

Contribution of Bengali scholars to *Sir'ah* literature

Md. Masudur Rahman*

Abstract: Islam came to be spread in Bengal at the end of the 8th century or the beginning of the 9th century. The preachers resorted to propagating Islam and the life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) orally highlighting the spiritual and miraculous events found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. However, some writers did write poems, essays and lyrics about the life of the Prophet (SAW) in Bengali language before the 18th century, a tradition which continues till today. There are over a thousand books on the biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Bengali which were published in the last 200 years. Contribution of Bengali scholars to the biography became an invaluable wealth of Bengali literature. Many Bengali Muslims keep at least a copy of the *Sir'ah* literature and consider its reading a kind of a virtuous act. The Bengali scholars presented the life of the Prophet (SAW) to the people with devotion and sincerity and in a pleasant language. This study focuses on the origin of the biographical works of the Prophet (SAW) in Bengal and provides a critical analysis of the contribution of Bengali scholars to the *Sir'ah* literature.

Keywords : Islam in Bengal, Life of the Prophet, *Sir'ah* literature, Bengali scholars.

During the last 1400 years, the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) known as *Sir'ah*, has been written in many languages, including Bengali. From the 12th century onward, Bengali poets, wilters, historians, philosophers and theologians have been writing and translating the works on *Sir'ah*. Even though the history of Bengali prose-literature is not more than 200 years old, that of its poetic literature dates back to more than 900 years. Literary history of Bengal proves that Bengali literature began with the study of the life of the prophet producing valuable treasure on his ideal life. His ideal life inspired the Bengali scholars to compose thousands of Islamic books. Later on many Urdu and Persian versions of *Sir'ah* books had been translated into Bengali enriching the *Sir'ah* literature further. The *Sir'ah* literature is very popular in public forums and religious congregations. The *Sir'ah* literature in Bengali has been produced mainly in the form of poetry and prose.

What is *Sir'ah*?

Sir'ah is an Arabic word. According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (in Bengali), *Sir'ah* means starting, tradition, story and the life sketch of the ancient people (Khan, 1999 : 81). Another Bengali scholar maintains that *Sir'ah* means character and habit (Bhuiyan, 1998 : 5). In standard term, it is understood as the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the

* Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies, CENURC, International Islamic University Chittagong.
E-mail : masuddu_08@yahoo.com

life story and the history of his contribution to world civilization. This is how it is presented in the earliest works on the Prophet's life entitled *Sirat ibn Hisham* and *Sirat ibn Ishaq*. In other words, *Sir'ah* means the events and facts, immediately before and during the lifetime of the prophet i.e., his prophethood, preaching of Islam, struggle and achievements etc. Therefore, any "written articles, features and books about the life of Muhammad usually are called the *Sir'ah*" (Khaleque, 1986 : Introduction).

Oral tradition of *Sir'ah* in Bengal

It is difficult to identify the exact date of the beginning of the study of *Sir'ah* in Bengali language. But understandably during the time of the second Khalifa of Islam, Umar ibn al-Khattab, the study of *Sir'ah* started along with the spread of Islam in Bengal. At that time the Khalifah sent a group of the companions of the holy prophet to the Indian sub-continent to preach Islam (Talib, 1980 : 59; Karim, 2002: 27) who described the miraculous and revolutionary life of Muhammad (SAW). "Within about one hundred years of its advent, Islam reached the northwestern India, and Arabian traders came into contact with the coastal regions of India, including Bengal" (Islam, 2003 : 309). Many Bengali people were converted to Islam and learnt about the life of the Prophet from the preachers. Later on, the converted Bengali Muslims preached the spiritual life of the prophet to motivate the Bengali people to embrace Islam. "The 'Seerah' of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is today, as it always has been, the best single method of effectively projecting the message of Islam" (Rahman, 1981 : xv).-This oral tradition of the *Sir'ah* continued until the 14th century when the written form started to appear.

Classical Bengali literature on *Sir'ah*

Sir'ah study in the written form started with poetry during the 14th century and Shah Muhammad Sagir (1339-1409) is considered to be the pioneer poet of Bengali literature of the time.¹ He started writing praiseworthy poetry about the life of Muhammad (SAW). His poetry work named *Yusuf Zuleikha* in the 14th century contains many verses praising Muhammad (SAW).

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Jainuddin² (d.1481) and Shah Birid Khan (1480-1550) wrote poetry separately and produced identical volumes naming *Rasul Bijoy*³ (victory of

¹ Shah Muhammad Sagir is believed to have served the Gauda King Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah (1389-1410). He was perhaps the court poet of Azam Shah and wrote the volume at request the King. Muhammad Sagir is considered to be the first writer to introduce Perso-Arabic literature to the Bengalis.

² Jainuddin (15th century) writer of *Rasul Bijoy*, was one of the great poets of medieval Bangla Literature. His father's name was Moinuddin. The family claimed to be the descents of Caliph Abu Bakar Siddique. While Jainuddin was composing his poem about the victories of Islam, Maldar Basu composed Srikrishna Bijoy, about the victories of Hinduism. Both these poems provide valuable glimpses of contemporary Hindu and Muslim communities in Bengal during

the messenger) on the life of our prophet. *Rasul Bijoy* is a narrative poem about a war between Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Jaikum, the emperor of Iraq. The poem, which ends with the victorious Muslims, also includes the Prophet's sayings. The source of the poem is believed to be Persian. Syed Sultan⁴ (1550-1648) is another famous poet of the time who wrote two famous books on the life and works of the prophet entitled *Rasul Charita* (life of the messenger) and *Wafat e Rasul* (death of the messenger).⁵ Sultan was noted as a composer of poems based on oral narratives or scriptures. He wrote several other books, including *Nabi Bangsha* (Family of the Prophet), *Gyanpradin* (Light of knowledge), *Gyan chautisha*, and *Jaikum Rajar Lodai* (Battle of King Jaikum). He composed some poems in couplets. His most noted work is *Nabi Bangsha* and is based on *Qisasul Ambiya* in Persian, and covers the entire range of religions and life of all the prophets till the last messenger of Islam.

In the 17th century, another famous poet named Alaol⁶ (1607-1680) wrote a volume entitled *Padmavati* praising and narrating the life of the prophet. A contemporary is Syed Hamza⁷ (1755-1815) who translated some remarkable *Hadiths* of the Prophet (Helal, 2005 : 18) into Bengali language. So, it is evident that during the classical period of

the 15th century as well as the struggle for power between the native Hindu kings and the migrant Muslim forces.

³ It was published at first in 1471-81, later it was printed in 1963 under the Dept. of Bangla, Dhaka University.

⁴ Syed Sultan, (c 1550-1648) a poet of classical Bangla Literature, was a resident of Patiya village under Chakrashala Chakla in Chittagong, Bangladesh. The name of his *pir* was Syed Hasan. The poet himself later reached the status of a *pir* (*saint*). Sultan was noted as a composer of poems based on oral narratives or scriptures.

⁵ It was also published in 1550-1648, later it was printed in 1949 by the Dept. of Bangla, Dhaka University.

⁶ Alaol (c 1607-1680) one of the greatest poets of medieval Bangla Literature, was probably born in 1607 at Fatwabad Pargana under Faridpur district of Bangladesh. His father was a minister of Majlis Kutub, the ruler of Fatwabad. But he was brought up at Arakan in Myanmar. Alaol learnt Bangla, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. He was also acquainted with the arts of war and music. Alaol was the most prolific medieval Bangla writer.

⁷ Syed Hamza (c 1755-1815) writer of bilingual *Puthi* (a book of verse based on legends). Syed Hamza's paternal house was in Udna, a village in Bhursut Pargana in the district of Hughli in West Bengal. The devastating Damodar erosion took away all their belongings in 1792, which compelled them to take shelter at Basantapur village in Raira Pargana. He started teaching in this village. The two puthis *Amir Hamza* and *Jaiguner Puthi* were written about the valorous acts of Hazrat Muhammad (SAW)'s uncle Amir Hamza and Hazrat Ali's son Abu Hanifa', while *Hatim Tai* was based on the Urdu epic *Arayesh Mahfil*. He used innumerable supernatural stories derived from Arabian legends, about the pious Hatim Tai. Both *Amir Hamza* and *Hatim Tai* are massive books of verse.

Bengali literature (1200-1800 CE), a great number of books were on the life of the prophet were written by Bengali poets.

Modern Bengali literature on *Sir'ah*

During the modern age of Bengali literature, hundreds of poets and literateurs composed and wrote on various aspects of the life of Muhammad (SAW). For their great contribution to *Sir'ah*, the biography of the prophet became a part of Bengali literature. Among the famous writers of the time are Mir Mosharraf Hossain (1838-1894), Munshi Mohammad Meherullah (1861-1907), Shaikh Jamiruddin (1870-1937), Shahadat Hossain (1893-1953), Golam Mostafa (1897-1964), Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), Farrukh Ahmad (1918-1974), Benajir Ahmed (1903-1936), Mohammad Mozammel Huq (1860-1933), Muhammad Shahidullah (1885-1969), and Al-Mahmud (b.1936). Those and other Bengali writers wrote praiseworthy songs, lyrics, poetry, articles and books on the life of Muhammad (SAW).

In 1918, the compilation of poetry named *Islamic Kabitamala* (collections of Islamic poetry) was done by Abul Khair Saifuddin where the poems of famous ancient poets were included (Choudhury, 2005 : 11). Another collection entitled *Khatamon Nabieen* (seal of the prophets) is a compilation of prose edited by poet Benajir Ahmed and was published in 1975. Some other famous works include *Rasulke Nibedita Kabita* (poetry devoted to the Prophet) compiled by Israf Hossain, *Rasuler Shane Kabita* (poetry in honour of the prophet) compiled by Mokol Chowdhury (b.1958) and *Nirbachita N`ate Rasul* (selected songs in praise of the holy prophet) compiled by Asad bin Hafiz (Bhuiyan, 1998). The most prolific of the poets of the modern age is Kazi Nazrul Islam who wrote hundreds of poetries and songs on the Prophet. His famous poetical work on the life-history (finished partially) of the Prophet is called *Maru Bhaskar* (Desert Sun). Kazi Nazrul Islam and the famous folk singer Abbasuddin Ahmed (1901-1959) earned popularity by their many spiritual songs on the prophet.

Modern Bengali prose literature on *Sir'ah*

Towards the end of 19th century, Christian missionaries wrote many books and leaflets on the *Sir'ah* in Bengal where they intentionally distorted the life of the prophet and ridiculed him. This angered the Muslim thinkers and writers of the time who felt the necessity to compose complete and original life of their prophet in prose. In this field, Munshi Mohammad Meherullah (1861-1907) played a vital role in writing to preach the ideal life of the prophet and succeeded to challenge the derogatory works of the Christian missionaries. This created a trend resulting in producing a corpus of Islamic literature by the end of the 19th century. At that time, one of the elements of Bengali Muslim literature was the biography of the prophet and all the authors more or less were composing something about the life of the prophet. In fact, the prose writing of Bengali Muslim literature had begun with the biography of the prophet. "In the beginning of the 20th century, hundreds of the biographies of the prophet were written in Bengali" (Hai and

Ahsan, 2008 : 123). Interestingly enough, it was a Hindu writer by the name Girish Chandra Sen⁸ (1834-1910) who wrote a full biography in prose on the prophet. The title of his book is *Mahapurush Mohammader Jibon Charita* (1886) (Biography of the great man Muhammad). He also translated the whole *Qur'an* into Bengali for the first time in the history of Bengal (Hai and Ahsan, 2008 : 123).

The first Muslim biographer of the prophet is believed to be Sheikh Abdur Rahim (1859-1933) of Bengal.⁹ The title of his book is *Hazrat Mohammader Jibancharita O Dharmaniti* (1887) (The biography and religious ethics of Prophet Muhammad). As a Muslim scholar, he detected many distorted or inaccurate information in the existing *Sir'ah* literature, so he decided to write an authentic life history of the prophet. He supported his writings with the sayings of the prophet and verses of the *Qur'an*. He rescued the biography of the prophet from further distortion by providing the original and authentic information from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. He also criticized the Western biographers of the prophet for not being qualified to embark upon such a project.

Another great work of the time is *Mostofa Charita* (1925) (biography of the prophet) by Moulana Mohammad Akram Khan (1868-1968).¹⁰ Many Hindu and Muslim writers

⁸ Girish Chandra Sen (1835-1910), a Hindu but Islamic and religious scholar and translator who made the first creditable and full translation of the holy Qur'an into Bangla, was born in the village of Panchdona at Narsingdi in undivided India. The outcome, a Bangla translation of the Qur'an (1881-86), was his greatest achievement. His keen interest in different religions and his liberal outlook earned him the respect of followers of other religions. Girish Chandra wrote and published a total of 42 books in Bangla. His publications include Persian translations of such works as *Gulistan*, *Bustan*, and *Diwan-e-Hafiz*. He also translated the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW): *Meskat Masabih* (1892-98). Sen wrote several biographies of Muslim personalities, including the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the Prophet's grandsons Imam Hasan and Imam Hussain, the four Khalifas etc in *Mahapurushcharita* (1882-87). His famous book *Tapasmala* (1880-1895), based on Sheikh Fariduddin Attar's Persian book *Tazkiratul Aulia*, contains biographies of 96 Muslim saints.

⁹ Sheikh Abdur Rahim, (1859-1931), journalist and writer, was born in 1859 in the village of Muhammadpur in the Basirhat subdivision of 24-Paraganas, West Bengal, India and was son of Munshi Sheikh Golam Yahia. Sheikh Abdur Rahim's writings were inspired by Islamic idealism. He hoped to awaken the backward Muslim society through his writings. Among his many books on Islam and Islamic ideals are *Hazrat Mohammader Jibancharita O Dharmaniti* (1888), *Islamtattva* (1896), *Namajattva* (1898), *Hajjbidhi* (1903), *Islam Itibrta* (2 parts, 1910), *Namaj Shiksa* (1917), *Khotba* (1932) etc. He also wrote two romantic books: *Alhamra* (1891) and *Pranay Yatri* (1892).

¹⁰ Mohammad Akram Khan, (1868-1969) Journalist, politician, Islamic scholar, was born in village Hakimpur in the district of 24 Parganas of West Bengal, undivided India. Mohammad Akram Khan entered professional life very early as a journalist and worked first with the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and with the *Mohammadi Akhbar*. In October 1936, he published the *Azad*, the only Bengali daily of that time which contributed greatly to generating support for the Muslim League in the pre-1947 days in Bengal. He wrote voluminously. His major works include

highly appreciated the work. The language of this book is of high standard and the book is considered to be a highly scholarly work on *Sir'ah* in Bengali literature. He was neither influenced by any previous biographer nor had impact of any theologian. He was different from previous writers in bringing original sources of the *Quran* and the *Sunnah* to support every opinion and presented strong logic behind his propositions. According to him, Western writers distorted Islam and Muslim history. He protested and refuted their biased arguments. His book is rich with details about prophet's life. Each page depicts the struggle and tireless labour of the author. In the preamble of the book, the author wrote "I struggled hard to accomplish this work day after day, month after month and year after year in a silent place" (Helal, 2005 : 26). In fact, Akram Khan tried to erase superstition and myths from the society of Bengal by the original and spiritual life of the prophet. He also tried to remove the culture of worshipping graves and saints from Bengal through his writings and through this biography (Rahman, 1995 : 107).

Poet and writer Golam Mostafa (1897-1964) is the author of much read book *Bishwanabi* (1942) (the Universal Prophet).¹¹ This book is the epitome of *Sir'ah* in Bengali literature. Since its first publication, 35 editions had been published which proves the acceptance and popularity of this book to the people of Bengal. This book is a result of substantial research and a perfect combination of logical interpretation and heart-touching arguments. "His *Bishwanabi* (1942) is a popular book about the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and is often read aloud at MILADS." (Islam, 2003 : 91). From ordinary readers to intellectuals, every reader gets a heavenly taste and attraction from this book. The author wrote this book in a planned and systematic way. Every page stood on logic and authentic references from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. So, readers, philosophers and intellectuals may get a clear concept about the life of the prophet. Many Muslim families keep at least one copy of this book at their houses as a symbol of devotion to the prophet and read it at their leisure as a part of religious duty. It occupies a place in the hearts of the Bengali readers. The author cited at least 62 authentic books written in English, Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages.

Samasya O Samadhan, the *Mostafa Charit*, *Amparar Banganubad*. His most significant book, *Moslem Banglar Samajik Itihas*, discusses various aspects of Bengal society such as the influence of *Pirism* and *Sufiism* and the reasons for the degeneration of the Muslims of Bengal.

¹¹ Golam Mostafa (1897-1964) poet and writer, was born in the village of Manoharpur in Shaikupa thana, Jhenaidaha. He earned BA from Ripon College in 1918 and BT from David Hare Training College in 1922. He believed in the ideals of Pakistan and, during the language movement in 1952, supported Urdu as the state language of Pakistan. Though known mostly as a poet, Golam Mostafa was a skilled in prose and poetry. His poetic works include *Bulbulistan* (1949), *Tarana-i-Pakistan* (1956), *Baniadam* (1958), etc. He also translated the writings of the Urdu poets Hali and Iqbal: *Musaddas-i-Hali* (1941), *Kalame Iqbal* (1957), *Shikwa O Jawab-i-Shikwa* (1960). In 1958, he translated the holy Qur'an. His prose works include *Islam O Jihad* (1947), *Islam O Communism* (1946), *Amar Chintadhara* (1952), *Pakistaner Rastrabhasa* etc. His *Bishwanabi* (1942) is a popular book on the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Islamic Foundation Bangladesh¹² has published a bibliography on the *Sir'ah* and the *Sir'ah Encyclopedia* in Bengali.¹³ It mentioned at least 1028 published books from 1474 to 2000 C.E. in poetry, lyrics and prose. On the other hand, Bangla Academy also published a bibliography which included Muslim authors from 1850 to 1947.¹⁴ It also mentioned more than 500 books on the biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). However, there exists many works on the *Sir'ah* in Bengali authored by writers in the West Bengal part of India which are not included in these two bibliographies.

Translation works on *Sir'ah* in Bengali literature

The classical works on *Sir'ah* (in Arabic and other languages) have reached the people of Bengal through translation. For example, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh has published a translation of the Arabic *Sirat e Rasulullah* by Ibn Ishaq (d.151 H.). Likewise, many other works on the *Sir'ah* in foreign languages had been translated and published by private publishers into Bengali.

Many Persian poets and literateurs composed poetry and lyrics in praise of the prophet and these were translated into Bengali. Among those whose works have been translated are Moulana Rumi (1207-1273), Mirza Mazhar (1111-1195), Omar Khayyam (1148-1124), Abdur Rahman Jami (1414-1492), Sheikh Sadi (1175-1295), Amir Khosrow (1253-1325) and Fateh Ali Wasi (1825-1886) are worth mentioning (Bhuiyan, 1988 : 156).

Sir'ah books in Urdu language played a vital role in the field of *Sir'ah* study in Bengali language. Most of the famous *Sir'ah* books in Urdu have been translated into Bengali and widely distributed. As there were lots of Islamic books in Urdu, Islamic scholars of Bengal learnt Urdu and later translated many books from Urdu. Famous books such as *Sirat e Mostofa Sallalloho Alaihi Wasallam* by Idris Khandalovi (1317-1394 H.), *Siratunnabi* by Allama Shibli Numani (1857-1915) and Sulaiman Nadvi (1884-1953), *Khatemul Ambia* by Ashraf Ali Thanwi (1863-1943), *Beladate Nababi* by Abul Kalam Azad (1870-1958), *Sirat e Khatemul Ambia* by Mufti Muhammad Shafi (1314-1394 H), *Aftab e Nabuwat* by Qari Muhammad Tayyib (1897-1983), *Nabi Rahmat* by Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-2001) have been translated into Bengali. Not only the books, but

¹² Islamic Foundation Bangladesh has published a 27-volume *Islami Bishwakos* (Islamic Encyclopaedia) under the Islamic Encyclopedia Project and has started working on compilation of *Sirat Bishwakos*, a 22-volume encyclopedia on the life of Muhammad (SAW).

¹³ This book contains 120 pages. The author remarked the name of the biographers, first publishing date and place. It is an excellent book and wealth of the researchers. (Helal, Nasir (compiler and editor) (2005), *Bangla Bhashai Sirat Bishayak Grantha Panji*, (The Bibliography on the Life of Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) in Bengali Language) (in Bengali), Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dhaka, p. 18.

¹⁴ Bangla Academy is another state owned institution which published '*Bangla Muslim Grantha panji*' (Muslim Bibliography in Bengali), by Ali Ahmed, 1985. It contains 865 pages.

also short articles, lyrics and poetry of famous poets and literateurs of Urdu on Muhammad (SAW) has been translated into Bengali. Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938), Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979) and Mirza Ghalib (d.1879) are very familiar figures to the Bengali scholars (Ahmad, 2004). *Sirat-e-Sarwar-e 'Alam*, a very scholarly work of Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi has been translated and published as well.

From English language, *Hazrat Muhammad in the Battle Fields* by Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah (1910-1998) and *Muhammad: Encyclopedia of Seerah* by Afzalur Rahman have been translated into Bengali.

***Sir'ah* in Bengali for children**

Children are the future of any nation. Every nation believes that if the children get moral education, they can bring a better future for a country. These teachings can convince their mind and character in future. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used to love children very much. The life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is full of ideals for the children as well. Based on this understanding, Bengali scholars wrote hundreds of books for the Bengali children, so that through reading these books children can be inspired by the great life of Muhammad (SAW). The famous book *Noor Nabi* (1918) (light of the prophet) by Yaqub Ali Chawdhury (1888-1940) is a charming book written suitably for children on the life of our prophet and an invaluable asset in child literature.¹⁵ It is an integrated creation of poetry, novel, story and prose in Bengali literature. Nobel laureate and poet Rabindranath Tagore¹⁶ (1861-1941) highly praised this book (Bhuiyan, 1998). The writer demonstrated the structure of an ideal man in this writing. This book helped to build Muslim nationalism in the Indian sub-continent. Following him, many Bengali authors became attracted to childrens' literature. The books *Chhotader Mostafa* (1936) (prophet of the children) by Torab Ali (1898-1954), *Chhotader Hazrat Mohammad* (1941) (Hazrat Muhammad for the children) by Muhammad Wajed Ali¹⁷ (1896-1954), were familiar and much read in the Muslim houses of Bengal.

¹⁵ Mohammad Yakub Ali Chowdhury (1888-1940), prose writer and journalist, was born in the village of Maguradanga of Pangsha upazila in the district of Faridpur. Though he wrote mainly on Islamic philosophy and culture, he believed in the amity of Hindus and Muslims. He staunchly supported Bangla when a controversy arose in the 1920s and 1930s whether Bangla or Urdu should be the state language of Bengali Muslims.

¹⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, (1861-1941) is poet, prose writer, composer, painter, essayist, philosopher, educationist, social reformer. It is basically as a poet that he gained fame all over the world. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913, the first Asian writer to have been awarded this prize.

¹⁷ Ali, Muhammad Wajed (1896-1954) journalist and writer, was born in Banshdaha village under Satkhira district, in Bengal. Wajed Ali was greatly influenced by his father's personality. However, influenced by Maulana Mohammad Akram Khan, he became involved in politics

Conclusion

In spite of late commencement of the culture of writing *Sir'ah* in Bengali literature, many articles, poems, songs and books on the prophet have been written till date. During the past two centuries, none other than the Prophet (SAW) received so much of literary attention in Bengali. From 14th century onward, almost every famous Bengali Muslim writer wrote something on the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). There have been similar works on the *Sir'ah* authored by Bengali Hindu writers as well. Since the inception of Bengali literature, the Bengali scholars in the classical age wrote praiseworthy poetry and lyrics about the life of Muhammad (SAW) and were patronized by Muslim rulers. Subsequently, the renaissance of Bengali literature in the modern period witnessed a central focus of Muslim literature on the biography of the *Prophet* Muhammad. Hundreds of books about the ancient *Mecca* and *Medina*, the ideal life of the *Prophet* and Islamic history have been written. Several organizations, institutions and individuals contributed much to the field of *Sir'ah* literature. For example : 'Sirat Academy', 'National Sirat Committee' and 'Bangladesh Sirat Mission' publish *Sir'ah* souvenirs every year. Scholarly articles and prose are compiled and composed on the occasion of the 12th *Rabiul Awal* of the Islamic lunar calendar annually. At the government and semi-government levels, programmes of *Siratuunnabi* and *Eid-e-Miladunnabi* are arranged with religious fervor. The government of Bangladesh has declared the birth day of the Prophet as a national holiday with newspapers publishing special features and supplementary pages on the Prophet. Some of the biographers sometimes have emphasized a specific side of the life of the prophet; however, in most cases they present the entire aspects of his life - religious, political, spiritual, social, philosophical and so on. Inevitably, the huge corpus of the *Sir'ah* literature in Bengali forms a major characteristic of the Bengali literature.

References

- Ahmad, Farrukh. (2004). *Iqbal Nirbachita Kobita* (Selected Poems of Iqbal). Dhaka : Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.
- Bhuiyan, Md. Abul Quasem. (1998) *Bangla Bhashay Seerat Charcha*, (History of the *Sir'ah* Literature in Bengali). Dhaka : Tauhid Prokashoni.
- Choudhury, Mukul (editor). (2005). *Mohanabi (SAAS) –Ke Nibedito Kabita*, (Poems Dedicated to the Great Prophet Muhammad (SAW), (in Bengali). Dhaka : Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.

and dropped out of college. He then joined the anti-British Non-Cooperation Movement. He took up journalism, and, from 1920 to 1935, worked as an editor in a number of Muslim-owned newspapers and magazines in Calcutta, among them, *Mohammadi*, *Nabajug*, *Sebak*, *The Mussalman*, *Khadem*, *Bulbul* and *Samyabadi*. Although he wrote over 200 articles, the number of his books is small. His eight books, which include biographies of varying lengths and a number of translations, are *Marubhaskar*, *Chhotader Hazrat Mohammad*, *Quaid-i-Azam Mohamed Ali Jinnah*, *Mohammad Ali*, *Mahamanus Muhsin*, and *Syed Ahmad*.

- Hai, Muhammad Abdul and Ahsan, Syed Ali. (2008). *Bangla Sahityer Itibritto, Adhunik Jug*, (History of Bengali Literature, Modern Period). Dhaka : Ahmed Publishing House, Dhaka.
- Helal, Nasir (compiler and editor). (2005). *Bangla Bhashai Sirat Bishayak Grantha Panji*, (The Bibliography of the *Sir'ah* related literature in Bengali Language). Dhaka : Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.
- Islam, Sirajul (editor). (2003). *Banglapedia, National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Vol. 5, Dhaka : Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.
- Karim, Md. Abdul. (2002). *Mymensingh Zelai Islam* (Islam in the district of Mymensingh). Dhaka : Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.
- Khan, Mohiuddin (editor). (1999). *Mashik Modina* (Monthly Modina, in Bengali.), 'Sirat Research in Various Ages' by Golam Monsur Ahmed, Dhaka.
- Khaleque, Abdul (1986), *Syedul Mursaleen*. Dhaka : Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.
- Rahman, Afzalur (editor). (1981). *Muhammad : Encyclopaedia of Seerah*, Volume. I. London : The Muslims Schools Trust.
- Rahman, A T M Atiur. (1995). *Banglar Rajnitite Moulana Mohammad Akram Khan*, (Akram Khan in the politics of Bengal). Dhaka : Bangla Academy.
- Talib, Abdul Mannan. (1980). *Bangladesh-e-Islam* (Islam in Bangladesh). Dhaka : Adhunik Prokashoni.