A Case Study on Popular Buddhist Belief in Bangladesh

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In Bangladesh, though Islam is the dominant force, there is a world of ritual and belief shared by Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. Most of the popular Buddhist beliefs in Bangladesh evolved from the popular beliefs of the agrarian society. It is true that there are some important respects in which Buddhists are also different from their Muslim and Hindu neighbours. For example, they never indulge in non-Buddhist principles such as killing, taking intoxicating substances, performing blood sacrifices and so on. However, though the Buddhists of Bangladesh are the followers of Theravāda Buddhism, they are a small minority of 1% of the population and can not but adopt some or many popular beliefs or rituals shared by the wide society. These rituals or popular beliefs have become part and parcel of their socio-religious life. These popular beliefs are vivid reflection of the gods and goddesses of Hindus. Consequently, from the rise of Mahāyāna thought the worship of Bodhisattva has become similar to the worship of a Hindu god. From the Tāntric period such popular worship widely expanded so that along with the worship of Bodhisattva many gods and goddesses or imaginary personalities have penetrated into the Buddhist society.\(^1\) With the wide expansion of Tāntric Buddhism, between the 12\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) centuries, Buddhism of Bangladesh has taken a form of popular beliefs in place of its original current or flow.\(^2\) During the time political, social and cultural movement has tremendously influenced the Buddhism\(^3\) of Bangladesh so that it has become absolutely dependent on popular activities. From this time Hindu gods and goddesses as well as Muslim
saints have become persons of Buddhist worship. These are observed not only as popular phenomena but also regarded as religious part. Let me cite some popular rituals or beliefs of the Buddhist of Bangladesh.

1. Lakṣmi Pūjā or the worship of Lakṣmi

In Hindu mythology, Lakṣmi\(^{(4)}\) is considered to be the goddess of fortune or resource, happiness,\(^{(5)}\) love, beauty and prosperity.\(^{(6)}\) Hindus in general worship Lakṣmi. The Buddhist of Bangladesh also worship Lakṣmi as goddess of fortune, but it is not a general worship. It is known that the Buddhist of Bangladesh performed Lakṣmi worship gorgeously in early times.\(^{(7)}\) But at present it is done only in the village. After three month of the vassāvāsa or rain retreat, on the day of pavāraṇā festival Lakṣmi worship is held in the Buddhist families, but never in the monasteries.

Village people are generally farmers. In the rainy season plantation and seedling are held. Paddy is the principle product of Bangladesh. It requires three months for paddy to ripen. By the end of the rainy season paddy ripens and farmers enjoy leisure. In order to get bumper crops they worship goddess Lakṣmi and the time is selected on the full moon night of the month of Āśvin, of Bengali calendar. Generally house wife take the initiative for the worship. They believe that if goddess Lakṣmi is pleased by worship, she will give abundance of Paddy or crops in the field. So, they worship the Lakṣmi.

It is difficult to say for certain when and how the worship of goddess Lakṣmi was introduced into the Buddhist society. It is known that the conception of Lakṣmi was creation of the imagination of the primitive agrarian society\(^{(8)}\) and she was regarded as the goddess of affluence and abundance in crops. Especially, it is always more in vogue with the women. So, it can be deduced that the worship of Lakṣmi, originated from the fertility cult of the primitive tribal society, which in course of
time became an integral part of the religious culture of the Bengalis. During the Pāla period, Mahāyāna Buddhism metamorphosed into Tāntric Buddhism, and during the period Tāntric Buddhism also developed into various sects owing to the Tāntric practices. Among the Tāntric sects the mentionable were Mantrayāna, Vajrayāna, Kālacakrayāna and Sahajyāna. The most important aspect of these sects was the worship of various deities as seen in the Brahminism. Among the various worship, the worship of Vajrayāna god Jambala and his wife Vasudhārā was in great vogue among the Buddhist of Bangladesh between 8th and 12th centuries A.D. The Buddhist of the period worshiped these two deities as the god and goddess of riches and prosperity. They believed that huge riches and affluence could be gained by dint of worshiping these two deities. After the 12th century, especially after the fall of the Chandra and Pāla dynasties Buddhist was faced, on one hand, with the loss of the royal patronage, and on the other, the unstoppable upheaval of Brahminism. Consequently, Buddhism had to undergo various socio-political persecutions, what was worse, Buddhism was changed a new form, which was an admixture of Tāntric Buddhism and Brahminism. As a result of this, many Buddhist gods and goddess lost their own identity and came to be known as Hindu deities; similarly many Hindu deities, too, came to be known as Buddhist deities. Even Hindu began to worship Buddha as the incarnation of Visnu. Indeed, it was the intention of the Hindus to accept the Buddhist deities as Hindu ones in order to absorb the Buddhist religion and society into Brahminism. The Bramanistis intelligentsia were successful in achieving this to a great extant. Though faced with socio-political persecution, Buddhist could not desert their popular beliefs. As a result, the goddess Lakṣmi of the Brahminism replaced Jambala and Vasudhārā as the god of prosperity. It follows from what goes above that the Vajrayāna deities Jambala and Vasudhārā lost their identity and gave rise to the fully fledged worship
of Lakṣmi. After the 12th century A.D., this spread widely over the Buddhist society and set its root very deep into it.

The procedure of the Pūja

Though the Buddhists and the Hindus worship the Lakṣmi for the same purpose, but the method of the worship of Buddhist is quite different from that of Hindu. About 3 feet tall a bundle of paddy plant is turned into an image of Lakṣmi. The image is covered with a piece of color cloth or a color paper and she is placed in the floor of the house at a suitable place. From the entrance door of the house mark of foot steps are placed with a kind of white liquid made from rice powder and water and she is taken to her place where she will be placed. Foot steps are painted to symbolize coming of the goddess Lakṣmi into the house. An umbrella of palm leave or cork plants is placed upon her head. The items of food such as rice, banana, molasses, coconuts, sugar cane, milk, curd and other fruits are placed before her in a banana leaf on heap. Then candles and incenses are burnt, then after all the members of the family vow down their heads in front of goddess and prayer for riches. Buddhist do not utter any kind of mantra as the Hindus do. But they utter words like this: “Oh! goddess, fill up my house with wealth by accepting my pūjā or worship.” Two or three hours after a portion of the articles or the pūjā is thrown away into the pond or river and the rest is eaten by the members of the family along with neighbors.

When I asked an old lady offering Lakṣmi worship for a period of over 30 years of the village Padua, Rangunia, Chittagong whether goddess Lakṣmi can give or change the fortune of a family, she sternly declared that goddess Lakṣmi is the goddess incarnation of fortune and plenty of riches may be obtained through her worship. She also said that yield of crops depends on the favor of Lakṣmi and their family has become rich by the grace of goddess Lakṣmi.

When I again stated that Lakṣmi pūjā is against Buddhist principle
and there is no advise in Buddhist literature to worship Lakṣmi and it is purely a Hindu principle, she replied in a firm way that our ancestors worshiped the Lakṣmi and it is from that long tradition and it can not be abandoned as it has taken root in our beliefs.

2. Śani Pūjā or The worship of Śani

Śani\(^{(15)}\) is a god of planet. All the mischief's are done by the Śani, the evil god and his influence brings about clarity or misfortune as recognized by the Hindu, like Lakṣmi, the goddess of fortune. According to Hindu mythology Śani, is said to be the son of Sūrya, and Chhāya, the servant whom his wife Savarnā substituted for himself, or, according to other accounts, he sprang from Balarāma and ṛevati. He is represented as a black man, clothed in black garments, riding on a vulture, with four arms. “If a person be born under the planet Śani, he will be slandered, his riches dissipated, his son, wife, and friends destroyed; he will live at variance with others and endure many sufferings.”\(^{(16)}\) Many stories are told of his evil influence, consequently the Hindus are under fear of evil from this planet. It was Śani who was said to have burnt off Ganeśa’s head. Every Hindu householder offers worship to him on every Saturday evening. The worship is very simple and a poem is read out, which popularly known as “Śanir Puthi”. The Buddhist of Bangladesh also give worship or homage to the god of evil, Śani, like the Hindu neighbors. Though the worship of Śani was done gorgeously in the past,\(^{(17)}\) at present it is found among the village Buddhist householders occasionally. If any family witness repeated natural curse in the form of disease, premature death or loss of property etc. that family thinks that it is the influence of evil spirit of Śani. “Evil spirit of Śani” is popularly called “Śanir dashā”. In order to get rid of the evil spirit of Śani, worship is given and people believe that the evil spirit is removed.
Like the origin of Lakṣmi pūjā, the origin of Śani Pūjā into the Buddhist society of Bangladesh is uncertain. It is assumed that Śani Pūjā came into practice in the Buddhist community after 12th century. For reasons discussed under ‘Lakṣmi pūjā’, Buddhism underwent great deviation. As a result Buddhist of this period was almost changed into the worship of gods and goddesses. In the circumstances, it found a permanent seat in the religious culture of the Buddhists. But its roots can be traced in Tāntric Buddhism. So, it seems that Śani Pūjā may have introduced and received widespread circulation after the 12th century A.D. in the Buddhist society of Bangladesh.

Method of the worship of Śani

The method of the worship of the Buddhist is different from that of Hindu. Many kinds of flowers, mango leaves, bamboo leaves, boo-tree leaves, and banana stem are kept in a pitcher filled with water, which is popularly called “Maṅgala ghat”, or jar. Then in the floor of the house on a convenient spot banana leaf is spread and many articles such as paddy, rice, sendle wood and Rahman tree (one kind of tree plant popularly known as Rahman tree), are placed for the worship. The “Maṅgala ghat” or the jar is placed above these things. Then another volume of worship is made with fruits of various kinds such as mango, jack fruit, licchi, black berry, nuts, sugar cane, banana, black muster seeds, camper, myroblan and amebic myroblan etc. But every kind of fruits is to be given five units or five pieces. Along with them curd, sugar and ghee are also put. After this, a kind of narrative poem with the eulogy of the power of Śani is read out. Ordinarily, an old fellow or an experienced man works as priest or main performer of the pūjā or worship. On some occasion and in some places the pūjā is performed by a Hindu Brahmin or priest according to the sweet will of the householder. The performer divided the goods of the pūjā into five parts and make five heaps. Then the members of the family convey
their complements touching their head on the ground requesting Śani to get them rid of the abnormal dangers which happen repeatedly.

Then after, a kind of liquid is prepared with rice powder, sugar, powder wheat. Molasses, banana, curd, dried paddy, coconut, juice of jack fruit, camper are mixed together with water. It becomes a delicious liquid, which is popularly known as "Śinni". This Śinni is offered to all presents and among the neighbors also. No invitation is offered to any one, relatives or neighbors. Though so hear of the pūjā are to come without any invitation. But the worshiper family can not share in this Śinni or delicious liquid. Another small volume of Śinni is made with same ingredients. The Śinni can not be eaten under the house rope. It is to be taken out side the four walls of the house.

This pūjā is to be performed on Saturday with out any exception. Saturday is called Śani Bār in Bengali. But male and female members of the family do it with equal interest and enthusiasm.

When I asked some aged persons in the village of Raozan, Chitagong, what happens if Śani is given pūjā, they argued very strongly about the evil power of Śani. They also argued that all cases of misfortune is due to the wrath and revenge of Śani. If he is not satisfied and his evil influence is curse on a family, that family suffers from utter massacre. When I asked them why the Śinni is to be taken out side the four walls of the house, no satisfactory answer to the question is found any quarter. Every body shows the reason that it is being done traditionally. But in my humble opinion, I think that Śani is not a welcome god as other god and goddess. People worship the Śani to get rid of him. But in case of other gods and goddesses, they are welcome and embraced, but Śani is not invited to come.

3. Magadheśvari Pūjā or the worship of Magadheśvari

The worship of Magadheśvari is still much in vogue among the
married woman in the Buddhist rural area. The Hindus also performed this worship very widely. Generally, a place or a spot is select out side the village on the bank of an old tank or a plane land on a hillock at a secluded place. The place is commonly used by the Hindus as well as the Buddhist of Bangladesh. Without in the period of vassāvāsa or rain retreat of monks, it may be held on any Saturday or Tuesday of the week. Expectation of a child, safety from accident, removal of disease, rescue from danger and in order to fulfill any special demand is the main object of this worship.\(^{(19)}\) *Magadhesvari* is also popularly known as “Icchāmati” as she fulfills the expectation of the desirer. There is also a belief that goddess *Magadhesvari* was originally carried by the Maghs or Buddhist from Magadha what fled to Chittagong being persecuted by enemies.\(^{(20)}\) It is not known how far it correct, but in reality it is traditionally believed that she rescue people from danger of any kind. Goddess *Magadhesvari* is considered as mother, who is affectionate to all of her sons and daughters. So, the spot of the worship popularly is called “Māra Kholā” or the seat of mother, or “Sevā Kholā” or the place where sevā is offered to the mother. Sevā means gratification of the mother.

It seems that this worship may also have come into wide vogue in the Buddhist community after the 12th century A.D., when worship of various Hindu deities found entry into the Buddhist religion. Nevertheless, it had its origin in the Pāla period, when Tāntric Buddhism got wide circulation and was reduced to the worship of various gods and goddesses. But Arun Bikash Barua\(^{(21)}\) holds that “this worship was widely spread in Bangladesh during the reign of King Govindachandra (1020–1050 A.D.) of Chandra dynasty, who was a great follower of Grokkanāth, a great Tāntric Yogi”. He also added that it was in vogue among the lower class people.
Method of worship

The method of the worship of the Buddhist is not similar with that of Hindu. Generally on any Saturday or Tuesday a pūjā with various edibles such as rice, banana, and cakes on a plantain leaf and taken to the “Māra Kholā” or “Sevā Kholā” or to the spot of the worship. Having offered the pūjā they kindle candles and incenses. At the end they vow down placing their head on the ground and express their grievances and pray for the boon. According to the families wish and ability a hen or a she goat or a pair of eggs is also offered to the goddess on the spot of the worship. Five married ladies must accompany the party while the worship is performed. These five ladies are popularly called “Āyastis” in Bengali language (= with their husband alive). Hindus slaughter a she goat at the time of pūjā and the place is besmeared with the blood of the she goat. Trace are found that Buddhist gave in sacrificed animals formerly. But now-a-days, no such killing is allowed. But animal is let loose for ever on the spot of worship. Sidur (Vermilion) or red color is painted on the forehead of the animal as a mark of sacrifice. A big gathering or fair is held on the purpose by the end of the month of Caitra of Bengali year in the village where Hindus and Buddhists live side by side. This fair is called “Kṣhetra Pāla fair.” The Hindu slaughter or let loose animals in the spot of worship of the fair. But the Buddhist do not kill, they let loose animals like goat, hen, pigeon, duck etc.

When I asked some persons in the village Shilok, Rangunia, Chittagong, whether any wish or prayer is fulfilled by the worship of goddess Magadheśvari, they emphatically said that the goddess Magadheśvari must fulfilled the desires in many way of their life. I was also told that an aggrieved mother has been giving worship to the goddess Magadheśvari for her son who has been suffering from lunacy for a long time. The mother is optimistic that her son will come round some day or other by the grace or blessing of the goddess
Magadheśvari.

4. Kārtika pūjā or the worship of god Kārtika

According to Hindu mythology Kārtikeya\(^{(22)}\) or Kārtika is regarded as the god of war. Kārtika is one of the god worshiped commonly by the Hindus and the Buddhists of Bangladesh. But this god is worshiped by the Buddhist of Bangladesh as a god of granting boon and fulfilling desire. The villagers of the Buddhist community also perform this worship like the Hindus. Generally for the sake of getting a male child, for making name and fame and for removal of sorrow and distress is the main object of the worship. There is a saying:

"Āśvin ye rānnā Kārtike khāya\(^{(23)}\)
Ye bara māge se bara pāya"

—Cooked in the month of Āśvin and eaten in the month of Kārtika of Bengali year, the boon which is prayed for is available or fulfilled.

Like all other worship, this worship also may have been introduced into the Buddhist society after the 12th century A.D. For reasons discussed under Lakṣmi pūjā.

The method of worship

For the occasion of the pūjā fine rice is cooked and water is poured on the cooked rice. It is popularly called "Kārtika Brāta Bhāta". The word 'Brāta' means a vow and 'Bhāta' means rice. It is so called because the worship with cooked rice is held in the month of Kārtika and for worship of god Kārtika.

This rice has to be cooked on the 29\(^{th}\) day of the month Kārtika and worship is performed on 1st day of the month of Kārtika. This pūjā is not common in character. Only a lady or ladies praying for a special favour arranged this and more than three times may also be taken for the program. But in the first year this rice is cooked in a big earthen
pot. In the second year rice is cooked in two pots and in the third year three pots are required for cooking. When year is increase pots also increase in number. According to the system, the pot or pots are kept in a suitable place of the house and they are decorated with various flowers. Then afterwards, on the first day of Kārtika month some portion of stale rice from that is offered to god Kārtika with banana, coconut, molasses and other particles. Candles and incenses are burnt and favour is prayed for and vow down their head as a mark of reverence. The Hindu makes a statue of god Kārtika. But the Buddhist do not do so. Neighbors and relatives also take part in the worship and show reverence vowing down their head. After the worship the pūjā is thrown into the water of a tank or river putting on a piece of banana leaf. The remaining rice in the pots is distributed among the invited guests and neighbours who take it to heart's content. The queer aspect is that no salt is added to the stale rice and before taking a five morshal of little quantity is placed on the head as a mark of respect or veneration. The relatives and other guests come to the house where the pūjā is held some days before earlier than the date of celebration. Hence, the place become a place of festivity and joy. The pūjā is done once again if the desire is fulfilled. It implies that when a barrent parents beget a male child by the blessing of god Kārtika, the pūjā is performed once again.

When I asked a lady, thirty five in aged, in the village Sukavilāsha of Chittagong, who worshiped the god Kārtika for three years for a male child, whether any wish or prayer is fulfilled by the worship of god Kārtika, she confidently told me that the god Kārtika fulfilled her desire and she got a male child only by the worship or by the grace of god Kārtika. She also informed me that she had not any male child for a long time and she was harassed by the family members on those days. At last, she worshiped the god Kārtika for a male child and she got a male child. The worshipers has a strong faith that god Kārtika grants
the boon without fail.

5. Manasā Pūjā or the woship of goddess Manasā

According to Hindu mythology, Manasā is the sister of Vasuki, king of the snakes; the wife of Jaratkāru, a sage; and being the queen of the snakes is regarded as the protectress of men from those reptiles. Another name by which she is known is Vishahara, "the destroyer of poison". Generally, offering are made to her without any image being made, a branch of a tree, a pan of water, an earthen snake being her representative; when her image is made, it is that of a woman clothed with snakes, sitting on a lotus, or standing upon a snake. According to the mythology the worship of goddess Manasā would not spread without worship of Chând Saodāgar. A song founded upon the following story concludes the worship of this deity.

It is said in the mythology that Chând Saodāgar, a merchant, was an ardent devotee of god Śiva. He would not worship any goddess. He not only refused to worship Manasā, but professed the profoundest contempt for her. As a result, Manasā's snake regiment killed six sons of Chând Saodāgar. The eldest son was Lakṣhindara. She would kill Lakṣhindara on the night of bridal bed, after marriage. To avoid a similar fate, Chând Saodāgar took step against the cruel revenge of Manasā. But Manasā also was determined to kill Lakṣhindara so that precautions heigher adopted against Manasā. Guard were employed, Chând Saodāgar himself went around the bridal chamber in order to save Lakṣhindara. But Manasā conspired with the mason to keep a hole in the wall of the bridal chamber and shut the whole with brick powder so that a snake might enter the bridal chamber and bite,When Lakṣhindara and his wife Vehūlā were lying in the bridal bed, a snake entered through the hole of the wall which was shut with brick powder and bite Lakṣhindara and the snake fled away. While fleeing, the tail of
the snake was cut and detached from the body of snake. Vehūlā was a pious lady and devoted to her husband through thick and thin. She took the death body of Lakṣhindara in a plantain tree boat and let float in the river. At last Chând Saodāgar tried to compromise with goddess Manasā. He agreed to offer worship with his left hand, i.e., half heartedly. Manasā thought that it was sufficient for her popularity among the people. Chând Saodāgar worshiped goddess Manasā and Lakṣhindara’s poison was dropped by the snake which had bit him and he became alive, and from that time, as men came to know of her power, and in this way the worship of goddess Manasā become in vogue. It is the mythology or legendary tale of goddess Manasā. Thus the Hindu adore goddess Manasā and it become a part of religion.

The Buddhists of Bangladesh as they were influenced by the Hindu mythology, adopted the practice in the age of Tantrayāna. The Buddhist began to worship Manasā and even today in some villages Manasā is worshiped in a particular day in the month of Śrāvana of Bengali year. Basically, snakes are abundant in the rainy season in Bangladesh. So, snake worship is much in vogue among the Hindus and some Buddhist also do so in the month of Śrāvana or in the rainy season in order to save from snakes bit. Snake-bit till date has no medicine. So, people belief in supernaturalism. Man is helpless. So, the hopeless people depend on supernatural belief.

The snake is the symbol of fertility. Historians and scholars think that Manasā Pūjā originated from the primitive fertility rituals. The reason of such assumption is that snake worshipping was in vogue in some form or other in primitive societies all over the world. In the 11th century A.D., idols of Manasā were worshiped and there are some idols of Manasā as an evident of the fact. But from archaeological evidences it becomes doubtless that Manasā began to be acknowledged and worshipped from the early Pāla period. Historians hold that worship of Manasā spread widely over Bangladesh during the Sena period, that
is around the 12th century A.D. However, it is known that the Buddhist of Bangladesh widely worshipped the Vajrayāna snake-goddess Jāṅgulī\(^{29}\) from the 8th to 12th centuries A.D. The goddess Jāṅgulī was imagined as playing lyre and was regarded as the neutralizer of the poison of snakes. With the vehement upheaval of Brahminism after the 12\(^{th}\) century, Jāṅgulī lost her own identity and was merged into goddess Manasā. Some historians think that the worship of Manasā and that of Jāṅgulī identical.\(^{30}\) Therefore, the Manasā worship practice in the Buddhist society is the another form of Jāṅgulī worship.

Method of worship

The Hindu people offer slaughter such as goats, ducks, pigeons etc. in order to please the goddess Manasā and avoid her anger. They do it in a large scale and offer the pūjā with banana, milk, rice and flowers. But the Buddhist worship the goddess Manasā by floating a pūjā with milk, banana, rice and flowers on a piece of plantain leaf into the water of tank or of a river. Thus they try to save themselves from the grudge of the cruel goddess, but they never slaughter of any kind.

Some Buddhists worshiper of goddess Manasā in the village Kokāniā of Chittagong, emphatically informed me that they are saved from snake-bit by the worship of goddess Manasā. One aged woman of the same village, confidently told me that any person can save himself from snake-bite only by the worship of goddess Manasā.

6. Satya Pīrer Pūjā or the worship of Satya Pīr

No detail is known about the life of Satya Pīr. But there are some Dargāha in some villages of Bangladesh. Dargāha means a sacred tom or grave of a pious saint. Actually Satya Pīr is not a historical person but an imaginary image of justice and morality. Satya means truth and
Pīr means saint or preceptor. So, he is called Satya Pīr. It seems to me that the Dargāha of Satya Pīr is an imaginary tom, which symbolize the truth, morality and justice and Satya Pīr may be a symbolized god or saint of truth or justice. He is Hindu and a Muslim at the same time as regarded by both the community. Otherwise, he is known as non Muslim saint or non Hindu god. In other words, he is worshiped as a Hindu god by the Hindu and as a Muslim saint by the Muslim. But he is non communal and non sectarian. For this reason, he is a common figure of worship. He is a beneficent figure always supporting justice.\(^{31}\) He stands by the side of the weak. The Buddhist of Bangladesh used to worship Satya Pīr, but it is out dated now.\(^{32}\) Of course, in some villages Satya Pīr is an alive god or conscience. Some Buddhist still offer worship to Satya Pīr for getting rid of some natural calamities such as flood, cyclone, epidemic, earth quark and similar disasters.

This pūjā or worship is to be done on Friday or Monday of the year. If anybody intends to do it, he arrange the pūjā, but it is not a common worship or function.

This worship came into practice in the Buddhist community from the 13th to 15th centuries A.D. During this period Buddhism assumed a form which was the synthesis of Tāntric Buddhism, Brahmīnism, Islam and various other traditional faiths.\(^{33}\) Not only were Hindu gods and goddess worshipped by the Buddhist in this period, but Muslim saints found a place in the worship practiced by the Buddhist and in their folk belief. Thus, worship of Satya Pīr may have come into vogue in the Buddhist community of Bangladesh during this period. According to Dr. Manikuntala Haldar\(^{34}\) ‘the worship of Satya Pīr is originated from the worship of Caitya, or Cetiya, or worship of Buddha’s relic stupa’. It may be said that the worship of Satya Pīr is the another form Caitya worship or the worship of Buddha’s relic stupa to the Buddhist of Bangladesh.
Method of the pūjā

The method of this pūjā has a similarity with that of Śani pūjā. A jar fill with water, leaves and flowers is to be placed at a suitable place in the house. The pūjā is arranged with one and quarter seer of rice, nine bananas, some molasses or sugar, curd, coconut, candle sticks, incenses and flowers. Then a kind of “puthi” or a poem with narration of Satya Pīr attributes is red out like Śani pūjā. Any body can perform the pūjā or a Hindu priest may be called for the purpose.

After the pūjā is performed, “Śinni” is prepared as in the case of Śani pūjā and distributed it among all present. There is a belief that eating or drinking that “Śinni” removes the sorrow, cronick disease and worriness of the body. This “Śinni” is offered practical result of a vow if the worshiper has any such vow.

This pūjā has wide popularity to the Buddhist of Padua village of Chittagong. When I asked some middle aged gentle man about the utility and the result of the worship of Satya Pīr, they promptly replied that it is a saint of truth. If any body offers worship and takes a vow in the name of Satya Pīr that does not go in vain for his power of truthfulness.

The Buddhists of Bangladesh also performed tree worship, river worship and village protection worship etc. Apart from these popular rituals or beliefs, the Buddhist of Bangladesh have faith in many other magical beliefs too. Like the Hindu they also believe in the effect of nine planets (nava-graha). They are very much conscious about the evil influence of planets-Śani (Saturn). They believe in astrology and palmistry. They consult almanac (pañjika) and horoscope (kuṣṭhī) to fond out auspicious and inauspicious days, good time and bad time in their life. During birth, death and marriage, they observe many superstitious formalities even today. Though they have got every faith in the doctrine of kamma, yet they believe in the efficacy of amulets, various stones and charms. They believe in the good result of pāni parā
(water purified by a monk or by a saint uttering religious verses), and Kāchāṅg (a thread specially prepared by monk uttering some words of Buddha, when finished it is dyed with green turmeric). They use pāṇi parā especially in the cases of child's troubles and during labour-pain of a woman. They use kāchāṅg especially for the children of tender ages to protect them from influence of bad spirits and also to maintain their physical fitness. Like the Hindu they have superstitions belief in the sound sneezing (hānci) and chirping or falling of a lizard (ṭikṭiki) in a particular time, place and occasion. While going out of the house for some good work they do not like to see an empty pitcher or to be called by some one from the back or to get some physical obstruction having his foot or head knocked against something, all on a sudden. When started if his mother calls him from the back, it is auspicious. If some one goes to filling up a pitcher, it is also an inauspicious sign. Sometimes it is not auspicious to them if some snake or jackal crosses the road just in front of one, while going somewhere for some important business. Sometimes it is good and it depends on the direction a snake or a jackal passes to, towards left or right. In some occasions, the sounds of crows, owls, and some other ominous birds, and the crying of dogs, are ominous to them. In like manner they believe in many other superstitions\(^{35}\).

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed various popular beliefs and practices which are fundamentally Hindu but which are shared by Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. Therefore, my paper has focussed on what is common to different groups within an agricultural society. Nevertheless, it needs to be born in mind that Buddhists are also kept distinct as a community in various ways, such as the practice of endogamy; the re-establishment since 1856 of the Theravāda Saṅgha which maintains the
continuity of traditional doctrine; and the general adherence to the Buddhist principle of non-violence etc. among most Buddhist. Furthermore, the presence of the Saṅgha and teaching of true Buddhist doctrine by the Bhikkhus has gradually penetrated into the lives of ordinary Buddhist people and is reducing their popular practices.

Notes

(9) Benoytosh Bhattacharyya: The Indian Buddhist Iconography. Delhi 1924, p. xxvi.
(10) Nalini Kanta Bhattachari: Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum. Varanasi 1972, p. 34.
(13) Tervor Ling, op. cit., p. 24-25; Dr. R. B. Barua, op. cit., p. 262, fn. 1.
(14) Nalininath Das Gupta: Bangalai Baudh Dharma. Calcutta 1355 (Bangali year),
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p. 44.


16 W. J. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 435.


18 Śinni: An oblation of semi-liquid product made of wheat or husked-rice-powder, molasses, banana, coconut-pickles, etc mixed with raw cow-milk.


21 Ibid., p. 50.

By the way, In the worship of Magadheśvarī no image was made and no priest officiated. The only Mantra (uttering verses) uttered was as follows:

"Āy re Mā Maginī Magadh rājār jhi,
Kon Kholāte vasya Mā re Kholā Chāḍi di."

—oh; mother, the princess of the king of Magadha, please come here, in which place you are living now giving up your own place.

22 T. H. Griffith (Trans), op. cit., p. 243.

E. W. Hopkins, op. cit., p. 69, 230.

W. J. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 334.

23 Collected from some aged persons of villages of Rangunia and Raozan Police Station.

24 W. J. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 474.

25 Manasā is also known as Vishahara in some places of Bangladesh.


W. J. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 475.

27 Niharranjan Roy, op. cit., p. 489.

28 Ibid., p. 489.


30 Niharranjan Roy, op. cit., p. 489.


32 Sukomal Chaudhury, op. cit., p. 25f.

33 Dr. R. B. Barua, op. cit., p. 262, fn. 1.

34 Dr. Manikuntala Haldar, op. cit., p. 315.

35 Sukomal Chaudhury, op. cit., p. 125.