



Bengali 'Bihari' Muharram: The Identitarian Trajectories of a Community¹

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During the first ten days of Muharram, especially during the last three days of those ten days, young boys, called paiks, aged roughly between six and sixteen, dressed in salwar kameezes, with ropes and bells strung between their chests and shoulders, sprint through the streets of many of the main thoroughfares of Bangladesh. Holding up colourful flags atop bamboo poles, along their jog, they dart in and out of imambarahs² and mosques shouting 'Ya Husain', 'Ya Hasan', in recognition of the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandsons, Imam Husain and his brother Hasan. They cover kilometres during those three days and usually follow the routes taken by their ancestors, visiting the tombs of saints along those pathways. One can see them running through streets of cities and towns such as Dhaka, Syedpur, Narayanganj, Chittagong.

While many of the male children and teenagers scamper around town as paiks, the male adult relatives of these children pull tazias – beautiful structures representing the tombs of the first martyrs – along the streets. These processions often get mistaken by Bengalis (both Hindus and Muslims and from either Bangladesh or West Bengal) for those of the Shi'as' as Prophet Husain and Hasan are mourned during the month of Muharram by Shi'as around the world. But contrary to popular assumption, the followers of this tradition are not Shi'as but predominantly north Indian Sunni Muslims or those referred to, on either sides of the Bengali border, as 'Biharis'.³

It is common knowledge, amongst Muslims, that the first of Muharram marks the start of the Islamic New Year as it is believed that Allah created the universe during this month. The month of Muharram also marks the tragic anniversary of the Battle of Karbala in the year 680 CE. On the tenth day of this month, a day also called



Ashura, Imam Husain bin Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, was killed along with his followers, on the plains of Karbala in what is present-day Iraq. The Shi'a Muslims consider Husain's death as a symbolic act of redemption and his death is commemorated in the form of penance during the month of Muharram.⁴

As highlighted by a Shi'a woman in Dhaka when I first started research on Muharram in 2007,⁵ "We Shi'as, for example, do not eat fish, get married or wear colourful clothes during those days as we believe that these, representing joy, would be inappropriately enjoyed in the month of mourning." Around the Muslim world, Shi'as mark the day of Ashura by walking in long processions down streets, floating banners in the air, parading a white horse (representing Husain's horse Duldul and the empty mount on his back) and a highly decorated, albeit covered in black (in mourning) and/or green (in respect for the Prophet's family), bier. They flagellate themselves with chains whilst calling out 'Ya Hasan', 'Ya Husain', 'Ya Ali' in self-mortification.

For the Shi'as, Muharram commemorations are central to their religious observations and are practiced in places as diverse as Lebanon, Iran, the Caucasus, India and more recently in the Caribbean, Trinidad and New York. The historical reason for this, as summarised by Korom and Chelkowski, is that those Shi'as living in places located far away found it too difficult to be buried around Husain's tomb in the highly desirable Karbala. Therefore, they came up with "creative strategies to metaphorically bring Karbala to local sites"; these were "devised as a way of bridging geographical distance, in order to attenuate the problem of alienation from the original site" (Korom & Chelkowski 1994: 152). And so all over the Shi'a world, specific sites within local places are set aside to be 'Karbals', and are blessed with some holy earth from the original Karbala site.

But what is noteworthy is that all over the Indic world, as well as in many far-flung places inhabited by South Asian Muslims, Sunnis also commemorate Muharram with what have traditionally been regarded as Shi'a practices. The bier is transformed into a representation of Husain's mausoleum and the structure, called *taziya* in Urdu, represents both the tomb and the bier. Interestingly, in Dhaka and Kolkata, as well as in smaller towns across both areas of Bengal, Muharram is mainly practiced by 'Bihari' Muslims and less so by Bengali Muslims. The graves (mazars) and shrines (dargahs) of saints called *baba*, *bibi* or *pir*⁶ have been added to the local 'Karbala sites' of Sunni 'Biharis' as *imambarahs* or 'memorials' to Imam Husain (such as the beautiful and immense Husaini Dalan shrine in old Dhaka). The



most important aspect is the markedly different 'mood' of the participants of 'Bihari' Sunni Muharram; in contrast to the customary grieving and lamenting of the Shi'as, Muharram practiced by the 'Bihari' Sunnis is a custom that one could call – following Korom and Chelkowski, who observed Muharram in Trinidad amongst the descendants of Indian indentured labourers – “a kind of celebration on one level of interpretation” (Korom & Chelkowski 1994: 157).

Despite the importance of this commemoration in the life of 'Bihari' Sunnis, contemporary scholars of South Asia have rarely discussed this form of marking Muharram.⁷ Outside academia, it is commonly regarded as a form of deviance from Shi'a practice. In Bangladesh itself, there is at best ignorance, at worse denial, of its observance by Sunnis: in Dhaka, the Bengali Muslims I spoke to had no idea that the procession going its way was not of Shi'as, but of 'Bihari' Sunnis.⁸ In Kolkata, elite Muslims also tend to ignore 'Bihari' Sunni Muharram. When asked about its rituals, they were condescending, asking me, “Why would you be interested in uneducated peoples' practices?” Even 'Biharis' of higher status, whether living in Kolkata or in Dhaka, often dismissed these as “un-Islamic practices, [which] should be banned.” David Pinault writes of encountering similar prejudice when he studied (Sunni) Muharram rituals in Darjeeling and Hyderabad in India.⁹

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These prejudices notwithstanding, this article looks at the 'Bihari' Sunni event of Muharram in the two capitals on either side of Bengal: it takes Dhaka and Kolkata as a prism for understanding complex processes of identity formation among the 'Bihari' Muslim migrant groups of Bangladesh and India. This identity, it is argued, is not an expression of the persistence of traditional 'Bihari' culture in a new location. While migrants draw upon elements of their remembered history as a symbolic resource, what is played out on the streets of Dhaka or Kolkata, I argue, is in no sense a replica of the Muharram of 'old Bihar', or indeed of Sunni belief in 'the Bihari homeland'. Nor is it understood as a hybrid or creolised adaptation of a 'traditional' form to a new cultural context.

This 'Bihari' Muharram' is not an 'expression of community' in any simple or literal sense. It is *action* which creates a sense of community, but which also resonates across many other registers of politics. It is the outcome of cooperation, but it also signals competition and rivalry between people thrown together in crowded neighbourhoods (whether in Dhaka camps¹⁰ or Kolkata slums). The paiki-running and tazia processions give us a fascinating insight into how a reviled 'low-class', migrant, 'ethnic' minority represents itself in the 'Bengali' (in-



cluding both West Bengal as well as Bangladesh) public sphere. By occupying – in very distinctive ways – spaces from which they are normally shut out, 'Bihari' participants represent themselves as a visible, even subversive, presence in the various Bengali cities and towns of their adoption or upbringing on these sacred days of the Islamic calendar.

The mainstay of Muharram for 'Bihari' Muslims is really the building and decorating of tazias and the dressing up of male children as paiks. When asked why Muharram was such an important event, Sunni 'Biharis' invariably talked about the advent of Islam in South Asia. A caretaker of an imambarah explained:

Bihar was Islamised through the pirs and was therefore the land of many dargahs and imambarahs' and wherever 'Biharis' went, they took with them a bit of their saint with them, carrying his memory safely across the land and seas they crossed; and this is why you see us practice Muharram, wherever we go, we take our saints along and build tazias to commemorate them each year.

Indeed in Dhaka, the most visited sites were the ornate and beautifully built shrines in honour of Hussein and Fatima, the Husaini Dalan imambarah and the Bibi ka Rauza respectively – believed to be the oldest Shi'a shrines in Bangladesh. The fact that these saints were venerated because they brought Islam to Bengal was highlighted in the following narrative by Rokeya Bibi – a Shi'a woman in her mid-thirties I met while researching Muharram practices in Dhaka in 2008:

The story goes that after Husain's death, people began to mistreat Khatune Jannat – the 'lady of paradise' – another name for Fatema, the daughter of our Prophet. So before dying she announced that when she died her soul would not stay in Saudi Arabia but go to Hindustan where women were better treated. It is believed that this is what happened – her soul floated down the Buriganga all the way to Farashganj (a place in Old Dhaka where the French traded and the name of a location in old Dhaka today) where we have kept her memory by respecting her grave.

In stories such as this one, the advent of a holy figure to old 'Hindustan' was linked to a particular grave (mazar) and associated branch (silsila) of Islam which had been started by people who had come together to honour the memory of the saint buried there. If these mazars formed communities of people bound together by their saint, they also saw their saint linking them to communities who venerated the saint worldwide.



The caretaker of Bibi ka Rauza's mazar, Mohammad Sajjah Husain, said that even though he was 'Bengali', he held his lineage from Egypt and that his family and friends "lived everywhere: Pilkhana, Kolkata, Isfahan." He also intimated that the mazar was visited by the ambassadors of Egypt, Iran, Irak, Pakistan as it is that of Fatema and therefore, in his eyes, not really susceptible to denominational differences. When groups of paiks visited his shrine, they would stand in a group, shout out "Ya Hasan, Ya Husain" and pray together while he blessed them. 'Biharis' spoke of their particular way of commemorating Muharram as being their custom, a custom from "back home in India," practiced by their ancestors and passed on because it maintained a link not just with the geographies and histories of early Islam but also with those of their own trajectories. It seemed that for a few days the differences between Shi'a and Sunni were set aside in honour of their common martyr Husain.¹¹

Imambarahs, Tazias, Paiks: The Mainstays of 'Bihari' Sunni Muharram

Imambarahs

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While following paiks during the commemorations with which 'Biharis' mark Muharram in Dhaka as well as in Kolkata (during field research undertaken over five Muharrams between 2007 and 2014), it was noted that both groups used very specific roads, lanes and side lanes. It seemed that, whether in Dhaka or in Kolkata, the paths taken by the procession of tazias were those that had traditionally been used and were commonly close to an important Shi'a shrine or an imambarah. Indeed, when 'Bihari' Sunnis undertake their trips (whether as paiks or with their tazias) they do so after visiting the main Shi'a dargahs or imambarahs of their areas.

If imambarahs are left in quasi desultory states the rest of the year, during the month of Muharram, they become the meeting place for those building tazias, or taking a rest from their paik trail. The only other time imambarahs become the soul of community lives, is during the month of Razab, when milads (prayer sessions) are organised and qawwali singers from all over South Asia are hosted. These commemorations around imambarahs are very important identity-forging occasions for the 'Biharis' and are really the heart of communities of North Indian Muslims who increasingly live in clusters or ghettos.



There are two main symbols placed atop the flags above the imam-barahs – these are the crescent and the star and the hand. These are the symbols of Islam, not Pakistan – even though this is what many Bangladeshi Bengalis believe when they see the ‘Biharis’ triangular green flags at imam-barahs. The hand is the symbol of the five Muslim leaders of the same family – from the thumb to the little finger: Prophet Mohammad, his daughter Fatema, his son-in-law Ali, and his grandsons Hasan and Husain. When asked about the symbolism of the hand, ‘Biharis’ often said that it stood for unity of the many strands of Islam. Many people take vows where they promise to “fly a flag” if their vow is fulfilled – this involves buying cloth, doing ‘fatia’ (a short prayer ceremony) and hoisting a flag.

During Muharram the imam-barahs are decorated and a group called the ‘khalifa’ takes charge of the festivities linked to each particular imam-barah, that is, the making of the tazia and the distribution of food. These khalifa groups are composed of ten to forty men: one builds the frame of the tazia, some decorate it, a senior may oversee the work, a few others may be sent out to collect donations from the inhabitants of the area; the wealthier members of the khalifa contribute with money and decide, after consultation with other khalifa heads, the position of one’s tazia within the grand procession. On the day of Ashura (the tenth day of Muharram and the day on which the Shi’a and the Sunni processions are taken out), when the tazia moves in a slow procession along with other tazias, the distribution of food (shirni) and sugared drinks (sherbet/sabil) are provided to all those who visit imam-barahs or watch the procession.

Tazias

Tazias are built by various individuals during the ten days leading to Ashura.¹² These are incredibly beautiful architectural structures made with bamboo cane or steel and richly decorated with colourful paper, glass, shiny lace and sometimes also fruit or sprouts. They are usually linked to a particular imam-barah. As Hakim, a boy from Town Hall camp explained:

A tazia procession is one of the most important events in a ‘Biharis’ life. The whole community comes and participates, walking along with the tazias for a bit or watching from rooftops. We make comparisons between tazias and debate as to which ones are the most beautiful. It is a way for us ‘Biharis’ to come together.



'Biharis' form groups not just around the making of each tazia and the distribution of sugared water, but come to an agreement with those belonging to nearby areas as to the order in which they will bring out their tazias so that the whole march runs smoothly. There are also little tazias made and brought over by children – they do this on their own initiative and add to the festive mood – and are sometimes accommodated within the larger convoy. The various tazias commemorate not just the death of Hasan and Husain (the grandsons of the Prophet Mohammad) and the 72 members of these two Imams' families but also the death of the little baby Ali Asghar (Hussein's baby, the youngest martyr of the battle of Karbala) for whom some tazias are shaped like a small cradle.

Even though the commemoration of Muharram is officially ten days long, the main part starts on the seventh day of the month, after the evening prayers of Magrib and sightings of the moon. The head of the khalifa (also called Khalifa) then takes two flags with him and a couple of assistants. The little group makes its way to the graveyard in the ensuing darkness and after a small prayer ceremony (fatia) they take some of the graveyard earth and wrap it in one of the flags. The Khalifa uses the other flag as a protective shawl while holding the first flag with the piece of earth close to him. On their way back to their respective imambarahs, the assistants make sure the Khalifa doesn't touch anything dirty or polluting. Once they reach their imambarah, the earth is placed inside the tazia. It is supposed to represent the earth from the tombs of Hasan and Husain. As nobody should see it (for fear of going blind) the Khalifa covers it up with a red and a green cloth/paper to represent the tombs of Hasan and Husain respectively; Husain died by the sword (red cover) and Hasan was poisoned (green cover).

The tazias are taken out for short trips on the eighth and ninth nights but the main 'trip' starts on the tenth day (actually night to be more precise as the 'day' in Islamic calendars start at nightfall). A small procession is led through the lanes and side lanes surrounding the imambarah amidst a lot of drumming and mock fighting with swords, sticks and fire to show off physical prowess and daring. This usually happens around the premises of the various camps or neighbourhoods – just outside the entrances on the main streets, between midnight and four a.m. After this 'outing' of the tazias, they are brought back in and placed in their respective imambarahs again.



During the afternoon of the tenth day and main day of Muharram the tazias are taken out in a grand final procession. The route that these processions will take has to be approved by the Government which issues both the organisers of the Shi'a and the 'Bihari' processions a special licence. Committee camp leaders and khalifas are responsible for getting the necessary paper-work done and arranging security by the police on the premises and along the roads. As the Shi'a caretaker of the Metiabruz Imambarah, in Kolkata, explained:

The processions start around one in the afternoon, it is a horse-drawn carriage bearing the flag of India and starting from the Imambarah, travelling via the main road and then ending at the graveyard of the house of Oudh. Ours is a different kind of procession – it is one of mourning where we sing soulful songs and where some of the younger ones beat themselves up with chains. The Sunnis who come with their tazias and join our procession are of a totally different kind; they believe that the making of a tazia is a form of piety and that their craftsmanship and ability to make such beautiful works of art are due to divine blessing. Ours is a procession of mourning; theirs one of fervent veneration.

Thousands of people watch or join in these processions in the afternoon during which there is a continuation of the drum-beating, playing with swords, and fire-eating of the previous night. Tazias from the different imambarahs of the same locality are paraded amidst much pomp through the streets from one road to the next (but staying within the premises of one of the three main geographical locations of 'Biharis' – as exemplified by the three different locations the paiks visit over the seventh, eighth, and ninth day of Muharram).

The festivities conclude at the end of the tenth day when the tazias are taken to a waterbody (previously it used to be the river) to 'cool'. The piece of earth is supposed to be very 'hot' as Hasan and Husain were very 'daring' and brave and this is done to 'cool' their tombs and allow them to rest in peace. Similarly, the flag or alam of the Shi'as pertaining to Karbala is 'cooled' in a water body. Initially the tazias were dunked in the river but over the years the tazias would be submerged in Dhanmondi Lake or the water bodies in front of Sansad Bhavan. The Dhaka City Corporation and the Dhanmondi Lake authorities, about twenty years ago, disallowed this practice. So now, at the end of the tenth day, the Khalifas only dip the small piece of earth placed inside the tazias into a water body. As they do not submerge the whole tazia it is not noticed or objected to.



The similarity between the 'cooling' of the earth or of the symbolic graves of Hasan and Husain in a water body with that of Hindu figures was an association some people made to denigrate this practice and say it was a heritage from the Hindus. Others spoke of Muharram as having been a practice which allowed them to distinguish themselves from Hindus. As Hasan, a young 'Bihari' boy from Town Hall, summed up:

There was, once upon a time, a saintly baba who lived in a Hindu dominated area. The king of the place was a Hindu and every time the Muslims wanted to do something they wouldn't be allowed to. The baba decided he should do something so impressive that the king, and the rest of the Hindu population, would start looking well upon Muslims. So he built a tazia and started playing drums to attract attention. The king heard the commotion and ordered the drum-beaters to stop. The man replied 'you're not doing right'. The king then said 'what's inside your tazia?' The man replied 'if you want to look inside, please be my guest.' The king peeped inside and was completely floored by what he saw: in the tiny room he saw Hasan and Husain talking to each other. The baba then said 'there's still time for you to repent'. The king then converted to Islam and all his people with him. To commemorate this event, and in honour of the baba, we build tazias.

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Many young 'Biharis', however, from either sides of the border¹³, said they felt embarrassed with the "spectacle" 'Biharis' made of themselves during Muharram. They said that due to this custom of theirs, they were the targets of ridicule from their Bengali neighbours. A young man from Town Hall camp felt that as an "educated" man he should not practice Muharram as it was "backward" and said he felt mortified his community should represented itself in this way. He was actively trying to get them to stop by explaining that he had read somewhere that this wasn't a very old festival. He said that 'Biharis' had only started Muharram on accounts of the Hindus. During their various festivals, especially Kali puja, the Hindus would bring out their arms and parade with them through the streets so the 'Bihari' Muslims, who felt threatened every time that happened, decided to do the same on Muharram, and that there was therefore no reason to continue with this custom, he argued.

It is interesting that a custom which is now being given a Hindu versus Muslim twist had earlier been characterised in the 1911 Census and the 1931 Census (by Hodson) as one that, albeit deplorably, represents shared elements between the two religious:



The members of both religions who in Bihar indulge in common practices are uneducated persons at the bottom of the social scale. With many of the Hindus religion means merely a propitiation of evil spirits, while many of the Mussalmans do not know what the tenets of Islam are. [...] Perhaps the most interesting example of common celebration of religious rites is the Muharram, in which low caste Hindus join, though they apparently regard it as a merry festival instead of a sad memorial service. In some places in Bihar low caste Hindus worship Hasan and Husain as gods. Childless husbands and wives, even among good castes, vow that if they have a boy he shall serve as a paik during the Muharram for a number of years [...]. (Hodson 1937: 251)

Korom and Chelkowski, too, highlight the influence of “indigenous rituals and festivals” on Muharram practices in India, pointing to the similarity of the tazia custom to the “immersion of Hindu icons at the conclusion of processional rituals such as the Durga *Puja*” (Korom & Chelkowski 1994: 154-5). ‘The ‘mixing and matching’ – and I borrow this term from Vineeta Sinha’s fine analysis of Singapore’s religious sphere (2009: 96) – of Hindu and Muslim ritual practices in Bengal have decreased over the years but can still be found in the veneration of Bonbibi or Kali in certain parts of Southern West Bengal and Bangladesh (cf. Jalais 2010a, 2010b, 2008).

Paiks

As mentioned, the most noticeable aspect of Muharram, apart from the tazias of the ‘Bihari’ Muslims, are the ‘Bihari’ paiks or paikis. Boys whose families have kept vows become paiks for a series of three years once the vow has been granted. After a short prayer (fatia) on the start of the seventh day of Muharram, at one of the imambarahs near their place, young boys are dressed with green and red or black and white ropes (or a combination of one of these four colours) and bells and are given a flag called ‘alam’. When it is girls whose parents have a vow made in their names, they have a ribbon tied around their hands – they have to keep it thus for four days. In the evenings the girls sit together in a circle and read out stories of Hasan and Husain. They read from the popular Urdu books the *Sahadat Namah*, the *Nur namah* and the *Kabuttar namah*.

In addition to the ornate tazias and the festive mood, the paiks are another element that distinguishes ‘Bihari’ Muharram practices from Shi’a ones. Thus, on the last three days, many ‘Bihari’ Sunni Muslim boys are, so to speak, ‘consecrated’ to Imam Husain – they are like his



'postmen' or 'horses' and roam through the streets taking the routes which lead to the mazars, dargahs and imambarahs of their area and then of those of adjoining areas. Those who are older and more adventurous go further. The mazars are associated with Sufism – especially the Chisti lineage of Ajmer – and with pirs or holy men who brought Islam to South Asia. It is believed the 'Khaja' of Ajmer also observed the Muharram period, which is why, being his disciples, the 'Biharis' – followers of the 'panch panchatan', or the five lineages: the Prophet, his daughter, his son-in-law and those of his two grandsons – continue this tradition in his honour.

The boys of the same imambarahs (usually also neighbours) then stay together and run in groups over the next three days. The paiks do not all take the same route; the younger amongst them, for example, run through "Asad Avenue, Zakir Husain lane, and the older ones [go] along the roads which [pass] along the 'Bihari' camps of Mirpur 11, Mirpur 12" and the still older ones visited Narayanganj. The paiks of Pilkhana in West Bengal, depending on their age and stamina, run all the way to Tikiapara, Ghushuri, Bali, Shibpur, Kazipara, Domjur, Bankura, Ghutiari Sharif, visiting the dargahs of various saints – they sometimes return from these sites by train or bus.

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The roads used are usually those that meander around areas where large numbers of 'Biharis' live, although some areas are inhabited by Shi'as. In parts of Bangladesh such as Saidpur, Chittagong, or Narayanganj, the pattern seems similar. Those from Metiabruz, Park Circus or Tollygunge, in Kolkata, India, follow an analogous practice; even areas in Howrah such as Pilkhana or Bali that have high concentrations of 'Biharis', Muharram is practiced along roads which have both Shi'a dargahs and imambarahs, and are the dwelling places of north Indian Muslims or 'Biharis'.

During these days paiks are not supposed to shower, nor eat or sleep at home – they will eat food given by others at mosques or imambarahs and sleep in one of those open spaces – in effect, paiks will live the life of a 'horse' and thus the requirement that they should not eat rice, home food or fish, the obligation they sleep in an open space and that they run. On their trip from imambarah to imambarah, from slum to slum, camp to camp, or neighbourhood to neighbourhood, they also end up visiting relatives, delivering news and letters, staying on to take a break and participating in the festivities of the respective locality. Some Shi'as also practice something akin to paiks, but neither do they have ropes tied around them nor do they run in



groups. Rather, they run individually carrying smaller flags that are differently decorated.

Association with Shi'as' Practices of Muharram: Some Complicity, Some Tension

The association to Shi'as is very close, apart from visiting the Shi'a sites in Dhaka such as the Tinshed Mazar, Satroja Mazar, Bibi Roja Mazar, the Sunni 'Bihari' paiks visit many Shi'a mosques, one of which was the small Karbala Mosque situated in the middle of an orchard-like space. Near Mirpur, the mosque is a small structure which houses the graves of the Imams Hasan and Husain; it looks like a simple house. As one enters through the gates of the complex, one notices a drop in temperature as the whole place seems to be covered by a canopy of large mango and coconut trees. A little further from the mosque, on the side there are small little-shed like houses where those who tend the mosque lived. There are about 150 people living on the premises of the Mirpur Karbala (22-23 families). Previously their mosque used to be in Lalmatia – another part of Dhaka – but the Government took away that land and gave them this other place when Mujib ur Rahman came to power in 1971. Like the 'Biharis', these families too migrated from India after partition in 1947.

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When I visited this small quiet complex, I observed that from time to time little groups of paiks consisting of ten to fifteen boys would come through the gates, breaking the quiet. Every time, the kind-hearted Imam came out with a jug of water, which he passed around. Once they had finished drinking water, washing their feet and dousing their head under the water pump he would gently assemble the boys under a mango tree and initiate prayers in which all the boys participated. After 15 minutes or so, once they were done, he would bless them and send them on their way. The trip, especially for the older boys, involved going to places beyond the immediate neighbourhoods which naturally was a tiring exercise. Sometimes a couple of boys would stay behind and rest, waiting to join the next group. As one of them said, "these imambarahs are little oases of peace and comfort for us. Outside, we're like dogs to the Bengalis, but inside these Shi'a shrines and imambarahs, we're given some respect."

The older Dhaka paiks visit the famous Mirpur Mazar and the various imambarahs in Mirpur, as well as in the Narayanganj district where the big Adamjee Jute mill; a place where many 'Biharis' settled and lost



their lives. They stop at places in Old Dhaka such as Chankharpul and finally, the highlight of their trip, the beautiful and famous Shi'a Hoseini Dalan which lies in the heart of Old Dhaka. As mentioned earlier, the place was packed on Muharram days and yet, when these young boys ran in, the crowd would separate to make space for them and they intoned their prayers in chorus. In the end, blessed by the imam or the elders of a place, they continued on their trot. The relationship between the two groups, however, is not always a very friendly one. Shi'a Ali summarised what many of them think:

They aren't 'respectful' of Shi'as' practices of Muharram. See, they wear all sorts of colourful clothes and do not undertake penance the way we Shi'as do (such as wearing only black in mourning during the forty days of Muharram, not eating fish, etc) and they run around like monkeys disturbing our mourning and sorrowful processions.

Basically the young paiks' running around greatly decreased the seriousness and decorum of their affair. As another one of them said: "By joining our procession, they give a bad name to not just us Shi'as, but also to Islam".

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In Dhaka, the two groups stayed separate as far as their processions went (even though the 'Biharis' visited the Shi'a shrines, as mentioned above) but many of the 'Biharis' attended the Shi'a processions standing along the roadsides as onlookers eagerly awaiting the Shias' procession. They watch the Shi'a participants of the procession do 'matam' or self-flagellation. Carrying black flags and wearing black clothes, some beat their chest with their fists whilst others beat their backs and chests with spiky chains. There are some flare-ups as young paiks run shouting through their procession, not respecting the mournful mood.

In general, in Bengal as elsewhere, Muharram often seems to be a cause for tension. In this respect, they resemble the 'Hosay' and 'Taj-da' processions of poorbea labour migrants in the Caribbean (Korom 2003; Mohapatra 2006), and the working-class Muharram processions of late colonial Bombay (Green 2011: 53-69), Singapore (Rai 2013: 369, 381-2) or present-day Benaras (Kumar 1988: 209-17). In Trinidad, Ali observes how "journalistic debates occur each year concerning the most appropriate way to 'observe' Hosay" (Ali 1990: 4 in Korom & Chelkowski 1994: 157). Here, even though it never made it to journalistic debates, it was generally regarded as a form of 'deviance' from Shi'a practice; those who were from the Tablighi Jama'at



and Jama'at-e-Islamia groups and political parties, argued that 'Biharis' were behaving like apostates and that the practice of Muharram in this way was 'un-Islamic'. On the other hand, the Shi'as had mixed feelings about the way in which "their" procession was in some way "hijacked" by the Sunni 'Biharis', but usually spoke about an "understanding" between the two.

However, despite frictions, and sometimes open hostility, most of the Shi'as continue to tolerate the 'Bihari' Sunnis and their tazias amidst their fold, more so in Kolkata than in Dhaka. Shamsheer Ali Irani, a Shi'a, quickly understood the nature of my work and invited me to join the procession the next day, which I did. Walking barefoot down Drum Factory Road, we went all the way to the Shi'a ground of Nakhhalpara in the heart of Dhaka. I had been sleeping at Town Hall Camp the night before and decided to leave early to recharge my camera batteries before heading to the march. I was surprised to be told by many camp-dwellers that I should not miss the Shi'a march that they would also be attending. When I arrived at the march I was surprised to see them standing on the sides, watching and at times even joining in. It was surprising to see their enthusiasm at joining the procession; they stuck out with their colourful clothes in a sea of black-clad Shi'a mourners.

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It became clear, upon asking, that 'Biharis' see Shi'as as part of their wider community of 'migrants from India'; they see the Shi'as as having come with Nawab Wajid Ali Shah from Lucknow to Calcutta in the middle of the nineteenth century or to Dhaka to work for Nawab Khwaja Alimullah. Both the nawabs, were patrons of the two greatest imambarahs of Calcutta and Dhaka respectively and of Muharram 'celebrations'. As Fakrul said "Even though the Dhaka Nawab family was Sunni, they enjoyed Persian literature and were the de facto patron of the Husaini Dalan; they also used to organise Muharram with pomp and splendor and have all those who worked for him join in the commemorations."

While 'Biharis' joined in the matam processions (albeit mainly as spectators) of Shi'as, Shi'as never came to watch the tazia processions of 'Biharis'. When I asked if they knew why the Shi'as did not join in their procession, the 'Biharis' replied that Shi'as were "a caste above" them. This was another big difference between the Shi'as and the 'Biharis' in Dhaka or Kolkata; indeed, if most of the Shi'as were wealthy, the 'Biharis' who practiced Muharram were not. Furthermore,



those who had moved out of the camps were reluctant to practice Muharram alongside the camp-dwellers.

The main practices in both places certainly take place around the imambarahs of the Shi'as – such as the Husaini Dalan in Dhaka and the Metiabruz Imambarah in Kolkata (amongst others). However, the routes taken go through parts of Dhaka city with high concentrations of 'Bihari' Muslims in Dhaka, such as Geneva Camp, Market Camp, CC Camp, CRO Camp, Town Hall Camp, Staff Quarter Camp (in Johuri Mohalla), and so on. Some places mentioned here are not really camps; the Panch Tolla Camp, for example, is known as a place where the richer 'Biharis' live, who apparently got along well with their Bengali government official colleagues, and were therefore spared in the liberation war. It seemed that in revisiting these areas, the 'Biharis' are also revisiting a part of their past which the younger generations try to ignore. In fact, this also manifests itself in the latter's call to stop the tazia and paik rituals. As one of them said:

it reminds me too much of the taunts and attacks of my Bengali neighbours. They would attack us when we went to play in the park calling us 'dirty Biharis' and 'Biharir bachha' as if being Bihari in itself was wrong, like being a thief or something.

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Another explained how a couple of decades back, a fight broke out between paiks running along Kobi Nazrul Islam Sarani, the avenue cutting through Dhaka University, and students from Dhaka University. Taunting them with insults of 'Bihari', the students refused to let the paiks pass through Kobi Nazrul Islam Sarani, saying they were defiling the memory of *oporejeyo bangla* – the statue in front of Dhaka university which stands for the resistance of Bengali students against the Pakistani army. In the fight, a 'Bihari' boy was killed, after which certain roads were barred to paiks. So the trail is not just a religious one where the different imambarahs and mazars are visited or a run where one can visit various relatives and have fun with friends but one which is also fraught with a sense of foreboding and danger. Understandably, the Shi'as prefer keeping away from the practices of the 'Biharis' so as to distance themselves from the tag of razakar or 'minion of the Pakistanis', thus safeguarding their own position within the nation as well as within the dominant Sunni populace.

The tension is less marked in Kolkata. Bohra Ali Mirza, the genial descendant of Wajid Ali Shah and main custodian of the big Metiabruz Imambarah in Kolkata, had an explanation as to why Shi'as, at least in Kolkata, seem to gently tolerate what to them seems a rather insen-



sitive tribute to Husain's martyrdom; "do you not find the Biharis' practices jarring when contrasted to your own commemorative practices of Muharram grieving?" I asked. "You know," he patiently explained,

They are at heart good people, the younger ones who become paiks are...well...'young', as for the older ones, well...the older ones are...let's say 'sincere'; for them, the very act of 'making' a tazia is piety, it is showing Allah that we rejoice in the craftsmanship He has gifted some of us with, showing Him that we honour His saint Imam Husain by building something beautiful for him as he was the first man to die for Islam. Tell me, how can we not allow these people to express their devoutness for our very own saint?

In a way, Bohra Ali Mirza's kind explanation as to why one had to be patient with the 'Biharis' was very touching. Despite telling me that his family was originally from Lucknow, he wanted me to know that he was "from Metiabruz". He explained how Metiabruz had once been a second Lucknow. He narrated:

Wajid Ali Shah, the founder of this imambarah, used to be the king of Oudh. When his kingdom was taken over by the British he declared 'the Queen is like me, of royal family, she will understand my plight and so I will travel to London to plead with her to allow her men to return the kingdom which they illegally confiscated from me'. So he set off for London by first travelling to Kolkata, this was in 1856. As he intended on staying there for a few days, waiting for the winds to be propitious, he built an imambarah. The trip to London was never made and he lived here more than 30 years until his death in 1887. He had come here with a retinue of 500-1000 men, he loved music and poetry and all things beautiful and the place became a mini Lucknow and was dominated by Shi'as.

Eventually other communities rallied around the Nawab. People from outside the community have now outnumbered the Shi'as who are not even two percent of the population of Metiabruz. The core of the matter is that we Shia's need to show our obeisance to Imam Hussein and this is why we build imambarahs wherever we go. If the Sunnis want to join us in our veneration of our saint, who are we to disallow them this privilege?

Lomba Jomidar, an elderly Sunni 'Bihari' man, is the descendant and caretaker of the imambarah, called 'Karbala', in Pilkhana, one of the largest neighbourhoods of 'Bihari' Muslims of the area, and the largest slum of Howrah, in West Bengal, India. Every year important Muharram processions take place here, which are at times charac-



terised by Shi'a-Sunni tensions. The imambarah, Jomidar narrated, was built in the year 1800; the whole place was called Dargahtala. Mir Amanatullah Ali, like in the stories of miracles of the pirs of Bengal, received the land from a generous king who promised to give the pir all the land his favourite elephant could walk on in a day. As in other pir-related miracle stories, the Pir had the required papers when the British asked him about the 52 bighas¹⁴ of land on which the dargah and its adjoining pond was built. The interesting part, Jomidar pointed out, was that people from all communities came and settled here. 'Biharis' had come to settle there to work in the Jute and Cotton mills and in the railways of Howrah, bringing with them their tradition of building tazias and entrusting their requests to the saint. When these requests would be fulfilled, one of their sons would be chosen to be a paik or a 'foot soldier', and the memory of the first saint and martyr of Islam: Prophet Hussein would be thereby honoured.

If the bid on the eastern front is to be considered as a bonafide 'Bengali' – that is, as a citizen of Bangladesh, in contrast, in West Bengal, the recognition sought by the 'Biharis' seems to be a different one. It is one which insists on being 'a son of the soil'. As Lomba Jomidar from Pilkhana said when I requested him to give an interview, "I am from Pilkhana", even though we all knew that before the settling of Pilkhana, the place was a wasteland. It felt like a plea to be recognised as part of the fabric of Bengal despite his linguistic background. Here, it was the older generation speaking in chaste Bengali, the younger generation being more mobile and having often left to work as migrants in Hindi-speaking parts of India. The younger generation of 'Biharis', in West Bengal, did not need to prove their 'Bengali' background – it was enough to be 'Indian' – whereas the older generation, the indirect victims of the east Bengalis' assault on their relatives living in today's Bangladesh, insisted on conducting the interview in Bengali. On the other side of the border it was the reverse, the older generation were often unwilling to speak in Bengali whereas the younger generation was fluent in Bengali and insisted on conducting interviews not in Urdu but in Bengali.

It is in relation to this background that the commemoration of Muharram takes on so much importance; in both in Kolkata and in Dhaka it was celebrated as "something we Biharis do". "Biharis on either sides of Bengal", explained an old 'Bihari' gentleman currently living in Dhaka,



are a bit like Husain, you know. We're sacrificial victims and its over our bodies that the politics of the two states of Bengal have been played. Is this why we identify so closely with Husain the martyr? We're a good, honest, hardworking people, we built this city just like we taught the Bangladeshis all about good food, good clothes and electricity. Don't you find the best kababs of Bangladesh in Mohammadpur (the biggest refugee colony of 'Biharis' in Dhaka), who do you think work as their tailors? Who work as their electricians, their car mechanics, their railway operators? We've been the ones working away for the Bengalis and yet, what have they given us in return? Only abuse, whether it be on this side of the border or on the other.

In Dhaka, like in Kolkata, the running of paiks through the streets feels like it has never been noticed or commented upon. The Shi'as see it with some discomfort as they find the association of 'Biharis' to themselves too close for comfort (both in terms of class as well as in relation to the history with which the Bihari community is marked). The mainstream Bengali Sunnis, often mistake the 'Biharis' for Shi'as because of their marked participation in Muharram. This is symptomatic of the malaise and ignorance with which this practice is viewed by Bengali Muslims on both sides of the border. It is interesting to think that a ceremonial that might have been used in an older age to mark one's identity vis-à-vis a Hindu population, is now practiced to distinguish oneself from Bengali Muslims. While this brings with it a sense of unease for some, it is a marker of pride for others. Many have highlighted how the 'Bihari' practice of Muharram used to be much more extensive in size and span in earlier days but that this has changed in the face of orthodoxy and the potential violence against the young 'Bihari' paiks.

Conclusion: Muharram – A Custom that unites a Community and defies Authority

Korom and Chelkowski point out in their fascinating study of the Hosay rituals surrounding Muharram in Trinidad how they soon became an event which united all the other Indians to join in thus becoming a public show of East Indian ethnic identity. Hosay continues to this day as a set of rituals identifying the East Indians of Trinidad with their homeland. Imaginary as it may be identification is due, in part, to the observance's combination of both Hindu and Muslim components. In Trinidad, despite the fact that it has been infused with the practices of indigeneous cultures, many of those who participate in the building of



tadjas are not Muslims, but Hindus and Christians belonging to diverse ethnic groups. (Korom & Chelkowski 1994: 155-7).

Similarly, Muharram practices amongst the Biharis of Bengal have to be understood within the specific parameters of history. The Bihari camps of Dhaka, like the slums of Howrah and Kolkata, are actually microcosms of communities with the Biharis rallying around their particular imambarahs. More than the mosque, it is the imambarah that unites. In the mazes that are these places, where nobody but a 'Bihari' and his relatives enter (even though these relatives might be Bengali rickshawalas from Dinajpur in the Bihari camps or Adivasi and Anglo-Indian Christians, Hindu Biharis, Nepalis in the Howrah and Kolkata slums) it is Muharram more than any other event that unites Biharis to each other. "Eid is shared by all Muslims but people go to their own mosque so the space is not necessarily shared but the imambarah is an open space, one where any Bihari can feel at home," said Lomba Jomidar.

But if the space was Bihari, it wasn't seen as exclusively being so, as expressed by an elderly man from Metiabruz:

The thing is, others have joined in our event; not just other Muslims but Hindus too. Each year, for example, here, as well as in Rajasthan and maybe in some other parts of the world there are families commemorating Muharram by making a tazia. The Hindus I mention make it with sprouts and call it the 'jowka' tazia. Many Hindu families would join in before but less so these days. (cf. Talukdar 2011)¹⁵

Even though the spaces in which the Biharis live initially appear forbidding with their tiny lanes and alleys, they are never completely controlled spaces. When there are 'outsiders' such as census takers, micro-credit bank workers, hawkers, drug-dealers, drug-users, NGO donors, researchers, guests, the police, etc., entering, the inhabitants will come up to them and guide them to the address they want to go to as it is practically impossible to find a person's house otherwise.

In my own case, after a few trips to Town Hall Camp, the person who I found the most forthcoming with information was Usman, who is referred to as chacha because of his advanced age. His goat-cum-mechanic shed is located very near one of the entrances of the Town Hall camp and his side job is match-making. Usman seemed to be curious as to who might be coming in and going out but not in a policing manner. Rather, power in this area seemed quite diffused and is shared by many: there is the Imam but not everyone goes to the



camp mosque, the camp leader Momin nicknamed 'Musharaf' as he is always talking of Pakistan, the school-teacher who knows how to read and write, and the bright student who is training as a computer engineer. Each of these individuals has their own understanding of Muharram, of their community, and of how to go forward in life. These understandings do not match but when Muharram comes, even those seemingly against each other, turn up to watch and are sometimes coaxed into participating in a stick game or helping complete a tazia.

Many of the 'Biharis', on either side of the border, have kinship ties with Bengalis. This is because many Bengalis (rickshawalas, porters, fish-mongers, shop-keepers) have shared camp/slum space, have intermarried with camp members, have established pir-bhai relations as they visited the same shrine, have travelled and worked as migrant workers in Gujarat, have been paiks together, have played together or, in some rare cases (like two in Geneva camp), have been on the hajj together. These "Bihari'-Bengalis' easily speak Urdu and sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between the groups, as most people in these areas are bilingual. Many 'Biharis' work in shops in the old part of Dhaka as they are reputed to be good cooks. They are sometimes solicited by their rural Bengali in-laws to facilitate land-buying in the suburbs as they are seen to have better relations with the 'town Bengalis' than themselves.

The main divide, whether it was in Bangladesh or in Kolkata, is that between those amongst the 'Biharis' who are Wahabis or Tablighi Jama'atis. I was once talking about religion with a young boy and he suddenly mentioned how the Town Hall Camp clerics were so much more relaxed than those in Dinajpur. "There, if people don't go to the mosque to say namaz five times a day, they're not allowed burial," he said. "What happens then?" I asked. "You have to pay up 50 to 60,000 Takas to the clerics who then feed the poor with the money before you are pardoned and allowed to bury your dead in the graveyard" he explained, "parents teach their kids how to say namaz from age five and they all wake up at 5 a.m. to troupe to the mosque". "Even the women?" I asked. "No, they stay at home but they have to offer namaz at home" he said. "How do you know all this?" I asked. "My extended family is from there, they live in a camp in Dinajpur (Bikrampur Colonypara)."

Both in Dhaka and in Kolkata, many 'Biharis' complained that even though the Wahabis had always been against the practice of Muharram, they had now started attacking the shrines of saints and



refusing that tazias be brought out on Muharram on the grounds that it is 'un-islamic'. As Lomba Jomidar from Pilkhana in India explained "we Muslims are divided into two main groups: Sunnis and Wahabis":

Our main fight is with the Wahabi or the Taliban and this fight goes back to Karbala – the fight between the spiritual and the political forces of Islam. Those who think only the Prophet is worthy of their veneration are Wahabis, the rest of us believe that not just the Prophet but also his family and his followers should be venerated. He couldn't have done everything alone, Islam was brought to South Asia by those who loved and followed him and all we do is honour their memory.

Mohammed Iqbal Munna is believed to be a professional tazia-maker from Metiabruz and originally from Baro banki in UP, which is about an hour from Lucknow:

We have been making tazias for generations, my grandfather came to Kolkata as a tailor master. My other job is as an electrician. I have never married and feel that making tazias is a kind of calling. The way I understand making tazias is that in our tradition one day the angel Gibreel brought some mud to Prophet Mohammad, the Prophet knew that the mud had been coming from Karbala and that Hasan and Husain would become martyrs and that this mud which was slowly taking the shape of a tazia would become red; this is also why at the end we place the mud in water, to 'cool' it. Our 'caste' believes that we should make these imaginary tombs to commemorate Husain's sacrifice to protect Islam. The Shi'as here take out one procession but we Sunnis take out thousands.

Today, he explained, continuing to make tazias was a way for him to defy the Wahabis. As an elderly Shi'a from the old town of Dhaka gently explained, "we enlightened Shi'as forgive the paiks but the ones to really get provoked are the Wahabis. But then, they get provoked by anything." Korom and Chelkowski write:

a very short time after the East Indians landed on Caribbean soil, the rituals, which are known as *Hosay* (derived from the name Husayn, often transliterated as Hosayn) in Trinidad and Jamaica, became a symbol of unity and often an act of defiance against colonial rule for the indentured immigrants. It was particularly in British Guiana that the *tadjah* (= ta'ziya) became a symbol of defiance for sugarcane plantation laborers against their British masters. (1994: 155).

In the same way, the practices of Muharram, for the 'Biharis' of Bengal, can be understood as an expression of collective identity,



maybe of pride or of defiance, against the overbearing Sunni Bengalis. Today, it is sometimes also a struggle against the Wahabis or the Deobandis.

Endnotes

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² This is the Urdu term for ‘house of the Imam’ and describes edifices in which eulogies for Imam Husain are recited, biers are housed, and other Muharram rituals observed.

³ The term ‘Bihari’ has come to be used to describe all Urdu-speakers in the region, even though by no means all of them come from Bihar. See Rahman & van Schendel 2003 for more details. The term has also acquired pejorative connotations; hence my use of inverted commas.

⁴ See, for instance, Vernon James Schubel. 1996. *Karbala as Sacred Space among North Indian Shi’a: Every Day is Ashura, Everywhere is Karbala*. In: Barbara D. Metcalf, ed., *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 186-203; David Pinault. 2001. *Horse of Karbala. Muslim Devotional Life in India*. New York: Palgrave; J. R. I. Cole. 1988. *Roots of North Indian Shi’ism in Iran and Iraq. Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*. University of California Press; Justin Jones. 2002. *Shi’a Islam in Colonial India. Religion, Community and Sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Kamran Scot Aghaei, ed. 2005. *The Women of Karbala. Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi’a Islam*. Austin: University of Texas Press; Syed Akbar Hyder. 2006. *Reliving Karbala. Martyrdom in South Asian Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Kamran Scott Aghaie. 2004. *The Martyrs of Karbala. Shi’i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

⁵ Unless otherwise specified, the interviews drawn upon here were conducted, translated, and transcribed between 2007 and 2014 by myself. All names of interviewees have been changed, except where my respondents said they wanted to be identified. I have usually mentioned the location; however, when not, it just means the location was either irrelevant or impossible to reveal without it having the potential to hurt.

⁶ A pir is a saint or a spiritual guide, sometimes one that has founded or that heads a religious order. Often the graves of pirs are called mazars. These are decorated and venerated and often become holy sites.

⁷ Even though the historical presence of Sunnis in the Karbala processions has been mentioned by some (cf. Cole 1988: 94; Freitag 1989: 27-8; Jones 2012: 190-3; 2009: 879, 885), only few scholars have really delved into the relationship between the two communities around modern-day Muharram-related practices in South Asia, those are Mamoon 1996: 54-80, Green 2011: 53-69, Kumar 1988: 209-17, Pinault 2001: 87-108, Schubel 1993; 1991: 118-31 & Korom 2003: 1-15.

⁸ Even as recently as November 15, 2012, the BengalNewz, a portal which purports to be the “Official twitter account for Bengal Newz Dot Com – The first and most reliable daily news portal dedicated to entire Bengali speaking region, since 01-06-2007”, describes a photo showing ‘Bihari’ Sunni Muslims as “Shiite Muslim breathes out fire during #Muharram procession, #Bangladesh”.

<https://twitter.com/search?q=bengalnewz%20muharram%20bangladesh&src=typd> [retrieved 01.10.14]. Similarly, neither Niaz Zaman nor Wikipedia page on Muharram in South Asia make any mention of Sunni Muharram practices. See respectively:



<http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Muharram> [retrieved 01.10.14]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mourning_of_Muharram [retrieved 01.10.14].

⁹ When asked about Sunni Muharram practices in Hyderabad, a Shia man responded in an exasperated manner that “yes, such groups existed, but they were not worth the time and attention of an educated person like myself. ‘Why not?’ asked the author. ‘Because, he said with evident irritation, these groups were uneducated. They were dirty. They knew nothing about Islam and so would be bad people from whom to learn about the religion. End of discussion’.” (Pinault 2001: 3).

¹⁰ In 1971, war broke out in East Pakistan. Bengali nationalists fought Pakistan’s army in one of the most brutal conflicts in recent history. When the war ended, a new wave of violence began inside what was now the independent nation of Bangladesh. This time the targets were Urdu-speaking ‘Biharis’, most of whom were Partition refugees. It was believed that they had collaborated with the Pakistani regime and thousands of ‘Biharis’ died in grisly reprisals against their community. A few were able to escape, mainly to the UK or the US, or to Pakistan. Most of those who remain inside Bangladesh have been internally displaced: many live, to this day, in the makeshift camps set up by international agencies after the 1971 war.

¹¹ The Shi’as who ran the big imambarahs of Metiabruz and the Hosseini Dalan of old Dhaka often highlighted how these were spaces not just for Shi’as and Muslims of other denominations but also for Hindus.

¹² The tenth of Muharram, which marks the climax of the commemoration of Muharram.

¹³ For a more detailed study about partition and its effects amongst those who left West Bengal for East Pakistan, read Jalais 2013 and Chatterji, Alexander & Jalais’ forthcoming book *The Bengal Diaspora: Rethinking Muslim Migration*.

¹⁴ The bigha is a traditional unit of land in several parts of India and it varies in size from one area to another. In West Bengal, a bigha is equal to 1333 square meter.

¹⁵ An article on a Hindu family that commemorates Muharram each year by making their tazia with mustard sprouts.

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