

Book Reviews

Bishoyee Boichittre Sirat Muhammad Ashraful Islam.

Muhammad Ashraful Islam, life member of Bangladesh Historical Society, is an eminent writer and researcher. His pivotal area of research is history that includes anthropology, topography, toponymy, numismatics, numeric words etc. A contributor to Banglapaedia of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Muhammad Ashraful Islam is very meticulous in investigating historical documents and records. His research papers have been published in various journals and newspapers in and outside Bangladesh. He conducts research for radio and television on various matters related to past history of Bangladesh. Muhammad Ashraful Islam is also a presenter of history programs in Bangladesh Television, the state owned official television channel of Bangladesh. He is very innovative and this is reflected in the six chapters he designed for the book under review [Bishoyee Boichittre Sirat, published on February 2009, published by Madina Publications, 38/2 Banglabazar, Dhaka-1100, Bangladesh, ISBN-984-70099-0034-1, pages 95, price Bangladesh Tk. 75, U.S. \$2.00].

The mind of man is no doubt the wonderful creation of God. Nobody knows in how many ways the mind of people performs. This dynamism of the mind made it possible to create and recreate. To my mind there is no doubt that writers, artists and painters are really creators that kept our life and society ever fresh and lively. This conviction of mine is reaffirmed by reading the book Bishoyee Boichittre Sirat, or the multifarious aspects of the Life of the Prophet, by Muhammad Ashraful Islam. Before coming across this book, I could not contemplate that a book on Sirat, the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), could cover so many topics. Books on Prophet Muhammad usually cover life and works of the noble Prophet. But this book by Muhammad Ashraful Islam not only discussed life and teachings of the compassionate Prophet but at the same time also discussed how the life and works of the noble Prophet influenced our thought and existence. This book, in Bengali, is perhaps the first book of its kind and is a composition of the six articles, authenticated by historical dates' and references, of the author earlier published in the journals and newspapers of Bangladesh.

The first chapter discussed how Prophet is depicted in the Nagri, alternative script of Bengali alphabet having similar pronunciation, language of Sylhet (Silati Nagri Shahittya: Prasanga Siratunnabi). Here the author discussed about Nagri script and language. He also talked about the influence of Arabic alphabets on the Nagri alphabets and gave a detailed account on the works on Prophet Muhammad in Nagri

language namely Haltunnabi (1855), Halatunnur (1896), Majejatunnabi, Osiatunnabi, Ashik-e-khoda-o-Hubbe Rasul, Tarikunnabi, Shafatunnabi, Harinnama, Akher Taran and Nur Nasihat (1819). Here the writer also referred about three other books on the teachings of Islam and one book on the Imam Hussain, the grand child of the Prophet.

The second chapter is on the influence of Prophet Muhammad on the calendar management of the subcontinent (Upamahadesher San Bebestaponai Hazrat Muhammader Provab). Here the author traced the foundation of Bengali calendar and discussed how Bengali calendar originated from Hijri calendar, the date on which the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madina. Here the writer discussed about some other calendars namely Kallom Andu, Rasul Mahmod Sangbat, Shahur San, Fasili San, Biliaoti San, Amoli San, Muhammadi San etc. that were influenced by Arabic and Hijri calendars. The writer here also gave a brief account on the influence of Arabic numbers on Shahur San.

The third chapter is on Prophetic heritage and tradition in journalism (Sangbadikatai Paigambori Oithijja). Here the author drew a parallel between the responsibilities of the Prophets and journalists both being communicators of the messages, the Prophets were the Messengers of God and communicators of the divine messages, the journalists on the other are communicators of the day to day events. Prophets followed the truth. The journalists are also duty bound to follow the truth. Here the writer mentioned how Arabic and Islamic terms and Prophetic traditions have influenced in deciding the names of the newspapers and magazines and gave a detailed description of this. It would be pertinent here to mention a few such names: The Musalman (1901) edited by Mahtab Uddin from Jessore, English Weekly (later daily) The Musalman (1906) edited by Abul Kashem and later by Mujibur Rahman, Monthly (later weekly and daily) Muhammadi (1903) edited by Moulana Akram Khan, Al Islam (1915) edited by Moulana Akram Khan etc. In this chapter the author highlighted the history and growth of journalism in this part of the world.

The fourth chapter is on the influence of the Prophet in naming the places of Dhaka city (Dhakar Sthan Name Hazrat Muhammader Provab). Here the author mentioned about the names of some places of Dhaka city which are named after Prophet Muhammad, namely, Muhammadpur, Ahmadnagar, Rasulpur, Ahmadbag, Rasulbag, Nabinagar, Nabiganj, Nabibag, Al Amin Road. to name a few. Here the writer gave a brief history of naming each place after Prophet Muhammad, when the place was named after the benevolent Prophet and who proposed it etc. The author also mentioned the name of those places which are linked with Islamic history in and around Dhaka, for example Hoseni Dalan Road and Imamganj, both in Dhaka city, named after the grand children of Prophet Muhammad and Kadam Rasul in Narayanganj.

-
The fifth chapter is on the influence of Prophet Muhammad in Bengali folk literature (Bangla Loksahittea Hazrat Muhammader Provab). Here the author discussed the

depth of the influence of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad on the folk literature of Bangladesh. Here the writer discussed about the works of Munshi Mohammad Meherullah, Golam Mostafa, Rowshan Ekdani and many other old and contemporary prominent writers in the field of folk literature and their contributions to spread the teachings of the noble Prophet.

In the sixth chapter and the last chapter of the book (Bangali Musalmaner Matrivasha Charcha Chetoner Muul Sirat Shahittya) the writer concluded that the litterateur of the Bengali literature derived its longing for mother tongue from the Sirat, the literature on the life of the noble Prophet. Here the author gave a detailed account of the literary works on the life of the Prophet listing the names of the books earlier published. Fifty Puthi books were written in the middle ages using Arabic alphabets. Mentionable works on the life of the Prophet are Rasul Bijoy by Jainuddin during Sultan Yusuf Shah (1474-1481) of Gour, Nurnama by Sheikh Paran (1560-1625), Nabibangsha (1586) by Syed Sultan and Nurnama by Abdul Hakim (1600-1670) to mention a few. Nabi Bangsha by Syed Sultan and Nurnama by Abdul Hakim were later edited by Dr. Ahmed Sharif and Dr. Razia Sultana respectively and published by Bangla Academy.

The author in this chapter also discussed about other literary works on Islam not directly related with the life of the Prophet for example Hanifer Larai, on the aftermath of the holy war of Imam Hussain, by Abdul Hakim (1600-1670), Gulzar-e-Shahadat, on the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, by Muhammad Hamidullah Khan (1808-1870), Amir Hamza, the companion of the Prophet, by Syed Hamza, Sayatnama, on the teachings of Islam, by Mujammil (1440), Nasiatnama, on the teachings of Islam, by Sheikh Paran (1560-1625), Durre Majlish, on the teachings of the Prophet, by Abdul Hakim (1600-1670), Amir Hamza (1684), on Islamic thought, by Abdul Nabi, Kaidani Kitab and Kifayatul Musallin, on the fundamental teachings of Islam, by Sheikh Muttalib of which the later one edited by Dr. Ahmed Sharif and published by Bangla Academy, Sirajul Kulub, on the teachings of Islam, and Hitopodesh, on the ethics and morals, by Muhammad Quasim, Rahatul Kulub or Kiamatnama, on the last day, by Syed Nuruddin, Burhanul Arefin or Musar Sawal-o-Hitopadesh, on the morals, by Syed Nuruddin, Namaj Mahatta, on the significance of ritual prayers, in Arabic alphabets by Muhammad Jan, Dakaikul Hakaik (1197), on Islamic jurisprudence, by Syed Nuruddin, Yusuf-Jolikha by Shah Muhammad Sagir during Sultan Giasuddin Azam Shah (1389-1410), Yusuf-Jolikha by Abdul Hakim (1600-1670), Fatuhushsham and Fatuhul Meser, on Muslim military expeditions, by Munshi Azimuddin (1838-1922) and Jange Sultan, on the conquest of Multan and Kashmir, by Munshi Mohammad Hatem.

No doubt Muhammad Ashraful Islam took painstaking efforts to dig out the historical facts. This is an impeccable work in terms of research and investigation and he deserves our thanks and appreciation. The added attraction of the book is its preface by eminent Islamic scholar of Bangladesh Moulana Mohiuddin Khan, Editor

of Monthly Madina. This has made the book more acceptable to the readers and enhanced its grace.

Since the author intends to continue his research in this field and publish an enlarged edition of this book in future, it is advisable that he should be more selective in using Bengali words and fulfill the expectations of our generation and must not overburden the readers by using such words that are important for our tradition and culture but nevertheless are not relevant to our time, after all the purpose of writing is to carry forward the message contained in the writing. Let us not forget that new words are created and old words die its natural death but the truth, ultimate eternal message only long last. I shall however fail in my duty as a reviewer of the book if I do not mention the wonderful use of some of the words by the author. I must in this regard mention the use of the Arabic word fatiha in place of the introduction or the preface or the prologue of the book. The writer here followed the style of the Quran, the first Surah or chapter of the Quran being fatiha. Perhaps Muhammad Ashraful Islam made such use of the Arabic word fatiha for the first time in Bengali literature.

In the cover of the book the monument of the Kadam Rasul of Narayanganj, an important historical architectural work, along with Nagri alphabet have been used as background which made the book all the more attractive. Both general readers and researchers of the life of the noble Prophet would find the book useful. The book deserves wider circulation.

Reviewed by-
Shah Abdul Halim
Chairman
Islamic Information Bureau Bangladesh
Email <sah1947@yahoo.com>
Web<www.shahfoundationbd.org>