

## ‘Guns of Barisal’: A Mysterious Fable

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### ABSTRACT

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### KEYWORDS

A mysterious phenomenon rocked the southern coast of Bangladesh in the 19th century. It was a phenomenon that was experienced by hundreds and thousands of people but nobody could identify its actual cause. The information in this article was collected from different kinds of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from a different place of Barishal. Secondary data was collected from some books and articles. A depth interview was used to collect primary data.

Mysterious, fable, Bangladesh

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## 1. Introduction

Fable is a literary genre: a succinct fictional story, in prose or verse, that features animals, legendary creatures, plants, inanimate objects or forces of nature that are anthropomorphized and that illustrates or leads to a particular moral lesson (a "moral") which may at the end be added explicitly as a concise maxim or saying. A fable differs from a parable in that the latter excludes animals, plants, inanimate objects and forces of nature as actors that assume speech or other powers of humankind.

## 2. The Mysterious Fable

Events of the early nineteenth century. Needless to say, the name Bangladesh did not exist then. The whole of India was then dominated by the British. As of the year, it is around 1800. The aura of winter is almost everywhere. There is not much crowd outside the house so the light wind is in the air. After dinner, preparations have been made for sleep. Silence all around. In the eyes of many then sleep. The lights of every room are also going out one by one. It is a terrible sound to be shaken around at such a time. Many people in the Barisal area fell asleep. The response was all around. The only question in everyone's mind is what is this sky-scraping sound? In the expression of fear and surprise, everyone's eyes are eager to find the answer to that question. And the name of these monstrous words that happened all over the vast area of Barisal is 'Barisal Guns' or 'Guns of Barisal' which is the main topic of today's discussion.

According to historian Sirajuddin Ahmed, a British magistrate named Henry Beveridge was the first to use the name 'Guns of Barisal'. This word is mentioned in his book 'District of Bakerganj'. From this text, it is known that from February to October some strange sounds are heard from Barisal to the south or southwest from the Bay of Bengal which seems to be the sound of a

lot of cannon firing. The locals call this word 'Barisal Cannon'. And that is why he also named its voice 'Guns of Barisal' in his writing. Sometimes one sound could be heard and sometimes two or three words could be heard together. But the funny thing is what the word is and what its source is, is still unknown to everyone today.

Attempts to unravel this mystery began in the time of the British. The initial idea of the English was that maybe Dutch or Portuguese pirates were making this noise to intimidate by setting up a secret base in Barisal. Because during the Mughal period there was a lot of violence of Portuguese and Dutch pirates in Barisal-Patuakhali region. Many believe that Portuguese pirates dug a canal to get from the sea to the river. This canal later came to be known as Patuakhali. So the idea of the English became quite strong. The search begins. Despite a thorough search, the English troops could not find any pirate ships or bases.

Later it was thought that there might be a volcano in the depths of the Bay of Bengal. It is also interpreted as the sound of a volcano erupting. But the British did not find any such precedent in all possible investigations. Another group argues that there may be a gas field in the ocean that is dead. The word is coming from that dead gas field. The British did a lot of searching along the coast but could not find a solution.

It is then thought that the sound was due to the movement of tectonic plates on the sea shore. But so far no strong evidence has been found to support such an argument. According to another idea, Kuakata, Kalapara and Mathbaria—these three areas have merged into one place in the sea. It is thought that the sound was caused by strong waves at high tide. Now the sea level in that area is low. A lot of places have been filled with silt. That is why words are no longer available as before.

However, according to experts, such words are collectively called 'Mistpuffers' or 'Sky Quack'. Similar sounds have been recorded on the banks of the Ganges in India, such as Barisal, the United States, Belgium, Scotland, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan, the Philippines, Australia and the North Sea.

According to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta in 18, it is believed that words like Barisal Gans were heard in Khulna, Barisal, Noakhali, Narayanganj, Harishpur and other places. According to a report of the annual session of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1890, the Barisal Gans was heard not only in the Gangetic delta but also in the Brahmaputra delta.

Barisal Guns or Guns of Barisal refers to some of the monstrous words that occurred in the nineteenth century in the Barisal area of what was then East Bengal. Such inexplicable words are collectively called most puffers. Similar sounds have been heard on the banks of the Ganges in India like Barisal, the United States, Belgium, Scotland, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan, the Philippines, Australia, the North Sea and some other areas. It is known that Barisal Gans was mentioned in the documents for the first time around 1800 AD. However, it is mentioned in the documents that it could be heard from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

It is thought that there may be a volcano deep in the Bay of Bengal. It is also interpreted as the sound of a volcano erupting. But the British did not find any such precedent in all possible investigations. Another group argues that there may be a gas field in the ocean that is dead. The word is coming from that dead gas field. The British did a lot of searching along the coast but could not find a solution.

Many people thought it was an earthquake, some said it was lightning, others said it was an estuary. But all this was just an idea. The mystery of the Guns of Barisal is still unknown to us.

Begum Sufia Kamal, one of the pioneers of Bengali Women's Awakening, was born at Mamabari in Shaistabad, Barisal. Barisal Gans is mentioned in his autobiographical essay 'Ekale Amader Kal' published in 1986. According to him, he heard the sound of such a mysterious explosion in his childhood from his uncle and elders. However, he also mentioned that he had never heard such a word since 1950.

What many may not know is that there is an instrumental band called 'The Guns of Barisal' in the United States. The band was renamed Redcap in 2001 and renamed in 2004 in Seattle, Washington. Their website mentions the word that originated from the Bay of Bengal as the history behind this naming.

However, in the latest light, it has to be said that despite many attempts to find out the secret of the origin of the word Barisal cannon, no effective solution has been found. So this 'Guns of Barisal' or 'Barisal Cannon' is still unknown to everyone as an unsolved mystery.

### **3. Conclusion**

According to one theory, the sonic boom was created by sound waves which were broken up by the local topography but this theory could not be proved. This incident is now considered as an example of a sky quake—which refers to an unexplained sonic boom without any corresponding earthquake.

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