

A Critical Review on the Literature of the Faraizi Movement

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Abstract: The Faraizi Movement was a religious reform movement of 19th century East Bengal. From the religious point of view, only what is obligatory in the Quran and Hadith is called Farz. The main slogan of the Faraizies was the complete denunciation of all rites and ceremonies which had no basis in the Quran and the Sunnah. This movement was led by Haji Shariatullah (1781-1840) and his son Dudu Miya (1819-1862). Initially it started with the aim of religious purification. By lapse of time, however their leaders, followers and overall condition had been changed. The movement developed into a socio-economic and finally a political movement. All classes of the Muslim community were involved in the Faraizi Movement and it continued for a long time against colonial rulers. It can be analyzed from different points of view on the basis of interdisciplinary method. Muin-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, Gautam Bhadra, Iftekhhar Iqbal, Narahari Kaviraj and many other prominent scholars wrote on various aspects of the Faraizi Movement. In this article, I will attempt to review their writings with a critical analysis. As the primary and secondary sources are available, my focus also will be the analysis of sources and make different sense of thinking about their theology and principles.

Key Words: Faraizi, Haji Shariatullah, Dudu Miya, Zamindars, Permanent Settlement, Islam, Resistance, Bengal.

Introduction

The political changes in Bengal after 1757 brought about significant political, economic, and social changes that had a lasting impact on the local population. Due to Bengal's integration into the capitalist economy through British imperialism, the peasants and artisans in the region endured significant hardships.¹ As a result, since the beginning of the colonial rule, Bengal has witnessed agitation and rebellion among different socio-economic classes. A notable example is the Faraizi Movement led by Haji Shariatullah. From 1820 the Faraizi Movement gained widespread popularity in Eastern Bengal. Several books have been published on this movement. Since many issues including religion, politics and economics were associated with this movement, researchers have approached the subject from different perspectives. This

article is an attempt to critically review the literature that exists regarding the Farizi Movement. Using primary and secondary sources, the author's statement and point of view will be interpreted. For the convenience of the reader, a brief idea about the Faraizi movement will also be given.

Methodology

This article is based on a comprehensive examination of primary and secondary sources related to the movement under study. The primary sources used primarily consist of the funerary inscription of Haji Shariatullah and the Bengal Census Report of 1872. In addition to the primary sources, various secondary sources were consulted to gain a broader understanding of the movement from different perspectives. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented, a comparison was made between the primary sources and the findings of the secondary sources. Author's perspective who wrote on the movement were scrutinized. Literature on Muslim socio-economic conditions, peasant movements, and the political history of India were consulted too.

Faraizi Movement in Brief

Literally, The term "Faraizi" originated from the Arabic term "فرض" (*Fard*), which refers to obligatory duties commanded by Allah (God). In Islamic law, *fard* refers to an obligatory or mandatory duty or action that a Muslim is required to perform. It is one of the classifications of acts in Islamic jurisprudence, indicating that fulfilling the specified duty is obligatory and failure to do so may result in sin or punishment.² Haji Shariatullah has given the definition and explanation of *fard* from his point of view. His interpretation of *fard* encompassed all religious obligations commanded by God and the Prophet (sm.), regardless of their significance. They placed particular emphasis on five fundamental pillars of Islam, namely, (i) *Kalimah* (the declaration of faith), (ii) *Salat* or *Namaz* (attending daily prayers), (iii) *Sawm* or *Rozah* (fasting during the month of

Ramadan), (iv) *Zakat* (giving alms), and (v) *Hajj* (performing the pilgrimage).³

The religious and cultural landscape of Bengal Muslims during the 19th century under British colonial rule was diverse and multifaceted, characterized by syncretism, religious pluralism, and cultural exchange. A. R. Mallick says, "... long years of association with non-Muslims who far outnumbered them, cut off from the original home of Islam, and living with half converts from Hinduism, the Muslims had greatly deviated from the original faith and had become 'Indianised'."⁴ Haji Shariatullah initiated the Faraizi movement with the aim of eradicating non-Islamic cultural elements from Muslim society.

The Faraizi movement was not solely motivated by religious factors; economic and social reasons also played significant role in its emergence and development. The Permanent Settlement was introduced in 1793 after a prolonged trial period. It allowed peasants to seek legal help if they faced exploitation.⁵ As the Company government aimed for increased profits at lower costs, it failed to create a judicial system proportionate to the population and size.⁶ Zamindars gained additional powers and rights over the peasants too. So, "To them the Permanent Settlement was nothing but an engine of oppression. Particularly loathsome to them was the right of the zamindar to enhance rent and levy abwabs as much as he liked. No less hateful were the laws of distraint which gave the zamindar or his agent summary power to arrest any raiyat on the flimsiest pretext."⁷ This resulted in increased financial hardships and cruel treatment for the raiyats. Even, many wealthy Muslims became financially weak after being ousted from power.⁸ These circumstances led to economic distress, indebtedness, and land dispossession that served as fertile ground for the Faraizi Movement to take root.

Faraizi Movement under the leadership of Haji Shariatullah

Haji Shariatullah played a central and foundational role in the Faraizi Movement. He was born in Shamail village of Madaripur

subdivision of Faridpur district in 1782. “Naturally, the chronology of his life has been a subject of endless controversy among scholars.”⁹ He resided in Makkah from 1799 to 1818.¹⁰

During his long stay in Saudi Arabia from 1799 to 1818, Shariatullah witnessed the emergence and decline of the power of the Saud family and the maturation of the 'Mawahidun' revolution, also known as Wahhabism. Returning home, he started an Islamic reform movement similar to the then Wahhabi movement in Arabia, which later came to be known as the Faraizi Movement. According to A. R. Mallick, “The doctrines and tenets of the two nineteenth century reform movements which go by the name of the Faraidi and the Wahhabi movements, appear to be analogous to those of puritanic movement in Arabia, started considerably earlier by one Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Ahhab.”¹¹ But I. H. Qureshi refuses to accept the Wahhabi influence on the Faraizi leader because Haji Shariatullah never identified himself as a Wahabi.¹² Muin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan emphasized that Haji Shariatullah was particularly influenced by the Wahabi movement of Arabia, although he did not adopt all the principles of the Wahabi movement.¹³

In 1818, Haji Shariatullah's initial mission encountered obstacles as his preaching of pure doctrines failed to attract a significant audience. In response, he decided to return to Makkah to seek guidance from his teachers.¹⁴ In 1820, Shariatullah returned with newfound Sufi influence. The incorporation of Sufi teachings, emphasizing the importance of holding faith in the heart, had a magnetic effect on people. Within a very short time he managed to gain many followers. The influence of his ideology remarkably spread everywhere, especially in Faridpur, Bakerganj, Dhaka and Mymensingh districts where one-sixth of the Muslim population believed in this ideology.¹⁵

Haji Shariatullah proclaimed various practices of Muslims as grave sins, categorizing them into two distinct types: *Bid'at* and

Shirk. He listed worship of shrines of Bibi Fatimah, Ghazi Kalu, *Panch Pir*, floating of *Bhera*, holding of Jari or bewailing in commemoration of the martyrdom of Hasan and Husain, observance of ceremonious dance, music, *fatihah*, *Urs*, *Milad*, planting banana tree around the residence on the occasion of first menstruation of a girl participation in the *Ratha Yatra* and other idolatrous customs of the Hindus as *Shirk* and *Bid'at*.¹⁶ Zamindars used to impose various illegal taxes on the subjects. For Hindu festivals like Durga Puja, Kali Puja, etc., taxes were collected from the Muslim subjects too.¹⁷ To protect Muslim raiyats from Hindu zamindar's oppression, Shariatullah advised his followers not to pay during Hindu festivals that promoted idol worship. He also encouraged cow-slaughter during Muslim festivals, disregarding all prohibitions. "This had a two-fold effect. Financial losses apart, the religious sentiments of the Hindu zamindars were offended as well. As the Faraizi-Hindu zamindar conflicts ensued, the religious reform movement conducted by Shariat-ullah got entangled with the economic and communal problems."¹⁸ These policies generated opposition from the newly emerged Hindu zamindars who felt threatened by his movement.¹⁹

Shariatullah issued a fatwa (doctrine) declaring it forbidden to perform Jummah (Friday prayers) and celebrate the two Eids in '*Dar al-Harb*' (non-Muslim country, an enemy state).²⁰ This viewpoint elicited strong opposition from conservative religious scholars (Ulama). Maulana Karamat Ali Jaunpuri, a contemporary religious preacher, vehemently disagreed with Shariatullah on this matter and criticized him, likening him to the *Kharijis* of Bengal.

In 1831, a clash broke out between the reformist Faraizi and the conservative orthodox at a place called Ramnagar in Dhaka district. Using this as an opportunity, the local Hindu zamindars, in collaboration with the government, expelled Haji Shariatullah and his followers from Nayabari, Dhaka, the center of their preaching.²¹

Faraizi Movement under the leadership of Dudu Miya

Following Haji Shariatullah's death, his son Dudu Miya (1819-1862) took the leadership of the Faraizi Movement. "Although a less accomplished scholar than his father, he played a role in the history of the Faraizi Movement which was second to none. Rather in certain aspects he even excelled his father's notability in organizing the Faraizi brotherhood into a well-knit and powerful society."²² "By his vigour and energy, Dudu Miya developed the Faraizi association into a powerful agrarian movement."²³

He structured the movement more efficiently by establishing a clear hierarchy, implementing a chain of command, and taking precautions against potential attacks. Jalal Uddin Molla from Faridpur was given the responsibility of forming a strong *Lathial* army.²⁴ The leader took the title of '*Ustad*', signifying that his orders became final and non-negotiable, emphasizing the party's interests. According to H. Beveridge, the then Deputy Commissioner of Bakerganj, Dudu Miya's organizational power and the loyalty of his followers made him the supremely powerful leader of rural Bengal.²⁵

Dudu Miya was arrested in 1840. He and his followers were humiliated in the court.²⁶ From 1840 to 1847, the zamindar-Faraizi conflict became highly confrontational. In 1841 and 1842, Dudu Miya initiated two campaigns against the zamindars of Kanaipur, referred to as Sikdars, and Faridpur, known as Ghoshes, with the primary objective of compelling them to treat the Faraizi peasantry with fairness and succeeded.²⁷ "These initial victories of Dudu Miya captured the imagination of the masses, and had far reaching influence on the future course of the Faraizi movement."²⁸ Dudu Miya gained high prestige, and the Faraizi movement received a significant boost as it attracted Muslims who were previously afraid of zamindari oppression.

Under the circumstances, it was not surprising that the zamindars would become desperate to destroy the influence and power of the Faraizis. They felt threatened by Faraizis

because it was not just about money—it was a power play for control over the territory. The zamindars saw that the Faraizis had become like real rulers and were applying judicial and administrative powers. Therefore, they increased the amount of taxes, including the tax on beards. In addition, they filed false cases in the court against the Faraizis.

In 1843, the Bengal Police found Dudu Miya leading a vast following of approximately 80,000 followers. But according to the Faraizis the number was 250,000.²⁹ According to James Wise, Dudu Miya boasted before the court that 50,000 men would answer his summon.³⁰

The zamindars attempted to ally with European indigo planters to suppress the peasant uprising led by Dudu Miya, but their efforts proved futile.³¹ Several criminal cases were filed against Dudu Miya, yet he consistently received acquittals due to lack of witnesses against him in court. During the onset of the Great Indian Revolt in 1857, Dudu Miya was arrested by the government and was subsequently removed to Kolkata, where he was incarcerated in prison. He was released in 1860 following the end of the Great Revolt. At Dhaka, Dudu Miya lived in Bangshal road. He passed away in Dhaka in 1862 due to illness.³²

After Dudu Miya's demise, the Faraizi movement weakened due to lack of competent leadership. The zamindars intensified their oppression on the Faraizis.³³ Meanwhile, Maulana Keramat Ali Jaunpuri declared the Faraizi doctrine as 'Khariji' and launched a campaign to eradicate it entirely throughout the region. By the end of the 19th century, the Faraizi movement in Bengal had become overshadowed by other reform movements, with Maulana Keramat Ali's *Tai-Wani* doctrine prevailing.³⁴ After Dudu Miya's death, his three sons successively became the Ustad of the Faraizis. The youngest son, Abu Khalid Rashiduddin, also known as Badshah Miya, took over in 1906. He actively participated in the Khilafat movement and non-cooperation movement. Badshah Miya passed away in 1951.³⁵

Review on the Literature of Faraizi Movement with Critical Analysis

While there are various sources to know about the Faraizi movement, the scarcity of books exclusively focused on this topic poses a challenge for in-depth exploration. Writers viewed the Faraizi Movement from different perspectives. Some explained it as part of the peasant movement, while others placed it in the context of social, economic, and cultural conditions. Muslim history chroniclers portrayed it as a religious reform movement. This proved to be a challenge while selecting books for review. Books with an analytical approach and sufficient information about the Faraizi Movement have been taken into account. The books have been presented in chronological order by the year they have been published. This approach will enhance the reader's comprehension of the author's perspective and the paradigm shift over time, encompassing politics and ideological thought.

- *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal* by A. R. Mallick³⁶, published in 1961, is a historical exploration of the relationship between the British colonial administration and the Muslim community in Bengal during British rule. This book gives an idea of the overall condition of the Muslims of Bengal before the Faraizi Movement which constructs background information of the Faraizi movement. By analyzing the interactions between the British authority and the Muslim community, Mallick aimed to provide valuable insights into the complexities of colonial rule and its effects on religious identities and movements. The author discussed in detail about the socio-cultural changes, converted Muslim's religious practices, the similarity of the idea of Pir with the earlier many gods and goddesses, economic condition of Muslims after political changes, religious purification movement in Bengal and North India etc. We can find some quantitative detailed information about reactions of zamindars against the Faraizi movement and the policies taken by the law enforcement authority. He also analyzed how religious leaders and Islamic principles were used to mobilize the masses and rally resistance against colonial injustices.

Mallick drew connections between the grievances that fueled the Faraizi movement and the broader socio-economic and political context shaped by British policies. As this book did not mainly focus on Eastern Bengal and presented the Faraizi movement as a part of the religious reform movement of India, it lacks detailed information on the socio-economic context of the Faraizi movement.

- *'Muslim Manos O Bangla Sahitya'* by Anisuzzaman³⁷, published in 1964, not only focused on Muslim social reform but also presents an evaluative comparative analysis with the broader social reform movement and renaissance in Bengal and India during that time. While the Bengal Renaissance led by Raja Rammohan Roy began, a Muslim reform movement also emerged. Anisuzzaman was of the opinion that the Faraizi movement remained conservative and required time and another effort to transition towards modernity. He mentioned that this movement spread mainly among the peasants and working class and the number of its supporters started to increase very rapidly.³⁸ However, it is said in this book that Hazi Shariatullah died in prison in 1860. Whereas Muin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Abdur Rahim and others mentioned he was arrested in the wake of the 1857 rebellion and released two years later. After returning home Faridpur police authorities arrested him again. He was released in 1860. After that he settled at No. 137 Bangshal Road. He died in 1862 and was buried in Bangshal.
- One of the most informative and reliable books on the Faraizi movement is *A History of the Faraidi Movement in Bengal (Down to A.D. 1906)*, published in 1965, written by Muin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan.³⁹ Since this book is written focusing only on the Faraizi movement, which is the subject of Muinuddin's doctoral research, this book will cover a large part of my assessment. In this book, while describing the background of the Faraizi movement, the author narrated the social and economic aspects, placing more emphasis on the amalgamation of non-Islamic cultures in religious rituals and culture of Muslim society. According to him, practices like adoring the Pir, visiting *dargahs*, observing Muharram festivities, and worshiping

Satyapir became prevalent in the 19th century Bengali Muslim society. Births, deaths, marriages, and social festivals were occasions marked by a multitude of non-Islamic rituals. Folk songs, dances, and festivals often blurred the boundaries between religious identities.⁴⁰ Other religious reform movements led by Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, Shah Ismail Shahid, Mawlana Karamat Ali, Mawlawi Wilayat Ali and Mawlawi Inayat Ali, Syed Mir Nisar Ali Titumir were described and he examined whether they had any relation with the Faraizi movement.⁴¹ A detailed examination of the Faraizi's religious ideology and activities, debates with Mawlana Karamat Ali on Jummah and Eid prayers, and opposition from the different Muslim schools like *Tayunis* and *Sabiqi* are described in this book.⁴²

The book, although published in 1965, is still an outstanding scholarly work of Muinuddin and a very important source for the subject under discussion. But although the main focus of this book is the Faraizi movement, some of the reader's queries and perspectives cannot be answered because of a few limitations. In this context, I am criticizing this book on two specific points:

Firstly, no movement arises overnight or due to a single reason. But, the author attributes the cause of this movement solely to the religious aspect. This may be because there is a trend in contemporary politics and thought to focus on religious issues. From the author's examination of Faraizi's religious reformation, debates, and comparison with other Islamic movements, a question will arise again and again that: was the Faraizi movement only a religious reformation movement? Muinuddin did not state that his intention is solely to describe and explain the Faraizi movement from a religious and communal perspective. But, his sole emphasis on its religious aspect overshadows a broader examination of socio-economic aspects. Readers may find unanswered questions in this book, such as why the majority of Faraizi movement supporters came from the raiyat, what the role of the middle class was, and what the reasons behind the lack of attraction of urban Muslims were. By solely emphasizing

the Muslim community, the involvement of other communities in this movement has been entirely concealed too.

Secondly, the author provided a detailed account of the religious ideology of the Faraizi Movement. But the author did not mention the contradictions found between their preached ideals and actions. I have attached two examples at the end of the review.

- Narahari Kaviraj⁴³, the author of *Wahabi and Farazi Rebels of Bengal* published in 1982, narrated that the Wahhabi and Faraizi movements were different, but both “were marked by a common approach, more or less a common programme and a common ideological orientation. In their outward character, both were in the nature of a religious revivalist agitation; in essence, though, both were agrarian movements directed against feudal and colonial forms of exploitation.”⁴⁴ He conducted an analysis centered on the agrarian content, excluding the religious and theological aspects from consideration. Indeed, the author explicitly acknowledged writing this book from a Marxist standpoint. He mentioned how organized the Faraizis, their support networks, widespread presence, and unique clothing were. This book also opined the Faraizi’s support during the Blue Mutiny. The author connected their goal of reclaiming lost power to the 1857 revolt. Additionally, the book detailed the actions and violence of the agitators, even among the Hindu and Muslim raiyats who opposed them. While the author initially stated an intention to analyze this movement from a Marxist perspective, the portrayal of the Muslim community’s discontent and expansion within them limits the perspective to communalism. The author attributes the decline of the movement to the religious ideology of the Faraizis, which failed to attract people of other faiths. Even in the author's depiction, there is limited emphasis on class conflict.
- Ajoy Roy’s⁴⁵ *Bangladesher Krishak-Bidroh* that was published in 1985, studied how shifts in power and the economy affected the peasant society, leading to suffering, and this, in turn, ignited revolts from the early days of colonial rule. He compared the Faraizi movement to the

Wahhabis, saying both began as religious reforms but are different. The author viewed this movement through a secular lens. The shared suffering of Hindu and Muslim raiyats brought them together, overcoming religious barriers. He concluded by saying that when people fought against oppressors inspired by their faith, it didn't split them. But when religion was used for personal gain, it caused division. The common characteristics of the peasant movements of this period were spontaneous participation and regionalism. According to the author, however, these rebellions were not directly anti-British freedom struggles or nationalist struggles and the educated middle class barely participated, except in the Blue Revolt.

- Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay⁴⁶ in his *Dynamics of Social Change in Bengal (1817-1851)*, published in 1990, analyzed the movement from socio-political and communal aspects. He fundamentally saw the Faraizi movement as a protest against zamindars levying taxes. He noted that this movement created anti-brethren psychology between Hindus and Muslims.⁴⁷ But we didn't find so much analytical description on this. It appears to me that the author depicted this movement more as a religious reform movement rather than a manifestation of anger towards zamindars and the government.
- Sirajul Islam⁴⁸, in 1997, briefly explained this movement as part of the resistance movement of religious groups. Titumir, Shariatullah and Dudu Miya clashed with the new rulers and their local representative zamindars. According to the writer, this conflict with the colonial rulers was due to the Islamic reform movement, not directly due to conflict of interests. With the failure of the so-called Wahabi movement, the revolt against colonial rule by religious groups came to an end.
- Dhurjati Prasad De⁴⁹, the author of *Bengal Muslims in Search of Social Identity 1905-47* published in 1998, wrote that the Wahabi and Faraizi movements had a significant impact on the minds of the Muslims of Bengal. Especially in Muslim religious and social activities, there were two divisions in the context of what to do and what not to do which had developed many syncretic tendencies. In his book, he tried to see this movement in terms of the

evolution of the thinking of the Muslim society in Bengal. According to him, neither Faraizis nor Wahabis could transform Darul Harb into Darul Islam, but their reformation movement was a religious one and their social activities sparked a controversy. Although the fundamentalists were ultimately unable to completely break away from their traditions, they did not bring about any dramatic change in the thought and religious and social practices of the average Muslim society.

- Nurul H. Choudhury⁵⁰, in 2001, did a great job examining the perspectives and theoretical frameworks of scholars in studying the movements led by peasants and lower classes. Here he tried to evaluate contemporary politics, capitalist economy and class-conflict in society. He also explored how leaders connected people's anger and frustrations with Islam. In his writing, the class-based society that existed in the Bengali Muslim society is also revealed. He highlighted the movement's failure, emphasizing the absence of unity between Hindus and Muslims, particularly due to its communal nature. A substantial amount of information is available regarding the Khilafat system of Faraizis, their intensity and aggression, instances of violence, attacks on landlords and indigo planters, as well as their reactions and subsequent counterattacks.
- Salahuddin Ahmed⁵¹ in his *Bangladesh: Past and Present*, published in 2004, depicts the Faraizi movement as a religious movement of Bengali Muslims for protection against cultural and economic domination of Bengali Hindus. He noted that with a view to resisting the infiltration of the Hindu culture and customs amongst the Bengali Muslims, Haji Shariatullah started a movement called the Faraizi movement. But he didn't clarify which customs are Hindu culture. He also noted that the Islamic doctrine preached by Shariatullah and Dudu Miya for some forty years brought some significant changes in the spiritual life of Bengali Muslims.
- Iftekhhar Iqbal's⁵² book *The Bengal Delta, Ecology, State, and Social Change, 1840-1943*, published in 2010, presents a distinct aspect of the Faraizi movement. In this book, the author has given an excellent analytical account of the rise

and fall of the Faraizi movement along with the geography and climate of Bengal. Although Muinuddin added a chapter about it, Iftekhar Iqbal filled up its limitation to a large extent. He also described the movement from a global context which was not shown elsewhere. Here we find how the impact of the British Industrial Revolution in the 1830s led to mass unemployment and reduced earnings for weavers, worsening their condition. Global recession further affected Bengal, causing a collapse in finance houses, reduced credit flow, and amid falling crop prices, pressuring peasants to cultivate unprofitable cash crops. Shariatullah called for informal resistance in response. After the death of Noah Mia in 1884, the Faraizi movement shifted away from its original agrarian agenda, losing political influence. Iqbal also linked environmental changes, such as waterway deterioration, waterlogging, and flooding in the Bengal delta, to the decline of the movement. According to the writer, the river system was the main center of communication of the Faraizis. The weakened river system affected communication and political dynamics of them. The death or fluvial weakness of rivers lead to changes in their communication and political course.⁵³ The author exclusively emphasizes the ecological aspect, neglecting the religious dimension of this movement entirely.

- *Amitabh Chakraborty*⁵⁴ in *Banglar Krishak : Kale Kalottora*, published in 2014, discussed Wahabi and Faraizi movements highlighting their differences. For instance, while Faraizis labeled India as an ‘enemy country’ and forbade certain prayers like Jummah and Eid, the Wahabis disagreed with this stance. This led him to consider the Faraizi movement more politically inclined compared to the Wahabis. He pointed out that the Faraizi movement had a class struggle aspect that the Wahhabi movement did not have. Due to this class perspective, thousands of poor Hindu-Muslim raiyats organized and participated in this revolt against the tyranny and exploitation of zamindars and Indigo planters. He examined how this movement affected Bengal culture negatively. He described how it severed the vibrant heritage of folk culture, all in the name of following Islamic reforms. The glorious tradition of

Hindus and Muslims coming together for festivals and rituals started fading away. Particularly in Muslim households, activities like dancing, singing, playing, and using items like mango leaves, paddy, *durba*, banana trees, and more were frowned upon by Islamic purists and eventually abandoned. The religious issues weakened class struggle and peasant unity and the exploiters remained protected. The author concluded by saying that the assessment of how the researchers are seeing the lower classes in those movements is very important. Keeping the class conflicts hidden, the judgment of history is very unrealistic from the Marxist point of view. But, a more informative analysis would have enriched this book.

- Rana Razzaque⁵⁵ analyzed how, by mid-nineteenth century, an intellectual awakening had taken place among the Hindus and they were making progress through contact with western ideas of liberalism and humanism. The Muslims, on the other hand, looked back to their past greatness and found comfort in their religion.⁵⁶ Here, we identify several crucial dimensions to elucidate the Faraizi movement as a reformist movement. She clarified how Hindu and Buddhist indigenous culture blended with their beliefs and rituals as Muslims converted from those religions. Here we can note that an important and common feature of any religious or ideological revivalist movement is that it generally thrives among the ignorant masses and in depressed economic conditions. In some cases, leaders used force and physical punishment to make poor raiyats join these religious movements.⁵⁷
- Abdul Bashir⁵⁸ detailed the peasant movement during the initial century of the colonial rule in Bengal, providing abundant data. His emphasis lies in highlighting the political essence of these revolts. Additionally, he conducted a comprehensive assessment of the perspectives and roles played by each stratum of society, with particular attention to the middle class in these uprisings. Jayanti Maitra⁵⁹ argued that the seeds of the Muslim separatist movement in India germinated in Bengal.⁶⁰ The Faraizi movement had an influential role behind this. Suprakash Roy⁶¹ characterizes the peasant movement as a democratic struggle with undertones of class conflict, emphasizing its

pursuit of political emancipation through the lens of Marxist ideology.

From the above discussion, two main trends become apparent from the researcher's perspective. The studies tend to approach the topic either from a religious and communal viewpoint, or solely through the lens of class struggle in line with Marxist ideas. But both schools have some limitations.

Muin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, A. R. Mallick, and some others examined the religious ideals of the Faraizis. but neither of them emphasized the ideological contradictions of the Faraizies. In my analysis, I am going to identify certain contradictions between what they preached and what they practiced. Firstly, one of the key slogans of the Faraizis emphasized that everything outside the Quran and Hadith is considered *Bid'at*. They explicitly opposed practices like visiting graves, dargahs, and shrines. It is surprising that after Haji Shariatullah's death, an inscription was placed on his grave. This occurred while Dudu Miya was still alive and at the pinnacle of the Faraizi movement.



Picture: Funerary Inscription of Haji Shariatullah dated 1255 AH (1245 Bengali year / 1839 CE)

Source: *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Inscriptions in the Bangladesh National Museum*⁶²

It is not that Muinuddin Ahmed Khan did not mention this inscription, He described it with this picture. What is surprising is that the author remains silent on whether the practice of placing an inscription on the grave contradicted Faraizi ideals.

Secondly, their forceful attempt to increase their supporters contradicts with the Islamic ideals of equality and fraternity that they preached. Despite opposing the Pir culture, Dudu Miya assumed the title of Ustad and ordered like a Pir. Their stance considering India as 'Dar al-Harb' led to opposing Eid and Jummah prayers. In the areas where they collected taxes and established their judicial system, why they opposed **those prayers** raise questions about the contradiction with the ideals they preached. Unfortunately, the books did not provide any explanation on these contradictions.

Some scholars, particularly Marxists, argued that the Faraizi movement gained more support among Muslims in the Dhaka division due to their larger population. Let's look at a statistic used by Narahari Kaviraj to explore this idea:

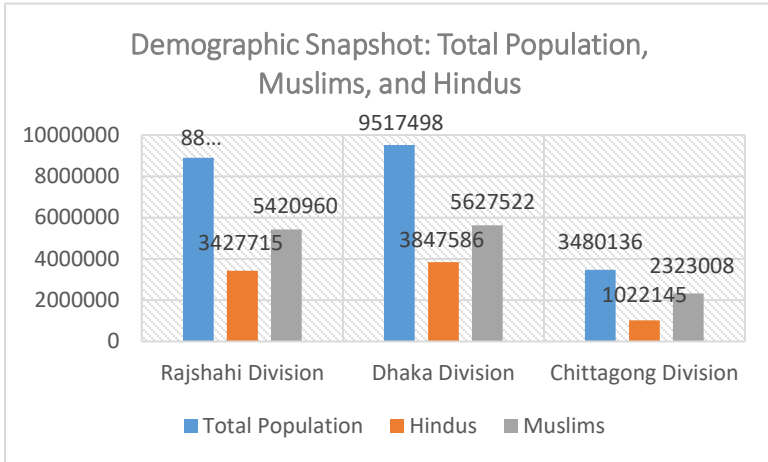
District	Muslim Population (%)
Maldah	46%
Bakerganj	54%
Murshidabad	45%
Dhaka	57%
Faridpur	54%
Patna	12%
Mymensingh	54%

Chart: Muslim population in some districts of Bengal Province by the Census of 1872

Source: James Wise, *Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal*⁶³

Narhari Kaviraj used James Wise's statistics to demonstrate that the Faraizi movement gained more popularity in areas with a majority Muslim population such as Dhaka, Faridpur, Mymensingh, and Bakerganj. Conversely, it was less popular in regions with a smaller Muslim population, including Maldah, Murshidabad, and Patna. However, we find that the movement

did not extend to several divisions despite the significant Muslim population in those areas. Let's look at the population calculation of the three adjacent divisions, including Dhaka:



Source: Report on The Census of Bengal 1872⁶⁴

The above graph illustrates that the Muslim population in Rajshahi division is 5,420,960, constituting approximately 60.96% of the total population. In Dhaka division, the Muslim population is 5,627,522, exceeding 58% of the total population. Chittagong division has a Muslim population of 2,323,008, making up about 66.76% of the total population. But despite being more Muslim in percentage than Dhaka, this movement did not gain much popularity in the two neighboring divisions. There is a lack of detailed analysis or discussion on this phenomenon in the researches.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the Faraizi Movement was a spontaneous movement driven by the active involvement of the common people in Eastern Bengal. Religious propaganda played a crucial role in uniting the participants. Upon analyzing the perspectives of the authors, it becomes apparent that their views are intertwined with the politics and ideologies

prevailing during the time of their writing. As a result, the author has become subjective rather than objective in many cases. There is a need for more objective research on this matter. Existing research mainly focuses on understanding why raiyats are dissatisfied, how zamindars respond, and how the Faraizis were suppressed. A more comprehensive exploration considering multiple perspectives could provide a richer understanding of the topic. It is important to investigate whether the movement had an impact on the longstanding harmony between the Hindu-Muslim communities in the region too. By employing interdisciplinary research methods, combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, we can enrich our understanding of this subject from both micro and macro perspectives.

Notes and References:

1. For details about economic condition after the Battle of Palashi, see M. Mufakharul Islam, *An Economic History of Bengal, 1757-1947* (Dhaka : Adorn Publication, 2012), 44-100.
2. Fard is one of the five categories of actions in Islamic law. Four others are *wajib* (obligatory), *sunnah* (recommended), *mustahab* (preferred or commendable), and *mubah* (permissible).
3. Muin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, *History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal (1818-1906)* (Karachi : Pakistan Historical Society, 1965), 34-35.
4. A. R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757-1856: A Study of the Development of the Muslims in Bengal with Special Reference to Their Education* (Dhaka : Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1961), 29-30.
5. To know details on Permanent Settlement and its regulations, see, Sirajul Islam, *The Permanent Settlement in Bengal, A Study of Its Operation, 1790-1819* (Dhaka : Bangla Academy, 1979), 14-76.
6. For details on judicial system under Company rule, see, Sirajul Islam, *Banglar Itihase Oupanibeshik Shashonkathamo* (Dhaka : Chayonika, 1984), 232-252.
7. Narahari Kaviraj, *Wahabi and Farazi Rebels of Bengal* (New Delhi : Peoples Publishing House, 1982), 63.
8. Before the establishment of Company rule, a considerable proportion of Muslim elites were actively involved in government services. See details in, Mohammad Shah, "Social Condition (1600-1800 CE)," in *History of Bangladesh, Sultanate and Mughal Periods (c. 1200 to 1800 CE) Vol. 1*, ed.

Abdul Momin Chowdhury (Dhaka : Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2020), 21-39.

9. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*, 141.
10. For details about his early life, see, *ibid*, 141-149.
11. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims*, 76.
12. I. H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, 610-1947: A Brief Historical Analysis* (The Hague, London : Mouton and Co., 1962), quoted in Abdul Bashir, *Banglar Krishak Bidroho o Moddhobittoshreni* (Dhaka : Bangla Academy, 2012), 150.
13. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*, 11.
14. Details about his second visit to Mekkah, see, Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims*, 77-78.
15. *Ibid.*, 79.
16. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*, 151.
17. Muhammad Abdur Rahim, *The Muslim Society and Politics in Bengal; A.D.1757-1947* (Dhaka : Dhaka Viswavidyalay Prakashana Samstha, October 2011), 75.
18. Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *Dynamics of Social Change in Bengal (1817-1851)* (Calcutta : Punthi Pustak, 1990), 397.
19. Bashir, *Banglar Krishak Bidroho*, 152.
20. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*, 226-242.
21. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims*, 80-81.
22. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*, 170.
23. Rahim, *Muslim Society and Politics*, 88.
24. Bashir, *Banglar Krishak Bidroho*, 153.
25. *Ibid.*, 155.
26. James Wise, *Notes on Eastern Bengal; The Trial of Doodoo Meea and His followers* (London : Harrison and Sons, 1883), 22.
27. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*, 172-173.
28. *Ibid.*, 178.
29. Wise, *Notes on Eastern Bengal*, quoted in Bashir, *Banglar Krishak Bidroho*, 156.
30. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*, 42-46.
31. To know details about zamindars reaction, see, *ibid.*, 179-185.
32. *Ibid.*, 200.
33. *Ibid.*, 206-217.
34. *Ibid.*, 204.

35. Rahim, *Muslim Society and Politics*, 89.
36. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims*.
37. Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Manos O Bangla Sahitya* (Dhaka : Charulipi, 1964).
38. *Ibid.*, 65.
39. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*.
40. Later on, Asim Roy provided a comprehensive explanation of the integration of different religious and secular culture in Bengal. For details, see, Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Dhaka : Academic Publishers, 1984), 19-86. "the syncretistic tradition remained the dominant form of Islamic acculturation in Bengal for several centuries until the 19th century witnessed the introduction of a new phase of Islamization of Bengal as part of far wider global movements of Islamic revitalization."- xiii.
41. Khan, *Fara'idi Movement in Bengal*, 39-53.
42. *Ibid.*, 101.
43. Kaviraj, *Wahabi and Farazi Rebels*.
44. *Ibid*, vii .
45. Ajoy Roy, *Bangladesher Krishak-Bidroho* (Dhaka : Bangla Academy, 1985).
46. Chattopadhyay, *Dynamics of Social Change*.
47. *Ibid.*, 393.
48. Sirajul Islam, "Resistance Movement in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century", in *History of Bangladesh Vol. 1*, ed. Sirajul Islam (Dhaka : Asiatic society of Bangladesh, 1997).
49. Dhurjati Prasad De, *Bengal Muslims in Search of Social Identity 1905-47* (Dhaka : University Press, 1998).
50. Nurul H. Choudhury, *Peasant Radicalism in Nineteenth Century Bengal : The Faraizi, Indigo, and Pabna Movements* (Dhaka : Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2001).
51. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Bangladesh: Past and Present* (New Delhi : APH Publishing, 2004).
52. Iftekhar Iqbal, *The Bengal Delta, Ecology, State and Social Change, 1840-1943* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
53. *Ibid.*, 87-92.
54. Amitabh Chakraborty, *Banglar Krishak : Kale Kalottora (Calcutta : Ubudash, 2014)*.
55. Rana Razzaque, *Bengali Muslims, Social and Political Thought (1918-1947)* (Dhaka : Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, December 2019).
56. *Ibid.*, 5.

57. *Ibid.*, 6.
58. Bashir, *Banglar Krishak Bidroho*.
59. Jayanti Maitra, *Muslim Politics in Bengal, 1855-1906* (Calcutta : K P Bagchi & Company, 1984).
60. *Ibid.*, 2.
61. Suprakash Roy, *Bharater Krishak Bidroho O Gonotantrik Songram* (Calcutta : D N B A Brothers, 1966).
62. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Inscriptions in the Bangladesh National Museum* (Dhaka : Bangladesh National Museum, 2016), 116.
63. James Wise, *Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal* (London and New York : Routledge, 2017), 7 & 11.
64. H. Beverley, *Report on The Census of Bengal 1872* (Calcutta : Bengal Secretariate Press, 1872), 13.