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Contents

Nationalism in Late-Nineteenth Century Japan and India: Fukuzawa Yukichi and Syed Ahmad Khan Marie Hanneman	1 - 20
An Archaeological Profile of North Bengal Mandira Bhattacharya	21 - 27
Temples of the Sun-God in Early Assam Bijoy Kumar Sarkar	29 - 36
Origin and Development of Forest Study in Ancient India: An Environmental Approach Anita Bagchi	37 - 45
A Review of Tamang Marriage System Sudash Lama	47 - 53
Urbanisation in the Regional Areas of Medieval India: A Case Study of Bhagalpur Varun Kumar Roy	55 - 65
Bengali Diaspora in Burma: Dynamics of Political Interactions (1885-1948) Dahlia Bhattacharya	67 - 82
Numismatic Evidence on the Chronology and Succession of the Rulers of the Kingdom of Kamta Koch Behar Debajit Dutta	83 - 88
The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and the Untold Story of its Extension Bhawna Rai	89 - 96
The Revolt of 1857: A Search for Secular Approach Malay Saha	97 - 101
APPENDIX	
Report on a piece of Broken Door-jam	103

Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Once again I am delighted to present to the readers the Volume 4 (2011) of the journal *Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History*. This time I have a feeling of contentment relatively more than the earlier volumes of the journal. The volume 4 is being published after all the articles having been refereed and peer reviewed and with the ISSN 2229-4880.

I express my deep gratitude to the contributors especially to Prof. M. Bhattacharya and Prof. M. Hanneman. Prof. Bhattacharya delivered a special Lecture in the Department of History, University of North Bengal and has kindly given permission to publish the same in this volume. Prof. Hanneman, Fulbright Nehru Visiting Professor, spoke on her article in an International Seminar organized jointly by the Department of History, University of North Bengal and the United States–India Educational Foundation (USIEF). She also contributed her lecture for publication in this volume.

A wide range of themes have been dealt with by the scholars. I extend my thanks to all of them. I express my deep gratitude on behalf of the Department of History to them all who have directly or indirectly helped in the publication of this volume. The unfailing cooperation of the North Bengal University Press is gratefully remembered.

Anita Bagchi

Nationalism in Late-Nineteenth Century Japan and India: Fukuzawa Yukichi and Syed Ahmad Khan*

Marie Hanneman

Late 19th century India and Japan both faced the intrusion of Western imperial power, albeit in differing degrees: India was under British colonial rule while Japan focused its energies on avoiding a similar fate. Two of their nations' leading intellectuals, India's Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) and Japan's Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), grappled with the challenge their nations faced from the west. Although from very different cultures, the two men developed startlingly similar responses to their national situations and arrived at startlingly similar conclusions. They were, as Stephen Hay writes in *Asian Ideas of East and West*, among "...the first men...to try to cope with this emergency situation by studying seriously the civilization of the intruding Euroamericans."¹ From their analyses of their countries' challenges to their single-minded determination to strengthen their nations, to the means and methods for doing so, the lives and ideas of these men show amazing parallels. Amid the many parallels however, are also some important differences. An examination of these similarities and differences show in microcosm the different trajectories in the development of nationalism in late 19th century Japan and India.

Both Khan and Fukuzawa wrote and spoke extensively and were leading opinion-makers in their respective countries. Both founded newspapers to help promote their social goals, Syed Ahmad Khan's journal, *Tahzib al-Akhlaq (Social Reformer)* and Fukuzawa's newspaper, *Jiji shimpo*. But central to both men's lives and their efforts to effect change in their countries, were the schools they founded, Khan's Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College (later Aligarh University) and Fukuzawa's Keio Gijuku (later Keio University). The colleges they founded taught a Western curriculum, the first in each country to do so, and they particularly emphasized the natural sciences and the English language. Both men promoted education as the primary remedy to social and national decline, a remedy that would create independent, self-reliant individuals who would in turn provide the foundation for modernizing, and thus strengthening, their societies and nations. This in turn, they believed, would lead to the establishment of "civilization" in their respective countries, and the advantages civilization would bring.

* The paper is based on a lecture delivered by Professor Hanneman as a Fulbright Nehru Visiting Professor in an International Seminar organised by the Department of History, University of North Bengal and sponsored by the United States - India Educational Foundation (USIEF) held on December 6, 2010 at the University of North Bengal.

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Despite the many parallels however, key differences existed in the lives and ideas of these two men. One obvious difference was in their national situations. Khan's India was already under Britain's colonial yoke while Fukuzawa's Japan struggled to maintain its independence; Khan supported British rule, Fukuzawa saw India's colonial status as a "warning to Japan" of a fate to be avoided at any cost; the Indian people, he wrote, were "slaves of the British government."² Khan was a deeply religious and committed Muslim; Fukuzawa was entirely secular, for him, religion had no personal meaning. This religious resulted in the most fundamental difference in the two men, and in their nationalist approaches: even though Khan's primary concern was for his own Muslim community, his vision was a wider one: Khan understood "civilization" as an end in itself, an end which would elevate the condition of the people as a whole. Fukuzawa on the other hand, despite his early liberalism and views of "civilization" as a goal for humanity, ultimately narrowed his focus and came to view "civilization" not as an end in itself, but as a means for strengthening the Japanese nation and state. Thus, while one man responded to the western challenge by developing universalist ideas: India in the world; the other's response was focused on the particular, laying the foundations for a view of Japan against the world.

Why was this the case and more importantly, why does it matter? An examination of the similarities and differences in these two men's thinking and approaches to the late 19th century Western challenge can help explain the vastly divergent trajectories in the development of nationalism in early 20th century India and Japan. India eventually shook off British colonial rule, achieving its independence in a movement that while certainly marked by violence and bloodshed, ultimately coalesced under Gandhi's banner of non-violent and pacifist nationalism. Japan's aggressive efforts to preserve and protect its independence from foreign control on the other hand, developed into a rabid ultra-nationalism, spawning severe political suppression at home and unleashing violence and military aggression abroad. How then can we understand the tremendous differences in the development of nationalism in Japan and India? What can we glean from the lives, thought and activities of these late 19th century figures, Syed Ahmad Khan and Fukuzawa Yukichi, that can shed light on the very different trajectories of nationalism in each of their countries in the first half of the 20th century?

Many factors — social, cultural, economic, intellectual and international — contributed to the different trajectories of nationalism in India and Japan in the early 20th century. I believe, however, that religion and religious belief were the major factors explaining the difference in the development of nationalism in early 20th century India and Japan, and this is demonstrated in the lives and ideas of Khan and Fukuzawa. Khan's Islam was stateless, its geographic, political and historical sweep gave Khan a broad perspective.³ His was a universe governed by an all-powerful God. Fukuzawa's universe lacked this omnipotent God; instead, his was a nation ruled over by the human god, the Emperor and although Japanese had historically borrowed heavily from China, central to the Japanese ethos was a sense of Japan's cultural uniqueness. Khan's religious beliefs afforded him an objective, transcendent vantage point, "*separate from the state*,"⁴ enabling him to see beyond his own concerns and even the concerns of his own Muslim community, and develop a

universalist vision for humanity as a whole. In contrast, Fukuzawa, lacking this transcendent, universalist vantage point, had no position outside of the nation and state from which to observe, critique and assess. Fukuzawa, for all his considerable gifts, accomplishments and legacies, in the final analysis could not see beyond Japan and its imperial tradition. Thus while Fukuzawa's was a subjective vision circumscribed by Japan itself, Khan's was a universalist vision that situated his nation within the larger community of nations. While Khan advocated strengthening the nation in order to civilize it, Fukuzawa advocated civilizing the state in order to strengthen it. In this way, the ideas of these two men represent, in microcosm, the foundations of nationalism's divergent development in late 19th century Japan and India.

This paper will examine the lives and thinking of these two men, in particular examining them in their self-appointed roles as educators and looking at their educational philosophies as windows to their thought. This will highlight the vastly different ideological foundations of nationalism in early 20th century India and Japan showing how these foundations resulted in the different trajectories in the nationalist movement in each country.

Fukuzawa Yukichi

Fukuzawa Yukichi was born in 1835, the youngest of five children of a low-ranking samurai of Kyushu's Nakatsu domain. His father died before Fukuzawa's second birthday, leaving the family in straitened economic circumstances and forcing their return to Nakatsu from Osaka, where the elder Fukuzawa had been stationed in service to his *han*. Fukuzawa's formal education began relatively late; as the son of a low-ranking samurai he was not expected to learn much of anything and he was fourteen before he decided to educate himself: "I found that many of the boys of my age were studying these classics; and I became ashamed of myself and willingly started school."⁵ Applying himself to his studies, he soon outshone his fellow students but came to hate the stultifying nature of both the Confucian classics and the Nakatsu han. He determined to leave Nakatsu, writing in his *Autobiography* that "...always in my heart I was praying for an opportunity to get away. And I was willing to go anywhere and to go through any hardship if only I could leave this uncomfortable Nakatsu."⁶ At nineteen the opportunity came: he left for Nagasaki to study Dutch and "Dutch Learning" as Western knowledge was called at the time. Again he excelled in his studies and in 1858 he was ordered to Edo by the Nakatsu daimyo to open a school for Dutch studies for other young men of the domain. But Dutch studies, he soon realized, were obsolete. Instead, he decided to study English and the world of the West.

In 1860, he took advantage of a chance to travel with a Tokugawa government delegation to the United States, the first of three trips he would make abroad. His second overseas experience took him to Europe in 1862 and in 1867 he travelled again to the United States. Prior to this last overseas trip he began writing what would be his most famous publication, *Conditions in the West*, (*Seio jijo*) published in 1867. The initial printing of the first volume of this three-volume book (combined with pirated copies) immediately sold some 250,000 copies, both satisfying and stimulating the Japanese thirst for knowledge about the west. The phenomenal popularity of this book made him a well-known national

figure. The book's popularity rested in part on its presentation of intricate detail about life in the west, with information on everything from banks, hospitals and schools, to the activities of everyday life, but also on its straightforward and unadorned style, a diversion from the highly elaborate Sinified writing common to the day. (He was so intent on ensuring that his writing was clear and readable that he had his housemaid read the first drafts, and would change any passages she found difficult to understand.)

In April, 1868, just as the last fighting of the brief civil war that accompanied the Meiji Restoration was ending, Fukuzawa opened Keio Gijuku in Tokyo, modeling it after the English public school.⁷ His aim for the school was to provide Western-style education to young men and inculcate in them a spirit of independence and self-reliance to prepare them to assume positions as leaders of the new society. (Fukuzawa himself studiously remained aloof from politics his entire life. Calling himself a "political 'teetotaller,'" he wrote that he wanted to "keep neutral and to serve the country in my own independent way."⁸) Some fifteen years after opening Keio, (1882) Fukuzawa founded the newspaper, *Jiji shimpo*, (the forerunner of *Sankei shimbun*, now Japan's third largest daily newspaper) as a way to disseminate even more broadly the ideas and approaches that were at the core of the Keio curriculum. Over the course of these years, Fukuzawa wrote and published numerous books including his 17-part *Gakumon no susume (An Encouragement of Learning)* (1872-1876), and *Bunmeiron no gairyaku (An Outline Theory of Civilization)* (1875). In 1899 he published his *Autobiography*. Later that same year he suffered a stroke. Although he recovered, he suffered a subsequent stroke several years later and died in 1901.⁹

Syed Ahmad Khan

Syed Ahmad Khan was born in 1817 in Delhi, then the capital of Mughal India. His family traced its descent from Imam Husain, grandson of the Prophet Muhammed, as indicated by the honorific title, Syed.¹⁰ Khan's father served as a personal advisor in the court of Akbar Shah II, the nominal head (and second to last emperor) of the declining Mughal Empire. Khan received the traditional, and typical, education of the Muslim elite of that era, focusing his study on the Quran as well as learning Persian, Arabic, and Islamic jurisprudence. His father's death when he was in his early 20s plunged the family into financial difficulties, and although this brought an end to his formal education, he continued to educate himself on his own. Although he was offered a position in the Mughal court, observing the decline of the court he opted instead for a position in the British East India Company civil service in 1837. The Mutiny of 1857, proved to be a crucial turning point in his life. During the Mutiny itself, Sir Syed, then serving the British East India Company in Bijnor, set himself up as guard to an English magistrate and his family, demonstrating his loyalty to the British. A cousin and uncle were killed in the Mutiny, and his mother died shortly after as a result of deprivations suffered during the chaos. In despair, Khan nearly left India, but he remained and it was this "decisive event that transformed him from an ordinary civil servant into an impassioned reformer."¹¹

Sir Syed began writing and publishing as a young man, focusing on various religious and cultural issues. He was the first Muslim to write a commentary on the Bible, "apparently

for the purpose of ...creating a greater degree of mutual respect among Muslims and Christians.”¹² His most famous work, however, which “brought him into the front rank of the leaders of Indian opinion,”¹³ was the 1858 *Causes of the Indian Revolt*, in which he argued that the 1857 Mutiny was not the result of Muslim conspiracy against the English, but rather resulted from British ignorance about Muslim and Indian culture. Sir Syed’s support for British rule is a controversial aspect of his record, but most scholars agree that Khan’s support for British rule grew out of his belief that it offered the best guarantee of peace and protection for India’s Muslim community. This was not an unprecedented intellectual position in 19th century India. As Jawaharlal Nehru commented in his autobiography, *Toward Freedom*, “Sir Syed Ahmad Khan... Like many of his contemporaries, was a great admirer of the British.”¹⁴ Earlier, Bengali social reformer, modernizer and advocate of Western style education Ram Mohan Roy had also supported British rule in India. Roy was more definite in his desire for Indian independence, but it should come, he believed, “... only after India was sufficiently developed in modern knowledge and had adequately learned to function as a modern and democratic civil society.”¹⁵ Khan himself wrote of his support for British rule: “Our desire to see the British government firmly established in India is based upon our conviction that its strength and continuance are essential to the peace and well-being of the country, and the support which we accord to our present rulers is entirely the outcome of our love for our own fellow-countrymen.”¹⁶ There was, moreover, a religious element to Khan’s support for British rule: “an old principle of Muslim statecraft ... [based on a]... saying of the Prophet... [called for]... unquestionable obedience to the ruler of the day.”¹⁷ “God has made [the British] your rulers,” Khan stated in an 1888 speech to the Indian National Congress, “and, in obedience to the will of God you should remain friendly and faithful to them.”¹⁸ This did not mean, however, that Khan was a sycophant, blindly faithful to the British. Indeed, Khan, in analyzing the causes of the 1857 Mutiny, roundly criticized the English, writing, “Now the English Government has been in existence upwards of a century, and up to the present hour has not secured the affections of the people.”¹⁹ When he disagreed with the British colonial policies, as in the case of educational policy, he stated so plainly: “...if we have still got something of self-respect left in us, we should prove to Government that though Government has indisputable power over the lives of the people, it has no power over their opinions.”²⁰

In 1869, Khan traveled to England, accompanying his son Mahmood, who had received a scholarship to study there. While in England, Khan explored and examined many aspects of British society and culture, but found himself most interested in British schools and education. Ten years earlier, he had opened a traditional *madrassa* in Muradabad. Though himself the inheritor of a conservative Islamic tradition, Khan advocated an Islam that would be responsive to the new era and his *madrassa*, in addition to teaching the *Quran*, promoted western science education. Now, seeing the state of education in England, he determined to expand his educational efforts in India and in 1875, after his return to India, he opened the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, modeling it after Cambridge and Oxford. Khan was convinced that a western-style education was necessary to lift the Muslim community out of ignorance and to enable them to compete in the modern world.

To push the Muslim community away from its insular adherence to tradition and rejection of modern western and scientific knowledge, the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College emphasized a western curriculum.

Although criticized by the Muslim orthodoxy, Khan devoted the rest of his life to developing the college and for the last two decades of his life lived in Aligarh. He died in 1897.

On Education: Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College and Keio Gijuku

Introducing and developing modern education in their countries was a focal point of both men's efforts and both believed that education was a foundation of society and of "civilization." Their schools, Khan's Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College founded in 1875 and Fukuzawa's Keio University founded in 1868, were India's and Japan's earliest institutions of higher learning to offer a curriculum based on western learning, and both continue to be among their nations' top universities even today. Khan's sojourn in England convinced him that, "... Apart from education the attainment to a higher level of civilization was not possible,"²¹ and his primary concern was to prepare Muslims and Indians in general, "for that relentless competition through education and social reform, so that they may thus be equipped for the struggle which the introduction of Western civilization had rendered inevitable"²² Fukuzawa's emphasis on education also grew out of concern over Japan's backwardness and weakness vis-à-vis the West.

While visiting England in 1869, Khan was struck by the nearly universal availability of and access to education and he concluded that education was responsible for England's rise to international power.²³ "Unless the education of the masses is pushed on as it is here [in Britain]," he wrote, "it is impossible for a nation to become civilized and honoured."²⁴ Khan also emphasized the importance of education to protect and preserve the Muslim community. He decried Muslim "ignorance" and what he saw as the Muslim community's refusal to accept modern thinking and ideas, their propensity instead to cling to a mistaken and hidebound notion of Islam. Islam, he believed, was not incompatible with reform. The Muslim community had fallen behind because their education was backward and they resisted the new learning coming in from the West. This was due in some measure to the prominent role Christian missionaries played in education in India: As Khan explained, because Indian Muslims identified Western knowledge so closely with Christianity, "Their antipathy was carried so far indeed that they began to look upon the study of English as a little less than the embracing of Christianity."²⁵ They had "refused to move with the times," he said, while the educational standards of Hindu India had already been moving forward under the guidance and leadership of such men as Rammohan Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen.²⁶ (Both Roy and Sen had in fact embraced Christianity, highlighting Khan's concerns.) Islam too must adapt to the times he argued: religious doctrine was one thing, on religious questions the *Quran* was the bedrock. "Religious and temporal affairs cannot be mixed," he wrote, and traditions and customs not set forth in the *Quran* but rather coming from the Commentaries, should be changed and adapted to fit contemporary society.²⁷ Thus education, he argued, was the means for saving and strengthening the Muslim community: "All the socio-political diseases of India may be cured by this treatment [educate, educate, educate]. Cure the root and the tree will flourish."²⁸

Like Khan, Fukuzawa was acutely attuned to the development and role of education in the West, and wrote extensively on the topic in *Seio jijo*: “In no country in the West is there a place where a school cannot be found – not only in large cities but in country villages and everywhere.”²⁹ And again, like Khan, Fukuzawa believed that education was a primary key to the West’s strength. As he often did, Fukuzawa gave a small example to demonstrate a larger point, the individual a metaphor for the nation: “Only those who strive to be educated and are capable of reasoning will earn rank and riches while those without will become poor and lowly.”³⁰

Given their views on education and its role in society, the similarities in the founding principles of the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College and Keio Gijuku are not surprising. Both schools were modeled after institutions of learning in England and the U.S. Khan envisioned a college “modeled on the lines of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge,”³¹ whose “chief aim and earnest endeavor [was to]... bring up scholars ...[to the same standard]... as Oxford and Cambridge.”³² Fukuzawa too modeled Keio “after an English public school.”³³ Both Khan and Fukuzawa adhered strictly to a policy of financial self-sufficiency, and neither Mohammed Anglo-Oriental College nor Keio Gijuku accepted financial assistance from the government. An early publication from Keio, *The Keiogijuku University: A Brief Account of its History, Aims and Equipment*, states proudly, “Attention may be called to the fact that the Keiogijuku has never received any assistance, pecuniary or other, from the government. It firmly believes in academic freedom.”³⁴ In *Seio jijo* Fukuzawa had noted the excellence of English education. “...the reason why the English excel over other people in their scholarship and technical skills and other arts ...comes from the leniency of government regulations which do not restrict people but allow them to extend their natural talents freely.”³⁵ This was the atmosphere Fukuzawa wanted to create for his students at Keio. Khan also adhered to a policy of financial independence and maintained his school free of any government control.³⁶ “I am of the opinion,” wrote Khan in 1884, “that no government can take the responsibilities of the education of the whole nation, and I firmly believe that it is not possible for the government to meet [sic.] out fully the educational requirement of its subjects. Even more than this, I strongly hold that the nation [referring to his Muslim nation] wishing for the betterment of the education of its young boys, cannot do so unless it by itself provides for their education.”³⁷

Financial independence from the government was vital for protecting academic freedom and allowing both schools to offer what was at that time, a radical curriculum: Western-style education. In his 1868 “Keio Inaugural Pronouncement,” Fukuzawa stated:

What places Western learning apart from all other learnings is that it is a true product of nature and it rides with reason; it teaches the ways of humankind and it moderates between an individual and society. It contains all the truths with no vestiges of untruth, it possesses all knowledge, large or small; it is learning that people, as long as they are people, must learn. Therefore, it may well be called a learning of the fundamental truth....To spread this study in our society, the first requisite is a school with rules modeled on those in Western countries to guide the students...³⁸

Khan too, advocated a Western-based curriculum, seeking to “secure high English education,” by which he meant the latest curriculum in the sciences, mathematics, economics, history, geography and literature.³⁹ “Let us add to our knowledge,” Khan wrote, “by borrowing and carefully studying the various arts and sciences of other nations.”⁴⁰

Both men advocated not only a Western curriculum, but also English language instruction. Keio recognized English as “not only... the best medium of introducing the Western civilization into the country, but also as the most widely used language in political, commercial and other relations between nations.”⁴¹ Khan argued that vernacular education, which “is no more regarded as sufficient for our daily affairs of life,” should be replaced by “English education which is urgently needed by the country and by the people in their daily life.” Even “an ordinary shopkeeper, who is neither himself acquainted with English nor has any English knowing persons in his employment,” Khan wrote, “feels it a serious hindrance in the progress of his business [to be ignorant of English].”⁴²

Khan’s and Fukuzawa’s advocacy of a Western curriculum arose from their critique of traditionalism in their societies. Echoing Khan’s views on the dampening effect of Muslim traditionalism in India, Fukuzawa too emphasized the importance of education as a means of removing the roadblocks erected by Japan’s “antiquated teachings.” These must be modified to suit current conditions: “It is fitting,” Fukuzawa wrote, “...that moral teachings should be modified from time to time to keep pace with the progress of civilization, and it is but natural that a highly advanced and ever advancing society, such as we find in the world today, should be provided with a system of morals better suited to its needs than the antiquated teachings...”⁴³

Although both advocated a Western curriculum, neither called for a complete scuttling of their cultural traditions. Even though Khan criticized Muslims for their rigid observance of obsolete customs, he nevertheless recognized the value in the core teachings of Islam and hoped the best qualities of Muslim tradition could be retained and nurtured: “In the old days our boys of good family used to read at home with a master ... [and]... they received a good general training in character and manners from the society of their parents and the elders of the family, who were patterns of excellence in these manners. ...it was of a very high order and we still honour and ought to honour it. Our difficulty now is this: that the noble class of gentlemen whose virtues we remember and from watching whose character we ourselves learnt good breeding and good morals, has departed from the world.”⁴⁴ Fukuzawa also had heaped scathing criticisms on Chinese Confucianism, but he nevertheless found value in Japanese tradition and argued that “One must not find too much fault with Confucianism, for, after all, what brought the Japanese people from their absolute ignorance to the civilization of today is the achievement of Buddhism and Confucianism... [Confucianism’s]... positive influence must not go unnoticed.”⁴⁵

Fukuzawa Yukichi,

Outline of Civilization, in *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Education, Selected Works*, Kiyooka Eiichi, translator and editor, (University of Tokyo Press, 1985), 107.

Thus as he considered what elements constituted a proper education for young Japanese men, he wrote, "Without question, I do not make light of the [core Confucian] teaching[s] of filial piety and brotherly harmony." The ideal teacher, according to Fukuzawa, "would certainly be able to influence his pupils in the ways of filial piety and brotherly harmony."⁴⁶

Those aspects of traditional culture that could be saved and utilized, however, had to be integrated into the context of a modernizing society. Both men held it as axiomatic that in the drive for modernization, their schools should not discriminate or be exclusive, but instead must be open to young men of all walks of life. As Fukuzawa stated at the opening of Keio in April, 1868, prior to the new Meiji government's abolition of the class system, "We have opened the doors of the school wide to the public to allow all men, regardless of their status as samurai or commoner, to come and participate in our program."⁴⁷ Nor was Khan's Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College intended only for Muslim students, despite Khan's galvanizing concerns about the backwardness of the Muslim community. Indeed, Khan encouraged young men of all backgrounds and religions to enroll in his school and he endeavored to maintain a balance in the student body among Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi and other students. The only injunction he issued was that Shia and Sunni students must not engage in religious debate and argument. "I shall feel sorry," he wrote, "if anybody thinks that this college has been established so as to show discrimination between Hindus and Muslims."⁴⁸

"...both Hindus and Muslims are provided with facilities to study here. Both of them get the training best suited to the existing norms and needs in India. We may call ourselves Hindus or Muslims here in India, but in foreign countries we are all known as Indian natives. This is why the insult of a Hindu is an insult of the Muslim and the humiliation of a Muslim is a matter of shame for the Hindus. In the circumstances, we can never be held in respect unless both the brothers are bred and brought up together, get the same education together, and are provided with the same means of progress for their future career."⁴⁹

Khan wrote, "There is no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. ... I consider Hindus and Mussulmans as my two eyes. I don't even like to say this because people will generally differentiate one as the right eye and the other as the left. I consider Hindus and Mussulmans both as one and the same eye. If I had only one eye, I could have compared them both with it."⁵⁰

Obviously, both schools were open only to men, but this was due not to Khan's or Fukuzawa's own discrimination against educating girls but rather to the prevailing social norms of the day. Both men, in fact, supported education for girls. Khan wrote, "There is no doubt in it that for the development of national culture and civilization the education of women is essential."⁵¹ Although he supported *purdah* for women in Muslim families, Khan argued that a "...home in which a woman was given an equal status with men could alone guarantee the well-being of society."⁵² Fukuzawa too was adamant about the necessity of educating girls: "To save the women of Japan from servility and slavishness, and to place

them in a position equal to men, schools and education are no doubt necessary.... As for education proper, no distinction should be made between girls and boys.”⁵³

Khan and Fukuzawa both believed that optimizing their educational endeavors required the environment of a residential college and both Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College and Keio Gijuku provided living quarters for their students. A proper education went beyond mere books, and demanded the kind of student-teacher contact that could only be provided in a residential context, “in which the students might learn the morals and manners of modern society.”⁵⁴ Prompted by a sense of immediacy in the face of the threats posed by the intrusion of Western imperial power, they opted for a more encompassing style of education, one that would offer maximum benefit to their students. “Boarding house,” wrote Khan, “is a machine for making nation a nation in the true sense. If all of its parts operate properly, it will function well, otherwise it is altogether useless.”⁵⁵ Khan advised his students, “Don’t search that book on your shelves or tables or in the College Library. It is with you all the time. What is that book? It is, indeed, nothing but the corporate life of you and your classmates in this College. Thus you have to learn how to study this book and get at its *substance*.”⁵⁶ Teaching by example was Fukuzawa’s policy as well. Not everything, Fukuzawa wrote, could be taught “by formal instruction.” Moral education in particular, “has to be transmitted to the pupils informally or unawares through the personality of the teachers. ... There are even examples in which there was not even a book to read and yet good education was provided.”⁵⁷

As residents at the college, students would learn not just the western-style curriculum, but could learn by observation and participation about the western life-style. In a departure from the exclusive emphasis on book-learning in both traditional Muslim and traditional Japanese education, and in keeping with their ideals of experiential learning, both men insisted that their students engage in sports, the Keio school rules requiring that after the evening meal, “all residents shall climb trees, play ball games, or engage in other sports.”⁵⁸ Likewise, Sir Syed’s school rules required students to engage in sports, and he even started a cricket club at Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College.

The residential college experience was designed to “modernize” their students and to make them independent and self-respecting. Both Khan and Fukuzawa were advocates of the self-help message of Samuel Smiles, believing the strength of the nation rested upon the strength of the individual. “The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigor and strength,” Khan wrote.⁵⁹

“Self-help is the best help—is a well-tryed and excellent maxim. This aphorism contains a vast store-house of worldly experience acquired by humanity at large and by generations belonging to different nations. Enthusiasm for self-help in a human being is the real bed-rock on which his progress depends. And when this enthusiasm is found in a number of people, it becomes a guarantee for national progress, strength and stability.”⁶⁰

At Keio Gijuku Fukuzawa emphasized “the inculcation in the students of the principles of Independence and Self-Respect...” “The true source of independence of life is to eat

one's bread in the sweat of one's brow," Fukuzawa wrote. A man of independence and self-respect should be a self-helping and self-supporting man...⁶¹

The Meaning and Goals of Civilization

Khan's and Fukuzawa's educational efforts were aimed at modernizing and strengthening their nations, at achieving "civilization." The convergence of individual and nation was real for both men, and just as they urged independence and self-reliance for their students, Khan and Fukuzawa also applied these to their own national situations. As we have seen, Khan did not advocate immediate independence for India, but accepted and even embraced England's colonial rule over India — India in the late 19th century was not yet ready for democracy, he believed. It was still, in his estimation, "too divided by race, religion, caste and lack of education" to be equipped for democracy.⁶² More importantly, British rule in India provided for communal peace: "It is," he wrote in 1885, "necessary that for the peace of India and for the progress of everything in India the English Government should remain for many years — in fact, for ever!"⁶³ Nevertheless, Khan did not rule out independence for India, acknowledging that "A desire for self-rule... was natural for all respectable people. This desire could even be their final goal."⁶⁴ Khan argued that education was the sure — and only — path to democracy and ultimately perhaps, independence. Without education, "political freedom, even if obtained, could not be retained; but education could be instrumental in winning back the lost political power and prestige."⁶⁵ For Fukuzawa, national independence was the essential goal of education and he energetically applied himself to defending Japan's independence. In fact, one might say that Fukuzawa's emphasis on and advocacy for education all focused on one essential point: save the nation and preserve its independence.

The schools Khan and Fukuzawa founded and the educational philosophies they developed shared much in common, yet despite this shared vision, as we shall see, critical differences arose in their understanding of the nature of the "civilization" such education would help build in their nations. These differences arose primarily in the religious outlooks of each man, and the fundamental differences in their religious outlooks can shed light on the vastly different pathways of the subsequent nationalist movements in each of their countries.

Khan's understanding of the world was founded on his deeply religious outlook. His was a transcendent view firmly grounded in his belief in an omnipotent God ruling over all of humanity. In Khan's belief, "The different categories of mankind are the variations of the same civilization whose root is common to all."⁶⁶ "Liberty," Khan wrote, [is] a natural right of the individual... God may be said to be the author of the right."⁶⁷ Khan's was a transcendent moral position that enabled him to value human beings as human beings, bound together in a common humanity. These were individuals, to be valued as individuals, not merely as cogs in the machine of national strength. Fukuzawa's view, in contrast, was ultimately much narrower, circumscribed by Japan and the Japanese emperor. Thus one might say that Khan's goals were goals for humanity; Fukuzawa's goals were goals for Japan itself. It is in these critical differences that we can identify the seeds of the different trajectories nationalism took in India and Japan in the early 20th century.

Khan and Fukuzawa both believed that in the late 19th century, civilization was best represented by the civilization of the West. As Fukuzawa wrote, "Those who would plan for their country's progress toward civilization must take European civilization as their goal and use it as the standard for judging all matters."⁶⁸ In Khan's view, Europe had advanced beyond Asia and Britain, in particular, served as a model of civilization: "England... now leads the van of civilization," he wrote in 1863.⁶⁹ Neither man advocated wholesale Westernization or an unthinking aping of the West. Fukuzawa championed Western civilization not because it was Western, but because it possessed what he believed were the qualities of civilization; it was the "civilization that had first appeared in the West," and not "Western civilization" that he aspired to for Japan.⁷⁰ Khan upheld the British model, of which he wrote in 1875: "I assert with the firmest belief, that there can be no better principles of government than those on which the British government is based. The rights of the subjects, their wealth, their liberty are not so safe anywhere in the world as they are under the British government."⁷¹ "Whatsoever nation is the master and possessor of the wealth of knowledge, we should extend our hand toward it," wrote Khan.⁷² For Fukuzawa, science, commerce and law were the "three pillars" of civilization; echoing this, Khan wrote that civilization possessed "modern science... modern industries, modern commercial methods [...and the...] social customs and polite manners of the West."⁷³ Khan, however, included an element of civilization that Fukuzawa did not, that is, religion, because, as he wrote, "religion exercises great influence on the culture and civilization of a people."⁷⁴

Despite their common understanding of what constituted the most advanced civilization, the ultimate goal of civilization was different for each man. For Khan, the goal of "civilization" was to provide for the welfare and happiness of the people, creating a system of government that would protect their rights, property and liberty.⁷⁵ Thus civilization was a goal in and of itself: "The only advantage of a good government is that under it the individual can freely develop themselves," Khan wrote.⁷⁶ It was up to the Indians themselves to accomplish this: "...our liberty and industry depend upon us... if we carry on our work with enthusiasm, patience and courage... our position, like that of other progressive nations, will be one of comfort, happiness, and freedom." This in itself, Khan asserted, was a worthy goal.⁷⁷ The role and function of the state was to protect against "internal disorder and foreign invasion." Having accomplished this, its main function was to "maintain peace and protect the lives, property and rights of the people and provide them with all sorts of freedom."⁷⁸ Thus, individual rights, individual property and individual liberty, beyond national liberty, were the true goals and the *raison d'être* of "civilization."

For Fukuzawa, as his writings clearly emphasize, the true, underlying goal of civilization was not the protection and promotion of people's life, liberty and property. While those were worthy goals, they were but side-benefits. The ultimate aim and goal was national independence. In his mid-1870s *Encouragement of Learning*, Fukuzawa had written about the need for a vigorous and independent citizenry in the progress toward civilization, people who were "...true citizens of Japan, citizens who will not be playthings but stimulating agents of the government... their own true masters. This will balance the powers of the government and the powers of the people, and *thus the true independence*

of the country will be assured [italics added].”⁷⁹ In later years Fukuzawa further narrowed his focus, writing an urgent message about the goal of national independence as the primary goal of achieving “civilization”:

When we look at Japan’s situation at present, we are struck by its urgency and we find no leeway for other concerns. We must first ensure the continuing existence of Japan and of its people and afterwards talk of civilization. If there is no country and no people, one cannot speak of Japanese civilization. This is why I narrow my argument and proclaim our country’s independence as the sole goal of civilization.⁸⁰

Thus while Khan saw civilization as a path to improving and enhancing the lives of the people, a goal in and of itself, for Fukuzawa the underlying goal of “civilization” in Japan was the protection and preservation of Japan’s national independence. Khan saw civilization as serving the people, for Fukuzawa civilization was to serve the state. I believe this fundamental difference can help explain the divergent directions taken by the mainstream of Indian and Japanese nationalism in the early part of the 20th century.

What then, were the intellectual foundations that led each man to his understanding of the meaning and goals of “civilization” and how can we explain these differing intellectual positions? Why was Khan able to develop a broader understanding, a conception of civilization that would serve all while Fukuzawa’s understanding of civilization’s goal was narrowly focused on Japan? More importantly, how can these intellectual positions shed light on the later divergence in the developments of nationalism in both India and Japan?

An array of factors can account for the two men’s different understandings of “civilization” and its goals and usages. I would like to focus on one major difference in particular, which is their very different religious perspectives and standpoints. Khan’s Islamic belief situated him in a broad historical, political, geographic and religious context and his belief in a transcendent, omnipotent God gave him a vantage point that encompassed all humankind. Fukuzawa’s vantage point, on the other hand, was ultimately only as broad as Japan itself. Khan’s broader vision, for example, prompted him to make the case for international harmony by citing the New Testament, and what he held as its universal truths.⁸¹ Also citing the Quran and the Torah, Khan wrote, “...one is asked to love not only his neighbors and those of his nation but all, to the extent that even for his enemies one is asked to have true love.”⁸² Seeking a universal basis for international harmony, Khan quoted the Gospel, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”⁸³ Fukuzawa also argued for international peace and justice, but writing in 1881, he rejected the idea of universal love as a “just and beautiful... fiction,” one that is “espoused mainly by Western Christian ministers or by persons who are enamored of that religion.”⁸⁴ Instead, Fukuzawa put forth a logical argument:

“A country is a gathering of people. Japan is a gathering of Japanese and England is a gathering of Englishmen. Japanese and Englishmen alike are members of a common humanity; they must respect each others’ rights. If one individual may not injure another, then two may not join to injure two others. And the same logic applies to a million or ten million: The principles of things do not change according to the numbers involved.”⁸⁵

This is a solid logical argument, but it does not draw him out of the exclusivism and subjectivity of Japan. Rather than grounding his arguments for universal peace, harmony, justice on the basis of universal values or a transcendent foundation, Fukuzawa harked back to the state itself as a basis for morality and ethics.

If the fundamental goal of civilization was the protection of the individual, where did individual rights, the “rights of subjects” come from, according to Khan? Individual rights were not granted by the state, they came from God, “who,” as Khan wrote, “is the real king.”⁸⁶ “God is the creator of all things,” Khan wrote, “as He is the Creator of heaven and earth and what is in them, and of all creatures, so is He also the Creator of nature.”⁸⁷ Khan asserted that as God was Creator of all, he was also the grantor of the rights of the individual: “Liberty... is a natural right of the individual... God may be said to be the author of the right.”⁸⁸ For Khan, each individual had a moral sense and a conscience, providing them with a moral compass enabling them to function harmoniously in society. “True social life required every individual not to suppress the call of his conscience...”⁸⁹ Morality and ethics were, in Khan’s understanding, a matter between the individual and his god, thus they were established on a universal foundation.

What then was the moral and ethical basis for Japan? Where, according to Fukuzawa, did the rights of man originate? Fukuzawa writes, “Seeking a teaching that can be made the ethical standard for our Japanese samurai, I find that the most appropriate is ‘repaying the country with loyalty.’”⁹⁰ Fukuzawa thus identified loyalty to the leader as the Japanese moral and ethical standard. What the leader said was thus by definition right and true, leaving the individual had no place in that determination. As early as the 1870s, Fukuzawa had moved away from an earlier acceptance of certain universal values in human civilization, for example, the idea of the existence of natural rights. “... it is simply useless,” he wrote, “to speak of popular rights based on nature; they are not worth discussing.”⁹¹ As Craig points out, “In a brutal world where principles are created only by men and guns, it is necessary to rely on one’s own strength. This view of the world led Fukuzawa away from general theories about civilization to a more specific concern for Japan’s immediate national needs.”⁹² Fukuzawa’s own view of religion led him to the conclusion that:

“It is extremely difficult, to maintain morality without religion. The great scholars of the west constantly struggle with this problem. Yet, accidentally, in Japan during the hundreds of years since medieval times our samurai have been able to maintain a high personal morality while ignoring religion... One reason they were able to maintain high standards of virtue apart from religion was that they were aided by Confucianism. But a still more potent factor was the feudal system itself: from the government of the Tokugawa down to the smallest han, each had his place as lord or vassal, as superior or inferior, and a clear social order was formed. The spiritual character of samurai raised in our feudal period derives fundamentally from the single fact of their unswerving loyalty to their lord.”⁹³

Thus morality, according to Fukuzawa’s analysis here, was not independent of the state, but in fact, depended upon state authority itself. The samurai of old relied not on their own

consciences, not on any independent moral sense derived from belief in a transcendent higher power, but on their loyalty to their lords, their loyalty to a temporal authority. Following this line of reasoning then, with the end of feudal power and the Meiji period restoration of direct imperial rule, the focus of loyalty must turn to the emperor and thus the emperor became the locus of morality. As Albert Craig has pointed out, Fukuzawa “state[d] that Japan must depend on the imperial house to uphold morality.”⁹⁴ Reflecting again on the meaning and the goals of “civilization,” Fukuzawa wrote, “At this time the duty of the Japanese is solely the preservation of their national polity. ... Western civilization will enable us to consolidate our polity and at the same time increase the luster of our imperial line.”⁹⁵

Conclusion

In *Asian Ideas of East and West*, Stephen N. Hay records the observation of an Indian writer who wrote, “India has absorbed most of the theoretical knowledge and the philosophical ideas of the West but did not to that extent imbibe the techniques and know-how of the West. Japan in contrast took on most of the latter.”⁹¹ This insight is borne out in the ideas and approaches of Khan and Fukuzawa. While both claimed “civilization” was “universal,” Khan’s understanding of civilization was deeper – he grasped the “soul of the machine,” while Fukuzawa on the other hand, understood the machine, a machine which would best be used, he felt, to advance national strength. Khan’s Islam provided him with an objective vantage point, a scaffolding from which he could develop a universalist assessment and understanding of “civilization” and its role in human society as a means of protecting and promoting the rights, property and liberty of the individual. While this paper does not argue that Syed Ahmad Khan’s views created the foundation for the development of pacifistic nationalism in early 20th century India, his views do give an example of the cultural and ideological structures in place that supported the eventual emergence of this pacifist strain as it ultimately would take shape under Gandhi. Fukuzawa, on the other hand, lacking a transcendent religious position, developed an understanding that was confined and circumscribed by a subjective, chauvinistic Japanese viewpoint. Similarly, this exemplifies the cultural and ideological underpinnings that ultimately paved the way for chauvinistic military aggression and violence in Japan’s effort to protect and solidify its national standing and independence by expanding its empire. One might even say that if Fukuzawa, the quintessential Meiji liberal misapprehended liberalism in such a way, who could be expected to do better? Thus nationalism was planted and nurtured in different soil in India and Japan. The result was the growth of different plants, the nationalism displayed in India’s generally pacifistic struggle to gain its independence and the chauvinistic nationalism of Japan’s effort to preserve its independence. The lives and thinking of Syed Ahmad Khan and Fukuzawa Yukichi give us windows onto the different trajectories of nationalism in early 20th century India and Japan. **(Endnotes)**

References

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- 69 Shan Mohammed, 256; Syed Ahmad Khan, in "Address to the Natives of Hindoostan on Education, Ghaziapur," (1863) in Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, ed., *Sir Syed Speaks to You*, (Idarahi Adabiyat-i, Delhi 1968, 1997) 41.
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- 71 Shan Mohammed, 400. As noted earlier in the text, critics have accused Khan of being a British sycophant. According to this argument, Khan's words are merely designed to curry favor with the British. While Khan does not reject Christianity, he strongly rejected Christian missionary efforts to convert Indians. Clearly, this was not the position of a mere sycophant. In *Causes of the Indian Rebellion, 1857*, for example, he writes of the Christian missionaries, "In preaching these Missionaries would mention the holy places and persons of other religions in highly derogatory terms and words and proaisde only the Holy Bible... The seed of anger and distrust of our government was thus sown in the hearts of the people." (p. 124) An extended discussion and analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper however.
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An Archaeological Profile of North Bengal

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Theoretically speaking there is no place called North Bengal. But marking the *Ganga* as the boundary, the stretch of land comprising the six districts of the northern West Bengal i.e.. *Malda, South Dinajpur, North Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Bihar* is called North Bengal.

The *Himalayas* start on the northern side. The district of Darjeeling almost lies along its foot hills. The *Terai* and the *Duars* lie along these foot hills. Here we have the tea gardens rather estates. Some portion of the district of *Jalpaiguri* is included in this undulating landscape. The other districts are plain agricultural land. North Bengal is also rich in its forest cover. Most of the forest area is within the districts of *Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri*. The other districts were formed mostly by the alluvium brought by the network of rivers. But portions of the district of *Malda* and parts of *South Dinajpur* were the earliest formations. The area was a part of an old plateau formation as old as upper Pleistocene to early Holocene¹. In *Malda* this region, on the eastern side of the river *Mahananda*, is still called *Barind*, echoing an early medieval name *Varendra* mentioned in inscriptions.

The districts have been peopled by a variety of tribal, semi-tribal and scheduled castes. The *Rajvanshi-Koch* people are now spread over the districts of Cooch Bihar, Jalpaiguri and both the *Dinajpurs*. According to old gazetteers² they inhabited the eastern side of the river *Mahananda*. Later *D.K. Chakraborty* held the similar opinion³. Besides the *Koch-Mech-Rabha* and other tribal people or scheduled castes, the hills of Darjeeling district are dominated by the Nepali speaking people. The Lepchas, the Dhimals etc, the original inhabitants of the hills, are now more or less marginalized and leading a precarious existence. The district of Malda and the adjoining areas were for many years under the direct rule of the Bengal Sultans. And as the region adjoins Purnea in Bihar, many urdu speaking people are present with a variety of cultural heritage in the district. The Bengali speaking people inhabit mostly in the planes of North Bengal.

The Northern districts of West Bengal were rearranged after independence. Cooch Bihar was included as a district of North Bengal in 1950. In pre independence days the district of Dinajpur had quite a considerable area. A portion of this was cut off and the district of West Dinajpur was formed in 1947. This district was further divided into North and South Dinajpur in 1992 with headquarters at Raiganj and Balurghat respectively. Some police stations from Purnea were added into North Dinajpur.

As a result of partition of India the Bengali speaking minorities from East Pakistan started thronging into the border districts of West Bengal. The flow continues till date. The immigrants mainly dependent on agriculture went around in search of land and home in this part of Bengal. Slowly the pressure was felt by the earlier settlers. The migrants called

“*Bhatia*” by the *Rajvanshis* came to be viewed as threats to their culture and livelihood. But this does not fall under the purview of the paper. The paper for convenience is divided into two sections. In Section I an outline of the river system of the area has been drawn. In Section II archaeological sites have been depicted.

Section I

The River System of North Bengal

The *Tista*, *Mahananda* and *Balason* are the main rivers of North Bengal. The river *Ganga* touches the district of *Malda*, then divides into *Bhagirathi* and *Padma*. Former goes down West Bengal to meet the Bay of Bengal and the latter to the neighbouring Bangladesh. A few rivers rise in the catchment areas of the slopes of the hills and during the rainy seasons transform into considerable water carrying streams. The rivers like *Atrai*, *Punarbhava*, *Nagor*, *Chhirimati*, *Tangan* and *Kalindri* etc. lying to the west of *Tista*, at some point of their flow merges with the *Ganga*. These rivers some times intersect each other in the district of North & South Dinajpur and *Malda* and finally meet the *Ganga*. The *Mahananda* and *Balason* two major rivers of the plains of North Bengal rise in the fountains or falls in the *Darjeeling* district, swells with the rain and during its travels towards the *Ganga*, catches smaller rivers along their way. During the winter and the summer months the rivers practically trickle down. It is difficult to conceive and identify by their form during the rainy season. They are fast moving and often overflow the sides. Excepting the rainy season both the rivers remains as dry beds with traces of water here and there. The other rivers follow the same characteristics. The *Atrai*, *Punarbhava*, *Nagor*, *Chhirimati*, *Tangan* and *Kalindri* etc have almost the same ebb and flow throughout the year. It is difficult to imagine their swelled up feature during the rainy season. The rivers lying to the east of the *Tista* — *Jaldhaka* or *Mansai*, *Torsa*, *Raidak* and *Sankosh* also rise from the catchment areas of the *Duars* and *Bhutan* and pour off their water into the great *Brahmaputra*. *Tista*, rising in the glacier and lakes of the snowclad Himalayas, flows through the State of *Sikkim* and comes down on the plains of Bengal near *Sevoke* in the *Jalpaiguri* district. *Karotoya*, another river, famous in the early texts, with its precarious existence flows in to the neighbouring country of Bangladesh, merges with *Tista*. They both meet the *Brahmaputra*. This river *Karotoya* is mentioned by the famous Chinese traveller *Yuan Chwang* who called it *Ko-lo-tu*.⁴ He mentions that he had crossed the river and stepped in to the *Kamarupa* country. On its bank was the ancient city of *Mahasthan* from where an inscription belonging to the 3rd century B.C.⁵ was discovered where the city of *Pundranagara* is referred to now in the *Bogra* district of Bangladesh. The *Tirthayatra* section of the *Mahabharata* mentions the river as a place of holy pilgrimage. A medieval text called “*Karotoya Mahatmya*”⁶ eulogises the greatness of the river. The other rivers that find mention in the early medieval text of *Ramacharita of Sandhyakaranandi* are the rivers *Apunarbhava* which has been identified with the river *Punarbhava* flowing past the ruins of *Bangarh* in South *Dinajpur* district and the river *Kalindri* flowing into the district of *Malda* which has also been identified with the river *Kalindi*; both are mentioned in the text of *Ramacharita*.

Section II

Important Archaeological Sites of N. Bengal

Bangarh: The earliest site, so far excavated in the present day North Bengal is the site of *Bangarh*, near *Gangarampur* in South Dinajpur. The impressive site lies on the river *Punarbhava* and is surrounded by an equally impressive boundary wall or rather fortification. The site was excavated by K. G. Goswami and the report was published in 1943⁷. The excavation went as far as *Maurya-Sunga* period. The settlement continued through the *Gupta and Pala-Sena* periods and also up to the days of the Bengal *Sultans*. This continuous occupation show the importance of the site throughout the phases of history. Bangarh has been identified with ancient *Kotivarsha* or *Devkot* by scholar as mentioned in the 5 Gupta copper⁸ plates discovered in the old Dinajpur district. Accordingly it was the seat of an administrative division called *Visaya* under a *Bhukti*. Thus Bangarh or *Kotivarsha* was a *Visaya* under the *Pundravardhana Bhukti* at least during the *Gupta* suzerainty in Bengal. The area around Bangarh is very rich in archaeological artifacts as well as a habitation site. From the time of Buchanon until today the region had been repeatedly visited by various scholars. D.K. Chakraborty in 2001 did an extensive study of the eastern part of *Mahananda*.⁹

Bairhatta : Another important site in the same district is the area known as *Bairhatta*. Stapleton had identified it with the fort of *Ekdala*. He had published a probable map of the area. This important site lies in between the two rivers called *Chhiramati* and *Tangan*. A small river called *Balia* flows through it. That it was probably the same site of *Ekdala* was endorsed by scholars like *Saraswati* and *D.K.Chakraborty*. *Gautam Sengupta*¹⁰ had collected 6 terra-cotta plaques with Brahmanical subjects from here. The entire area is densely populated. The insensible people are digging the mounds and bringing out ancient bricks to reuse them in their houses. Everywhere there are found pedestals of images, pieces of door jam, lintel and brick built walls. Extreme callousness in the people is visible above everything. Nearby lies the grave of *Mulla Atauddin* and a mosque. These are situated on the bank of the enormous water reservoir called *Dhaldighi*. A few Persian - Arabic inscriptions adorn the structure. Around this area there is another very impressive mound called *Bhaior*. This is a totally destroyed stone built temple. The dressed stones lying around indicate a temple of considerable height. A huge *Amalaka* stone lies embedded in a corner. On the lower part of the slope there is a huge pedestal of an image. On the pedestal lies a huge male figure . There is a Dwarf *Bhairava* showing his fangs. On another corner, there is the part of a female figure from waist above. She holds various objects in her 16 hands. The entire mound is surrounded by a low lying land which is filled by water during the rainy season. The site at the present is utilized as a temple of *Kali*. Every year a *Kalipuja* is celebrated lavishly with lots of animal sacrifices mainly of goats.

Sonapur: S.K.Saraswati had explored both the banks of the river *Chhiramati* and had pointed out several archaeological occupation sites as well as objects. He specially mentioned the sites of *Patiraj* in South Dinajpur and *Itahar* in north Dinajpur as occupational sites. Smarajit Ghosh has extensively explored the North Dinajpur district. He has pointed out

several important archaeological sites. The village of Sonapur, about 16 k.m. from Raiganj on the National Highway to Malda is a site where wanton destruction is taking place everyday. The village is surrounded by a small rivulet called *Gamor*. There are small and big mounds scattered all around. The 'Dhams' are now being extensively dug out to use as building materials by the callous villagers. Architectural stone pieces, partially broken images, *makara* symbols, mouths of stone built drains are scattered all over. A 5 feet *Pala-Sena Visnu* in *Sampadasthapanaka*¹³ pose stands in a bamboo roofed room. The people are very aggressively protective about their ancestral property !!

Besides these two districts the other district which is extremely rich and potential is the district of *Malda*. The buildings and mosques constructed by the Sultans of Bengal stand with majestic grace. People from all around make it a point to visit these structures through out the year. In Malda we have the oldest State run Museum of North Bengal. The museum is full of Pre-*Sultanate* period antiquities. Recently a *Buddhist Stupa* and a monestary has been unearthed from a place called *Jaggibanpur* under the Police Station of Habibpur. Hundreds of beautifully decorated terra-cotta plaques have been discovered along with other antiquities. In addition a huge and heavy copper plate of a hither to indefinite King called *Mahendrapala* has also been discovered. But the district is yet to yield any pre-Pala site as such. No systematic excavation has been conducted to discover the pre-Pala occupational level in Malda, yet. But stray explorations in the district had been conducted by several scholars and were impressed by the area in and around *Samshi*. In *Samshi* there are 5 mounds called *Kandaran*, *Bangapal*, *Damanbhita*, *Kaimer* and *Madhubana*. Along with the mounds there are huge water reservoirs called *Kaladighi*, *Ranidighi*, *Bauldighi*, *Laldighi* and *Ballabhadighi*. The surface of the mounds are covered with reddish gritty soil, From here were reported *B.S. ware*, *N.B.P.W.*, stamped pottery usually belonging to the *Kushana-Gupta* times. D.K. Chakraborty had identified two tiny terra-cotta heads belonging to the age of the *Kushanas*. These are preserved in the Malda Museum. Besides several images of *Pala-Sena* periods were also found from the area.¹⁴

Chaulhati: The district of Jalpaiguri lay mostly on the eastern side of the river Tista. On the western side, close to the *Bangladesh* border on a small stream called *Talma*, there is a fort called *Prithurajar Garh*. Major portion of the fort lies in *Bangladesh* only a corner lies in the Indian territory. The village of *Chaulhati* is close to the fort. At a distance of about 1-2 KM. to the east from a brick mound has been discovered the image of a unique human figure¹⁵ almost in the round. His hands are clasped in *Anjali mudra* with a lotus within. At the back of his clear shaven head there is a distinct *Shikha* (bunch of hair). The present writer has identified it with an unknown deceased King, sculpted after the *Chola* artists who erected images of their Kings and placed them even in temples. The image stands on a *Visva Padma* and is devoid of any *Stela*. The influence from south India pushed into Bengal quite strongly with the arrival of the *Sena Kings*. This could be an example of such influence. A few other such discoveries might strengthen the above idea. There is also preserved 10 Octoalloy images from one and half inches to 5 inches of *Pala-Sena* school of art. It is a mixed bag i.e. both brahmanical and Buddhist images lies in the small hut of a local peasant belonging to the *Rajvanshi* scheduled caste.

The famous temple of *Jalpesh*, was erected during the heyday of the *Koch* Kingdom. This is off the town of Maynaguri. Around this temple, within a radius of 4/5 KM. there are about 3/4 ruined temple structure. Of these the most impressive is the temple of *Bateswar*. The temple was built with huge dressed stones which lie in an impressive heap on a mound. The temple shows various phases of construction, the earliest evidence is probably a *Gupta* door-jam . Then subsequently there was probably a *Pala-Sena* building activity. Several *Pala-Sena* images were discovered scattered from here. The last phase was done up by the *Koch* Kings. There are several bases of brick built structures in and around Maynaguri. One of them probably was a temple of a big *Pala-Sena Chamunda* image called *Pet Kati Mao* by the locals. A few kilometers off the NH 34, near by the river *Jaldhaka*, there is the best specimen of a stone built, square temple, the top is only missing. This temple of *Purva Dahar* is situated near a huge water reservoir from where two *Vishnupattas* were recovered. Close to the temple, there is a brick built structure betraying its *Sultanate* origin. It is a rectangular structure whose roof (dome?) has disappeared. The temple stands on a huge flat mound.¹⁶

The most impressive archaeological site of North Bengal is the *Mendabari* ruins bordering on the district of Koch Bihar, in the deep *Chilapata* forest. There lies a *Gupta* period forest fortress. The first excavator, P. C. Dasgupta¹⁷ considered it as a *Aranya Durga*, as mentioned in the *Arthasastra* of *Kautilya* as *Vana Durga (Artha Adhyaya III 29 Prakarana)*. The evidence discovered from the earliest phase indicate a pronounced *Gupta* time bracket. Later excavation was conducted at the site which recalled a *Pala* temple and lastly there was evidence of *Koch* reconstruction. The site is close to the river *Torsa*. A small rivulet *Bania* comes and surrounds the ruin. So it is also called *Bania* ruins in the local area.

The river *Jaldhaka* is called *Manshai* in its journey down. By the side of this river there is the huge tumulus mound, called the *Rajpat*. The Archaeological Survey of India had conducted excavation for a few seasons.¹⁸ It was surrounded by boundary walls, not one but many. The mound was occupied from the 9th to the 15th century. The few images that were unearthed did not belong to the *Pala-Sena* style of art. The material is a kind of spotted whitish stone.¹⁹

The eastern part of the river *Tista* was the arena of the *Koch-Kings* from the fifteenth century onward. Their construction spree included both the sides of the river *Tista*. The *Gupta* site at *Chilapata* might indicate its close proximity to the *Brahmaputra* valley. The evidence of *Daha Parbatiya* door jam, one of the best samples of *Gupta* art, at a place near *Tejpur*, is no doubt a pointer.²⁰ The *Koch King Naranarayan*, constructed the *Kamal Ali* road and the King challenged the *Ahom Kings*. He constructed a temple at the sacred site of *Kamakhya* and struck coins like his father.

The district of *Darjeeling* mainly lies on the mountaneous terrain. Innumerable Neolithic stone tools have been discovered from *Kalimpong* since 1924. A.H. Dani had classified the tools preserved in the British museum. Later the Department of Archaeology had conducted field surveys. The date is yet to be determined. No evidence of early ancient history has yet been discovered from this district.

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Temples of the Sun-God in Early Assam

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar

I

Temple demonstrates the will of the community and thereby shows the religious condition of the period. It represents in concrete form the prevailing religious consciousness of the people.¹ Temples are considered as the symbolic representation of God. Temple-building was regarded as a sacred act and meant to enhance one's fame and renown in this world and one's eligibility for a place in Heaven. "One wishing to enter the world attained by performing sacrifices and sinking wells and the like, should build a temple, whereby one should get the fruit of both."² The Hindu temple is a *tirtha* made by art.³ There was no scope for a temple in the solar religion of the Vedic tradition because of the worship of the atmospheric Sun by means of oblations and libations in the sacred fire. However, terms indicative of the temple start occurring in the *Grihyasutras*.⁴ The cult of *bhakti*, which inundated India after the 5th-4th centuries B.C., was responsible for the adoption of the temple-tradition.⁵

As regards the Sun-cult, we do not find any reference to a temple of the Sun in the orthodox literature before the 5th-6th cent. A.D. For the first time, there are references to a Sun-temple established by *Samba* at *Mulasthan* (modern Multan) in the *Samba*, *Bhavisya* and many other later Puranas.⁶ The temple of Multan may have been built in the Saka-Kushana period (2nd cent. B.C.-2nd cent. A.D.). The tradition of public worship of the Sun in temples was introduced in India by the Magas as is attested by the literary evidences.⁷ From the archaeological evidences, it is clear that many temples with the sun-icons may have been constructed in India under the influence of the Magi Priests.⁸ The Puranas mentioned above also refer to other temples at Konark and Kalapriya established by the Magas.⁹ Many Gupta inscriptions also refer to Sun-temples.¹⁰ Thus, by the Gupta period the temple tradition came to be incorporated in the Sun-cult by the orthodox Hindus too. From the same period onwards, the Sun-temples also came to be built in bricks and stones. That is why we start getting archaeological evidences of Sun-temples from the Gupta period onwards.¹¹

II

Sun-worship prevailed in Assam from very early times, which is indicated by the reference to the very name *Pragjyotisa* of ancient Assam in the *Grihyasutras* and the Epics as well as by the nomenclatures like Navagraha and Sri-Suryapahar. The earliest reference to *Pragjyotisa* as a centre of sun-worship is found in the *Grihyasutras*. The *Markandeya Purana* gives details about sun worship in *Guruvishala* in *Kamarupa*. Of the sixty-four important images of Surya in India as referred to in the *Skanda Purana* three existed in Assam. The *Kalika Purana* refers to Sri Surya Pahar in Goalpara as the perpetual

abode of the sun and the worship of the Navagrahas at the *Chitrasaila*. According to Taranatha, the people of *Kamarupa* were sun-worshippers before the introduction of Buddhism. The *Adicarita* refers in details to the prevalence of Sun-worship in early Assam. There are also a few references to the deity in epigraphs, though with no definite invocation. Above all, a wide-spread solar cult is attested to by a good number of Surya images found throughout Assam, which belong to a period from A.D. 6th to A.D. 12th century, particularly A.D. 10th-12th centuries.

III

The reference to a sun-temple in Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa is found in the *Brihatsamhita*, based on the geography of the *Parasara Tantra* of the 1st century A.D.¹² Kamarupa is mentioned in the *Markandeya Purana* as an especially appropriate place for the worship of the Sun. The *Purana* in question gives details of the worship of the Sun at *Guruvisala* in Kamarupa (109/59-61). In narrating the account of King Rajyavardhana, the *Markandeya Purana* (109) states that when this king began to grow old, he retired to the forest to perform austerities. Seeing this, the Brahmanas of his kingdom, who were very much attached to him, started austerities for propitiating the Sun to get the king restored to youth. Then a *Gandharva* named Sudaman appeared and advised the Brahmanas to go in haste to the forest of Guruvisala in the very mountain of Kamarupa and perform their propitiation of the sun to obtain all their desires. Accordingly, the Brahmanas proceeded to that forest in Kamarupa and beheld there the sacred and beautiful shrine of the sun. By continued austerities, they succeeded in propitiating the sun and obtained from him a boon prolonging the life of Rajyavardhana.¹³ Thus *Markandeya Purana* (58) informs us of a sun temple in *Pragjyotis-Kamarupa*, whose fame was spread far and wide.

The modern town of Tezpur contains some of the most ancient and best remains of temples and buildings. While digging for Deputy Commissioner's buildings, a huge lintel (118 cm X 51 cm) of the principal entrance to an enormous temple was found.¹⁴ The size of the lintel is enough to determine the size of the door frame and consequently of the principal entrance to the sanctum. The lintel (*sirapatti*) has three raised panels, one in the centre and one on each side; each of them is divided into a large niche (*khattaka*) in the centre with a smaller one on either side. The panel on the left contains a standing figure of Brahma in the central niche with an attendant on either side. The central panel is occupied by a beautiful figure of the Sun-god. The deity is seated cross-legged, holding lotus flowers in both of his hands. He has two attendants in seated posture; the one on his left holds a pen and inkpot and the other on his right carries a staff of the orthodox description. The attendants are perhaps *Danda* and *Pingala*. However, the panel on the extreme right contains a standing figure of Siva with an attendant on each of the side niches. The space between these raised panels is divided into six niches, three to the left of the central panel and three to the right. They contain six figures, which represent some *grahas* (planets). All these niches are separated from each other by a round pilaster (*laghustambha*).

According to the general practice in Hindu temples, the central niche or panel of the lintel of the stone-door-frame of the sanctum is generally occupied by the presiding deity of

the temple. The lintel of the ruined temple bears the figure of Surya in the middle. Also it bears some Navagraha *murtis*. The nature of the representation of the deities thus shows that the gigantic temple was dedicated to the Sun-god.¹⁵ And this huge sun temple existed in the locality. This finds commendation from an inscribed expression ('*aditya-bhattaraka*') on a piece of stone, evidently from the basement of the temple.

The sill of the door-frame of the same temple is also of gigantic dimensions and shows a vase in the centre, flanked by two lions. Each end is occupied by a niche containing a male and a female, flanked by a smaller and narrower niche on a recessed corner, containing a single human figure. The vase and the retreating lion motif are commonly met with in the *silalis* of the pre-Ahom ruined temples of Assam. It seems from the *sirapatti* and *silali* that the height of the *dvara* could not have been less than 438 cm. R. D. Banerji further conjectures that if the height of the *dvara* of the main entrance to the *garbhagrha* was 438 cm, the height of the *jangha* must have been from 652 c.m. to 815 cm. In that case, the total height of the temple up to *sikhara* was considerably over 3260 c.m. The temple, according to K. L. Barua, belonged to A.D. 9th century and the lofty ruined temple might have been the Himalaya-like one.¹⁶ However, R.D. Choudhury thinks that the architectural piece referred to above belong to 9th-10th century.¹⁷

Sri Surya Pahar about 14 kms. east from Goalpara Town is, according to *Kalika Purana*, the perpetual abode of the sun. Ruins of several old temples are scattered all over the hill. There are relics of Surya temples, including those of Visnu, Siva and Devi.¹⁸ At Sri Surya Pahar there is a tank to the right bank of which is a small modern sun temple. This temple enshrines a circular stone tablet, four and a half feet in circumference, with carved images representing the twelve *Adityas*. It may be also called an *Adityachakra*.¹⁹ Here Kasyapa who is often called Prajapati or creator of beings (Brahma)²⁰ is shown seated in a cross-legged posture in the middle. Around him are seen in same posture miniature figures of twelve *Adityas*,²¹ sons of *Aditi*, wife of Kasyapa. Each of the twelve miniature figures seated cross-legged is depicted one-faced and two-armed holding some object, possibly lotuses. The *Adityachakra* in question was possibly used as a ceiling slab of a temple.²² Interestingly, that site has old bricks and brickbats of the pre-Ahom style scattered around. In many ruined temple sites of the pre-Ahom age, a *Visva-padma*, i.e., a huge lotus inside a circle on a huge slab of stone used as ceiling slab of the original temple is seen. It is likely that the present *Adityachakra* slab was used as ceiling slab of such a temple instead of the common *Visva-padma* motif. If so, this piece of *Aditya-chakra*, (not earlier than 9th-10th century A.D. on stylistic consideration) was used as a ceiling slab of Sun temple after which the Sri Surya Pahar might have been designated

Sun worship was, no doubt, popular in this locality in the pre-Ahom period. We find a stone *dvara-sirapatti* showing some solar deities, a *dvara-sakha* depicting some *avatars* of Visnu and a *dehali*²³ – all dug out from a temple site at Marnoi, about a mile east of Sri Surya Pahar. The middle seated cross-legged figure on the *sirapatti* with traces of lotus on either side possibly represents Surya. On either side of the figure, six cross-legged, seated miniature figures possibly representing twelve *Adityas* are seen, each holding lotuses in both hands. Surely, the *dvara* belonged to some ruined temple in the same locality dedicated

to some solar deity. Stylistically, these architectural pieces may belong to c. 10th century or so.

Epigraphic reference to sun temple is also not wanting in Assam. In Line 51 of the Guwahati grant issued in the 8th year of Indrapala's reign (roughly mid-11th century A.D.) occurs the expression *âditya-bhappâraka*,²⁴ which Hoernle²⁵ takes to mean "Holy Aditya" or in other words, the Sun-god. *Bhattaraka* is actually a name of the Sun god himself. Vidyavinoda has opined that the word *Tathagata* mentioned in the above grant might refer to King Ratnapala; from the text itself it appears likely that the king himself made a donation of land for the purpose of a Sun-temple near which the land of present gift lies.²⁶ The word '*Tathagata*' leads N.N. Dasgupta to infer the existence of a Surya temple.²⁷ The same word occurs also in the Puspabhadra grant of Dharmapala.

The enormous architectural ruins of the Madan Kamadeva temple in Kamarupa appear to be the same of a temple of the sun-god.²⁸ The sculptures of the temple resemble as in the architectural pattern of Orissa in the thirteenth century. A standing sun-image - made of black stone, two meters in height and clad in *udichyavesa* (Northerner's dress) - has been discovered from Galchepa of Gahpur Mouza in Tezpur district. It is thought that it must have been installed in a sun-temple.²⁹ A few years back a beautiful Surya-image was discovered at Chalachal in front of the Nehru Stadium. Probably in the elevated portion of land there was a temple in which the image was installed.³⁰

The Navagraha temple near the Kamakhya temple deserves mention. The temple, which is surrounded by a big wall, consists of a large circular room where the nine *grahas* are placed. The *grahas* are represented by nine cylindrical pieces of black stone, each one of which has been erected on a wide elevated base. The central pillar is supposed to represent Surya, (the Sun) and around it, there are the other eight planets, Chandra, Mangala, Rahu, Sani, Ketu, Brihaspati, Buddha and Sukra.³¹ Probably, the *Grahas* are symbolically represented by their numbers at this place. This temple must have been built before the definite reduction of the Kalika Purana.³²

At Negriting or Negheriting, some 17 miles from Jorhat, was a centre of sun-worship. However, at this place, Sun god had perhaps a subordinate position. In the campus of a big Siva temple of the 11th -12th century A.D., a subsidiary shrine has been dedicated to Him.³³ Other subsidiary shrines surrounding the main temple are dedicated to Visnu, Devi (Sakti) and Ganesa. This temple is of the *Pancayatana*-type, constructed in many parts of India to show regard to all the main gods of Hindu pantheon.³⁴ Every shrine has a separate portico attached to it. The smaller or subsidiary shrines resemble the central one in all the architectural details. Built on a small hillock on a grand scale, the temple in its vertical elevation consists of the basement, the *garbhagriha*, and the curvilinear *sikhara* with tri-dent at the top. The middle portion of the temple outside contains a number of niches to house some graceful and exquisitely beautiful sculptures.³⁵

IV

The *Brahma Purana* prescribes Sun worship for all the castes - *Brahmanas*, *Ksatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras* - to get all the worldly and non-worldly pleasures.³⁶ No

restriction because of caste is imposed on Sun worship in the *Brihaddharma Purana* too.³⁷ Religious privileges were extended to women and men of lower castes by the Magas as well.³⁸ As is well known, Sun worship did not receive royal patronage in Assam as elsewhere. But, large numbers of Sun-images in stone from different parts of early Assam speak in favour of the existence of a good number of temples for the divinity. Perhaps most of these temples were built by the rich people as well as the residents.

According to *Bhavisya* and some other Puranas that *Samba*, a son of *Krisna*, brought the Magas from Sakadvipa to appoint them as the priests of Sun-temples. Further, it is expressly laid down in the *Brihat-samhita* (Ch. 59, V.19) that it was the Magas who were entitled to install ceremonially the images of Surya in temples. Assam abounds in images of Surya belonging to the mediaeval and earlier periods. It is presumable that the descendants of Maga Brahmanas settled in large numbers also in this tract. The Brahmanas in Assam are divided into two categories: *Surya-vipra* and *Chandra-vipra*. The *surya-vipras* or *daivika / daivajna brahmanas*, who are also engaged in the study of astrology, looks after as priests the sun-temples as well as the Navagraha-temples such as the one Chitrasaila.³⁹ Hopefully, there was no exception to it in the past too.

Although no Sun-temples of great antiquity exist in Assam, we get some idea about their general features from the close examination of some extant sun temples in other parts of India. The sun-temples of ancient Assam, which should have belonged to the northern style of Indian architecture, may have been divided into not more than two distinct types: (i) The *bhadra, pida* or tiered type, in which the roof over the sanctum consists of a series of gradually receding tiered stages crowned by the usual finials including the *amalaka*. (ii) The *rekha* or the *sikhara* type characterized by a high curvilinear tower and the usual crowning elements. According to the *Bhavisya Purana*, the entrance of a Sun-temple should face the east⁴⁰; if not possible, it should face the west. The *agnihotragriha* is an integral part of the Sun-temples.⁴¹ They have usually *pradaksina-marga*. These characteristics, at least a few if not all, might have been present in the Sun-temples of early Assam. Sometimes the image of the Sun god was installed in a temple along with those of other Brahmanical deities as well. It is not also rare that the shrine of other divinity had been built up just beside or very close to the temple of Sun god. These developments came to take place either out of the growth of the *Panchayatana Puja* or of the social compulsion of harmonious co-existence for a better survival of the cults at stake.

The Sun-temple at Sri Surya Pahar has still a tank.⁴² This tank is most probably a *Surya-kunda*, which is sacred to the Sun god. The presence of a *Surya-kunda* became quite common in classical and mediaeval Hindu India.⁴³ and was an integral part of the Sun-temple complex. The *Rigveda* (10.142.8) emphasizes the need of digging ponds or tanks for having full-blown lotuses (i.e. a sun-symbol standing for the creative force) besides for the supply of pure drinking water (*Rigveda*, 9.110.5). It is said in the Great Epic that the digging of tanks is very agreeable and beneficial and is "gratifying" to Surya himself and rewarded are those who dig tanks.⁴⁴ The presence of big and deep-water source like river or pond is quite significant. It is known from the legend of *Brahma-hatya* and consequent Sun worship by Yajnavalka and his pupils⁴⁵ that it was enjoined for those guilty of sin to have a bath

before going to worship the solar divinity. Surya has been worshipped from time immemorial for removal of diseases.⁴⁶ In addition, water happens to be the most important of the eight offerings to god Surya. Such a pressing necessity of water in Sun worship explains the location of the solar shrines on the riverbank or the digging of tanks very close to the temple of the Sun god.

V

In dealing with the Sun temple in early Assam, there is an utter scarcity of material all through the period. Almost no solar shrine of great antiquity exists today. All that is possible to do is to piece together every bit of information from such other sources as inscriptions, literary works, sculpture and extant monuments elsewhere, in order to reconstruct the history of the Sun temples in Assam. A cause for this almost obliteration may be the soft alluvial formation of the land and its damp climate, but also the nature of the building materials. These last were usually mud, bamboo, reeds, wood and fragile but indigenous products. Many temples that might have escaped decay because of the more durable nature of their materials were deliberately razed to the ground by foreign invaders because of their iconoclastic zeal.

Large numbers of Sun images discovered from different parts of Assam are in them sufficient evidences that in ancient Assam there were several temples for their proper enshrinement. Temple came to be an important feature of Sun worship from the Gupta period, which witnessed the increased use of stone and preferably brick in the construction. The roof of the Sun-temple was generally of the shape of stepped pyramids crowned by an *amalaka*. The solar shrines with *agnihotragriha* faced towards east. They were mostly built up on the bank of rivers or elsewhere with a pond (*Surya-kunda*) in front. Thus the sun-temples in Assam not only corroborate the wide-spread of the solar cult there, but also point to the architectural richness of the province.

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Origin and Development of Forest Study in Ancient India: An Environmental Approach

Anita Bagchi

Introduction

The long period of history when human beings were exclusively gatherers began to come to a close with the plant and animal worlds which helped them to acquire the art of domestication of plants and animals by degrees.

The Neolithic people had acquired better technological knowledge which helped them to cut down the big trees and open the forests by clearing off jungles. Childe argued that once sharp Neolithic tools were made, it became easier to cultivate the soil¹. Other developments took place consequently with the development of agriculture and spread of cultivation. The agricultural pastoral people spread over the Indian subcontinent in many phases and the systematic destruction of forests in India started with the extension of Neolithic settlements. But the introduction of iron implements opened a new chapter in the extension of agricultural process. It is not certain whether the Rig Vedic Aryans had the knowledge of iron as because the meaning of the word *ayas* used in several contexts in the *Rigveda* is not conclusively determined. *Ayas* could have meant copper, copper-bronze or may have been a generic term for metals². It may be logically assumed that the Iron Age started approximately from 1000 B.C. The Vedic people with their knowledge of iron and improved technical know-how started a steady eastward advance as far as the Gangetic Valley. With metal tools they could readily penetrate into the moist forests such as those of the Gangetic plains or the west coast. It seems that the newcomers were at first confined to the land of the Seven Rivers and before the end of the Rig Vedic period they had spread over a vast expanse of the territory of the subcontinent³.

The advent of the people who preferred to describe themselves as *arya* practically had far reaching effect on natural vegetation of the country. The word *arya* is a linguistic term and the people may better be called Indo-Aryans. In eastward expansion of early vedic people the lead was taken by two tribes – the *Bharatas* and the *Videghas*. The *Bharatas* reached the bank of the *Yamuna* and the *Videghas* advanced upto to the river *Sadanira (Gandak)*⁴. In this context the story of *Videgha Mathaba* referred to in the *Satapatha Brahmana* requires mention. *Mathaba* a *Brahman* is said to have started from the bank of the *Sarasvati* river with sacred fire in hand and reached *Sadanira* (a river always full of water) in the country of *Videha*. *Videha* has been identified at present with Mithila and its adjacent areas in Bihar. This episode reminds us of the primitive tribal practice of slash and burn for acquiring agricultural land⁵.

Thus with the eastward march of the Vedic people, a significant portion of land began to be converted into grassland or crop field replacing the forest, jungles, marshes and

other wasteland tracts. Along with many natural causes like volcanic eruption of high degree, flood, forest fire, the use of tools of stone, metallic axes and also practice of burning the jungles accelerated the process of deforestation. The burning of *Khandava* forest as depicted in the *Mahabharata* clearly illustrates the destruction of forests by fire⁶. Agricultural activities increasingly imposed pressure on the vegetal world. Not only that, greater use of forest produce like fuel, fodder, manure, timber elephants and other wild animals for military purposes became indispensable part of human life and settlement. Here in this paper an attempt will be made to trace the origin of the forest study in India from the days of the *Rigveda* upto the rule of the *Mauryas* and to find out the environmental concern as reflected in the provisions laid down by the government.

For convenience of understanding the paper is divided into three sections — (I) introduction, (II) empirical study by the Vedic people, and (III) development of knowledge in the area as reflected in the *Arthashastra* and in the Asokan edicts.

Section – I

Some scholars exploring environmental history, like to think that there was hardly any dichotomy in the history of agrarian expansion and the environmental history of colonial and post colonial India⁷. But I would like to reiterate the view of Thapar that ‘dichotomy between Vana and grama evolved in early times when the village consisted the settlement’⁸. She explains that although the duality had existed for many centuries, the perceptions accompanying it were neither static nor uniform. The forest was seen in multiple ways, and historical change altered the focus⁹. The historians of early India though did not produce a specific historiography of environmental history yet they certainly addressed the issues like historical geography, state formation, extension of agriculture, use of iron, impact of state and society on forests and forest people and many other which in fact helped in a way to develop an environmental approach to the study of ancient Indian history.

The Aryans were partly pastoral and partly agricultural people. With the march of agriculture a significant proportion of land began to be converted into grassland or crop fields which replaced forests, marshes and other non-agricultural land. We find distinct classification of land into different regions according to the nature of the soil and climate as late as the time of Charaka¹⁰.

In such a study it is logical to examine the issue in long term perspective. The relationship between man and nature and man’s role whether prudent or profligate may be judged by taking into consideration the dominant mode of resource use by the man within the broader economic frame of the time he is living. In this sense, the people of the *Rigvedic* or the later Vedic period though largely depended on forest resources, could do little harm to nature compared to the years of industrial development of present time.

The Indo-Aryans as are commonly called migrated to India and they had to clear up extensive forest tracts for the purpose of habitation and agricultural as well as pastoral purpose. For a network of connecting paths between different village settlements, more trees were to be felled down. Everyday necessities like building of huts, carts, chariots etc. could be meted out by increasing supply of forest woods, and “there was nothing unusual in

what done by the Aryans, for, a migrant community in a forest-country, would have to deplete its forest wealth for fresh fields and pastures anew”¹¹.

Agriculture has been playing a vital role in the economy of India ever since the dawn of history and that agriculture came to be considered as an important vocation by the Vedic people is evident in the Vedic hymns. For example a verse may be cited from the *Rigveda*, Book X. Verse 13 in chapter 34 which bears a divine message from the Sun God who directs the mankind to take to agriculture. Book X of the *Rigveda* though is considered as later interpolation, yet the verse may be quoted for our better understanding. The Verse is — play not with Dice: no, cultivate thy corn-land. Enjoy the gain, and deem that wealth sufficient. There are thy cattle, there thy wife, O gambler. So this good Savitar himself hath told me (RV., X. 34, 13. p555)¹². Thus the *Rigveda* reflects the actual esteem of the people for the vocation of agriculture. But side by side with developing a agriculture based economy, the Rigvedic people started careful observation of the flora and fauna of the newly acquired country. They began to study carefully its flora and fauna with a view to proper exploitation of the resources. The Vedic literature gives us a clue to the understanding of the perception of the Indo-Aryans about the forests. Thus the relationship of the forest to the settlement i.e. Vana to the kshetra ushered in a new area of study i.e. study of plants, trees, herbs and others.

The Vedic people before being merged into the vast mass of the Indian population among which the Aryan and non-Aryan elements are not clearly distinguishable, left for the posterity nothing spectacular from the strict point of view of material culture. Nevertheless it can never be over looked that they created something most amazing in world history — a vast literature of over a thousand songs and hymns which is compiled as the *Rigveda Samhita*. It is obvious that such a composition primarily evokes appreciation of the historians of literature but at the same time, it can not be ignored as it contains certain concepts with exceedingly interesting science potential. Even a Marxist critique like D.P. Chattopadhyay agrees to the view¹³.

Plant bearing fruits or flowers as well as the medicinal herbs originally remained mixed up in forest jungles. The people had no other option but to bring them out of wilderness and to sort them out by a process of trial and error and replant them in village settlements or their boundaries to meet out the human needs. To the Aryans, the study of plants and plant life of the newly acquired country became a self imposed task. Different herbs trees and plants are classified, named and praised for their medicinal value in the *Atharvaveda*. In the *Rigveda* we get hymn, which is described by G.P. Majumdar as the first medical utterance of man.¹⁴ A faint glimpse of scientific idea of fight between herbal antidote and the germ within the body of a diseased man may be had from a verse of the *Atharvaveda*. *Yakṣma* being treampled at the sight of the medicinal herb is nicely described in the following hymn:

‘As at the roaring of a lion do they quake: as at fire do they tremble a [the herbs when] brought, let the *Yakṣma* of kine, of men, go driven by the plants beyond navigable streams (AV. VIII.7.15 p.500).¹⁵ Thus a deeper insight into the hymns of the Vedas often suggests a formative stage of empirical knowledge system largely developed on the basis of

familiarity with and observation of the common people on the plant world. The people belonging to both the indigenous and newcomer groups held their share in this development.

We can draw the attention of the reader to an unique example to substantiate the proposition that the indigenous forest people had parallel contributions to the accrual of knowledge in forest study which bear much historical significance.

In the *Atharvaveda* we have an interesting reference to a *Kirata* girl who digs for a herbal remedy on the ridges of mountains¹⁶. So it may not be merely a vague conjecture if we say that the forest study and its outcome as a whole was not the credit of any single people's group. It was the product of the efforts made both by Aryan outsiders and the original inhabitants of the country. Besides, it should be mentioned that side by side with the idealistic and mystic elements inherent in the Vedic corpus, there are essential material information in the *Vedas*, which can not be satisfactorily interpreted by stigmatizing it only as otherworldly or metaphysical¹⁷. This view possibly is shared by Thapar when she says 'that binary separation of the rational from the irrational, astronomy from astrology, for instance, is necessary to the analysis of scientific knowledge; the irrational cannot be outright dismissed or ignored. It too has to be assessed perhaps as an alternative or a system within itself confronting the rational'¹⁸. In fact agriculture is a system of life where men, animals and plants are intimately related. Not only plants or man, the *Rigveda* is replete with references to number of beasts and birds. That the Indians knew the use of horse, cattle and elephant is attested by the *Rigveda*. Biological phenomena, it is true, are not separately treated in the Vedic literature, but information regarding the animals are diffused in a distinct way. There are mentions of vigorous horse (RV., i.28.7.p17), mighty elephant (RV., I.64.7.p.43) or even of watch full eyes of bird (RV., X 68. I. p. 581). We get so many verses from which we may form an idea about the curiosity and interrogative mind of the ancient people about the behaviour, strength and appearance of different animals both tamed and untamed.

Section – II

A significant development occurred with the birth of Imperialism in northern India in 6th century B.C. The eight centuries from 500 B.C. to 300 A.D. followed the colonization of the vast expanse of the Gangetic Valley; a remarkable feature of the age was that the rulers of northern India became conscious of the necessity of imposing control over the revenue earning natural resources. Forests as natural resource base automatically attracted the attention of the state authority and from that time onwards attempts were made to bring the forests under the regulatory management of the state. We have least of information regarding the management of forests until we come to the days of *Kautilya*.

The most detailed and perceptive provisions for forest management are found in the *Arthashastra* of *Kautilya*. The ruler was not only to protect produce forests and elephant forests but also to set up new ones¹⁹. We notice mention of some principles for categorization and maintenance of forests. The reason may lie also in the fact that as the empires rose, war became inevitable and the war machines were being perfected. Elephants as well as hard timber were the important component of defence. *Kautilya* pointed out clearly the urgency of proper maintenance of elephant troops for defence of the country²⁰. He thought

that 'the victory of kings (in battles) depends mainly upon elephants, for elephants being of large bodily frame, are capable not only to destroy the arrayed army of an enemy, his fortifications and encampments, but also to undertake works that are dangerous to life (KA. II.2.13-14). Qualitative classification among the elephants from different regions of the subcontinent, discerned in the *Arthashastra* indicates a serious attitude of the author to determine the policy to be adopted by the state in time of collection of this war-machine. According to *Kautilya* 'Elephants bred in countries, such as *Kalinga*, *Anga*, *Karusa* and the East are the best; those of the *Dasarna* and western countries are of middle quality; and those of *Saurashtra* and *Panchajana* countries are of low quality'²¹.

If we go by *Kautilya*, it is evident that there were three categories of forests in the Maurya Empire:²² (a) Forests donated to *brahmanas* for religious learning and cultivation of *soma* plants (II. p48). (b) Reserve forests with plantation of fruit trees, bushes, bowers, thornless trees, lakes and animals for king's merry making and hunting expedition. The wild animals were to be shorn of their teeth and claws for safety of the royal people during hunting. The reserve forests were to be guarded with ditch and provided with single entrance. (II. p. 48). (c) The third type of forests were game forests and remained open to public. This type of forests was situated on the extreme limit of the country. *Kautilya* advised that in addition to the public forests, forests were to be formed exclusively for elephants.

In such a discourse on forest a few words may be said with regard to the notion of forest divisions in ancient India. The ancient people used to think in terms of eight Forest Divisions in India²³. These eight forest divisions were *gaja Vana* i.e. these were dense forests. The eight forest divisions were as follows: (1) *Prachyavana*, (2) *Karusha Vana*, (3) *Dasarnaka Vana*, (4) *Vamana Vana*, (5) *Kalesha Vana* (6) *Aparantaka Vana*, (7) *Saurashtravana*, (8) *Panchanada Vana*.

D.C. Sircar opined that the concept of the eight dig-gajas probably had influenced the ancient Indian writers' classification of the Indian elephants under eight typical groups²³. *Kautilya*'s qualitative categorization of elephants according to their provenance may help us to conceptualize the ancient eight divisions of forests in India. The idea of eight forest division had been prevalent for long time at least as late as the time of *Manasollasa*, the encyclopaedic work of *Chalukya* king *Somesvara III* (1126-1138) A.D. The names found in the *Arthashastra* are mentioned by *Somesvara* with slight changes.

It is said ²⁴.

Kalingam ve (ce) di Karusam Dasarnam cha vanam varama|
Angireyam tatha prachyam madhyaman vanam = isyate ||
Aparantam panchanadam Saurastram cha adhaman vanam|
evam estau vananyahur gajanam janmauah padam||

The list of the forest division as mentioned above occurs in the *Visnudharmottara Purana*. What ever similarity lies with regard to the nomenclature of the forest divisions in the three texts of early India with few centuries gap in between, it is not easy to identify the geographical location of the forests with accuracy. At the same time it may be pointed out that all the forest divisions did not belong under the command of a single ruler of all India

stature, not to speak of extreme south. So the uniform pattern of forest administration might not have developed through the length and breadth of the country. But a specific department to deal with the forests, forest produce and protection and conservation of forests is found in the *Arthashastra* and that *Kautilyan* system perhaps exercised a dominant influence in determining the government policy in later period too.

From the functions and responsibilities assigned to superintendents of different departments, it may be assumed that the heads of various departments had to run their administrative works keeping themselves in touch with each other's department. Well-knit centralized method of work made the government conscious of its own resources.

According to *Kautilya's* administrative definition, 'Enclosures for beasts, deer parks, forests for produce and elephant forests were the constituent elements of forests (A.S. II. 6.6)'²⁵.

The department of forest produce as it was called in the days of the Mauryas was administered by the Director of forest produce i.e. *Kupyadhyaksha*. The duties of the *Adhyaksha* of the Forest Department as specified by *Kautilya* were as the following (A.S. II. XVII. 1-17).

(1) The Director of Forest produce shall collect timber and other products of forests by guards of the produce forest. (2) He should start factories for forest produce. (3) he should fix fines and compensations for damaging the productive forests. (4) He should classify the group of forest produce. Hard timber giving trees were *saka, tinisa, dhanabana, arjuna, madhuka, tilaka, sala, simsapa, arimeda, rajadana, sirisa, khadira, sarala, tala, sarja, asvakarma, somavalka, kusa, amra, priyaka, dhava* and others. (5) He should classify the different types of bamboos and group of other reeds, namely *utaja, cimiya, capa, venu, vamsa, kantaka, bhalluka* etc. (6) He should classify different types of canes and creepers like *beta, sikavalli, vasi, syamalata, nagalata* etc. (7) he should know all fibrous plants like *malati, murva, arka, sana, gavedhuka* and other creepers. (8) All writing materials like *tala, tali* and *bhurja* were also to be identified. (9) He should identify all kinds of flowering plants, medicinal herbs, and poisonous plants. He should collect all kinds of poisons, and preserve the venom of snakes and insects in pots for selling. (10) He should collect the skin, bone and bile etc. of the dead animal.

The defence of the country largely depended upon the various products of forests. The logs of hard woods were stored in the government godowns and used for setting up palisades around the cities²⁶. Extensive excavations have unearthed the wooden palisade which surround the city of *Pataliputra* which is corroborated by Megasthenes' *Indica*. Timber and several wooden planks were discovered by Kumrahar excavation at Kumrahar and Bulandibag.²⁷

The superintendent of the elephant forests was a separate administrative authority. A large number of employees like *banapalas*, elephant keepers, foot chainers, physicians, trainers and group of attendants served under him. They had to maintain a record of each and every elephant in writing. We observe the mention of a series of environment friendly conservation measures in the *Arthashastra*.

For the purpose of protecting the forest and wildlife, the following laws were to be followed:

1. In the extreme limit of the country, elephant forest separated from wild tracts were to be formed.
2. The superintendent of the elephant forests with his guards shall not only maintain the upkeep of the forests but also acquaint himself with all passages for entrance and exit.
3. Whoever kills an elephant shall be put to death.
4. Whoever brings in the pair of tusks of an elephant, dead due to natural causes, shall receive a reward. (II. 2. 6 – 10).
5. Trespassers upon a forest preserve would be severely punished. The Supervisor of slaughter house should impose the highest fine (for violence for binding, killing or injuring deer, beasts, birds or fish for whom safety has been proclaimed and who are kept in reserved parks (II. 26.1).
6. None should do any harm to the productive forests. If any one doing so, would be penalized (II.17.3).
7. He shall cause to be burnt in fire one who sets on fire a pasture, a field, a threshing ground, a house, a produce-forest or an elephant forest (IV. 11.20).

The laws mentioned above probably were in force during the reign of the First Maurya ruler. In the reign of Asoka, the scope of the forest and game law was further widened. In the pillar Edict V, Ashoka clearly forbids that no one should set fire to the forests without any purpose, or with cruel motive²⁸. In the major Rock Edict I, we find the royal proclamation for checking the killing of huge number of peacocks and deer in the royal kitchen²⁹. The Major rock edict VIII tells us that Asoka totally abolished royal hunt in the 10th regnal year of his reign.

The prohibition relating to animal killing in forests on specified days of the lunar year was imposed in the 26th year of his reign³⁰. All hunters, slaughterers and fishermen were strictly ordered to obey the royal injunction. The Asokan edicts impose restraint on killing of animals and advocate for planting and protection of trees. One such edict e.g. the Major rock edict II is an outstanding evidence of environmental concern of the Maurya king. The edict runs as follows — ‘The king with charming appearance, the beloved of the Gods in his conquered territories and in the neighbouring countries, thus enjoins that medical assistance should be made available to both men and animal; the medicinal herbs, the fruit trees, the roots and tubers are to be transplanted in those places where they are not presently available, after being collected from those places where they usually grow; wells should be dug, and shadowy trees should be planted by the road side for enjoyment both by men and animals’³¹.

From time immemorial forests have been fighting a losing battle as men have to encroach the natural vegetation for his own existence. But the mode of resource use in a given economy is the determinant factor as to fix the degree of his predacious role. Prudence vis-à-vis profligacy in resource use mark the entire course of human history. The study of

flora and fauna in natural vegetation and forested territory consequently became a part and parcel of the function of a state. State sponsored conservation activities and forest protection measures obviously were the outcome of long drawn empirical experience of the human society. India was no exception.

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A Review of Tamang Marriage System

Sudash Lama

Generally, social recognition of a man and woman as husband and wife is called 'marriage'. It is a legal right of a man on women and vice versa. It is an institution in which interpersonal relationships usually intimate and sexual, are acknowledged in variety of ways, depending on the culture or sub-culture in which it is found. Marriage is a social knot, which brings the people of two clan into one and gives the hope of new beginning. The marriage system represents the exchange and unity among the families and also a stepping stone for making an individual family. Marriage practices are very diverse across the culture, may take many forms, and are often formalized by a wedding. Here in the article I am going to discourse upon the marriage system of the Tamang community. But it seems necessary here to trace a brief history of Tamang people before going through main topic of the paper.

There are different views regarding the Tamang people. Some have views that Tamangs belong to the **Indo-Mongoloid Tribe**¹ and speak the 'non-pronominalised'² dialects of Tibeto Burman group. Their traditional area is sub-Himalayan tracts of India and Nepal. At present, they live in large number in different districts of Nepal. Outside Nepal they are found in Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam, Nagaland within India and also in Burma and Bhutan. The Tamang were addressed in a derogatory manner as '**Bhote**' (impure and unclean) and '**Murmi**'³. The Tamangs have a system of different types of societal leaders: *Tamba* (Traditional historian or oral historian), *Ganba* (elderly respected person of the village who knows rites and customs), *Banbo* (Witch priest), *Lama* (Chief priest) and *Choho* (village headmen) – to keep the Tamang society continuously alive and dynamic. There are more than hundred sub-groups (*thar* (gotra) as well as *sub-thar*) within the Tamang community, and marriage between same sub-group (*thar* and *sub-thar*) is not practiced. But out of these groups, only 12 Tamang⁴ or *Thar* (Gotra) is believed to be pure. The study of the Tamang community makes it clear that these people have their own traditional culture which they practice in their own way. Marriage is an important aspect of culture. It is practiced by the Tamangs with great joy following different kinds of rituals. Since the earlier period they are known as band society having their own cultural prosperity. But now-a-days Tamang culture has been influenced by the culture of other communities due to close association.

Among the Tamang people marriage is taken as an important ritual like that of other communities. There is the prevalence of **cross-cousin**⁵ marriage practise i.e. as in the case with some other hill tribes like Magar, Gurung etc. The one is called *Mama Cheli Phupu Chela* (the marriage between daughter of maternal uncle and son of paternal aunty) type and other is called *Phupu Cheli Mama Chela* (i.e marriage between daughter of paternal aunty and son of maternal uncle). But in the Tamang society marriage within the

same *Thar* (Gotra) is strictly prohibited. Among, the Tamangs a person's marriage is celebrated as a community festival. After a boy marries a girl and takes her, to his village, every household in his village sends presents for him and his wife. Thus customarily the couple must reciprocate this magnanimity of the villagers by arranging a grand feast for the entire village. Among the Tamang people the girl's side is given more importance than that of the boy. In the performance and accomplishment of a marriage *Tamba*, *Ganba*, *Banbo* and *Lama* play an important role in Tamang society. Beside this, maternal uncle of a boy or a girl also play an important role. Uncle's main work during marriage is to bring cloths for the boy or the girl.

Before fixing the particular date for marriage Tamang people use to consult with the *Lama* (priest of Buddhism). The *Lama* fixes a particular date after seeing a ritual book which is called '*Chi*' (religious text of birth and death). Besides this there is the tradition of matching '*Lho*'⁶ and '*Kham*'. There are five *Kham* which are the five elements of this universe and have male and female effects. These are *Mey* (fire), *Sha* (Soil), *Cha* (Iron), *Kui* (Water), and *Sin* (Wood). There are twelve *Lho* consisting of twelve different animals and birds like *Chya* (bird), *Khi* (Dog), *Fak* (Pig) *Jhiwa* (mouse), *Lang* (cow), *Tak* (Tiger), *Hyuie* (Cat), *Dug* (dragon), *Dhul* (snake), *Ta* (Horse), *Luk* (Sheep) and *Tay* (monkey). Before marriage is fixed *Lho* and *Kham* should be matched.

Forms of marriage system

There are different types of marriages prevalent among the Tamang people, *Magi Biwaha* (arranged marriage), *Chori Biwaha* or *Prem Biwaha* (elope marriage or love marriage), *Dhansing Biwaha* (marriage through purchase) *Balsing Biwaha* (capture marriage), *jari Biwaha* (compensatory marriage), *Biduwa Biwaha* (widow marriage)

Magi Biwaha (Arranged Marriage)

The marriage system where consent of parents of bride and bridegroom is more important than that of the boy and girl, is called arranged marriage or *Whiva*⁷ (in Tamang dialect). This type of marriage is a traditional one. In *magi biwaha* there is the custom of sending the *lami*⁸ or matchmaker, representing boy's family, going to the girl's house. The *Tamba* is the person who functions as the *lami*, because he is knowledgeable in matters of ancient rituals and the family genealogy. Once the talks are over and the finalization is made by the *lami*, *Saagun* or gifts consisting of one hen or fried Chicken, one bottle of country liquor etc are sent to the girl's house by the boy's family, which is called *Karjel Pong*⁹. It is at this time the actual date of the marriage is fixed.

The *janti* (procession of the bridegroom) leaves for the girl's house on the scheduled date, as per their custom. While the *Janti* makes its way towards the girl's house, exotic rhythms are beaten on *Damphu* (Tamang's most important musical instrument) or large one side open hand beating drums. The marriage starts with the *Tambas* of both the side beginning to praise the ancestors and ancestry of their respective sides, narrating exploits and incidents, adventures and deeds of valour, and the like. This is followed by a duet where the *Damphu* beaters of one side ask their counter part questions in a certain tune or *bhaka* (rhythm) and these questions are answered by the other side in the same *bhaka*. The next part of the

marriage is the *Ratri bhoj* or night feast, where the bride, groom and all present eat and drink together. After the feast is over, the solemn ceremony or the most important ritual of the tamang community *Karjel Chol or Chardam* (giving away the virgin) is performed, consisting of 1 mana (a pot of bronze to measure rice) of rice, 1 paisa (in early time of Nepal 1 paisa was equal to 4 Dam), drink's like *jaad raksi* (local rice beer, and country liquor) as much as they can afford, which is essential for the *Karjel Chol* (Kanyadan) ritual. As like that of other communities, a Tamang does not handover his daughter whole heartedly because in the Tamang custom, *Rhui* (Gotra) remained in paternal group. Accordingly in Tamang social custom, the husband of a deceased woman does not have funeral right, which remains with the brother of the deceased women. Therefore in Tamang society women will not change her surname after marriage. After the *Chardan* is presented to the groom's party, the Kanyadan ritual in Tamang society is considered concluded.

The next morning, prior to the departure of the *Janti*, groom and *Samdhi bhoj* (in-laws feast) is given. This is to celebrate the occasion where in laws of both the sides meet and have *dhog-bhet* (bowing down to each other). It means that introductions have been completed and relationships have been acknowledged. At this point of the wedding, the *Tamba*, in the presence of the gathering, makes the parents of the groom promise never to let the bride suffer in the future and the groom is made to vow in a similar way also, by the *Tamba*. The rituals that follow are first the couple's heads are gently banged thrice and then they feed each other with what they have eaten (polluted food) or *Jutho Khuaune* and change their seats. The final ritual is the placing of the *Tika* (made of rice and curd) on their foreheads and receiving blessings from the elders. This concludes the marriage.

Prem Biwaha or Chori Biwaha (*Hyo Laba or Rang Tangba*)

In the Nepali society love marriage is not given much importance but in Tamang community love marriage is accepted. If there is love between a boy and a girl they can marry. If parents are not ready to accept their relationship, in that condition too they may prefer marriage. In love marriage a girl uses to leave her house and flee away with the boy. On reaching boy's house, his father and mother use to welcome them by placing light in front of the door. *Tika* is also placed on the forehead of both boy and girl. Within three to five days from the entering of a girl in boy's house, *Sagun* (gifts) is sent to the girl's parents which is called *Chor Ko Swar Pong*¹⁰. If it is accepted then relation is acknowledged otherwise the girl may be sent back to her house. *Ganba* or *Tamba* who goes to girl's house with *Sagun*, informs the girl's parents that their daughter is in safe in her husband's house and there is no need to worry. After this *Gamba* or *Tamba* presents *Saguns* before the parents by saying "Ashang (respect to someone) accept this"

Biduwa Biwaha (Widow Marriage)

The Tamang People practice widow remarriage. There are many examples of widow remarriage. A widow can marry with a boy whom she likes and such marriage may not hamper her social status in the Tamang society. In the earlier days there was a tradition of marrying sister-in-law after the death of her husband, by younger brother. A widow can marry younger brother of her husband but not the elder one.

Anterjatia Biwaha (Inter-Caste Marriage)

Inter-caste marriage gets recognition in the Tamang Society and very much prevalent among the Tamang people. Interestingly, inter-caste marriage particularly with the *Newar*, *Chettri*, and *Rai*, etc has given birth to new castes like *Nharba*¹¹, *Chiri* etc. But such marriage has to be purified by observing rituals like *Ritbhat* and *Chardam*. Earlier, girl had to make parents from Tamang community with whom the boy can make matrimonial relation and had to give social feast, and secondly, after making religious parents they had to go through the sacred ritual *Chardam*.

Dhanshing Biwaha

This kind of marriage is generally performed by the rich families and it is termed as *Dhanshing* (**Dhan meaning 'wealth'**) because of enormous expenses involved. Since most Tamangs are not wealthy, this type of marriage is rare. In such marriages, the parents of both the bride and groom discuss and finalize the wedding. They agree to the marriage so as to establish a relationship between the two families because they are rich. It is performed with great pomp and extravagance.

Balsing Biwaha (Forced Marriage)

In case of *Balsing Biwaha* or forced marriage a girl is forcibly abducted or carried off from some local fair where she goes to enjoy herself or while she is walking along the road or any such scope is available. This is purely marriage by capture as can be seen from the way it is performed. The abducted girl is taken to the boy's house directly or to a friend's place and kept hidden there. The next step is to dispatch the *Syalker* or *Sagun* (gifts) consisting of *Rakshi* (country made liquor) and money to the girl's parents and kin. In such circumstances, the *Syalker* (gifts) may be within the range of Rs. 5 to Rs. 50, and if this is accepted by the girl's parents, it is considered that the marriage has been authorized. In spite of this acceptance, the girl's parents have a right to demand a compensatory fee or fine called **Hazranaa** for the forcible abduction of their daughter. From this it is seen that '*Bal*' Meaning 'force' in Nepali is used and so the name *Balsing*.

Besides the above mentioned marriages, there are other kinds of marriages like *Jari Biwaha* (compensatory marriage), popular among the Tamang people. In this case a married or unmarried man can marry a woman who is already married, it is called *Jari Biwaha* or compensatory marriage. In Tamang society such marriage is not neglected but to get social status they have to pay compensation like expense of marriage or a lump sum amount demanded by earlier husband.

Divorce or Parpachuke

Divorce or *Parpachuke* can be availed of in a rather simple way among the Tamang. If a couple wish to separate or if the husband is attracted to another woman or if it is the wife, they can sever their knot of marriage by mutual understanding or placing the matter in front of *pancha* (a group of elder person meant to solve the social problem) thus completing the divorce formalities. In payment of the thread severing, the *Pancha* must be compensated with a very nominal fee as a formality. Couple so divorced can remarry and the society does not look down upon them with hate and they have nothing to be ashamed of.

Polygamy System

Polygamy is prevalent among the Tamangs and so a person is permitted to have a couple of wives simultaneously. In some villages in the northern areas of the country the practice of Polyandry was also previously prevalent, where two or more brothers were married to single woman. This has however, become extinct now-a-days.

Gharjuwai System

A person who lives uxorilocally (in wife's house) is called *Gharjuwai*. He is not permitted to marry polygamously. This means the boy who lives with his wife's family as a *Gharjuwai* cannot marry another women as long as he lives there. If such a *Gharjuwai* does marry another woman, he automatically forfeits his right on his first wife. Or if his first wife brings another man to live with her, then the former husband (the *Gharjuwai*) has no right to live in that house from then on.

The Role of Tamba and Lama

In marriage the *Tamba* and *Lama* play an important role. The marriage without a *Tamba* is taken as to remain away from rituals of the Tamangs. According to *dastur* or tradition, from the very period of choosing a girl by a boy to the day of marriage, *Tamba* plays an important role. After the marriage is over the *Tamba* suggests both the boy and girl regarding *Dharma, karma* and *Kartabya*¹². Beside the *Tamba*, a *Lama* plays an important role in marriage. In the earlier days *Lama's* role was only as a helper in needs. But later at present, *Lama's* role is becoming increasingly important in the Tamang society, marriages are presided over by the *Lama*. It is *Lama* who fixes a particular date for marriage.

Property Right of Women

The right to property is given to the women in the Tamang society. After marriage girl lives with her husband but she has right over the property of her parents legally and she also has property right to her husband's property. If her relation is cut off with her husband, in that condition also she doesn't lose her property right. So there is dual right of women over property.

Influence of other Rituals on Tamang Marriage System

Since a long time Tamang has been regarded as band society because of its cultural difference. But now-a-days there can be seen direct influence of other communities. For example earlier, Tamang people did not use *sindur* or vermilion in marriage but in the present day they have begun to use *sindur* because of Hindu influence. Generally or Traditionally, Tamang people make marriage relations within their society. But because of the contact with other community this kind of relation is at the point of decline today. The marriage rituals like *Ritbhat, Chardaan*, the procession or *Janti* etc are getting out of vogue. In the marriage the use of foreign music is increasing in the place of traditional *Tamang salo* or *damphu Geet*.

Conclusion

The above account makes it clear that Tamang society has some unique system of marriage but at the same time it is also clear that many forms of marriage are similar to

ancient marriage system of Hindu civilization like Asura, Raksasa etc which were prevalent among the *Vaisya* and *Kshatriya* community. Nevertheless it does not prove that the Tamang marriage system is totally influenced by Hindu marriage system rather most of the tribal communities use to follow their own tradition of marriage. The system that makes the Tamang marriage a unique one is the funeral right of women, it does not allow her husband, but this right goes to the parents of women or the brother of the deceased woman. Therefore, Tamang woman can not change her surname after marriage. In conclusion it can be said that the Tamangs, whatever may be the views of the scholars regarding their racial origin, are culturally rich one. Example may be cited as their marriage which is followed by different kinds of rituals of their own. But in the present day context the cultural uniqueness of Tamang people is at the stage of decline because of the globalization and cross cultural relation.

Notes and References:

1 Chatterjee Suniti Kumar *Kirata-jana-kriti*, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, (2007 reprint), p. 41.

2 Which speaks pure Tibetan Burman dialect, pronominalised group speaks Tibetan Burman with Austric influence, *Ibid.*, p. 25.

3 People of the frontier. In Tibetan *mur* stands for frontier and *mi* for people. See Holmberg David H. (reprint 2005) *Order in Paradox, Myth, Ritual and Exchange among Nepal's Tamang*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, p. 17.

4 Tamang social system is based on pure and mixed, these are 12 Tamang and 18 Jaat, This 12 Tamang are believed to be pure whereas 18 jaat are of mixed. See *Tamang Jati* (sambat 2051) Parsuram Tamang, Nepal Rajkiya pragya pratisthan, Kathmandu, Nepal, p. 55.

5 Generally, among the Tamangs, bridegroom's father likes to give marriage to the daughter of his sister or in this system son and daughter of maternal uncle and son and daughter of paternal aunts are eligible to get married. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

6 According to the Chinese lunar calendar, a year is combination of five elements these are fire, soil, iron, water, and wood and these elements have effect of male and female; for counting the age there is 12 animals representing one for a year, like 1) mouse, 2) Cow 3) Tiger 4) Cat 5) Dragon 6) Snake 7) Horse 8) Sheep 9) Monkey 10) Bird 11) Dog 12) Pig. See *A Brief history of Lhochhar and Tamang Calendar* (2005) Ajitman Tamang, Nepal Tamang Vidyarthi Ghedung, Kathmandu, Nepal, p.10.

7 See *Tamangs Jati* (sambat 2051) Parsuram Tamang, Nepal Rajkiya Pragya Pratisthan, Nepal, p.135.

8 In Tamang society *Lami* does not have social obligation but they think that they know some tradition and clan groups, for match making *Lami* will get nothing other than respect in both house. *Ibid.* p.134

9 This is called *Mangni* pong or Begging Gifts because in arranged marriage system first the boy's family has to send *karjel* pong, if parents of girl accept the gift then followed by

second pong or gifts which is called *Hyotpapong* which needs traditional Salleroti (a kind of circular Nepalese loaf of rice flour cooked in ghee or oil) a cock, 2/4 bottle of country liquor. In this *pong* they fix the date of marriage. *Ibid.*, p.136

10 In this *pong* or gifts, the parents of the groom responsible for the theft of the daughter must inform them by placing liquor and meat that their daughter is safe and with marriageable *tharor gotra*. *Ibid.*, p.145.

11 According to tradition a Tamang can not marry to Newar because sometime in early time they were religious brothers, whoever get married they will get new caste *Nharba*, They can be pure only after three generations. And *Chiri*, if a Tamang marries a woman of higher caste like Chettri, Bhahun, their child will get *Chiricaste*. See *Tamang Sanskar r Sanskriti* (2004), Rudra Sing Tamang, Tamang Society Research and Development Centre, Nepal, p. 158.

12 *Tamba* is an authorized person to tell the new bride and bridegroom about their rights, duties and religion, that they must live happily, a man can not go for another marriage till his wife is alive, same of wife too, woman has full right on her husband and for husband too has full right on his wife except funeral right which lies in the hands of girls parents. See *Tamang Jati* (sambat 2051), Parsuram Tamang, Nepal Rajkiya Praga Prathisthan, Nepal, p. 139.



Urbanisation in the Regional Areas of Medieval India: A Case Study of Bhagalpur

Varun Kumar Roy

Students of urban studies have viewed their subject in two perspectives: the inclusive and the specific. The inclusive and wider view encompasses the larger social system or total culture in which a given city takes shape. The historians who study the urban centres in this larger perspective takes account not only of activities within the urban territory but also of components of the social system located outside. Military considerations, for example, may influence the development and patterns of cities, although military organisation is not a specifically urban manifestation. The broad, cultural concept of the urban areas transcends the range of phenomena which the observer may directly encounter in an urban area. The student who takes this inclusive, cultural view assumes that it is only the social system as a whole which explains the behaviour of its parts: Max Weber's recently translated essay on the city furnishes a good example of such a microcosmic study¹. In this essay Weber maps three historical types of urban corporation in ancient and medieval Mediterranean society. The categories with which he construed his urban types include kinship, power structure, military organization, foreign trade, agriculture, and taxation-concerns which in the given instances are not predominantly urban. A large portion of urban research has been devoted to the discovery of characteristic relation-ships between two or more variables of city life. In short, these sub-cultural explorations were designed to map urban institutions or dislocations and to predict their behaviours in relation to one another rather than to trace their configuration within the larger social system.

There have been major changes in the art of history writings in the 20th century. The event – centred Rankean history was questioned in the early 20th century in favour of “Structures”. The Annalist regarded this historical *e've'nementielle*” as the surface of the Ocean of history significant only for what they might reveal of deeper current.² In the 1950s and 60s the historians were generally concerned with the lives of the people and concentrated on the analysis of general trends. However, in 1970s some historians turned from the telescopic to microscopic aspects of history.³ Increasingly attention was given to local history and attempt was made to study a region and explain the structures in concentric currents covering the centre.

Braudel remarks “Towns cities are turning points, Watersheds of human history when they first appeared, bringing with them the written word, they opened the door to what we now called history. Their revival in Europe in the eleventh century marked the bigning of the continent's rise to eminence. When they flourished in Italy, they brought the age of the Renaissance so it has been since the city states, the *poleis* of ancient Greece, the *medina* of

Muslim conquest to our own times. All major bursts of growth are expressed by an urban explosion.²⁴

An urban centre is not merely a "diachronic assemblage of buildings. It has a structure it has its own dynamism and it is differentiated in particular time and a space. However the process of urbanization picked up the attention of the researchers since 1960 but tended to concentrate on the western countries⁵. A few historians have chosen to write about the process of urbanism in Medieval Asia.⁶ R.S.Sharma hypothesized the theory of 'urban decay', on the basis of archaeological evidence, by reflecting a decline of trade, which he concluded was due to the paucity of coins resulting in closed economy.⁷ However B.D.Chattopadhyay has shown that many urban centres remained prosperous in the early medieval times.⁸ Muhammad Habib postulated the theory of "urban revolution" for the period of Delhi Sultanate⁹. Habib opined that the economic changes that occurred due to the establishment of Delhi Sultanate created an organization considerably superior to the one that had existed earlier¹⁰. Naqvi Hamida Khatoon highlighted the importance of political stability in the growth of medieval Indian towns. She argues that "the highly centralized Indian states with base at Lahore, Delhi and Agra worked to foster viability and endurance in urban concentrations. The rise and fall of Medieval Indian towns corresponded largely to the vigour or weakness of the Central power"¹¹.

A recent history of pre-modern Europe argues that economic development is the result of population increase. There is no unanimity on definition of a town and so is with the factors which led to the growth of the town for some 'a town emerged with the movement of people to a certain area'. Thompson uses urbanization just in this sense when he writes 'Urbanisation is characterized by movements of people from small communities concerned chiefly or safely with agriculture to other communities generally larger whose activities are primarily centred in government trade, manufacture or allied interests',¹² Duncan echoes a similar opinion when he characterizes urbanization as a change in the pattern of population distribution. It involves an increase in the relative size of the urban settlements at a place and an increasing concentration of the population in such place. Hope, Tisdala Eldridge who has appeared to have treated urbanization systematically also considers population factor to be of vital importance when he says that there can be no meaning of it (urbanization) but a process of population concentration which involves two elements: a) the multiplication of points of concentration : b) the increase in the size of individual concentrations"¹³.

There are others who would prefer to explain urbanization in terms of economy Vance, R.B. and Demerath, N.J, criticize Eldridge on this ground when they point out that urbanization means more than a mere increase in numbers of points at which population concentrates and growth in the size of those concentration it means an increasing shift from agrarian to industrial service and distributive occupations¹⁴. Conceptually urbanization has three main aspects: Behavioural, Structural and Demographic.

The first aspect is generally associated with Louise Worth who formulated a theory of 'urbanization based upon the existing knowledge of social groups' and which refers to the changes in the pattern of behaviour of people. According to him, it is the size of aggregate

population which affects the relationship between members where by increasing process of differentiation ultimately leads to segregation¹⁵. The second aspect – highlights the transformation of primarily agrarian economy to primarily industrial economy. This concept also recognizes the differential ordering of occupation with a given territorial space¹⁶. Lampard, E.E interprets the structural aspect as a product of increasing specialization and advancing technology. The third aspect visualizes the process in terms of increasing degree of population concentration¹⁷.

Urbanization thus is a complex process which defies any simple and isolationist explanation. It can be studied and viewed properly only in a total societal framework. Any explanation emphasizing one aspect of its growth at the cost of other relevant factors will render it lopsided. Indeed, urbanization is a whole process of change and its consequences when a society gets transformed from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy and from a small homogeneous society to a large heterogeneous mass¹⁸.

To understand the basic vitality of the medieval urban centres, surviving and careering through the most turbulent times of Indian History, one has to understand the core of the time period. There are few reliable estimates for the population of India during the medieval period (A.D. 1200-1800); it is possible to get a basic sense of the fluctuations and the general magnitude of change. The period from the A.D. eighth to the twelfth century has generally been seen as a time of stagnation and decline for North India¹⁹. The area was fragmented and subject to repeated invasions, and the drop in the quantity and quality of coins reflected the economic decline²⁰. The coming of the Ghurid Turks ushered in an era of growth and prosperity leading to “revolutions”²¹. Although we have no demographic information for the period, a substantial increase in population took place due to the increase in peace and stability, the growth of towns and cities, and the revival of trade and commerce²².

After a time of stagnation during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, North India experienced another period of growth and development under the Mughals. The first reliable estimate for the population of Mughal India was 150 million in 1600 A.D. ²³ Irfan Habib has estimated 200 million persons in 1800 A.D., This is an increase of about 33 percent over the two hundred year period or a compound growth rate of about 0.14 percent per year; while less than 0.35 percent, the annual rate of increase between 1800 and 1900, this does indicate substantial growth²⁴.

We learn from Bernier, for instance that there was safety on roads on all directions, honest dealings for the merchants were guaranteed²⁵. However neither the Muslim historians nor the European travellers visiting India at the time of different Muslim rulers did mention anything that might lead us to believe that they were positively keen on urban development in the proper sense of the term, In spite of that urban development does not appear to have been slackened. What could have led urban life and functions go uninterrupted? Bernier, visiting sometime earlier, commented on the general conditions of India as follows – “It is important to observe that of this vast tract of country, a large portion is extremely fertile, the large Kingdom of Bengal, for instance, surpassing Egypt itself, not only in the production of rice, corn, and other necessaries of life, but of innumerable articles of commerce which are

not cultivated in Egypt such as silks cottons and indigo. There are also many parts of the Indies where the population is sufficiently abundant and the land pretty well tilled, and where the artisans, although naturally indolent is yet compelled by necessity or other wise to employ himself in manufacturing carpets, brocades, embroideries gold and silver clothes and the various sorts of silk and cotton goods, which are used in the country or exported abroad"²⁶. In his words, "There is in Bengal such a quantity of cotton and silk, that the kingdom may be called the common store house for these two kinds of merchandise not of Hindustan (India) of the Empire of the great Mughal but of all the neighbouring Kingdoms and even Europe"²⁷. The picture of affluence did not escape the notice of Marco Polo who found the province of Malabar as the first and noblest in the world: At that time ships used to come from many parts of the world for the purchase of pepper ginger, cinnamon, and beautiful cotton cloth produced in plenty in this Kingdom. Merchants from different nationalities congregated at the port like Tana, Cambay, etc collecting the rich merchandise²⁸.

All these facts reveal the unique position that India enjoyed in the eastern hemisphere over a period of ten centuries and the inevitable rate of Indian ports in handling the merchandise, obviously enormous in quantity as well as in quality, to feed such a large market. The entire work of this external trade of India, however, could have developed not only on the basis of ports alone, it depended upon a far more huge infrastructure composed of a transportation system developed all over the country, highly skilled artisans producing quality goods, intermediaries and merchants collecting the produces from distant places, markets acting as collecting and distributing points etc and above all, the facilities, including protection and patronage offered by the rulers of the respective areas. The combination of all these factors and the sustained efforts of this nature were not possible from an agrarian base, urban back up was an absolute necessity for that. About the roads of his days Ibn Batuta observes – "It (Dhar) is twenty four days journey from Delhi and all along the road between them there are pillars on which is engraved the number of miles from each pillar to the next."²⁹

Manucci paid glowing tribute to the system of '*sarais*' or resting places for the travellers the latter mostly being, the trading merchants. The *sarais* were fortified placed, built of stone or brick, offering accommodation to 800 to 1000 persons or more in, many cases along with their horses, camels and carriages³⁰. The speciality of Indian products regarded as rarities by foreigners gave India a highly esteemed position which could not have been achieved without a strong urban foundation³¹. The ever growing demands of the European markets for Indian goods, the rivalry between European and Arab merchants, the latter ultimately getting dislodged in the race, established supremacy of Indian merchandise beyond any question. The entire industrial structure even if largely localized in the rural areas, was of course the development that had taken place in the country. Movements of goods, their long haulage in great bulk over hundreds and thousands of miles both inside and outside the country by land and main routes could not be possible without a number of stations functioning as trading ports. They had, for instance, found a caravan of over a thousand men carrying cotton cloth from Agra to Surat³². Such a scale of industrial and commercial development can not be the product of rural economy. A widespread and well

developed urban superstructure formed the necessary base for that. This work aims to explore the process of urbanization in the regional areas of Mughal Empire, Bhagalpur .

Bhagalpur is one of the oldest districts of Bihar, situated in the plane of the river Ganges, 141 feet above sea level. Locating between 25°7' - 25°30' N latitude and 86°37' - 87°30' E Longitude, it is acclaimed as the 'silk city of India. This city referred to as one of the biggest trade centres in eastern India by the Chinese travellers like Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang. Hence, the work intends to focus on the growth and development of Bhagalpur evolving urban features during the Mughal rule between A.D. 1575 to A.D. 1765.

The town of Bhagalpur is situated on the right bank of the river Ganges. For the first time we find the reference of Bhagalpur in *Akbarnama*³³. Bhagalpur was called as 'Champanagar' before the Mughals set their foot on the soil of this town. However, in the East India Company's records it is mentioned in different names - 'Boglipor', 'Bhagalpoore', 'Boglypore' and 'Bhaugulpore'³⁴. The main source to study the history of Bhagalpur during the medieval period is available in English Persian, Urdu, and Bengali scripts. Some manuscripts including the records and the family papers are preserved with some important families of Bhagalpur.

The Persian chronicles are considered as one of the most important sources to reconstruct the process of urbanization in Bhagalpur during Medieval period. The political and revenue history of Bhagalpur during the last quarter of 16th century can be traced from Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* and *Ain-i-Akbari*. We find references of four Mughal army operations between A.D. 1575 and A.D. 1590 in *Akbarnamah*³⁵. General Munim Khan, Raja Todar Mal, Muzaffar Khan, and Raja Man Singh led these expeditions. These expeditions reflect the importance of Bhagalpur as a military outpost. In *Ain-i-Akbari*, a description of rich revenue zone under *sarkar* Munger during the time of Akbar is mentioned. This town was a part of *Akbari Mahal* and shared the largest portion of revenue of Munger *Sarkar*. An outlook of 18th century Bhagalpur can be seen in *Siyar-ul Mutakhirin* of Ghulam Husain. This gives a vivid picture of the political developments under the Bengal Nawabs namely Alivardi Khan, Siraj- Ud Daula, and Mir Qasim. The Maratha raids also finds its place and the tussle between Mir Qasim and English East India Company is also discussed. Other Chronicles like Ghulam Hussain Salim's *Riyaz us Salatin* also gives the description of Maratha raids in Bahagalpur under Balaji Rao and Bhaskar Pandit.

The epigraphical records at our disposal can also be used for the construction of the process of urbanization and a gradual development of urban culture in Bhagalpur. The Inscriptions are divided into two groups, Pre-Mughal inscriptions and Mughal inscriptions. The earliest one is dated at 769 A.H. (Amino Hijra) and is related to sultan Sikandar Shah of Bengal. It gives light on the expedition of Delhi Sultan Firoz Shah Tuglaq against Sikander Shah³⁶. The second inscription dated 850 A.H. discusses the military career of Khursheed Khan³⁷. Inscriptions dated 854 A.H. records the commemoration of a bridge by Sultan Mahmud Shah on 21st March A.D. 1250, another dated 862 AH reflects that during the interregnum period between A.D. 1487 and A.D. 1493, the Bengal sultans had strong presence in the town of Bhagalpur. The records after the mughal period also show the development

of the town. The first Mughal inscriptions belong to the period 1032 A.H. (1622 AD). Written in Persian it records the construction of a mausoleum over the tomb of an unknown saint by the Faujdar of Munger³⁸. During the period of Aurangzeb we have many inscriptions at our disposal for historical construction. The first one dated A.D. 1683 and the second inscription dated A.D. 1685 commemorate the completion of a mosque. The third inscription also makes an announcement of the completion of a mosque in A.D. 1668³⁹.

These Persian inscriptions are recorded and published in texts like, *Bengal Obituary*, *The Antiquarian Remains in Bihar* by D.R. Patil, Ahmad's *Corpus of Arabic and Persian Inscriptions in Bihar* etc. Credit goes to K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna⁴⁰ for bringing to light these inscriptions. Another section of inscription which is also used as a source to construct the history of economic development of Bhagalpur is Jain Inscriptions. The Jain Inscriptions of 17th century deals with the activities of Hiranand Shah, who laid the foundation of the famous Jagat Seth banker's family. Francis Buchanan takes note of this inscription dated A.D. 1637

The Foreign traveller's accounts are also of immense help to construct the history of this region. Tavernier, the French Traveller visited this place in A.D. 1668 and spent a night in the Town. John Marshal was the first foreigner who gave a vivid description of the region. He arrived this town in 1670 AD and accounts Bhagalpur as "a great town of thatch house and a place of bows, arrows.. He also draws a neat picture of the carnage system as it operated in the region. In the last quarter of the 17th century Dutch surgeon Nicholas de Gear and William Hodges also gave their description of the town.

Regarding the first half of the 18th century as well as the second half of the aforesaid century, we get information about military operations, routes, geography, and economic activities from the foreign traveller. Jean Law, who was the chief of the French Factory at Kasim Bazaar and an enemy of the Bengal Nawabs camped at Bhagalpur in course of his military expedition against the English East India Company in May, A.D. 1757. He recorded his activities and the interesting political development of these days in his memoirs which was published in S.C.Hill's *Bengal in 1756-57, Vol. III*, London, 1906. James Brown, a military captain gives a detailed explanation of the Jungle Terry (Forest tracts) of Bhagalpur in his account "*India Tracts* published in A.D. 1788. Another account is given by Archibald Swanton who visited the town in connection with an army operation in A.D. 1759. The details of Maratha raid under Balaji Rao is discussed by Captain Howell in his Book "*Historical Events*" published in A.D. 1766. A prominent geographer Major James Rennel compiled a map of south-eastern part of Bihar in A.D. 1773 covering Bhagalpur demarcating its various sites and other minute details. This is also an important source to construct the history of this region during the eighteenth century.

It is worth observing that Mughals came, conquered and established a mixed format of administrative apparatus without ignoring the indigenous or local ingredients of administration. We have chosen a regional area in close proximity of the Mughal Empire's eastern frontier to examine the above notion. The geography of this region played a significant role in pushing up the growth and development of the urban centres. The mushrooming of

the marketing centres owes their origin to the keen interest shown by the Mughal rulers in the area due to its strategic location. This region was the only military route from western India to Eastern India. The uniqueness was the two hill passes one connecting *sarkar* Munger via the Kharaghpur hill and the other leading to Bengal called Sakrigali.⁴¹

Bengal was considered to be a prized *suba* during the Mughal times. The only route to enter this area was through Bhagalpur via Teliagarhi fort. This fort stands on a plateau on the lower slope of the Rajmahal hills at the foot of which the Ganges flowed. Owing to its positions it was of great strategic importance and was known as, "The key of Bengal".⁴² The uneven terrains of Bhagalpur made the rulers always optimistic in their military approach in keeping Bhagalpur as a strong defence line. Even Mir Qasim invited Jean Law to assemble with his army at Bhagalpur. The Battle at Udhwanala though had the disastrous consequences but is still remembered as the signal of regional superiority by the people of Bhagalpur. Another important observation which cannot be kept in oblivion is that the emperors gave grants to the influential *ahal-e qalam* in order to establish their legitimacy in that area.

The growth of urbanism led to a gradual growth in urban culture. Prior to the advent of the Mughals in Bhagalpur the main township was concentrated on the western side of the modern city in the vicinity of the areas known as *Champanagar*, *Kargarh*, *Nathnagar*, *Lakshmipur* and *Kabirpur* all of which existed in the ancient pasts because the existing buildings speak loudly about their past.⁴³ During the Mughal period, several areas in the Bhagalpur town have been recorded as marketing centres. The Mughals tried to reform the existing administrative setup of the town. Bhagalpur was made a seat of a *Faujdār* or military governor appointed through a royal *Farman*. The first prominent *faujdār* is mentioned in *Maāthir-ul-Umra*.⁴⁴ According to this text, Atish *Khān* held this post in A.D.1639 during the reign of Mughal Emperor *Shājahān*. It is said that after receiving a robe of honour and a horse and ten thousand rupees he was made *Faujdār* of Bhagalpur during the 13th year of *Shahjahān*'s reign. A number of Mughal documents refers to *Faujdārs*, *Kotwāls*, *Dārogha* and some other police officials who performed various function like maintenance of law and order, control of the *pargana*, army, and the police. They also assisted in the revenue collection. They were also supposed to enforce royal commands in their jurisdiction. During the reign of Emperor Aurangzēb, the police officials of *pargana* Bhagalpur are also described in some of the documents. In a *Parwana* dated A.H.1084 or A.D.1675, the officials of *Kotwali* were instructed that Maūlāna Syed Ali Ahmad (of Pir Damaria family) resided in Khalifabagh and that he should not be put into trouble on account of the demand of any tax. Some prominent *Mazars* in the town of the 17th and 18th Century remained a Centre of intensive religious activities. The town of Bhagalpur was also an important religious place of Jains. A Jain temple at Champanagar, Kabirpur attracted pilgrims from western India in 17th 18th Century⁴⁵. This is also proved by an Inscriptions dated A.D.1677 found and deciphered by Francis Buchanan in 1811 with the help of a local priest.⁴⁶ The place was equally revered by the Hindu pilgrims, the bank of the river Ganges attracted large Hindu pilgrims on the full moon in the month of *Maghi*, and Buchanan says 25,000 people assembled to take holy dip into the river Ganges.⁴⁷

The Mughal administration targeted the town based elite of the areas where they wanted to increase their hold. In case of Bhagalpur, among the highly respected and admired families, the most distinguished was the family of Pir Damaria⁴⁸, the family of Maulana Shahbaz and the Mahasay family. The Pir Damaria family is known for their achievements in the advancement of Islamic learning, knowledge and culture in the town. This family imparted teaching to a large section of the people through establishing madrasas and Khanqahs in Bhagalpur. These educational institutions received lavish financial assistance in form of extensive land grants from the time of the Mughal Emperor Akbar to the days of Bengal Nawabs. Various documents and papers⁴⁹ of the Pir Damaria family have given an account of the working of the educational institutions and also of people who served as the head of the seminary, land grants received for its maintenance, and construction of buildings and for the purpose of accommodating students.

The contribution of Shahbazia family in the field of education and cultural development cannot be ignored. A seminary was instituted in the town of Bhagalpur in the reign of Emperor Jahangir which soon developed as a prominent place of Islamic learning. The founder of this educational institution, (known as *madarsa*) was Maulana Shahbaz. He has been described in a Report⁵⁰ of the English East India Company as "a Disciple of God, a native of Bihar, who having allied himself to a family in the neighbourhood of Bhagalpur".

The Mahasay family possesses three *sanads*, which confirmed the post of *sadar Qanungo*. The first was granted in A.D.1719⁵¹ to Dayanath Ghosh the uncle of the former *Sadar Qanungo* Dinanath Ghosh. Dayanath Ghosh was allowed to possess property as well as the office of *Sadar Qanungo*. The second *Farman* was given to his son Mayanath Ghosh in A.D.1725⁵² recognizing his succession by the estate and office. Finally, in A.D.1730 his brother Mahasay Loknath Ghosh was conferred the office of *Qanungo* by the Emperor Muhammad Shah. The last Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II granted a decree in favour of Mahasay Parasnath Ghosh confirming his succession to his ancestral estate as well as to the post of *sadar Qanungo* of Bhagalpur. Mahasay Parashath Ghosh provided a connecting link between the Mughal rule and the beginning of English East India Company's administration. He offered his services to the East India Company in the revenue administration. It was also during his time that the post of *Qanungo* was abolished by the British government.

The core Mughal area expanded with a centrifugal force incorporating not only the territory (by use of force) but also its population (by use of ideology). The use of ideology recreated a centripetal force moving towards the centre. By overlapping both the lines of force there was a creation of co-centric circle where the forces nullified it destroying the concept of core and periphery and giving rise to centralized Mughal Empire. Urbanization is a derivative of a healthy economic structure which in turn re-models the other structures by creating an aura of urban culture.

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- 32 *Ibid.*, pp 206
- 33 Abul Fazl, Akbarnamah, Eng tr. H. Beveridge, Vol. III, Cal 1912, pp. 143-44.
- 34 Company records are the contemporary literature written by the East India Company officials. In the coming pages I have tried to mention the names fully.
- 35 *Op.cit.*, p.150
- 36 This inscription was found in Mohalla Châmpanagar and publicly brought to notice in 1962.
- 37 Found in Mohalla Mandroja in town Bhagalpur, it also gives the list of military commanders and government functionaries of Mahmud Shah.
- 38 This construction was ordered by the then Bihar Governor, Parwez who was the son of the emperor Jahangir.
- 39 This inscription is found on the eastern wall of a mosque wetted in the heart of the town royally Khalifabagh.
- 40 Holmes (ed.), *Bengal Obituary*, cal 1851, Patil D.R, *The Antiquarian Remains in Bihar*,(K.P.Jaiswal Institute, Patna,1963), Ahmad's *Corpus of Arabic and Persian Inscriptions in Bihar*,(K.P.Jaiswal Institute, Patna, 1973).
- 41 Hodges William., *Travels in India*, (London 1793) p.24. Sakrigali: was famous for its fortifications called teliagarhi. Hodges mentions the remains of the strong wall and gate of *Telliyagarhi* fort.
- 42 Hunter. W.W, Vol. XIV, (Delhi, 1976) p. 284.
- 43 Singha Sunity Kumar., "Bhagalpur through Centuries", *JBORS* (Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society), Vol.XLVII, 1961, p.18.
- 44 Nawâb Sams-ud-Daulah, *Maâthir-ul-Umra*, Vol-I, English translation by H. Beveridge, (Calcutta, 1952), p.305.
- 45 Martin M., p.29.
- 46 Journal of Francis Buchanan of Bhagalpur in 18110-1811, by C.E.A.W. Oldham (ed.), (Patna, 1930),P.6
- 47 *Ibid.* p.28.
- 48 They were called as Damaria because they probably accepted only a Damaria (a small copper coins) as *Nazar*.
- 49 Documents of the family preserved in their family library at Khalifabagh, Bhagalpur; some of the copies also available in MSS Section, Patna University Library; Papers translated into English in the *RRRSC (1962-63)*.
- 50 A Report on the establishment of the seminary was transmitted by the Collector of Bhagalpur in his letter dated 1st August 1783 to the President of the Committee of Revenue, Calcutta, *BDCR*, Vol. III, 1781-83, p. 182.
- 51 Basu, N.N., *History of Bengal Kayasthas* (Vishwakosh press, CALCUTTA, 1930),p. 101.
- 52 *Ibid*, p. 102.



Bengali Diaspora in Burma: Dynamics of Political Interactions (1885-1948)

Dahlia Bhattacharya

'Diaspora' means dispersal and the term was referred to the Jews living in different parts of the world i.e., outside Israel, their ancestral homeland. Of late, however, the purview of the word 'diaspora' has been broadened to refer to any " ethnic minority group of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with countries of origin –homeland."¹ In recent times it is also referred to the Indian immigrants settling in the various parts of the world. But in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the word 'diaspora' was not in use and it is not mentioned in the British colonial reports of the Indian colonial migrants. The general nominator was 'overseas Indians' and this was also used by the academics in the post colonial times². It is especially from the mid-1970s that historians, geographers and anthropologists started to produce research in the field of what we now call the 'South Asian Diaspora'. Phillip D. Curtin his book *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge 1984, had introduced the term 'trade diaspora'. The growing interest in the area of studies culminated in an international conference on 'South Asian Communities overseas' in the Oxford University in 1987. It is to be noted that the word 'diaspora' was not yet in use at Oxford University in 1987. The published proceedings (1991), however, do use the term diaspora³. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the term 'diaspora' became popular and its connotations were no longer monopolized by the Jewish Diaspora. Social scientists now use the term diaspora to describe any population which is considered transnational whose origins are said to have arisen in land other than in the land they are residing currently and their economic, social and political networks cross the border of their nation state⁴. In the present day the Indian community spread throughout the different parts of the world is also considered by the social scientists within the concept of Diaspora.

The modern Indian diaspora is largely the creation of the British colonialism in India. It can be stated that it began with the abolition of slavery in Britain in 1834 and the need of labourers in the various colonies for the plantations and public works. It was also directly proportioned to the penetration of the British mercantile capitalism in Asia. In the second half of the nineteenth century, as a result of the technological improvement in communications and the opening of the Suez Canal, Asia was integrated with the world capitalist economy which helped the British to earn a considerable surplus of trade with Asia as well as India in particular⁵. The surplus was invested in the mines and plantations of Asia and Africa. This profit from the trade was invested by the British in the mines and plantations which were in urgent need of large supply of labours and trading classes in various parts of Asia. Along with this there were other factors like excessive dependence on agriculture, decline of handicraft industries, huge burden of agricultural revenue, seasonal unemployment, illiteracy,

poverty, caste bound occupational structure and repeated famines forced the Indians to seek for employment in the overseas. Indians were, therefore, exported as indentured labourers and also free passage immigrants to various British colonies like British Guinea, Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa and Burma⁶.

Indians also migrated to Burma for the same causes and there were also Indian traders and government officials. Among the Indians the Bengali community had been an important segment of the population and played a very significant role in Burma. In this historical background the present study attempts to highlight the history of the Bengali diaspora in Burma and the impact of the community felt particularly in the realm of politics.

I

The British made conscious and concerted attempts to encourage Indian emigration to Burma while pursuing the goals of expanding and consolidating the empire in this region during the 19th and the 20th centuries. Skilled and unskilled labours of Indian origin were taken to Burma for the work of construction projects of roads, railways and public works. In Burma, Indians were taken to work as rice cultivators and also to occupy positions in expanding bureaucratic and commercial establishments. Businessmen and capitalists also went to Burma along with middle class and the labourers under British encouragement. Under such situation in the later decades of the 19th century the number of Bengalis who migrated to Burma was 30% in 1881 to 25% in 1901. Among the Bengalis 40% were from Chittagong who migrated as cultivators and labourers. Till 1886 most of the migrants were seasonal labourers or came as temporary workers in Burma. After the establishment of separate linguistic schools for the India's community in 1878 there was growth of permanent residents of Bengalis in Burma. More after 1886 the British completed their colonial ambition in Burma and the establishment of British rule saw the influx of huge population in Burma⁷.

The first phase of British administration in Burma in 1898 – 1899 invited the coming to more cultivators and labourers and also middle class educated migrants for the white collared jobs. The economic activities of the British in Burma such as construction of roads, railway lines, mines, oil fields, etc. demanded a huge labour force. The non-enterprising Burmese people could not meet the rising demand for the labourers for the much extension of cultivation. This paved the way for the import of labourers from India, so close to Burma. The economic change of Burma was a stimulating factor in the process of immigration. The main lots of labourers were supplied by Indian provinces of Madras and Bengal. Numerous workers moved from Bengal to Burma from Chittagong, Cumilla and Dacca chiefly for harvesting rice and rice milling and other jobs in Rangoon. Under the British patronage the middle class intellectuals and professionals like engineers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, clerks etc. also migrated to Burma. They filled in vacancies in bureaucracy and expanding social services and professions. In bureaucracy and legal professions the Indian community's prior acquaintances in English language, rules, procedures and practices proved to be of an added advantage. The British could rely upon them and the local Burmese could not compete with them. As a result, they soon started dominating in their host societies⁸.

There were immigration from various other parts of India but the flow of people from Bengal was very high. In 1891, 1,12,084 persons had migrated to Burma from Bengal. After 1891, there was further development in the flow of Bengali labourers and agriculturists from Chittagong to Arakan.⁹ The story of migration from Bengal to Burma reached to a considerable height by 1901 and it is visible in the figures of the

Census of 1901 that 1,57,034 persons had moved into Burma from Bengal. But many of these migrants were seasonal labourers. Most of these migrants were from Cumilla, Dacca and Chittagong¹⁰. The Census of 1901 (Table 1) shows that among the Indian languages spoken in Burma Bengali was spoken in a large amount.

Table-I: Number of individuals who spoke Indian languages in Burma in 1901

Languages	Number of Individuals
English	18,500
Hindusthani	95,122
Bengali	204,973
Hindi	28,689
Punjabi	15,803
Tamil	99,576
Telegu	96,601

Source: The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Volume-IX, Bomjur to Central India, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1908, p.139.

Table I clearly indicates that the Bengalis were present as the highest number of the Indian immigrants present in Burma. The Census of India, 1911 gives a similar picture. It records that 1,34,985 persons had migrated from Bengal to Burma. Among these huge immigrants the population mainly consisted of the seasonal labourers. The Census of 1921 states that 1,46,087 persons had migrated from Bengal to Burma out of which 26,932 had been to Rangoon, and 3584 to Mandalay. By 1921, the Census provides that the total persons who migrated in Burma were 1,46,058. In the Census of 1931, there was further growth of Bengali speaking persons in Burma which numbered to 2,42,415 males and 1,34,579 females, a total of 3,76,994¹¹. The migration was mostly temporary because there were mainly seasonal labourers for the purpose of agriculture and reclamation of waste lands. There was also migration of persons with non-agricultural professions. The agricultural professionals or farmers mostly settled in Akyab, Prome, Bessein, Pegu, Myaungmya, Pyapan and other places where agricultural lands were available.¹² The districts from where the bulk of Bengali immigrants were from Burdwan, Calcutta, Hooghly, Howrah, Nadia, 24 Parganas, Chittagong, Dacca, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Noakhali and Tippera (Tripura).¹³ The Census of India, 1921 (Table II) shows that the classification of the races in Burma in which the number of the Bengalis had struck the highest in number. It also includes the population from Chittagong and the eastern part of Bengal.

Table II: Indian Races in Burma, 1921

Race Group	Males	Females	Total
GURKHA	26,689	12,843	39,532
BENGALI	212,594	104,769	31,7363
HINDUSTHANI	132,842	42,125	174,967
ORIYA	58,905	3,680	62,585
GUJARATI	46,221	1,847	48,068
TAMIL	93,435	56,453	149,888
TELEGU	123,269	35,819	159,088

Source: Census of India, 1921, Volume-X, Part-II, pp.245,231,225.

Along with the migration of labourers, farmers and other professionals, there was also an influx of Bengalis who came for administrative posts in Burma. The British administration wanted the Bengali English educated men to take the posts in Burma because they were available in abundant as well as they were cheaper to employ than the British officials. Moreover, due to the spread of English education the newly educated Bengali 'babus' wanted jobs in the administrative posts which was not easily acquired in India. Thus the intellectuals flowed in huge number to fill up the posts in Burma, a virgin land with resources which could be utilized in full extent. The British also found it better to employ the Bengalis instead of the Burmese who had to be trained for such posts and the business could also not compete with the Indians or the Bengalis who were educated in the British educational system¹⁴. Thus the figures reveal that the Bengali speaking population was quite high among the Indian immigrants in Burma and had an ever reaching influence on the host country and its people. A significant reason for the Bengalis to migrate to Burma was also its geographical location. There is no natural barrier between Burma and Bengal except only tropical jungles and Arakan Mountains which are not too high. Chittagong was attached to Arakan and Akyab of Burma. The Arakanese Mugs often migrated to Chittagong before 1824 when the English captured Arakan. In the colonial times the migration was to opposite direction, i.e. to Burma. 'Burma muluk' was a special attraction for the nineteenth century Bengalis and they emigrated to try their fortune. The attraction of the Bengalis towards Burma also depicted in many contemporary literatures, both Bengali and English. Rajkumar the leading character of the fiction *The Glass Palace* of Amitava Ghosh refers to Burma as a "golden land."¹⁵

II

The migrant Bengali community had interactions with the host community in the field of politics, society, economy and culture. Politics was the most vital field where both communities interacted with each other and the Bengal politics had influenced the national political course in Burma. The middle class Bengalis who immigrated to Burma were mostly the educated class and since Bengal was one of the political centres of India they carried with them the ideas of revolution and nationalism. The Burmese nationalism depicted in its character and disposition the touch of Bengal nationalism.

The rise of nationalism in Burma was much late than in India. The First World War had led to remove the concept of provincialism in Burma and widened the political outlook of the people of Burma. The Young Men's Buddhist Association during 1916-1918 became linked with political activities. It came involved in the 'Footwear Controversy'. It was an agitation carried out against the wearing of shoes at Pagodas by the Europeans. It was first popular expression of protest against the British and ultimately the Burmese demand was accepted by the British. This was historically, the first clear victory won by means of mass protest and action in Burma and it gave a great impetus to the growing national awareness¹⁶. The growth of national movement was felt first in the demand of national schools and colleges and Universities by the political activists. The growth of any activities make in Bengal, national schools which would one of the agenda of the Swadeshi movement has a deep influence in the political movement of the Burmese. There was the movement of national education for which national schools were set up in 1906 under Arobindo Ghosh. Rabindranath Tagore also made a successful attempt in establishing the Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan. The national education in Bengal had influenced the Burmese people as they had kept 'national education' always as a prime agendum in the nationalist movement of Burma. The Rangoon College was established in 1878 as an affiliated college of the University of Calcutta. The Rangoon College was operated and managed by the British. It was opened by the Education Syndicate which was established by the colonial Government to manage educational institutions in Burma.¹⁷ In 1904 it was renamed as Government College and the University College in 1920. The Rangoon University was opened in 1920 and the national college was opened at Shwe Kyin monastery, Bahan, Rangoon in 1921. In its opening ceremony a call was given to support the national education system. The Council of National Education (CNE) was constituted in 1920 and was registered under the Act for the Registration of Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies, 1860. By 1921 there were more than 80 national schools, which enrolled at least 15,000 students.¹⁸ There were 70 students in the national college and Professor of English was Bhaumik Kabyanidhi, Professor of History, H. K. Chakraborty, Professor of Chemistry, B. Banerjee¹⁹ and Muhammed Siddiq Khan as lecturer in Political Science²⁰. The national education movement in Burma as a central force gave an impetus to the national movement. It must be mentioned in this connection that prior to 1920, i.e. before the establishment of the University and national schools in Burma, most of the Burmese youths who wanted to be educated in western lives came to Calcutta University for the completion of their education. The Calcutta University mentions in its 80th anniversary that the University is for the people of Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Chota Nagpur, Assam, Bihar, Agra and Oudh, Punjab, Central Provinces and Berar, Burma and even remote Ceylon. It should be further mentioned that the Calcutta University in its prospectus stated that it allowed candidates for its matriculation to pass their vernacular language examination in any of the vernacular languages i.e. Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Oriya, Burmese etc.²¹ This indicates that students from Burma must have been present in the University and it is not unlikely that these students were influenced by the political upsurge of Bengal. The Calcutta Medical College was another centre of attraction for the educated middle class Burmese. They were inspired by the swadeshi and boycott movements in

Bengal. The Calcutta University was the centre of anti colonial protest and the youths of the University became the future leaders of the nation later. The Rangoon University which was founded later in the year 1920 also followed the tradition of students protest against the British, a political impact of Bengal. They protested against the centralized policy adopted by the British Government and its refusal to give affiliation to other colleges.

In the same year of the Swadeshi movement there was the formation of the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) and it was for a number of years had been only widespread public organization in Burma. It had accepted boycott, hartal (cessation of commerce) and the legislative walkout as techniques of political agitation from India. The principal members of this association were U. Ba Pe, U Maung Gyee, Ba Yin, U Sein Hla Aung and others. Young officers and clerks were also the member of this association. It was a non-political organization but soon it became associated with national activities. It played an important role in arousing the national consciousness in Rangoon and other towns. It had its branches in district towns and villages²².

After the Montagu – Chelmsford reforms of 1916, the Burmese nationalism developed in an organized and articulated form. There was rapid development of political activities in Burma during 1920 – 1923. In the twentieth century Bengal became the primary centre of nationalist movement. The Burmese youths and the Buddhist pongyis established a close contact with Bengal. The common spirit of Buddhist tradition had helped to strengthen the bond. During 1920s there was the appearance of Bengal revolutionaries in Burma. The Anushilan Samiti of Eastern Bengal and Chittagong took initiative to build up revolutionary secret societies on their lines in Burma. The history of Bengali revolutionary terrorists in Burma began in 1920s because of the release of hundred of Bengali revolutionaries in 1919, many fled to Burma in order to avoid detainment. Their secret societies also played an important role in any activities like in Bengal, in influencing the Burmese youths to fight against their common enemy. Driven underground by a series of repressive measures instituted by the colonial government in the 1920s, Bengali terrorists used imperial networks to expand their influence, particularly in urban parts of Burma where many found clerical work in British offices and where new branches of anti-colonial political parties were founded. The route to Burma from Chittagong through Arakan was used by the revolutionaries. Sarat Chandra mentions about this route in *Pather Dabi* where Sabyasachi, the principal character and hero of the fiction, came to Burma crossing the hills of Arakan. The only objective before him was the independence of India and he considered Burma been exploited by the British similar to India.²³

The Anusilan Samiti of Eastern Bengal and Chittagong took initiative to build up revolutionary secret societies on their lines in Burma. Chittagong Samiti opened its branch in Rangoon in 1922 and Eastern Samiti in 1923. In 1924 both these samities joined their hands together to form the Burma Jugantar Party. The Jugantar Party sent its agents in different districts in Burma to organize the district units and to build up secret cells. Burma provided them a strategic place to regroup and respond to British efforts to tamp down violent resistance. The Calcutta Jugantar Party, Prabartak Sangha of Chandannagar founded their branches in Burma. However, the Burma Jugantar Party remained as the most active

revolutionary organization in Burma. These revolutionaries organized a Bengali Students' Association on the lines of the youth association of the then Bengal. It wanted to foster unity among the students and teachers throughout the province to create a cultural atmosphere by encouraging physical, intellectual and moral education to enable the students to be in touch with the cultural movements at home and abroad and to have debating competitions²⁴.

The Bengal revolutionaries in its early stages showed that the party had four primary aims: (1) to provide help with arms smuggling from Japan, Singapore and China, (2) to raise funds and awareness of the difficulty of the Indians (3) to recruit new revolutionaries in Burma, particularly among the large groups of Bengali clerks who worked in British administrative offices, and (4) to provide shelter to the absconders.²⁵ The revolutionaries established contacts with the Burmese revolutionaries active at that time and started to be friendly with Burmese youths with a view to encourage them to undertake revolutionary activities. Secondly, they started revolutionary activities like in Bengal, for e.g., killing of top officials and British personnels, robbery for funds etc. Bhikhu U. Ottama, the most popular nationalist leader of Burma also joined hands with the Bengal revolutionaries to induce the Burmese youths to adopt the path of revolution. Through him the Bengali revolutionaries had established contacts with the Burmese youths. He was related with the revolutionary extremism of Bengal. He took part in the anti partition movement. He worked to involve large number of youths for revolutionary work. Under his initiative a number of young phongyis started to recruit school and college students for revolutionary work.²⁶

The Prabartak Sangha was an association whose headquarters was in Chandannagore and was directly under the leadership of Motilal Roy in 24 Parganas. They smuggled arms through Burma into Chittagong and Assam and with this intention there were two local organizers who moved from Akyab to Rangoon²⁷. In 1926, over 25 high levels Bengal terrorists, including Surja Sen, came to Burma seeking shelter, showing that the Burma organization was closely connected to branches in Chittagong, Dakhineswar and Bhawanipore. The organization had spread itself in various parts of the country like Namtu, Mandalay, Insein and became involved in the national movement of Burma. Towards the end of 1925 there were leaflets and booklets which were distributed among the students and youths of Bengal and also circulated in Burma. An English pamphlet appeared under the title "The Revolutionary, An Organ of the Revolutionary Party of India, Volume-I, No-1, Dated India 1st January, 1925". The Pamphlet purports to set forth the political programme of the revolutionary party and to justify their methods and ideas, while it threatens the onset of a remorseless campaign of terrorism. This pamphlet was clearly the work of Sachindra Sanyal and was widely circulated not only in Bengal but also in Burma. In the first quarter of 1931 the government founded large number of 'seditious and very inflammatory' leaflets in Rangoon, Akyab and various other town of Burma. Rangoon University and other educational institution were filled with the leaflets which were distributed by both Burmese and Bengalis²⁸. There are various instances and incidents which prove the existence of Bengalis as revolutionaries and their interaction with the political life of Burmese. It is true that Bengal had a favourable position in Burma and the Burmese people also had sympathy for them because both of them wanted to achieve freedom. *Pather Dabi* of Sarat Chandra

Chattopadhyay was written using the plot drawn on the basis of Burma, which was published in 1936. It provided a naked criticism of British and Indian capitalists in Burma. Sabyasachi, the main character of the novel became a role model of the Bengali youths. It describes the sacrifice and dedication of the freedom fighters and it also confirms the activities and involvement of the Bengal revolutionaries in Burma.²⁹

After the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Acts in 1924-1925 was passed, the Bengali revolutionaries turned to Burma as alternate site of reorganizing. The Anushilan Samiti moved towards a closer connection with the New Violence Party. The party had its branches all over United Provinces, Bihar, Assam, and Burma. From Burma communication was maintained through Debendra De alias Khoka at Singapore with Rash Behari Bose in Japan³⁰. The New Violence Party was formed in 1925 had its main function to smuggle arms. Its important leaders were Nirmal Sen, Kedareshwar Bhattacharjee and Nagendra Das of Chittagong, the district to which all the members belonged.³¹ Shri Nripendra Chandra Bannerjee, the editor of the Rangoon Mail, had started a party with Rajendra Dasgupta, Nirmal Sen of Chittagong and a boy of Karimganj, Assam. The latter was sent to Rangoon by Hari Narain Chandra and thence on an unsuccessful mission to Siam and Singapore to arrange the smuggling of arms. There are correspondences and documents which prove that connections were there between Rash Behari Bose and Nripendra Chandra Banerjee.³²

Letters containing plans and programmes were exchanged between revolutionaries of Burma and Bengal. Bhikhu U Ottama participated in the Martyr's Day celebrated in Chandannagore of a Bengali Terrorist named Kannailal Chatterjee in 1930. In the commemoration he stated in favour of the political assassins and the revolutionary terrorists. He opposed the moderates and spoke that "Swarajya is not to be attained as a gift from Britainit has got to be earned by the sheer weight of force....." His speech was published at Sree Saraswati Press, Ramanath Mazumdar Street, Calcutta, by Kalicharan Ghosh of Chandannagore. It was in a booklet form. This revealed a relation being established with Burma and Bengal politics.³³ After he returned to Rangoon on July 4, 1930 he started a mission to recruit large number of Burmese youths for the revolutionary work. Under his influence several phongyis turned towards anti-British movements and they also helped in recruiting students and youths in the revolutionary works.³⁴

The decade 1930s seem to be politically significant in the history of nationalism in Burma. The outbreak of the Saya San rebellion against the colonial policy was important step towards the foundation of the nationalism in Burma. Saya San was a leader of the GCBA but he represented the masses and the peasants who were exploited by the British as well as the Indians, the protégés of the colonial masters. Moreover, the British in order to suppress the rebellion used Indian forces. Most of the organizers of the revolt were political phongies or Buddhist monks who had local and grassroot connections. Like any other revolutionary movement or activity particularly of Bengal it was suppressed by the British Government by 8000 arrests and 128 hanged.³⁵ Saya San was arrested and the Tharrawaddy Case continued which was defended by Dr. Ba Maw like Dr. C.R.Das defended the cases of the Bengal revolutionaries³⁶. The significance of the Saya San rebellion was that it was

first outburst of the Burmese anti colonial rather anti –alien protest. During the rebellion many Bengali Revolutionaries were arrested from Rangoon. In February 1931, three Bengali Revolutionaries were arrested and convicted. One of them was attempting to shoot the Magistrate of Rangoon. A telegram was sent to the Home Department from Rangoon that the Saya San Rebellion was not local revolt it had relations with the Bengali revolutionaries. There were agents of the Jugantar Party namely Paresh Chatterjee, B.B. Roy and J.K.Ghosh. It claimed that there were evidences which establishes connections of U.Ottama, GCBA, Thoe Soe and Bengal Revolutionary Party.³⁷

The Saya San rebellion had begun in Dec. 22. 1930 over a large part of Burma including Tharrawaddy, Pegu, Henzada, Insein and Prome Districts and Shan states in Upper Burma. The rebellion was anti-Indian and the outbursts were in the form of assaults, burning of huts and places of business in the districts.³⁸ Though the official view was that the Saya San rebellion or Burma rebellion was mainly political against the directed colonial government but there were also economic causes against both the Indians and British. The peasantry considered the Indians as their immediate oppressors and the British as their friends and masters of the India.³⁹ The Viceroy on behalf of the government did not take any steps against the misdeeds of the police and the poor law and order condition. On the other hand, the Viceroy Sir Charles Innes promulgated an ordinance on 31st January 1931 for a speedy trial of the captured leaders and mention was made of the association of Bengal revolutionaries with whom contact had already been established.⁴⁰ The Viceroy addressed in the Legislative Council on 12 February, 1931 stating the Bengal Revolutionary Party in Burma responsible for the rebellion and anti-colonial outbursts. He firmly claimed that, "All I need to say in this speech is that for the years past we have been aware of the existence in Burma of a small section of Bengali Revolutionary Party, and we have contented ourselves with keeping a careful watch upon them. Recently, however, they have increased in numbers, and some time ago we received warning that they were contemplating outrages in Burma..... We have also reason to believe that during the past few months, they have set themselves to the task of trying to corrupt the younger generation in Burma."⁴¹ As a result of the passing of the bill twelve Bengalis were arrested from different parts of Burma of whom two were clerks from the office of Port Commissioner's, two school teachers, six at Rangoon and one each from Insein and Yamethin. But this proved that the revolutionary activities and anti-colonial political connections of Bengal with Burmese and their joint effort was to oust the colonial rulers.⁴² While the passing of the Burma Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 1931 in the Legislative Council in February 1931 to an act. The Honorable Home member stated in the house: "The Bengalis are efficient people and very highly intellectual. They are ill-mannered people and well disposed as a rule... Bengal has given us Rabindranath Tagore, Jagdis Bose, Vivekananda, Ram Mohan Roy, Rash Behary Bose and many other distinguished people in different professions... but some Bengalis have a kink in their brain, that is, they desire to remove all persons who do not see eye to eye with them."⁴³ The name of a Bengali revolutionary, Bhupendra Kumar Dutta is associated with the Saya San Rebellion and he though did not take part in the rebellion directly but he had close ties with the monks who were leading the movement. Bhupendra Kumar was arrested and deported to Mandalay jail

in 1923 and even inside the prisons he had contacts with the Burmese monks and other Bengali revolutionaries who were absconding in Burma. In 1931 on the outbreak of the Sayasan rebellion they were arrested along with Jiten Ghosh, their leader.⁴⁴

The Jugantar Party had similar its organization in Burma with its members namely Jitendra mohan Ghosh of Dacca, Khagendralal Mukherjee and Sukumar Sengupta. Sukumar Sengupta was a student of the medical college of Rangoon. There were S. N. Deb and Parimal Mukherjee who were also students in Burma. Jiten Ghosh had a shop named 'Students own Store' located in the Fraser Street in Rangoon which was suspected to be the hub for the revolutionaries in Burma. The Bengal Academy was also an important center of the Bengal Revolutionaries in Burma. There were many students from the school who were engaged in the nationalist activities. Khitish Chakraborty a student of the Bengal Academy was an assistant of the Jiten Ghosh. There were numerous students in Rangoon who were involved in the revolutionary activities. Trailokhyanath Chakraborty had a close contact with these members but however he was arrested in 1931.⁴⁵

III

The Thakin movement was in fact one of the effects of the Bengal-Burmese collaboration made by the efforts of the Bengal revolutionaries for the political development in Burma. Young Burman intellectuals formed the *Dobama* (We Burman) Movement which demanded that its members be addressed with the salutation, *Thakin* (master). It advocated "Burma for the Burmese." In addition to newspapers in Burmese, Western novels were adapted to Burman locales and given a local veneer. They gradually gave way to Burman stories, characters and issues.⁴⁶ The use of the word master to each other was probably a sarcastic expression against their colonial master who was considered as superiors. It was an expression of aversion for the Englishman. The Thakins were highly influenced by the Bengal revolutionaries took up the objective of the use of Burmese language, inspire national and to work in the ideals of non-violence like non-cooperation, ahimsa, and boycott. The Indo Burmese riot served as a powerful medium to expose the deplorable social and the economic conditions in Rangoon. In 1935 Thakin Ba Sein was elected as the first president. He had a close association with the Bengal revolutionaries and changed the name of the organization as 'Dohama Asi-Asyaon' or 'We Burmans Society'. They also contested the elections under the 1935 Act with the objective to wreck the government like the Swarajya Party. They were inspired by Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru. The Party opened its branches throughout Burma. The organization was mainly led by student's leaders, like Aung San, U Nu, U Ne Win, M. A. Rashid, Thakin Soe, Than Tun and others. The Thakins formulated a revolutionary parliamentary programme. Their objective was complete independence. They aimed to divide their objective that while their representatives fought within the councils the others organized militant mass action outside the council chamber.⁴⁷

The Thakins maintained a close relation with the mainstream Indian politics apart with the Bengal politics. The most important feature of the Thakin movement was similarity with the swadeshi movement in Bengal as there was active participation of the students. The swadeshi movement led to the development of the indigenous languages, literature,

drama, theatre, music and also gave an impetus to the indigenous industries. The Thakin movement led to the rise of the patriotic songs similar to the swadeshi songs of Bengal. Thakin Kodaw Hmaing, (the national poet of Burma) composed many swadeshi songs which were sung in gatherings of the Thakins. Thakin Kodaw Hmaing is one of the most respected nation builders, the father of the Burmese Peace Movement, and patron of the Burmese Nationalists for the independence struggle. He is popularly known as 'Tagore of Burma'.⁴⁸

The Thakin movement began to be influenced by the Communist movement of India and particularly of Bengal. The Communist Party of Burma was founded on August 15, 1939. The members were Thakin Aung San, Thakin Thein Pe, Thakin Ba Hein and Thakin Hla Pe later Bo Let Ya. In fact, Aung San a popular student's leader believed in violent method of achieving freedom under him there was the rise of another section of Thakins as communists.⁴⁹ The Bengal revolutionaries and Aung San formed a popular party with the objectives to the welfare of the students, peasants and workers. He was assisted by many Bengali communists namely Harinarayan Ghosal, Madhav Munshi, Subodh Mukherjee, Amar Nag and Barin De. Their objective was to free the country from British yoke. These leaders decided to meet the nationalist leaders both Congress and Communists before the formation of a larger political platform. Thus in 1938 Harinarayan Ghosal, Madhav Munshi and Amar Nag came to Calcutta via Dacca. They met Latika Das, the first woman communist in Dacca and in Calcutta Dr. Ranen Sen who advised them to leave for the Tripuri Congress session of INC. There they had a meeting with Jawarharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, Jayprakash Narayan and P. C. Joshi. After returning to Burma, the Communist Party of Burma was formed in 1940. Aung San was the first secretary of the party and the pioneer leaders were Amar Nag, Madhav Munshi, Gopal Munshi, Harinarayan Ghosal, Thakin Soe, Than Dun, Ba Hien, Amar De, Subodh Mukherjee, Binoy Sen and Arobindo Dutta. The party kept contact with the Indian communist leaders as well as the Indian National Congress. There were also extremist Phongyis (Buddhist Monks) in this section of Thakins. These revolutionaries established many secret cells to organize terrorist activities.⁵⁰

Ghosal was one of the foremost leaders of the Communist Party of Burma and the most prominent theoretician of the party for several years. Ghosal played an important role as a liaison between the Burmese party and the Communist Party of India (through its Bengal Provincial Committee). After the death of Thakin Ba Hein, Ghosal became the head of the All Burma Trade Union Congress. Ghosal's activities were mainly concentrated to Rangoon, organizing largely the Indian working class there. Ghosal edited a political and strategic document, calling for the Communist Party of Burma to prepare for armed struggle. The document would be nick-named the 'Ghosal Thesis' and was adopted by the Communist Party of Burma at a mass meeting in Pinyinmana on March 14, 1948. In the rally of the peasants there he promised to provide the peasants free land and no taxes.⁵¹

After the Japanese imperialist rule in Burma, many of the Bengali communists had broken the prison and came to India. But many of them stayed back to serve the motherland because for them Burma was no less than their own country. The poor condition of the Burmese peasants and workers touched their heart. H.N. Ghosal alias Thakin Ba Tin and

Dr. Nag alias Tun Maung, another Bengali revolutionary who had lived in Burma for a long time. There was a civil war in Burma between the two groups of the political party. Than Tun and Harinarayan Ghosal wanted to bring about a Mass revolution like in China but in their similar to struggle, which continued for two decades, led to the loss of lives of many Bengali communists namely, Harinarayan Ghosal, Subodh Mukherjee, Gopal Munshi, Amar, De and Amar Nag. The Communists were in the forefront of armed resistance which subsequently became a national uprising on 27 March 1945 led by the BNA under the command of General Aung San. The party that had started with a small group of men now became a major legal political party from 1945 until 1948 when Burma gained independence from Britain.⁵²

Beside the Thakins there was the growth of another party called Freedom Bloc in 1939. Ba Maw was the prime leader of this party. The main objective of this party was independence, Constituent Assembly and cabinet supervision of the special authorities of the governor. The Freedom Bloc was an ultra nationalist organization. It derived its name from the Indian 'Forward Bloc' led by Subhas Chandra Bose. The Burma Revolutionary Party, Dr. Ba Maw's Sinyetha group and Buddhist groups had become the members of the Forward Bloc. It was modeled on the Bose's party in India. The forward Bloc in Burma made a mass demonstration in Burma demanding the abolition of the Constitution of 1935.⁵³ Aung San had also met Bose in India when he visited the INC session held in Ramgarh in 1940. Aung San and the Thakin leaders met him in the Anti Compromise Camp held in the Indian National Congress session of 1940. The Thakins admired and revered the courage of Subhas Bose⁵⁴. It is impossible not be influenced by the charismatic personality of Subhas Bose whose presence in Burma was very conspicuous. The brave son of Bengal had inspired many Burmese youths to dedicate their lives to their motherland as well the political leaders in their course of political activities.

IV

The British police suspecting Subhas Bose to be one of the conspirators engaged in the assassination of police officers and also the smuggling of arms arrested him and was kept in the Calcutta jail. Later he was transferred to Rangoon and ultimately to Mandalay jail. Subhas Bose thus had his early connections with Burma in the year 1925-27 when he was imprisoned in the Mandalay jail. He was imprisoned along with Trailokya Chakraborty, Satyendra Chandra Mitra, Surendramohan Ghosh and Madanmohan Bhaumik.⁵⁵ Subhas Bose has mentioned about his experiences in his book 'The Indian Struggle' which was banned in India and also in Burma. There were other political prisoners namely Jibanlal Chatterjee and Bhupendra Kumar Dutta who were also in imprisoned to Mandalay jail prior to the arrival of Subhas Bose. Bose was highly impressed with the Buddhist pongyis or the monks whom he considered the finest specimen of humanity. He expressed his respect for the monks who had kept the flame of nationalism burning and never reconciled to the British culture. He was well informed about the political conditions in Burma and supported the Burmese nationalist struggle.⁵⁶ Further, the Calcutta session of 1926 was a significant event in the history of the nationalist movement in India. Burma-Bengal ties were further tightened

by the fact that Subhas Bose had won the election for the seat in the Bengal Legislative Council while he was in the Mandalay jail.⁵⁷

The political career of Bose was closely related to the South East Asia particularly between the years 1941 and 1945. Subhas Bose made a contact with Rashbehari Bose, a great revolutionary and a meeting was called in March 1942 where the idea of Indian National Army emerged. Netaji also took tour to Thailand, Indo-China, Burma and to all parts of Malaya to establish new branches of Indian Independence League, to collect funds, to open new recruitment centers for the army and enroll voluntary workers and soldiers in INA. In 1943 he took the charge formally of Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army or the Azad Hind Fauj. Aung San the Burmese nationalist leader who often met Subhas Bose was inspired by his political ideas and charismatic leadership and inaugurated the Burma Independence Army. Like the Azad Hind Fauj of Netaji, the BIA made an attempt to liberate Burma from the British control with the help of a foreign power i.e., Japan. After the upheaval in 1940 there were arrests of the nationalists by the colonial Government on the basis of Defence of Burma Act. Aung San along with Hla Mya left for Amoy and made contacts with Japan.⁵⁸ In 1941 even General Aung San had a strong conviction regarding Bose deemed Subhas Chandra Bose as a sincere friend of Burma and Burmese people. Netaji and Aung San came into close and frequent contacts during the Second World War. During a speech at the City Hall Rangoon on July 24 1946, General Aung San said, "I knew Netaji, even before I met him for the first time in Calcutta in 1940 by reading various accounts of his life of sacrifice and struggle and last of all, his own book *The Indian Struggle 1920-42* which was in those days banned in India and Burma. I knew his burning love for country and his people, and his unflinching determination to fight for the freedom of his country. I knew him also as a sincere friend of Burma and Burmese people. Between him and myself, there was complete mutual trust; and although time was against both of us so that we could not come to the stage of joint action for the common objective of the freedom of our respective nation, we did have an understanding in those days that, in any event, and whatever, happened, the INA and the BNA (Burmese National Army) should never fight each other. And I am glad to tell you to day that both sides did observe the understanding scrupulously on the whole, during the days when we were up in the arms against the Japs."⁵⁹ Bo Let Ya, one of the followers of Aung San has described that Aung San had held Bose in high esteem. Aung San had described to Bo Let Ya while staying together during the University Strike in 1936 that how Subhas Bose had qualified successfully the Indian Civil Service examination and did not join the British Indian service to join the Indian freedom struggle. Aung San had a great respect for Subhas Bose and as Bo Let Ya describes in his account that Aung San said, "After I had passed I would then throw away as Subhas Chandra Bose did, and go into politics. Then the country would look up to me for my education as well as my dedication."⁶⁰ Bose thus created Asian consciousness and a new spirit which was joined together with the Burmese nationalists.

The political life was largely affected by the immigrant Bengalis. In the political sphere there was a close collaboration between the Bengalis and the Bengal revolutionary party with the Burmese and Burmese leaders like Bhikhu U. Ottama and Aung San. The

Thakin Party also drew inspiration from Bengali revolutionaries and the Burmese communist party had many Bengalis as its members. It always looked to Indian Communist Party in Bengal. They looked towards the INC, Gandhi, Nehru and Bose. They took up armed struggle like Subhas Chandra Bose. Many of the Burmese nationalists like Bhikhu U. Ottama did not support the separation of Burma from India. The Bengalis were in fact a part of the politics of Burma which changed its courses following Bengal. The interactions between the two communities led the Burmese struggle for independence been largely was guided, inspired and developed by the courses and political ideas and leaders of Bengal, which dominated the politics of India during the twentieth century.

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Numismatic Evidence on the Chronology and Succession of the Rulers of the Kingdom of Kamta-Koch Behar

Debajit Dutta

All historical interpretation is ultimately based on evidence derived from the sources of history, conventionally derived into two categories – literary and archaeological. From a historical point of view, literary sources include all texts and on the other hand archeological sources include all tangible material remains like inscription, coins and inscribed and un-inscribed images. Among these archaeological sources, coins have a unique place in the reconstruction of the old events.¹ It is right to state that coins have enormous power for initiating “an unending dialogue between the past and the present”. A viable definition of history which underlies three usages of words- thought, record or events, can conspicuously be read from the bearings on the two sides of a coin. A.H.M. Jones pointed out the value of numismatic evidence with the following words – “Numismatic is a science in its own right. Coins deserve study both from the technical and artistic point of view and must be classified typographically and chronologically”.²

A coin technically speaking is a piece of metal of prescribed weight, embellished with designs or legends and produced under the direction of a public or private authority for its use as a medium of exchange.³ Every coin has two sides obverse and reverse. Obverse is also called head. It is the main side of a coin carrying the portrait head of the ruler or a symbol and name of the country. Reverse is the back side of a coin and is called tail. It depicts the denomination or issue price of the coin with year and mint mark underneath.⁴ Besides this technical side the study of coins gives an insight into many aspects of the culture of a region. At first glance, coins may appear to carry little historical information but they provide ample light to several important historical processes. Their very existence and in particular the denominations and number of pieces issued, shed light on the economic and social aspect of a country. The issuing authority sheds light on the political history. The quality of production indicates technological developments. The metal content indicates minting activity, if the metal was mined locally or imported and also the trading link as well. The choice of design and inscription often shows the religious preference of the issuing authority and the quality of execution sheds light on religious iconography and artistic development.⁵ In fact, coins are datable contemporary documents of a rather special nature and as such, they can be of great value to the historians.

The genesis of metallic currency in India was followed by regular issue of coinage in different regions of the country. The use of coins in India can be traced from an early time⁶ The Indian people used to place equal emphasis on *Dharma- Artha- Kama* principal in life. Scholars believe that paradigm of true coins in the modern sense are not available in

any literary work of the pre Buddhistic period. It is also categorically observed that no regular currency or coinage appears to have been introduced even in the age of the *Upanisads* and *Sutras*, as no coins definitely belonging to this period have been unearthed and no specific and undoubted reference to coins occurs in the literature of the period. But without any prejudice or reservation it can be opined that a regular system of coinage or currency was probably in vogue during the time of the great grammarian Panini⁷ (c. sixth-fifth century B.C) who mentions (in *Ashtadhyayi*) coins like – *Pana*, *Karshapana* and *Pada*. This leads us to presume that coins and currency system in India was well known to people, although the other system of exchange was also in practice side by side.⁸ In this paper an attempt will be made to throw some light on the coins issued by the Kamta-Kochbehar Kings.

The state of Koch Behar was situated between 25° 57'40" and 26°32'20" north latitude and 88° 47' 40" and 89°51'35" east longitude. The territory of modern Koch Behar originally formed a part of the ancient kingdom of Pragjotish and Kamrupa⁹ and had no separate existence of its own as a distinct principality prior to the abolition of the ancient Kamarupa Kingdom. The name 'Koch Behar' is a compound of two words Koch and Bihar. The word 'Koch'¹⁰ is a corrupted form of 'Kuch' and it means a race of people and 'Behar' means the abode or land of the Koches. The origin of the Koch Behar State can be traced back as early as to the sixteenth century and it was a small kingdom situated just south of the Himalayas controlling the main route up to the Brahmaputra River from Bengal and Bihar to Assam. The state was founded about 1510 A.D.¹¹ in the vacuum created after the collapse of the Hindu kingdom of Kamrupa and Kamta. There is a great deal of obscurity leading to some academic controversy about the way it was established and more so about the ancestry of its original founder. In spite of a very modest beginning as a small principality in the early years of the sixteenth century, the Koch Behar state was unique for its long existence and can boast of its remote antiquity, sustained continuity and survival down the centuries.

The original inhabitants of Koch Behar and its royal family belonged to a branch of Mongoloid race and believed to have originally come from Tibet. However the history of Koch Behar is mainly based on literary sources. The literatures like *charita*, *vamsavalies*, *Assam Burunjis*, foreign travelers account, *puranas*, diplomatic letters etc. are the main literary sources and they have left an account of chronological history of Koch Behar. But only literature can not be taken as the authentic source material for reconstructing the Koch history:

A few inscriptions of the Koch kings so far known have not been properly utilized and are not therefore, of much help to us in reconstructing the history of Koch Behar. In this respect coins of Koch Behar are of immense historical importance particularly as these coins are among the earliest historical documents that survive from the region and almost invariably dated as they are; for they duly bear the names and epithets of the issuing kings. The evidence of coins not only corroborates genuine facts as given by the literary sources but also supplements information not supplied by the literary sources.

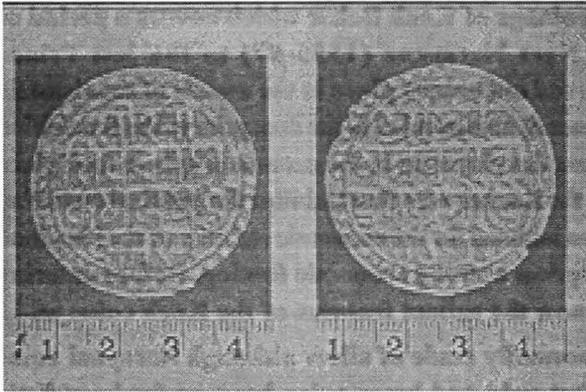
The most extensive series of coinage of Koch Behar which covers a period of about five centuries starting from Nara Narayana (1555-87) to the last Prince Jagaddipendra Narayana (1936-49) curved out unique place in the annals of numismatic heritage of India. Though some other minor dynasties ruled in the area prior to the acquisition of power by the Koches, yet no significant development in the economic sphere took place because of the political instability. It was the Koches who first stabilize the political condition by suppressing other tribal groups and also initiated for the economic stability of the kingdom. They took concrete steps to give the kingdom a strong economic footing. Before entering into the core issue it is important to know the salient features of the Koch coinage.

The coins of Koch Behar are normally made of silver although Narayani coins were struck in gold and brass also. But gold and brass coins have so far been little noticed.¹² The coins are usually of full, half and quarter denominations.

The dates of Koch Behar coins are always given in the Rajasaka era. The Rajasaka era is normally regarded as commencing in 1510 A.D., so that the dates can be converted to A.D by the addition of 1509 years.

The characteristic feature of the Koch Behar coins was that the epithet and the name of the king are inscribed on the obverse side and the phrase "*Sri Sri Shivacharana Kamalamadhu Karasya*" inscribed on the reverse. This particular phrase is engraved in most of the coins of the Koch dynasty. The coins of Koch Kingdom were not only known as '*Narayanimudra*' after the title Narayana assumed by the rulers but also known as '*Sivatanka*'¹³ as the association of Siva with the people of the Kingdom was very deep rooted.

There is no historical evidence as to when coins were first used in old *Kamatapura* or Koch kingdom. The oldest surviving coins of *Kamatapura* were of Samsuddin Ilias Sah which was recovered with other coins from *Kamatapura* (Gosanimari) in 1863 by the discovery of a big hoard of 13500 pieces of silver coins.¹⁴ After Nilambara the last king of *Khen* dynasty of *Kamatapura*, Visvasimha of the Koch clan became the ruler of *Kamatapura*. Visvasimha during his first few years was busy in consolidating his position to the north of the Brahmaputra. After the departure of the Muhammadans the whole country was ruled by a number of petty independent chiefs. Visvasimha seized this opportunity and in course of time made himself the master of the country west of Bara Nadi.¹⁵ Visvasimha assumed the title of *Kamateswara* and declared himself an independent king after his formal coronation in c.1496 A.D. It was the usual practice among the Indian rulers to issue coins in their own name, the moment they felt themselves independent and powerful enough to do that. But unfortunately no coins have so far been discovered. This may lead us to believe that unstable political condition of the time might have prevented Visvasimha from issuing any coins in his name. But *Rudrasimha Burunji* refers to a meeting between the Ahom King *Suhunmun* and *Visvasimha* in *Saka* 1419 (i.e. A.D.1497) in which *Visvasimha* presented a purse of 500 coin struck in his own name and five horses. From the above statement it is clear that *Visvasimha* issued coins in his own name and we believe with Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahamed that his coins may be discovered when the old city of *Kamarupa* will be excavated.¹⁶



An unusual coin of Nara Narayan

Visvasimha's successor Nara Narayan ascended the throne in 1555. Although there may be speculations on whether *Visvasimha* issued coins or not but surely it was the credit of his son Nara Narayan whose coins are discovered plenty in number from Koch Behar and adjoining Assam.¹⁷ During Nara Narayan's reign the Koch Empire expanded almost upto Burma in the east and in the west upto Bihar and several neighboring

rulers were forced to acknowledge the suzerainty of Koch Behar. The military campaigns enabled Nara Narayan to accumulate a large quantity of silver as booty and tribute by which Nara Narayan could strike coins. His full rupees are very plentiful but only a few specimens of half and quarter rupees are known. All the coins are of same basic design, with an invocation to Siva on the obverse and the name of king and the date 1477 (1555 A.D.) on the reverse. It is probably that this date merely represents the accession year. These coins were struck on several occasions and perhaps even in the several mints throughout the reign.

After the death of Nara Narayana his son Laxmi Narayan (1555-81) ascended the throne and also coined money. The coins of Laxmi Narayana were identical in style to the late coins of his father. Apart from his half rupee coin, quarter and half rupees are also found. All these coins have the same accession year that is 1509.

After Laxmi Narayana the most important names of the Kings, who struck coins are Raghu Deva (1581-1603), Parikshit Narayan (1603-1613), Bira Narayan (1627-1633), Prana Narayan (1633-1665), Mada Narayan (1663-1681), Vasudeva Narayan (1681-1683), Mahendra Naryana (1683-1695), Rupa Narayana (1695-1715), Rajendra Narayana (1770-72), Dharendra Narayan (1772-75), Dhairyendra Narayana (1775-83) and Harendra Narayana (1783-1839).¹⁸

This continuation of striking coins was hampered due to the invasion of Bhutan in the late 18th century. The King of Koch Behar took help of the English East India Company to resist the Bhutanese attack and made an agreement with the British (1773)¹⁹ By this agreement Koch kingdom became a tributary state and it lost the authority of minting coins. Finally the Koch mint was permanently closed by a British order of 27th December, 1845. But in spite of that coins were struck ceremonially upto the reign of Jagaddipendra Narayan (1936) and the rulers retained the right to strike one hundred one gold and one thousand one silver coins on the occasion of their coronation and the transaction of Narayani currency was in vogue upto the first half of the 19th century.

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6. According to Cunningham (*Coins of Ancient India*, London, 1891, p. 43) the date of the earliest coinage goes back to 1000 B.C, but J. Allan (*British Museum Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India*, London, 1936, pp. xvi, xvii, xix) is not inclined to place them earlier than the Maurya period, the single-type silver coins alone being given an earlier date.
7. Agarwala, V.S., *India as Known to Panini*, Lucknow, 1953, pp. 37ff and 48ff.
8. It is generally believed that the method of exchange of the primitive man was usually confined to barter. Besides this Cowrie shells also served as currency for smaller transactions.
9. Chaudhury, H.N., *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*, Koch Behar, 1903, p.209.
10. The scholars are not unanimous about the etymological source of the term 'Koch'. S.K. Chatterji a distinguished philologist, argues that the term Koch has been originally derived from the Indo-Aryan source *Kawamca*, written as *Kamoca*, which was sanskritized as *Kamboja*. (Sunity kumar Chatterji, (1998) *Contributions to the History and Culture of India*, reprint ed, The Asiatic Society, p.111, Calcutta). The term *kamboja* has been further elevated to *kubachaka* through *Komc-Koch-Kubacha* continuum. Whatever may be the actual source and differentiability in nomenclature we will use the term Koch to indicate the race.
11. Rhodes, N.G & S.K. Bose, *The Coinage of Cooch Behar*, Dhubri, 1999, p. 1.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
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as descended from Lord *Siva*. (See, Ghoshal.S.C., *A History of Cooch Behar* (1942), Koch Behar, p. 304.)

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The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and the Untold Story of its Extension

Bhawna Rai

The UNESCO's inscription mentions the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) in the following words: - "The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is the first, and still the most outstanding, example of a hill passenger railway. Opened in 1881, it applied bold and ingenious engineering solution to the problem of establishing an effective rail link across a mountainous terrain of great beauty. It is still fully operational and retains most of its original features intact."^{1a}

The Tiny, name of the first engine of the DHR, connected the sweaty plains with the cool and serene Hills for the first time in 1880.² On March 4 of that year, the then Viceroy of India, Robert I, Earl of Lytton inaugurated the line from Siliguri to Kurseong as steam tramway. From August 1880, the tramway was opened for the public use. It was only on July 4, 1881, the line was completed up to Darjeeling and the name was changed from Darjeeling Steam Tramway Company to Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Company on 15th of September. It is amazing to know that this small size locomotive, running on a narrow gauge of 2 feet wide covering a total distance of 52 km, had its branches as well. The fact of its two branches i.e. the Kishengunj Branch and the Teesta Valley Extension is common to all. However, few are familiar about its unfulfilled plans of extensions. This article is indeed to highlight such untold facts of DHR extension.

The importance and vitality of Darjeeling can be understood when we come across the view of Alastair Lamb, who says, 'the cession of Darjeeling was an event of the greatest importance in the history of northern frontier of India.' He further suggests that as the hill station of Shimla 'was destined to play a part in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations, comparable to that played later by another hill station, Darjeeling.'³ Even Joseph Hooker in

a. The proposal for DHR as a World Heritage site was submitted by the National Rail Museum on 29 June 1998 to the UNESCO. Many inquiry and evaluations were made for the heritage criteria and the DHR was sanctioned the status of the World Heritage. Criteria: (i) Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is an outstanding example of the influence of an innovative transportation system on the social and economic development of a multi-cultural region, which was to serve as a model for similar developments in many parts of the world. (ii) The development of railways in the 19th century had a profound influence on social and economic developments in many parts of the world. This process is illustrated in an exceptional and seminal fashion by the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. 2. The Eastern Indian Railway workshop situated at Jamalpore (Jamalpur) was assigned to construct the first engine of the DHR & due to its size instantly christened as 'Tiny'.

1850 in his *Himalayan Journal* recorded that the prospects of Darjeeling itself are neither doubtful nor insignificant. The location of the place is a nature's gift in itself. It has the mighty, magnificent peaks and mountain ranges, soothing climate enriched with flora, and fauna, leaves one's heart singing and mesmerizing. Surrounded by Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan, Darjeeling therefore, occupies an important place in terms of strategy and commerce. 'Trade' consisted a chief feature of the British administration. Reflection of which could be gathered from the Calcutta Review of 1857 that Darjeeling was the gate^b through which commerce and culture of the west could reach central Asia. Similarly in 1861, Sir Ashley Eden expressed his view to the Government of Bengal that 'a very considerable trade will spring up between Lhasa and Darjeeling. The Tibetans will only be too glad to exchange gold dust, musk, borax, wool and wait for English cloth, tobacco etc. and the people of Sikkim will gain as carriers of this trade, and their government will raise a considerable revenue from the transit duties.' By 1864, the Government of Bengal was convinced that Darjeeling could develop as a center of Indo-Tibetan trade as evident from Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Imports from and exports to (in Rs.) Tibet and Sikkim

From & to	Years	Imports	Exports
Tibet	1862-63	64,005	43,700
Sikkim	1860-63	89,535	19,450

Source: Sen, J., *Darjeeling: A Favoured Retreat*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1989, p.25.

Table 2: Imports from and exports to (in Lakhs of Rs.) Sikkim

Years	Imports	Exports
1880-81	1.68	0.81
1900-01	4.21	2.46

Source: Banerjee, A.K., *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, 1980.

From Nepal food- grains, cotton piece goods, manufactured wool and hides, potatoes, sheep, goats, cattle and poultry were imported in return for European piece-goods and cotton twist, salt, kerosene-oil, tobacco and food-grains.⁴ The trade with Sikkim was of same kind. In addition, that of Bhutan was in small scale since most of the Bhutanese trade passed through the district of Jalpaiguri.

There was already the public demand for a good cart road for trade purpose much before the coming of the DHR. The Indo-Tibetan trade was in a flourishing condition. The opening of the DHR in 1881 has been jotted down by Sarat Chandra Das that 'By the opening of the Darjeeling railway, Calcutta where most of the Chinese articles valued in Tibet may be easily and chiefly procured, will be brought within three weeks' journey of

b. In the early eighties of the last century frontier trade with Nepal was registered at Naksalbari, Ghum and Kanjilia. 'Report on the External Trade of Bengal, with Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan for the year 1880-81', Government of Bengal, Calcutta, 1881, pp. II-III.

Lhasa... The Tibetans thoroughly appreciate these facilities, and every Tibetan who has ever visited Darjeeling warmly praises our government for making the Jelep la Road. The Chinese government naturally fear that with the opening of free intercourse between Tibet and India, China will be a great loser so far as her commercial interest are concerned.⁵

The success of DHR in the hill station and the profitable return on the dividend of 8% to the investors in 1886 (Table 3) gave Franklin Prestage, Chairman of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Company, the idea of an extension line to Nepal (Fig.1). 'The bait of Tibetan wool, inter alia, led to the proposal of a big leap to reach the heart of Central Asia through the extension of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway'.⁶

Table 3: Dividend return to the investors

Year	Percentage
1886	8
1895	10-12
1909-10	8
1914-15	15-16
1919-20	8

Source: From different records of the DHR

He was serious about his scheme and submitted the same to the Government of India. He, in the same year unofficially communicated to the Resident of the Nepali Durbar about the possibility of a shorter distance for the Central Asian trade via Nepal. Since the trade between China and Tibet was carried on through the Arun valley and if the scheme of the extension line materializes, India would procure the benefits. The distance of the Tingri

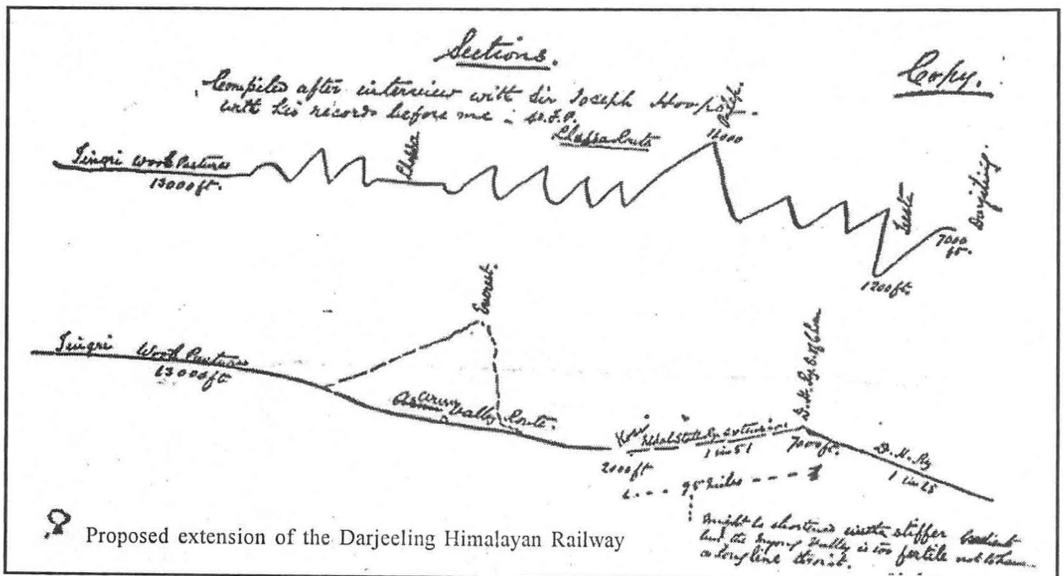


Fig. 1: Sketch of the proposed extension of DHR to Nepal by Prestage

Source: Sen, J., *Darjeeling: A Favoured Retreat*.

Maidan, the pasture and wool producing center of Tibet, was only 262 miles away from the terminus of DHR via Tamakote, the proposed terminus for Nepal extension. It was only 180 miles from Tamakote with a continuous descent of Arun Valley from 12,500 ft. to 2,900ft. Whereas, the existing distance via Lhasa was 770 miles. Franklin Prestage's plan was the inclusion of a bridle track across the frontier into Nepal, by Ilam or by the best route into the Tambur Valley to Dhankota, an important market at the confluence of the Kosi, the Arun and the Tambur rivers as well as Arun Valley and Kathmandu roads.

The official effort of Prestage noticed in the correspondence to the Resident on 25 June 1889 that the Directors of the DHR Co. might approach the Nepal Durbar with the proposal of an extension line starting from the terminus of the Kosi and Arun on the east end of Kathmandu Valley, about 82 miles in length. Further, it will be extended along the Singalila Range to the most suitable point. In a letter dated 20 September 1889 Prestage got the green signal from the Secretary to the Government of India on the condition that he should consult the Resident. To make sure of its execution Prestage integrated certain beneficiary points for both the countries.⁷ He cited for Nepal the advantages like:

- i. Cheaper and faster rail transport
- ii. Availability of surplus food grains from Rangpur, Dinajpore and other districts of North Bengal at low rates in times of scarcity or famine
- iii. Easy availability of nearest market for surplus produce or imports of goods
- iv. The prospects of Tea gardens at an elevation from 3000 ft to 5000 ft.
- v. Even if 5 miles on each side of the line is brought under cultivation, it will bring Rs. 3,60,000 per annum.
- vi. Permanent revenue may be incurred from the fertile valley of Myong and Tambur.
- vii. Trade in the Arun Valley with Tibet would benefit the Nepal govt.
- viii. Job opportunity for surplus labour is guaranteed
- ix. The forest trees on the Myong ridges may be supplied as charcoal, tea chests etc. which otherwise was brought from Japan etc.

Advantages for India:

- i. Easy availability of Tibetan wool, the cost of transport would be 1/3 than that of Lhasa and Sikkim route
- ii. Availability of fuel midway on the line
- iii. Increase of wood and wool exports to Calcutta
- iv. Recruitment of Gurkha soldiers
- v. To procure skilled and intelligent labour for railway in the plains
- vi. Free use of waste land for the construction purpose (if permitted by the Durbar) etc.

However, on 9th October, 1889 the Resident of Nepal Durbar reported Prestage about the refusal of the proposal. Finally, on 4th November, 1892 it was officially confirmed when the Secretary to the Government of Nepal wrote of Durbar's inability to comply with the proposal for the construction of the railway in the country. The proposal of Prestage was much calculated and planned just like the DHR. His many attempts were foiled by the Durbar and his dream were never meted. He died in October 1897.⁸ Nepal, in the present context enjoys very little scope of railway network. Perhaps the acceptance might have given Nepal the needed economic benefits in terms of tourist and natural resources. However, Nepal must have her own reason for the refusal. Moreover, a peep into the governmental

papers and reports reflects the uncertainty of the peaceful relations. There were always doubts and precautions on any developments on either side of the boundary. For instance according to Darjeeling district records, in 1839, when the Nepal durbar pleaded for a passage of its troops through sikkim for the conquest of Bhutan; Hodgson was convinced of Nepal's expansion towards the east. According to a letter dated 14th November, 1854 Edmonstone informed that the preparation of Jung Bahadur were directed against Tibet even though the Government may see reason for watchfulness.¹⁰

The letter dated 5th December, 1872 reveals that Colonel Houghton, the then Commissioner of Cooch Behar, expressed his deep concern on the proposed visit of Jung Bahadur to Darjeeling. 'The mere idea of his visit is a cause of much alarm to the inhabitants. I have this day received a report that the inhabitants of Dooars are burying their valuable and preparing to flee. Bhootea Durbar regards his movement with suspicion and an intimation that he was coming to the neighborhood of the chief pass into the country would increase this feeling. My own subjects, I am told, believed that his visit has a reference to some common projects hostile to themselves connected between Sir Jung Bahadur and the Bhooteas.'¹¹ Another instance was the news of strong garrisons along the Darjeeling frontier in 1878. Bengal was instructed 'to maintain an effective check upon attempts of the Nepal Durbar to import arms through India.'¹² Ultimately in 1888-89, Bengal accepted the proposal of A.W. Paul, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, for a strong force at Tonglu, Sandakphu –Phalut range.¹³ From these extracts, it is understandable that the relation was always skeptical. Hence, the rejection of the DHR Extension to Nepal is not that complicated. The victory of Muglan (India was referred as Muglan i.e. the land of the Mughals by the inhabitants of Nepal) by the English might have opened their eyes.

Moreover, the Durbar itself had tasted the bitterness of the losses during the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-16. This was how the long effort and failure for the DHR extension to Nepal ended in a fiasco.

Other proposals for extension

As early as 1909, the Directors of the DHR Company thought of additional lines to meet the need of growing traffic (Table 4).

Table 4: Growing traffic for passenger and goods

Year	No. of Passenger	Freight (in tons)
1881	8,000	380
1884	36,500	16,730
1896-97	30,000 (approx.)	15,510
1909-10	174,000	47,000
1914-15	250,000	60,000
1917	239,696	59,740
1919-20	263,000	62,000

Source: *The Iron Sherpa*, Vol. 1, Martin Terry, 2006, U.K., pp. 63, 70, 173.

Hence to meet the requirement, in September 1909 proposals were made for three extension lines—one for Kishengunj, second for Kalimpong and the third one towards the Lebong spur. Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Extensions Company (DHRE) was formed in 1913.¹⁴ The estimated return for the first two lines was Rs. 552,000. Out of which half would be used as working expense and a return of 5% be given as dividend to the investors. The DHRE Co. was authorized to construct a line from Panchanai to Kishengunj in the plains and another from the Sevoke to the Kalimpong respectively (Fig.2). The Kishengunj Branch of 67 miles and Teesta Valley Branch of only 26 miles were opened for traffic by 1915. However, after partition in 1947, the former was converted to meter gauge with further extension to Barsoi and Teesta Valley was converted to mixed 2 ft and meter gauge, which, too, was extended further. Unfortunately, in 1951 the line was abandoned after it was washed away the previous year.¹⁴

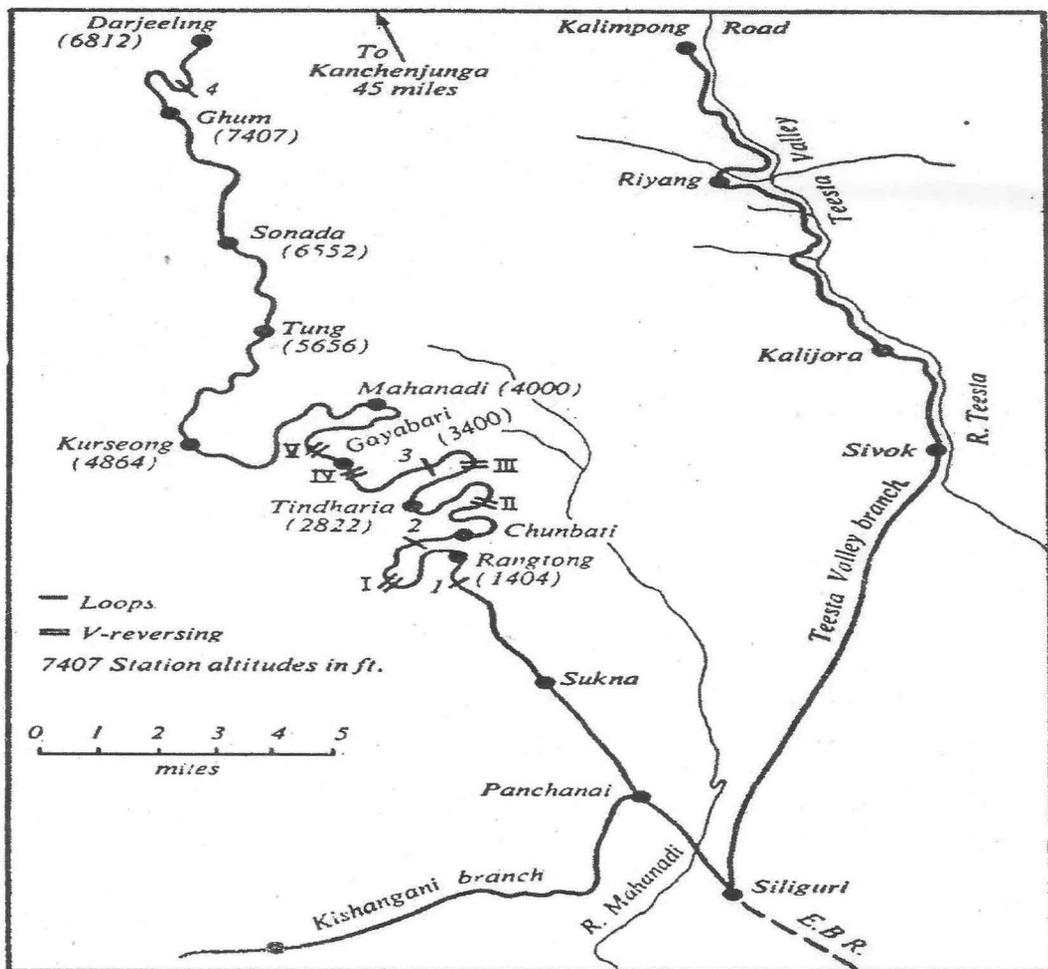


Fig. 2. Map of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway for which DHRE Co. was authorised to construct rail lines

Source: Bhandari R.R., Darjeeling Himalayan Railway

The third scheme to lay an outlay towards the Lebong spur, which is only 4½ miles from the Darjeeling town, was not sanctioned. The place was a military barrack and long before it, Prestage had already made an understanding with the army for transporting the troops at a reasonable price and comfort.*

Another such half-hearted steps were taken for an extension to the Mirik from Naxalbari. In the year, 1916-17 statistics were collected for the purpose. This was welcomed by the authorities of Behar and Orissa govt. for a summer resort but was inconclusive. Mirik, located at an altitude of 5,300ft attracted the attention of the DHR Co. and a fresh survey was made from Naxalbari via Panighatta and Namsu to Mirik, which again went in the obscurity.

During the same years of 1916-18, a plan was formulated for a further extension of the Teesta Valley line at 34½ miles, to Gangtok via cart road and Rangpu. Based on survey the scheme was first to construct a girder –bridge instead of existing suspension bridge on the river Teesta near its junction with Rangeet. The bridge was to be of 300 ft in length and few changes were to be done to avoid slips from hindering the regularity of the traffic. Altogether five stations were to complete the route –Melli at 3rd mile, Tarkhola at 9th mile, Rangpu at 14½ mile, Sankokhola at 24½ mile and lastly Gangtok. Rangpu would be serving as a siding for railway stock. The Sikkim line was to be constructed for tapping the resources of the country in general. This too, could not assume its fulfillment.

However, time has always emphasized the need and viability of such endeavors of extension attested to by the fact that the Railway Ministry is again reconsidering extensions to Mirik and Sikkim. If materialized such an act would definitely bring these areas under the flow of development and integration and will mark a new beginning in the glorious history of DHR.

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The Revolt of 1857: A Search for Secular Approach

Malay Saha

Secularism is a concept where government or other entities adopt the policy of separating the state from religion and/or religious beliefs. In one sense, secularism means a freedom from governmental imposition of religion upon the people within a state that is neutral on matters of religious belief. When someone caters to the word secularism, one certainly lays down two different paths for religion and politics to tread on. In medieval Europe there was a strong tendency for religious persons to despise human affairs and to meditate on God and the afterlife. As a reaction to this medieval tendency, secularism, at the time of the Renaissance, exhibited itself in the development of humanism, when people began to show more interest in human cultural achievements and the possibilities of their fulfillment in this world, which for some analysts were the initiation of Renaissance. From its birth, secularism started its journey with a view that state will remain free from religious affiliation. Another important feature of secularism was that religion is only an individual affair and in public affair religion should have no role to control or lead human life. It mainly arose to fight against Christian laws which led to blasphemy in medieval Europe. Secularism never denied religion in human life but it denies the necessity and importance of religion in politics. In the present day world, the term secularism encompasses all values and beliefs devoid of any religious-spiritual code.

In a general way, the definition of secularism is taken to be as a belief in the fulfillment of life in this world through material instrument, a belief in natural causation that there is a cause behind every event of nature located in natural laws, recognition of reason, free inquisition and conduct experiment as intermediary of human vocation, inviolability of each person irrespective of accidents of birth and inherent human rights to freedom and autonomy. In another sense, it refers to the view that human activities and decisions, especially political ones, should be based on evidence and fact unbiased by religious influence.¹

It has been argued that secularism is a movement toward societal modernization. This type of secularism, on a social or philosophical level, has often occurred but secularism on a social level is less prevalent^{2,3} Within countries as well, different political movements support secularism for varying reasons.⁴ Religious beliefs are widely considered a relevant part of the political discourse in India. This contrasts with other countries (Western) where religious references are generally considered out-of-place in mainstream politics. Positive ideals behind the secular society are —

- a. Deep respect for individuals and the small groups, of which they are a part,
- b. Equality of all people,
- c. Breaking down of the barriers of religious differences.⁵

In the Indian context, secularism from the mid 19th century has been viewed from a very positive dimension. The great revolt was a watershed in the history of modern India. It marked the first national challenge to the British rule in India, emboldened the growth of Indian nationalist politics and presaged significant constitutional changes in British India.⁶ The nineteenth century India witnessed many anti-imperialist uprisings against British imperialism. Amongst the most significant were the Kol Uprising of 1831, the Santhal Uprising of 1855, and the Kutch Rebellion, which lasted from 1816 until 1832. There was also precedence of a soldier's mutiny when Indian soldiers in Vellore (Tamil Nadu, Southern India) mutinied in 1806. Although unsuccessful, it led to the growth of unofficial political committees of soldiers who had several grievances against their British overlords. The 1857 revolt in India was much more powerful. The various societal fringes that existed during the revolt were broken up amongst various class and religious divisions since long. But when the revolt took place such division or barriers simply withered, where one can witness groups fighting against a single exploiter irrespective of their caste or religion. Such amalgamation of barriers can be attributed to a sudden birth of a sense of equality and secularism among the rebels who fought against the East India Company. One may also note that the barriers disappeared amongst the rebels only during the revolt. Difference existed, before and continued to exist even after the revolt. In this paper an attempt will be made to highlight the cohesive attempt of the sepoys against the common enemy as a whole. The revolt started with the mutiny of Indian sepoys over the use of greased cartridges, but the sepoys were soon joined by broader sections of people whose economic, political and social rights were encroached and had been exploited by the East India Company. The unique feature of the 1857 revolt was the solidarity amongst the rebels cutting across religious and cultural barriers. Leaders of the revolt issued proclamations to stress the importance of communal amity, emphasizing the need of unity of the Hindus and the Muslims to join hands together to drive out the Britishers and protect their own rights, customs and rituals. For the colonised, the feeling was of patriotism, sacrifice and of an overarching solidarity cutting across the traditional divides in Indian society. The Azamgarh proclamation⁷ called upon the Indians of all classes and of all religions to rise up against tyranny of the British. The rebel leader Feroz shah's proclamation of August 1857 reiterated the same national spirit: "it is well known to all that in this age, the people of Hindustan, both Hindus and Mohammedans, are being ruined under the tyranny and oppression of the infidel and treacherous English".⁸

Historians have also drawn our attention to such examples of muslim rebel leaders banning sacrifices of cows during the Id festival to avoid any Hindu- Muslim discord. The striking feature of the revolt of 1857 was that both the Hindus and the Muslims assiduously organized the front against the foreign rule. Hindu – Muslim unity was visible among soldiers and people as well as among leaders.⁹ The frustration the sepoys felt was largely caused by the policy of organizing the army by the British Imperial Government. For reasons of convenience, the British recruited soldiers for the Bengal army from an area where people spoke and understood the same language namely; Hindustani.¹⁰ Rules were framed in 1850 to include the stipulation that upper caste men only would be recruited to the Bengal army. At the same time in order to encourage cohesive action at command, divisions on religious

lines were not introduced in the Bengal army. Imperialism had not discovered till then that it could use everywhere religious divisions between Hindu and Muslims. For this lapse they were censured by a loyal official and future educationist, Syed Ahmed Khan, when he wrote his book *Asbab-e-Bagawat-e-Hind* (causes of the Indian rebellion), in which he argued that it was a mistake for the British government to put both Hindu and Muslim sepoys in the same regiments and companies, for when they shed their blood together, they became closer than brothers to each other, and could no longer be used against each other. Soldiers of this modern army, which had very little to do with the Indian ruling classes of older days, and which was perhaps the most numerous modern element in Indian society of that time, had thus evolved two important features. It was very highly caste sensitive, and yet it was not communal.¹¹ It was stated repeatedly on the floor of the British parliament that both the Talukders and the Hindu-Muslim peasants of Oudh had joined hands in the rebellion against the British government and the tie was strengthened by the proclamation of the Mughal prince Firoz Shah (25th August 1857) the pundits, fakirs, and learned men, both Hindu and Muslim, would be given lands, provided they declare in favour of the rebels. Starting out as a revolt of the sepoys-it was soon accompanied by a rebellion of the civil population, particularly in the North Western Provinces and Oudh. The masses gave vent to their opposition to British rule by attacking government buildings and prisons. They raided the "treasury", charged on barracks and court houses, and threw open the prison gates. The civil rebellion had a broad social base, embracing all sections of society - the territorial magnates, peasants, artisans, religious mendicants and priests, civil servants, shopkeepers and boatmen. For several months after the uprising began in Meerut on May 10, 1857, British rule ceased to exist in the northern plains of India. Muslim and Hindu rulers alike joined the rebelling soldiers and militant peasants, and other nationalist fighters. Among the most prominent leaders of the uprising were Nana Sahib, Tantia Tope, Bakht Khan, Azimullah Khan, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Kunwar Singh, Maulvi Ahmadullah, Bahadur Khan and Rao Tula Ram. Former rulers had their own grievances against the British, including the notorious law on succession, which gave the British the right to annex any princely state if it lacked "legitimate male heirs". The rebels established a Court of Administration consisting of ten members - six from the army and four from the civilians with equal representation of Hindus and Muslims. The rebel government abolished taxes on articles of common consumption, and penalized hoarding. Amongst the provisions of its charter was the liquidation of the hated 'Zamindari' system imposed by the British and a call for land to the tiller.¹² The support from the kings is good evidence of non communal attitude of the rulers as for example Nana Sahib's world view was not clouded by religious prejudices and the Rani of Jhansi, some of whose most determined fighters were Muslim gunners and Pathan guards. On the supposedly Muslim side, the way the standard of jihad was removed from the Jama Masjid in May 1857 at Delhi, lest it be apprehended as being directed against the Hindus, and all cow and buffalo slaughter was banned at the Muslim Idus zuha festival in July, it showed the rebels' determination to prevent all religious disputation. At Bareilly, Bahadur Khan, the principal rebel leader, printed an appeal to Hindu chiefs to join the struggle against the British, detailing the attacks on Hindu customs and taboos by the British and offering, on behalf of Muslims, to utterly abjure cow slaughter and the eating of beef.

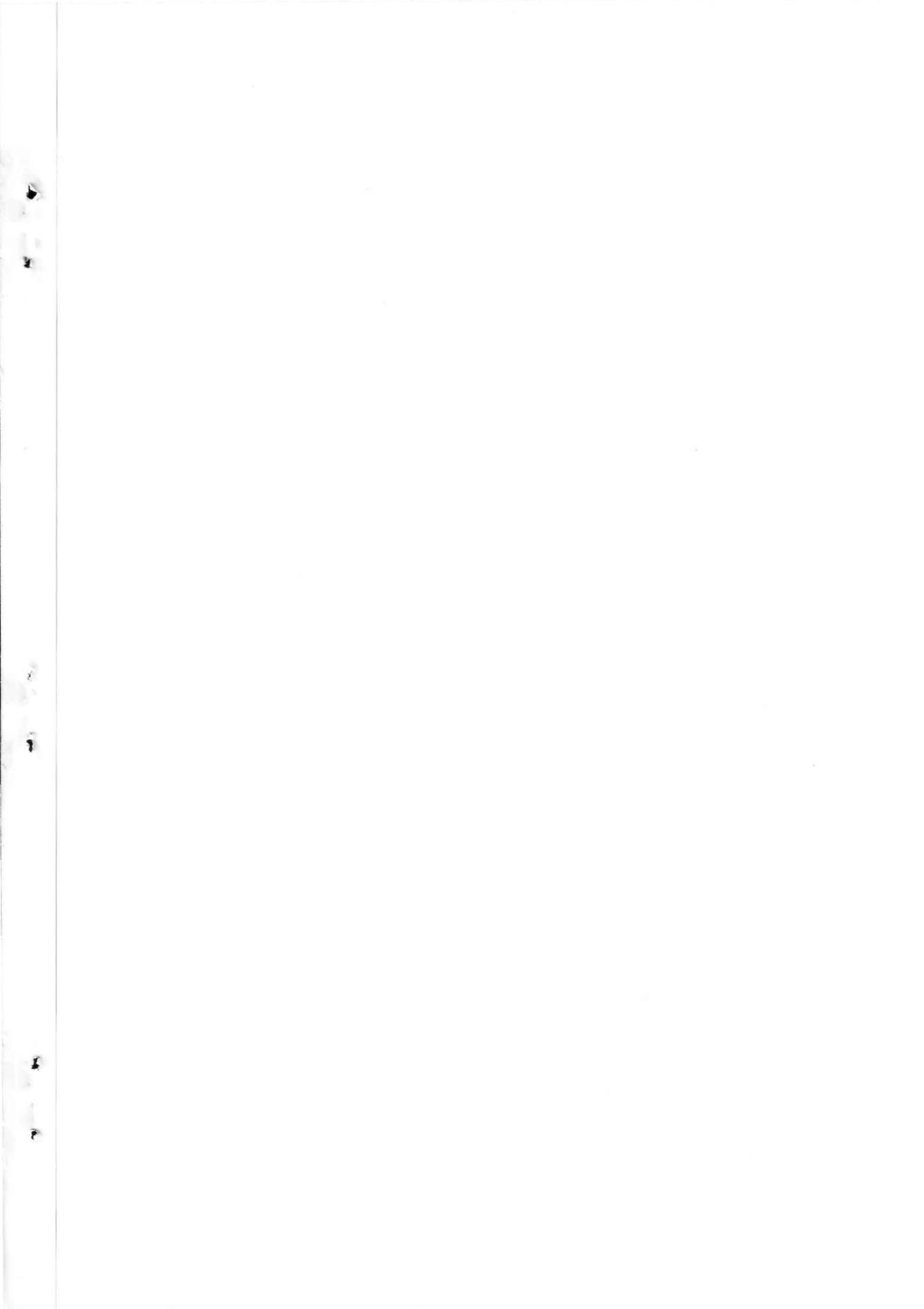
Rajat kanta Ray has very comprehensively dealt with the attitude of mind of the various sections of the rebels.¹³ He particularly underlines the fact that in the rebellion of 1857, in the minds of most of the participants, even when they were not sepoys, but civilians, the sense of religious differences receded to a surprising degree. Hindu contingents would elect Muslims as their representatives; Muslims contingents would accept a Hindu subedar major as their head. Among the Muslims who voluntarily joined the rebellion, under the impulse of joining a righteous war or jihad there was the same acceptance of the need for Hindus and Muslims coming together to fight for a common cause; the target was the British alone. The author argues that the concept of nation hood, although defined by the modernity, is nevertheless likely to be rooted in older feelings and ideas. Watershed events such as the uprising of 1857 and the wars that replaced the Mughal empire with British rule, along with the general evolution of sub continental identity over centuries, engendered a common emotional experience that formed the psychic foundation of the later nationalist movement.¹⁴

The famous rebel leader and theologian Ahmadullah Shah repeatedly appealed to both Hindus and Muslims to fight unitedly to defend their respective faiths against their English oppressors.¹⁵ During the period of 1857 one rebel leader Bahadur Khan was moving through Bareilly with two banners, one the banner of Islam, a green one and another large banner or the 'Holy Dhvaj'.¹⁶ A similar ceremony had been undertaken by Nana Saheb at Kanpur. On 11th may, 1857 the sepoys of the Meerut regiment captured Delhi and proclaimed the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as their undisputed leader. The Delhi proclamation also exhorts that 'all Hindus and Mahommedans should be of one mind in this struggle'.¹⁷ A few instances of conflict between members of Hindu and Muslim communities occurred among the civil population. These were reported by spies employed by the English and their veracity has been questioned by competent historians like Mahdi Husain.¹⁸ The reports on battles fought by the rebels consistently show that Hindu and Muslim soldiers and officers fought side by side. A striking feature of the proclamations from the leaders of the rebellion is the oft repeated emphasis on the unity of the Hindus and Muslims in a common struggle. Almost every agenda making public documents on the rebels' side reflected the desire of the leaders of the rebellion to keep their Hindu and Muslim followers united, while denouncing Christians or firangis equal to English. This call for unity, among the Muslims and Hindus, is perhaps to be interpreted in the light of the rebel leaders' perception of secularity. Though a kind of religious fundamentalism had been the inspiration behind the rebellion, the idea of Hindu- Muslim unity was no less strong. The 1857 revolt, which had forged an unshakable unity amongst Hindus and Muslims alike, was an important milestone in our freedom struggle - providing hope and inspiration for greater unity among the Hindus and the Muslims. However, the aftermath of the 1857 revolt brought about dramatic changes in colonial rule. After the defeat of the 1857 national revolt, the British government embarked on a furious policy of "Divide and Rule", fomenting religious hatred between the two as seen never before. Resorting to rumors and falsehoods, they deliberately recast Indian history in highly communal colors and practised pernicious communal politics to divide the Indian masses. That legacy continues to plague the sub-continent even today. However, if

more people become aware of the colonial roots of this divisive communal gulf, it is possible that some of the damage done to Hindu-Muslim unity can be repaired. If Hindus and Muslims can join hand together and collaborate in the spirit of 1857, the sub-continent may yet be able to unshackle itself from it's colonial clutch of the past.

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APPENDIX

Information on a Piece of Broken Door-jam

A piece of broken (probably) a door-jam with carved design was recovered during digging of an irrigation well from the depth of about 12 feet underground. The land belongs to one old man named Bangtu Singha at *Tarbandha* village of *Turivita mouja* within the jurisdiction of Bagdogra Police Station in the district of Darjeeling, West Bengal. Photographs were taken from the find spot and the Bagdogra P. S. The spot is the dried bed of earlier flow of *Buribalasan* River. The piece is now in the custody of NBU AKM Museum.



1. *The piece of door-jam*

2. *The full view of the slab*



3. *The editor with Bangtu Singha and the local villagers*

By courtesy: Dr. Anita Bagchi and Mr. Sudash Lama,

Department of History, North Bengal University, dated 04.05.2011.



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Mauryan Brahmi Script found at
Vasuvihara Mahasthangarh