponds, and wells are very important for any city. In the medieval period, Khan Jahan Ali dug a canal and pond in the region of Jessore and Khulna.³⁷ The Muslim rulers of Bengal dug many ponds and wells for public use. Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah (1342-1357 A.D.) constructed a gosolkhana at Pandua like the Shamsi hammamkhana of Delhi. Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah (1415-1433 A.D.) dug a pond named Jalalipukur and a large tank at Lakhnauti.³⁸ All amenities, including the facility for bathing, were

available at Pandua. De Baros (1540) mentions that-

"The streets are broad and straight and the main streets have trees planted in rows along the walls to give shade to the passengers. The population is so great and the streets so thronged with the concourse and traffic of people, specially of such as come to present themselves at the King's court, that they cannot force their way past one another. A great part of this city consists of stately and well-wrought buildings."³⁹

The Muslim rulers of Bengal framed the planning of the town planning and founded different institutes in the cities and keeping in mind employment opportunities and comfortable lives. Almost all cities of the medieval period founded the *khanqah*, or Sufi Khana. There were centers for free distribution of food in the cities like Lakhnauti, Pandua, Sonargaon, and Bihar Sharif.⁴⁰

Many mosques were constructed in the medieval Bengal cities for offering prayers of the Muslims in addition to the temples for the Hindus. Some of the examples of these mosques are Binat Bibi's Mosque (Dhaka), Sath Gumbad Mosque (Bagerhat), and Darasbari Mosque (Chapai Nawabganj). Eminent Sufi saint Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi built a mosque at Pandua. He summoned the people from the whole country and founded the mosque here.⁴¹ Sultan Sikander Shah built the Adina Mosque in 1346 A.D., which included many pillars. A space earmarked as *badshah-ka-takht* was built on twenty-one designed and thick pillars measuring a height of eight feet each for the sitting of the ladies to the north of the mosque.⁴² Diverse figures and designs are engraved on the walls of the Chhota Sona Mosque of Gour, and a room has been here that is almost like the ladies' gallery of the *badshah-ka-takht* of the Adina Mosque.⁴³ A similar gallery was constructed in the Tantipara mosque of Gour.⁴⁴ References to the construction of mosques can also be found in the literature of medieval Bengal.

*Pashchim dikete seha, tulila namaz griha,
Dalan masjid nana chhande.*⁴⁵

Ikhtyaruddin Bakhtiyar Khilji founded the Muslim rule in Bengal, winning the city of Nadiya. It was not only a capital of the country but also a place of famous educational centers. Many Sanskrit scholars and Brahmin pandits lived in this city.⁴⁶ This place became more famous with the birth and religious activity of Chaitanya. There are many instances of the foundation of learning centers and educational institutes in the instant period, such as Bihar Sharif, Darasbari Madrasa, and the educational institute of Abu Tawama at Sonargaon. In addition to this, there were residential complex, a conference hall (*daliz*), a kitchen, a mosque, and a *maktab*. References to the construction of educational institutes can also be found in the contemporary Bengali literature. '*Bambhag-e durgamela, tar pam-e patshala.*'⁴⁷ While describing the building of the city of Gujarat, Mukundaram referred to the construction of educational institutes, mosques, and temples. Sukumar Sen argues that a template of the contemporary

town planning can be observed from the description of the foundation of this city.⁴⁸

The Muslim rulers opened the doors of the cities for all. Accordingly, the cities were open not only to the artisans and labourers but also to many low-caste Hindus, including the untouchables like the Chandals. It is known from the Chinese sources that the eating of beef and mutton was prohibited in the royal court of Pandua.⁴⁹ Eating of beef and mutton was prohibited to honour the feelings of the Hindus. Numerous occupational classes of people, like the astrologers, dancers, singers, musicians, physicians, and hundreds of artisan classes, lived in the cities, and they had their different types of shops and establishments there. The Muslim rulers needed people from all occupations irrespective of their social position, for instance, the labourers, artisans, bankers, or moneylenders.⁵⁰ The Mukti's, Kotwals, foot soldiers, and the cavalry rendered their services on behalf of the rulers and maintained the law and order in the cities. Guest houses and auberges were built for the accommodation of the merchants and tourists. Rest houses were built in big towns or cities. Travelers and guests coming from far-off places took rest there. Auberges were set up at certain distances along the roads for the safe journey and comfortable shelter of the travellers and the merchants, where they could stay free of cost. There was a guest house beside the dargah of Nur Qutb Alam.⁵¹ Reference to the auberge can be found in the accounts of Bernier,

“... The Karuansara is in the form of a large square with arcades, like our Place Royale, except that the arches are separated from each other by partitions and have small chambers at their inner extremities. Above the arcades runs a gallery all-round the buildings, into which open the same number of chambers as there are below. This place is the rendezvous of the rich Persian, Usbek, and other foreign merchants, who is general may be accommodated with empty chambers, in which they remain with perfect security, the gate being closed at night... strangers on their first arrival would be less embarrassed than at present to find a safe and reasonable lodging. They might remain in them a few days until they had been their acquaintance, and looked out at leisure for more convenient apartments. Such places would become warehouses for all kinds of merchandise, and the general resort of foreign merchants.”⁵²

The peasants, weavers (Tantis), blacksmiths (Karmakars), goldsmiths (Swarnakars), potters (Kumars), carpenters (Sutradhars), and other Hindu artisans supplied their products to the cities and facilitated the internal and foreign trading. Many of them produced their goods living inside the cities. A section of both the Hindu and Muslim artisans lived at the fringe of the cities and produced their articles in their cottage industries. Even the untouchable Chandals, Chamars, and Doms lived in the cities. The Chandals sold salt and

fruits in the cities. Before the foundation of the Muslim rule in Bengal, the marginalized Hindu castes did not enjoy such economic, social, or cultural freedom in the cities.⁵³ The Sen rulers of Bengal patronized Brahmanism and enforced strict caste rules among the lower-caste Hindus. Ballal Sen, the king of Bengal, restructured Hindu society into different castes and introduced the practice of Kulinism.⁵⁴ They discriminated against the lower-class Hindus in various ways.

Conclusion

The urbanization process in Bengal gained new momentum after the foundation of the Muslim rule in Bengal. The Muslim rulers in Bengal built not only new cities but also reconstructed the abandoned old cities. These cities grew cantering around the capital, administrative centers, mint towns, police camps, and military installations. The Muslim rulers offered equal opportunity to the Hindus and the Muslims to earn money by selling goods and services in the cities and lifted the restriction imposed in the previous regime. With the development of cities and the advent of people from many parts of Bengal and abroad, a new culture evolved in the cities under the influence of urbanization. But in the rural areas of Bengal, a caste-based economic, social, and cultural atmosphere prevailed, and discrimination against the lower castes continued. In the urban areas the enforcement of rigid caste rules was not possible, partly for economic reasons and partly for the non-discriminatory policy of the Muslim rulers. Not only the immigrant Muslims but also a portion of the Hindus and Hindu converts who lived or visited in the medieval cities of Bengal earned their livelihoods from there without facing many caste restrictions prescribed in Brahminic texts. The medieval Bengal cities thus produced a separate economic, social, and cultural sphere. But in rural areas there was the age-old economic, social, and cultural practice. The caste-based marginalization diluted to some extent in medieval cities, and the marginalized untouchable communities of Bengal got socio-economic opportunity there according to their talents.

Notes and References (Endnotes)

1. Minhaj-ud-din Siraj, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, (eng.tr.) Major H.G. Raverty, Vol. I., Orient Books, Reprint 1970, 1st published in 1818 in the Bibliotheca Indica Series by Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 556-557.
2. Niharranjan Ray, *Bangalir Itihas Adi Parbo* (in Bangla), 7th ed., Dey's Publication, Kolkata, 1416 B.S., p.301.
3. Sufi Mostafijur Rahaman, 'Nagarayan, Adi-Oitihashik O Prak-Modhyajug' (in Bangla), *Bangladesh Sangskritik Samikshamala-1*, Pratinatattwik Oitijhya, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.494.
4. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. II., D.U., Dacca, 1976, p.4; Muhammad Abdur Rahim, *Social and Cultural History of Bengal (1203-1576)*, Vol. I., Karachi, 1963, p.125.

5. Irfan Habib, 'Economic History of the Delhi Sultanate-An Essay in Interpretation', *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. IV, No. I, Kanpur, Kolkata, p.289.
6. Hameeda Khatun Naqvi, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India (1556-1803)*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963, p. 87.
7. Francis Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire 1656-1668*, Vol. I, Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster, 1891, p. 245.
8. Nadiya was a education center besides the capital city. "Nana desh hoite lok Nanadweep-e jay, Nanadweep-e porile se bidya ros pay." Brindaban Das, Chaitanyabhagbat, Adi, Madhya O Ontyaparba (in Bangla), Smith & Co., Kolkata,1304 B.S, p.23.
9. Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I., Cambridge University Press, London, 1982, p.xii.
10. Abid Ali Khan, *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua*, Bengal secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1931, p.34.
11. Abid Ali Khan, *op. cit.*, p.35.
12. Edward Thomas, *The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1871, pp.151-154; There was a courtyard to the north of the Gour palace which was known to the residents of Gour as khajanchikhana. The large tank located here is familiar to the local residents as 'takshal er dighi' (tank of the mint). There has been a building on the mint measuring 40 feet x 40 feet with a dome over it. Abid Ali Khan, *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua*, Bengal secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1931, p.58.
13. Edward Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp.151-154; Abid Ali Khan, *op.cit.*, pp. 41-42.
14. Abul Fazl Allami, *The Ain-I-Akbari*, eng.tr. Colonel H.S Jarret, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, Vol. I., 2010, pp. 18-27.
15. Ferrokhsere appointed the nephew of Manickchund to be the Imperial treasure, or banker with the tittle of Juggeet Seat. Charles Stewart, *The History of Bengal*, Watts Printer, London, 1813, p.393; J.H.Little, *House of Jagatseth*, Calcutta Historical Society, Calcutta, 1960, p. 26.
16. K. M Mohsin, *A Bengal District in transition*, Murshidabad, 1765-1793, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dacca, 1973, p. 129.
17. *Ibid*, p.181.
18. Prince Ferrokhsere having arrived at Benaras, was enabled to barrow a large sum of money from the bankers of this city. Charles Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.388.
19. The servants of the East India Company knew the financial power of the Sarrafs before their arrival in Bengal. After East India Company captured power in Bengal, its Court of Directors directed that the different varieties of coins circulating in the province should be converted to the sicca standard by a general recoinage and by stopping the annual discount on sicca. Alexander Campbell, the Mint Master in Calcutta, opposed this scheme and contended that the shroffs would defeat the measure by purchasing new siccas and would thus cause an artificial scarcity of such coins. J. C. Sinha, *Economic Annals of Bengal*, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1927, pp.116-117.

20. Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama of Abu'l Fazl*, V. III., tra from Persian by Beveridge, The Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1939, reprint, 2000, pp.1213-1215, 1236.
21. Abdul Karim, *Dacca: the Mughal Capital*, p. 28.
22. it is known from the medieval literature, Chandimangal that the poet's Gujarat town was fortified on all sides with the boundary wall made of stone. "Karat-e pathar kati, prachir er paripati, nirmila Dwaraka saman." Mukundaram, op.cit., p.78.
23. Abid Ali Khan, op. cit., p.43.
24. Ahmed Hasan Dani, *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*. Asiatic Society of Pakistan Publication No-7, 1961, Dhaka Museum, Dacca, pp.221, 225, 226.
25. Shams-i-Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i- Firoz Shahi*, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians the Muhammadan Period*, edited by Prof. John Dowson, Susil Gupta LTD., Calcutta, 1st print. 1871, 2nd print, 1953, p.31.
26. Abid Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 22.
27. Ibn Battuta, *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, tran. by Mahdi Husain, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1976, pp.235-237.
28. The name of these cities was Sankhadaha, Kouriadaha, Kankra, Bijaynagar, and Kalidaha. There are names of 215 merchants who undertook trading in the Gohanti Punthi of Chandimangal (55b-56a). Some mentionable merchants among them were Kalu, Malu, Ketu, Maya, Ramhari, Bishwanath, Kamal, Jamal, Habibullah, Immambaksh, Farid, Safi, Gangaram, Baidyanath, Saifullah, Ataullah. Mukundaram Chakrabarti, Chandimangal, ed. Sukumar Sen, Sahitya Adademi, New Delhi, 3rd impression, 1993, p.339.
29. Abdul Karim, *Dacca: The Mughal Capital*, Jatiya Sahitya Prakash, Dhaka, 1st published 1964, pp.47-48.
30. Abid Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 42.
31. Bernier, op. cit., pp. 258 -259.
32. Ibn Battuta, op. cit., pp.234 -235.
33. Ma Huan, op. cit., p. 161.
34. Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515 and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues: Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanac and Maps, Written and Drawn in the East before 1515, Trans from the Portuguese MS and ed.by Armando Cortesao, Vol. I., Hakluyt Society, London, 1944, p.91.*
35. Abid Ali Khan, op. cit., 1986, xvii; P.C. Bagchi, 'Political Relations between Bengal and China', *Visva Bharati Annals*, V. 1, 1945, pp. 117, 121.
36. Various castes settled in Gujarat, including Muslims, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Kayasths, merchants and other professionals. Mukundaram, op. cit., pp.86-92.
37. Satish Chandra Mitra, *Joshohar Khulnar Itihas (in Bangla)*, Vol. I., Gatidhara, Dhaka, 1964, pp. 295-296.
38. Ghulam Hussain Salim, *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, tran., Abdus Salam, Idarah-I-Adabiyat-I-Delhi, 2009, pp.100, 118.
39. De Barros, *Da Asia*, Lisbon, 1778, v.3, p. 458, see detail, Abid Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 43

40. Abdul Karim, *Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal*, A.S.B., Dacca, 1960, pp.16-24, 32-33.
41. Halayudha Misra, *Sekasubhodaya*, ed. Sukumar Sen, Calcutta, 1963, pp.217-220.
42. Ahmed Hasan Dani , *op. cit.*, p. 61.
43. Abid Ali Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 47, 82, 127; R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., pp.310-311.
44. Abid Ali Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 72, 134.
45. Mukundaram, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
46. Krishnadas Kaviraja, *Chaitanyacharitamrita*, Akshay Kumar & Brothers, Kolkata, 1941, pp.73-74
47. Kalketu Upakhayan, *op. cit.*, p.78.
48. Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas (in Bangla)*, Vol. I., Eastern Publishers, Kolkata, 1978, p.530.
49. P.C. Bagchi, *op. cit.*, p.122.
50. P.C. Bagchi, *op. cit.*, pp.118, 124.
51. Abid Ali Khan, *op. cit.*, p.119.
52. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 281.
53. Chandal nibase pur-e, laban bikroy kore, paneefal kembur pasare/Moja panoi jeen, nirimoye pratidin, Chamar basila ak vit-e/bayuni chaluni jhanta, Dom gare toka chhata, jeebikar hetu ak chit-e. Mukundaram Chakrabarti, *Kabikankan-Chandi (in Bangla)*, Bangabasi Electro Machine Press, Kolkata, 1332 B.S., pp.89-90.
54. Ananda Bhatta, *Vallala Charita*, ed. & tr., Haraprasad Sastri, Hare Press, Calcutta, 1901, pp.8-12.