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Note from the Editor-in-Chief:

The areas of historical research are ever on the expansion mode and historical inquiries are at present always widening propelled by 'globalization' and advanced by 'information technology'. In fact, now a day anybody may do historical research on any aspect of human society at any period of time. This is likely to echo the forecast of Arnold J. Toynbee whose *Civilization on Trial* lifted the historian's horizon from the nation, the state and the civilization to the entirety of human history. This seems to be a kind of prophetic forecast about historical research and a befitting reply to those who consider history as nothing but a 'telephonic directory'. Because the 'truth' (but not 'absolute truth') behind history is that 'we cannot learn anything from history by merely initiating it or repeating it but by prying behind it and trying to discover the forces that move it'. It is, therefore, time to get to work and the work done by the historians, which in Reiner's phrase is 'the story of civilized human society down to the present day'. With this perception of the growth of history as a discipline many of our colleagues and friends are engaged in pursuing historical research and the production of this journal titled *Karatoya* (North Bengal Journal of History) is out of such initiatives. The present volume contains articles on various aspects of history. In particular, most of the articles are designed on the studies of social, cultural, political and economic aspects based on both primary and secondary sources. The views expressed in those articles are, however, the views of the authors themselves and are in no way of the editorial board.

In the process of publication of this volume, I am obliged to offer my thanks first to the authors who had responded readily and contributed papers as per their specialization. It is also my privilege to express gratitude to each and every member of the faculty and especially to Mr. Sudash Lama, the Associate Editor of this volume. My heartiest thanks are due to Ranjan and Moksed, once our students of the Department, who spent many of their valuable hours for compiling the articles and also to assist me in deferent occasions while I had to complete the editorial process. I wish them every success in their life. I am also to extend my thanks to the University Authority for their kind financial assistance towards the publication of the journal. Last but not the least, in terms of importance, is my duty to thank the Registrar, University of North Bengal and the university press for undertaking the responsibility to bring the journal in the present form.

Ichhimuddin Sarkar
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Sun Worship in Assam and Bengal: A Peep into Comparative Study

Bijoy Kumar Sarkar*

Assam and Bengal are geographically contiguous with more or less ethnic similarity. The socio-cultural structure of both the regions tended to be similar with distinctive features of their own. Since the early times Assam and Bengal along with Orissa and Bihar constituted a wide cultural zone.¹ It is from the western side of early Assam that easy land and navigable routes were possible, which helped in the migration and the expansion of culture from the Indian mainland. The Brahmins of the by-gone age played a great role in associating and inducting the non-Aryan people into their fold, thereby creating a new culture. With the expansion of the Aryan domination to eastern India, Indo-Aryan ideas penetrated early Assam. Like other major religious cults, sun-worship was also prevalent in both Assam and Bengal in early days. Both similarities and differences marked the solar cult in these two geographical areas.

Before embarking upon a comparative study, we'll give a short but general description of the solar cult in both the regions in ancient time. The cult of the sun god prevailed in Assam from the early days. The earliest reference to *Prāgjyotiṣa* as a centre of sun-worship is said to be found in the *Sāṅkhāyana-Grihyasamgraha (tato niṣkrāmya Prāgjyotiṣām puṇyadeśam upāgāmya anudīta āditye)*.² However, according to Barpujari, this passage has nothing to do with the prevalence of sun-worship in *Prāgjyotiṣa* or ancient Assam.³ That Kāmarūpa was once renowned as an ideal place for worshipping the Sun could be seen in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*'s story of propitiation of the sun in Kamarupa by the Brāhmaṇas of the kingdom of Rajyavardhana for his restoration to youth.⁴ Thus, it appears that Sūrya was also worshipped for removal of disease. The prevalence of the cult is also proved by a number of existing manuscripts like the one, '*Kāmarūpa nibandhanīya khaṇḍasādhya*' (6th-7th century A.D.), which also speaks of the introduction of the solar cult along with the planetary worship in the land by the Alpine-Magian group of people.⁵ The *Skanda Purāṇa* also refers to the worship of sun-images in early Assam.⁶ The *Kālikā Purāṇa* mentions a place, sacred to Surya, called *Ravikṣetra* on *Tattvasaila* (Śrī Sūryapāhār) in the Goalpara and two *kundas* (ponds) – Kapota and Karana associated with sun-worship. It also states that Śrī Sūryapāhār was the perpetual abode of the sun: (*yatra deva ādityah satatam sthitah*).⁷ The *Kālikā Purāṇa* (78/42, 79/142) further refers to the *Chitraśaila* or the Navagraha hill near Guwahati, where the nine planets (*Navagrahas*) were worshipped in aniconic form.

There are also a few epigraphic references to the deity, but without any definite invocation. Wide-spread Sūrya-cult in Assam is attested to by many icons of the deity. Though Sun-worship has a remote antiquity in this province, surprisingly the earliest of

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the sun images from Assam (carved on the door-lintel of a ruined, Visnu temple at Dāh Parbatīā near Tezpur) belong to the 5th-6th century A.D.⁸

Anyway, all these images belong to a period from A.D. 6th to A.D. 12th century, most of them being dated at 10th-12th centuries A.D. Besides the independent representation, Sūrya also appears as an accessory figure in the image of Brahmanical deities. He also finds representation as a god of *Panchopasana*. Some sun-images from Assam are also very significant from iconographic point of view. Besides the free representation, the god has also been sculpted in niches, on lintels of temples and rock-cut. The Sun god has been depicted both in standing and seated position. Sun-images from Assam mostly are made of stone, though of bronze in some cases. Influences of Bengal, Bihar and West Indian sculptures can be traced in the Sūrya images of Assam. Sculptures of Assam tended to be closer to the art of the Guptas and those of the schools of Bihar and Orissa rather than to the contemporary Pala school of Bengal. Though they were fundamentally based on the Indian traditional system, generally following the lines laid down in the *Silpasastras*, Assamese art very frequently exhibits marked peculiarities, which were mainly due to the non-Aryan influence in Assam that was more effective here than other parts of India. The *Brihat Samhita* and the *Markandeya Purana* indicate the existence of sun-temple in early Assam. Based on archaeological remains, it can reasonably be presumed that there must have been shrines of the god Surya in places like Tezpur and Shri Suryapahar.

In early Bengal, the most important of the minor religious cults was that of the Sun. It is interesting to note that numerically Sun-images occupy here a position second to that of the most popular god Visnu. The earliest definite reference to the worship of the god in this land occurs in the *Ārṣeya Upaniṣad* datable to the fourth century B.C. In this Upaniṣad,⁹ the non-Āryan people like the Puṇdras of North Bengal and the Sumhas of *Rādha* (Midnapore, Hooghly and Burdwan) are described as the Sun worshipping tribes, who looked upon the Sun as the highest reality.¹⁰

Sun worship was no less popular in pre-Gupta period. From inscription as well as the extant Terracotta figures, plaques, seals and sealing, a comprehensive picture of the adoration of the Sun god may be drawn. It seems that the Magians from Iran were not responsible for the introduction of sun-images in Bengal because there definitely existed an indigenous art tradition. The early indigenous tradition of representing the Sun god in his anthropomorphic form may be traced in some terracotta plaques of the Sunga-Kushana period found in different parts of Bengal. In fact, those terracotta plaques may be considered as the earliest remains indicating the beginning of the anthropomorphic Sun worship in Bengal.

A standing, terracotta, winged figure of Surya¹¹ from Tamluk belonging to c. 2nd century B.C. with long stalks of full-blossomed lotus in his hands depicts the Vedic Surya at its embryonic stage of iconic development and shows strong Brahmanical influence in Sun worship. The Chandraketurah terracotta Surya (1st cent. A.D.),¹² which figures as an independent deity along with attendants on a four-horsed chariot, seems to have been an object of worship with *bhakti*. The advent of the Iranian Surya can be visualized in the northerners' dress of the 1st century A.D. Sun-icon from Hadipur (24 Parganas).¹³ This Magian tradition continued to be the major guiding force in the later representations.

Aniconic depiction of Surya and the Surya-pillar were not also probably unknown (2nd Cent. A.D. Terracotta Seal with a round object representing the Sun;¹⁴ Horse and lotus on a terracotta seal).¹⁵

During the Gupta rule, anthropomorphic worship of Surya and solar cult of a purely northern culture spread far and wide. The earliest Sun images of Gupta India come from Kumarpur and Niyamatpur (Rajshahi). Representation of seven horses in the Kumarpur sculpture marks a departure in the subcontinent from the custom of Kushana artists to provide the *Surya-ratha* with two or four horses. Some development in solar iconography such as the increasing number of attendants also occurs. The Deulbadi (Comilla) icon points to his worship even by the Buddhists and also his domestic adoration.

Surya and his worship are frequently mentioned in the inscriptions of the Pala-Chandra age with emphasis on his atmospheric aspects. *Surya-pranama* came to be a popular form. With the progress of Vedicism during the Varman-Sena age, Surya was increasingly worshipped by *Sandhyopasana* along with the *Gayatri*. The solar cult became more popular probably because of the belief in the god as the curer of all types of diseases. As a result, numerous Sun images came to be carved in the Pala-Sena period. All the figures are in the family groupings, with all symbolism clearly manifest. Religious outlook of the northern and Iranian regions is retained, but in the meditation and interpretation of Surya, the Vedic and Brahmanical religious concepts appear to have merged.

The charioteer Aruna, two principal attendants Pingala and Dandi, as well as the earth-goddess Mahasveta accompany the Sun god in most of his representations and in those of the 11th and 12th century A.D., two consorts Samjna and Chhaya appear. The arrow-shooting Usa and Pratyusa frequently appears in the sun-images from the very period. Sun worship gained much more popularity in the 11th and 12th century A.D. as is evidenced by several images of Surya. Many Sun images illustrate eleven *Adityas* to highlight the concept of *Dvadasaditya*, while some images represent the god along with Navagrahas. It seems that at a later period, the *Sauras* assumed a syncretic approach. References to Sun-temple in various sources and its design in some icons point to the popularity of Sun worship in the shrines. The Vedic as well as the Puranic form of solar worship was prevalent. Sun cult was also influenced by Tantricism, though outwardly. The presentation of the god as the eye of Hari as well as his adornment, though stray, with *karandamukuta*, *tilaka*, *vanamala* etc. indicates his assimilation and downward course of his cult. Distinct worship of Sun-images is not noticeable from the medieval times. The emergence of *Panchopasana* left no scope of exclusive worship of Surya. In addition, the preponderance of *Vaisnavism* and *Saivism* over-shadowed the cult of the Sun god. It appears that there existed a Sun-sect, though not strong, in Bengal throughout the early period. There also developed some centers of Sun worship in Pundravardhana and Gangasagara-*samgama*.

Let us now make a comparative study of different aspects of sun-worship prevalent in Assam and Bengal.

Antiquity: As noticed earlier, Surya came to be an object of worship in Bengal at least as early as the fourth century B.C. and that too by the contemporary dominating

tribes like the Pundras and Sumhas as suggested by the *Ārṣeya Upaniṣad*. On the other hand, the most convincing, earliest reference to the worship of the god in Assam occurs in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* that may be dated in the 3rd-4th century A.D.

Epigraphic Evidence: There are enormous epigraphic evidences of sun-worship in Bengal. We can draw a comprehensive picture of the popularity of the sun-god in this land from the inscriptions of the pre-Gupta,¹⁶ the Gupta,¹⁷ post-Gupta period,¹⁸ the Pala¹⁹ and the Sena period.²⁰ The inscriptional evidence of the solar cult in Assam is meager. There are a few references to the god in epigraphs of 9th/11th centuries,²¹ though no definite invocation is found.

Aniconic depiction: Sūrya is not depicted in human form in early Bengal art until a comparatively late period. However, side by side with the anthropomorphic representation, the aniconic representation of the Sun god and its worship might have also been in use in Bengal during the early centuries of the Christian era.²² Symbolic representation of the Sun god in the second century A.D. Bengal is attested to by a terracotta seal²³ from Berachampa (North 24 Parganas). It displays a boat with a mast carrying a banner. Above it, there is a round object representing the Sun in the sky. The most important point is the display of the Sun on the seal along with an advice in the accompanying legend in Kharoṣṭhī and Kharoṣṭhī-Brāhmī for the sea-farers to take resort unto the Brāhmaṇas while at sea. Aniconic representation of the Sun is traceable in a 3rd cent. A.D. hemispherical terracotta seal²⁴ from Chandraketugarh, depicting a staff rising from the water and flanked by two lotuses is quite significant. In the *Rigveda* (4.13.5), Sūrya has been called the pillar of the sky. We may also refer to the Sūrya pillar from Nagarjunakonda²⁵ of the 2nd century A.D. Thus, the staff for the pillar of the sky may be taken as personifying the Sun. Theriomorphic representation of the Sun was not also probably unknown in Bengal.²⁶ There can but be aniconic representation of the Sun-god in early Assam, but evidences thereof are not available to us. However, such representation of nine planets (*Navagrahas*) is found in the Navagraha temple built in the late Ahom period near the Kamakhya shrine in the vicinity of Guwahati. Here the nine *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 and around it, there are other eight planets.²⁷ Probably, the *grahas* are symbolically represented by their numbers at this place.

Earliest anthropomorphic representation: There occur no remains of sculptural art in Assam in any medium - metal or stone, which may be assigned to a period earlier than the 5th century A.D. Judged by the extant remains, the sculptural activities in Assam began with the expansion of the Gupta Empire. The Umachal Rock Inscription and the Nagajari Khanikargaon fragmentary stone inscription of the early 5th century A.D. (or earlier), point to the penetration of Brahmanical religion into Kamarupa (early Assam). In view of the sculptural remains at Dah-Parvatia, Mikir-Ati, Barganga, Kamakhya and Dudhnai, belonging to the late 5th and 6th century A.D., sculptural art appears to have burgeoned into full flowering in Assam during this span of time.²⁸ It is evident that the sun image was introduced in Assam in the late Gupta period. The earliest representation of Surya in Assam is found in the extreme left-hand ornamental niche in the projected top section of the lintel of a door-frame of a ruined temple dedicated to Visnu²⁹ at Dāh

Parvatīā (near Tezpur) of 5th-6th century A.D.³⁰ He is seated cross-legged (in *utkaṭikāsana* attitude) with two lotus flowers in two hands and flanked by Pingala and Daṇḍa in seated posture.³¹ In view of the earliest reference to *Pragjyotiṣa* as a centre of sun-worship occurring in the *Grihyasūtras*, it may, therefore, be suggested that the Vedic tradition of aniconic as well as symbolic worship had been the principal way of venerating the Sun god at least till the late Gupta period. Further, Surya does not appear here as an independent deity along with his attendants and thus seems not to have been an object of worship in image-form. Here he is merely depicted as an accessory decorative figure in the religious architecture of another Brāhmaṇical sect.

The early representation of the Sun god in Bengal in anthropomorphic form is to be traced in some terracotta plaques of the Suṅga- Kuṣāṇa period. The first to mention is a 2nd cent. B.C. terracotta figure of standing, winged Surya from Tamluk³² with long stalks of full-blossomed lotus in his hands. The next worth-mentioning is a terracotta image of the Sun-god (first century B.C./A.D.) from Chandraketurah (24-Parganas), seated on the chariot drawn by four horses and accompanied by the charioteer Aruna as well as Usa and Pratyusa.

Role of the Magians in image-introduction: As noted above, the Iranian Magians did not introduce the anthropomorphic representation of the Sun god in Bengal because we find an earlier, indigenous art tradition of representing the god in some terracotta plaques of the Sunga-Kusana period discovered in different parts of Bengal.³³ In fact, those terracotta plaques may be considered as the earliest remains indicating the beginning of the anthropomorphic Sun worship in Bengal. However, the solar cult along with the planetary worship was introduced in the Assam by the Alpine-Magian group of people, which is confirmed by the astronomical work, *Kāmarūpa-nibandhaniya Khandasādhyā* (6th-7th centuries).³⁴

Non-Indian iconographic feature: Non-Indian features of solar iconography like Northerner's dress (*udichyavesa*), boots, etc. slowly but steadily penetrated into the mainland from the north-western India. The terracotta Surya datable to c. 1st century A.D. from Hadipur (North 24 Pargana) is found to be clad in a close fitting jacket gathered at the anklets and soft-padded boots - a northerner's dress (*udīcyaveśa*). This is the earliest occurrence of tunic and boots in solar iconography in ancient *Vaṅga* and thus, indicative of the coming of the Irānian Sūrya (Mitra) in this land. However, a slate stone image of early 4th-5th century A.D. from Harinarayanpur (South 24 Parganas)³⁵ shows the Sun god in *udichyavesa* with the upper part of the body of the deity being denuded, which reflects an absolute Indianised version of the image. In ancient Assam, Kilt-like garment hanging down to the knees of the god as well as a pair of boots occurs for the first time in a small 8th century A.D. bronze icon of the Sun-god from Narakāsūr ruins at Kahilipara near Guwahati.

Companions: (i) *Aruna:* Aruna, the celestial charioteer of the Sun god, appears for the first time in solar iconography in Bengal, though only in its upper bust, in a 1st century B.C./A.D. terracotta figure of the Sun-god from Chandraketurah, 24-Parganas. He wears a small cap-like headdress. It points to the development of Sun's personality because of sectarian devotion. In Assam, we find earliest representation of Aruna in sun-image in a sculpture³⁶ of the god Surya stylistically datable to 7/8th century A.D.³⁷ and

found at Sadiya wherein the god is seated on a lotus on the chariot, with two lotuses in the hands and with Aruna in front holding the reins of the seven galloping horses.

(ii) *Usa-Pratyusa*: Usa and Pratyusa – two consorts of the Sun-god- make their first appearance in Bengal solar iconography in a beautiful, seated, 1st cent. B.C./A.D., terracotta sculpture of Surya from Chandraketurah,³⁸ 24-Parganas. Here the deity is flanked by the goddesses, who passionately cling to him by the neck. However, Usa and Pratyusa, who are generally represented in archer pose in the latter-day sun icons – is first noticed as simply carrying bows and arrows and not in archer pose, in the sun-image of the 4th cent. A.D. from Kumarpur (Rajshahi, Bangladesh).³⁹ Coming to Assam, as far as the existing knowledge is concerned, we come across earliest representation of the same goddesses in the sun-images from Dabaka (Nowgown) and Gahpur,⁴⁰ both belonging to 11/12th century, in which the Sun-god is also accompanied by Aruna, Pingala and Dandi as well as Samjna and Chhaya. In other words, Usa and Pratyusa came to be a part of the solar iconography in Assam when there was full development of the god's iconographic traits as well as the journey of standardization.

(iii) *Pingala-Dandi*: As regards Pingala and Dandi (principal attendants of the Sun god), in Bengal we find their earliest representation in a coarse-grained sandstone Surya image of the 5th cent. A.D. from Niyamatpur (Rajshahi, Bangladesh).⁴¹ Interestingly, almost at the same time appear the pot-bellied Pingala and youthful Dandi in solar iconography in Assam too. The earliest image of Surya in Assam found at Dāh Parvatīā (near Tezpur) of 5th-6th century A.D. shows the seated god flanked by Pingala seated on his left holding a pen and inkpot as well as Daṇḍa seated on his right holding a staff.⁴²

Separate images of Pingala and Dandi: It is interesting to note that separate images of Pingala and Dandi have also been found in Bengal. One bronze image⁴³ of Pingala and another⁴⁴ of Dandi, both belonging to the 12th Century A.D. are now housed in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi. The images give an indication of independent worship of the two principal attendants of the Surya to some extent. However, no such image of Pingala or Dandi has ever been noticed in Assam.

(iv) *Samjna-Chhaya*: Two other consorts of the Sun god - Samjna (Sarenu or Rajni) and Chhaya (Niksubha) – come to our notice first in a photograph⁴⁵ of a sun-image from Assam, stylistically belonging to the 9th cen. A.D. Here both the goddesses with *chowri* in their hands attend upon the god on either side. In Bengal too, the same goddesses enter the iconographic scene in the 9th century A.D.,⁴⁶ though in a very few images. They are represented as carrying lilies and flywhisks or showing *abhaya-mudra* with their right hands and placing the left on the hip.

(v) *Mahasveta*: According to the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*,⁴⁷ the goddess in front of the Sun god is Mahasveta (Prithivi). She makes a frequent appearance in front of Surya in the Bengal sun-images of the ninth cent. A.D., exhibiting *abhaya* with her right hand and holding *aksamala* (rosary) and *kamandalu* (water-pot) in the left or holding *aksamala* in the right hand and *kamandalu* in the left one.⁴⁸ In Assam we find her earliest representation in the 11-12th century sun-icons from Dabakā (Nowgong) and Moronoi.⁴⁹

No attendant: It is not always that the sun-images are invariably depicted as attended by some or other companion. For example, a terracotta figure of Surya⁵⁰ from Bogra district (Bangladesh), which is a remarkable piece of Gupta sculptural art, shows the god Surya in tunic, boots and a sword dangling on the left but without any consort or attendant. Similarly, coming to Assam no attendant and even chariot is found in an 8th century bronze icon of the booted deity from Kahilipara (Narakasur hill) near Guwahati.

Number of Horse: The Sun-god is usually represented as seated or standing on horse-drawn chariots with the charioteer Aruna seated or half-embedded into the *ratha*. Two Surya images from Bengal shows only one horse,⁵¹ another with four horses,⁵² the third with eight⁵³ and the rest with seven. Representation of seven horses in the Kumarpur relief marks a departure in the subcontinent from the custom of Kusana artists to provide the *Surya-ratha* with two or four horses. However, no horse is seen in a number of Sun images at all. In Assam, no horse is found in the Dah Parvatia (Tezpur) seated Surya image of 5th-6th century A.D. as well as in an 8th century A.D. bronze image of Surya from Narakāsūr ruins at Kahilipara near Guwahati. In case of presence of horses in Assam Surya images, the number is always seven, which first occurs in a 7/8th century A.D. seated image of the Sun-god from Sadiya.⁵⁴

Surya images with bare-feet: We have already noticed that the Northerner's dress (*udichyavesa*), boots, etc. penetrated into Bengal solar iconography (terracotta Surya from Hadipur, North 24 Parganas) since the c. 1st century A.D. and in Assam since the 8th century A.D. (Bronze icon of the Sun-god from Narakāsūr ruins). However, a specimen discovered from Gāzole (Malda district, W.B.)⁵⁵ and dated in the 11th Century A. D., shows the god Surya and his attendants without any boots, which is a characteristic feature of south Indian Surya images. Sun-image of early medieval period without boots is also found in Assam too. A stone image of the Sun-god in the precincts of the Kamakhya temple standing on a lotus within a pilastered niche has bare feet. This figure may belong to about the eleventh century A.D. The absence of boots in sun-images of both Bengal and Assam belonging to the same century is quite thought-provoking.

Surya as an accessory figure: Sūrya appears as an accessory figure in the images of Brahmanical deities in Bengal as well as in Assam. However, neither in pre-Gupta nor in Gupta period was Surya ever seen as an accessory figure in Bengal. During the last two or three centuries of the so-called Hindu rule, Surya was not only represented as combining with other gods but also shown as an accompanying figure of the major cult-gods. But in case of Assam, the earliest Surya figure of 5th-6th century A.D. from Dāh Parvatiā makes his appearance simply as an accessory, decorative figure.

Surya in Panchopasana: It has been enjoined by the *Smritikaras* that in the daily worship, one has to pay one's obeisance to the five deities namely, *Ganesa, Narayana, Surya, Siva and Sakti*. A Brahmin, officiating as a priest for the worship of any god or goddess, is found to perform initially *Panchopasana* or the worship of five-deities.⁵⁶ During the last centuries of the Hindu rule in ancient Bengal, Surya received worship as a constituent cult-deity of *Pancopasana* from a large number of followers of this religious system. Most of the Sena kings were also followers of *Panchopasana*, as is evidenced by simultaneous show of reverence to Narayana, Mahesa and Surya in a few of their inscriptions as well as reference in the *Pavanaduta* (verse 28) to installation of both the

Laksmīnarayana and *Mahadeva* images in temples in Suhmadesa.⁵⁷ In Assam also, sun-worship came to be a constituent of *panchopasana*. At Nigrīting about 16 miles from Jorhat, the sun-god has been dedicated a subsidiary shrine in the campus of a big temple dedicated to God Siva.⁵⁸ Other subsidiary shrines of the temple, which is of the *Panchayatana*-type, are dedicated to Visnu, Devi (Sakti) and Ganesa.

Surya's predominance in Trinity: There existed many a religious sect, major or minor, in Bengal as well as in Assam and rivalry among them was not quite unnatural. The enmity revealed itself mainly by way of representing other dominant god or gods as attendant or accessory figures of the other ambitious cult-god or replacing some opponent deity from the Trinity. The Sun-cult, especially spearheaded by the Maga Brahmanas of foreign origin, could not have been an exception. In *Trimurtis*, Surya as the principal god is not unknown as it is found in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Surya replaces Brahma in the trinity in an inscribed sculpture of Bengal. The god replaces Visnu in the door lintel of the tenth century A.D. Siva-temple at Tezpur in Assam with Brahma and Siva on either side.⁵⁹

Paramasaura: The royal patronage to the cult of the Sun-god in ancient India is not totally unknown. Maharaja Dharapatta of the Maitraka dynasty as well as Prabhakarvardhana, Adityavardhana and Rajyavardhana of the Vardhana dynasty of Thaneswara were most devout worshippers of the Sun (*Paramaditya-bhaktah*).⁶⁰ Visvarupasena (son of King Laksmānāsena) and his son Suryasena, the Sena kings of Bengal, pronouncedly call themselves *paramasaura* (staunch devotees of Surya). However, no reference is found to such type of royal devotee in the history of Assam.

Surya-worship and Buddhists: As we know from Tārānātha⁶¹, the solar cult enjoyed a special favour in Assam even before the Christian era. But about the 3rd century B.C. a Buddhist monk Ārya Dhītika, with his supernatural power, converted to Buddhism a wealthy, Sun-worshipping *Brāhmaṇa* of Kamarupa named Siddha by appearing before the latter as the Sun and delivering sermons to him. The Brahmana then spent his energy and wealth for constructing *mahāchaityas* and lavishly entertained the *Sanghas* all around. This speaks of rivalry between the two religious faiths of India and the aggressive predominance of Buddhism over the solar cult. Coming to Bengal, we notice a different picture. All the Pala kings, though Buddhists, were prominent patrons of Brahmanas, Brahmanical images and temples and therefore, made grants of lands for them to enhance their own virtue and renown. Prabhavati, the queen of the Buddhist Devakhadga, set up an image of the goddess Sarvani (Durga) with which was found a seated bronze image of Surya.⁶² *Chaitya* windows are found in solar iconography of Bengal, which is natural in view of the Pala kings being ardent patrons of Buddhism. A seated miniature of the two-armed *Dhyani-Buddha Amitabha* appears on the crest of the image of a ten-armed Surya-Lokesvara from Bengal.⁶³

Surya as remover of disease: Sun-god was regarded not only as the bestower of welfare and fulfiller of desire. From the *Markandeya Purana*, which tells the story of propitiation of the Sun in Kāmarūpa by the Brāhmaṇas of Rajyavardhan's kingdom to get him restored to youth, it appears that Sūrya was worshipped for removal of disease too. In the Bairhatta image inscription from Bengal too, Surya is described as the remover of all diseases ("*samasta-roghanam hartta*").⁶⁴

Surya in relief: Besides the independent representation, the Sun god has also been sculpted in Assam in niches (pilastered niche of the Kamakhya temple), on lintels of temples (Dah Parvatia) and on rockcuts (Pandu Rock-cut Surya). In Bengal, the sculptured representation of Surya probably belonging to the 8th century A.D. from Bhadrakali (Hooghly Dist.) is found in a niche on a stone.⁶⁵ Navagrahas in seated posture are depicted in a sandstone panel in the State Archaeological Gallery, Calcutta,⁶⁶ broken into two pieces, which seems to have been a door lintel from some shrine. *Navagraha* images used to be carved on lintels over the entrance doorway allegedly to ensure prosperity to their founders and to prevent any evil happening to the temples themselves.

Surya's iconographic posture: Sun god is found as depicted both in standing and seated posture in Assam as well as in Bengal. The earliest (5th-6th century A.D.) of the Surya images in Assam from Dāh Parvatiā (near Tezpur) is found seated cross-legged (in *utkaṭikāsana* attitude). Another unique feature of this image, which is not at all found in Bengal, is that Pingala and Dandi are also seated here and quite contrary to the standardized practice, the former is to the left side and the latter is to the right side of the standing central deity. In Bengal, the god appears in seated position in first century B.C./A.D. on a four-horsed chariot in the terracotta sculpture from Chandraketurgarh (24-Parganas). However, the oldest specimen, yet known, of sun-images from Bengal, which is winged, terracotta figure of the god from Tamruk of the 2nd cent. B.C. as well as the first cent. A.D. *udīcyaveśī* terracotta Surya from Hadipur (24 Parganas) is represented as standing. Interestingly, the number of seated sun-images is more in Assam than in Bengal, taking into consideration the total number of solar sculptures from both the regions.

Material of Sun-images: The materials, according to the *Bhavisya Purana* (30.1-2.), employed to represent the images of Surya for worship are gold, silver, copper, clay, stone, wood, and paint. Amongst these seven materials, three - terracotta, stone and bronze - are found to have been used for making the sun-images in Bengal. On the other hand, the figures of the Sun-god from Assam are mostly made of stone, though bronze has also been made use of in some cases. Interestingly, an image of the god Surya from the Kamalabari *Satra* (Majuli Island, Jorhat District), dated to the 19th century A.D. is chiseled out in a piece of wood.⁶⁷

From the above, it appears that factors like location in the Indian subcontinent, the very geography, the demographic variety, etc. remarkably determined the extent and nature of sun-worship in Assam and Bengal. The solar cult discussed above is basically of the Brahmanical tradition, which penetrated into Assam much more lately than in Bengal. Still the Assamese society remained predominantly a tribal one with a pastoral economic life. Religious offerings and worship of various deities were actually symbolic and related to fertility rites. Moreover, much of the history of early indigenous sun-worship in Bengal is known to us because of extensive research already carried out. Surya being the creator of day and night and producer of plants, vegetation and food has attracted the attention of mankind for adoration all over the world from the very beginning of human history. And Assam, therefore, cannot be an exception. There must have been sun-worship in Assam in some form or other, presumably in aniconic form,

among its indigenous people since the very days, which awaits to emerge on a large canvas through a comprehensive research.

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Society of Medieval Punjab as Reflected in the *Bani* of Guru Nanak

Mohammad Idris *

The Persian word Punjab literally means 'five rivers' by implications, the land of five rivers. The term Punjab came into currency during the reign of Mughal emperor Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.). In the Mughal period's documents, we find the use of the terms *Sarkar-e-Punjab* and *Suba-e-Punjab*. These terms do not refer to any geographical entity; they refer simply to the Mughal province of Lahore.¹ Of all the Indian provinces the Punjab alone had the longest period of Mughal rule and suffered from the largest number of foreign invasions from the north-west. About 450 years before Guru Nanak, Punjab had become an integral part of the Muslim world.² The first Arab fleet appeared in Indian waters in 636 during the Caliphate of *Umar*,³ very soon the eyes of the Muslim fell on Sind across the Arabian Sea. This province was at that time ruled by Raja Dahir, son of Chach, the founder of Brahman dynasty. In 711 Al Hajjaj, the governor of Basra, deputed his son-in-law, Muhammad bin Qasim, a young and ambitious general, to launch an attack. The Arabs captured the territories of Sind and Multan⁴. Stanley lane Poole describes Arab rule in Sind 'as an episode in the history of India and of Islam, a triumph without results.'⁵

Historians do not attach much importance to Arab rule in Sind, but it was remarkable in many ways. It strengthened Arab trade on the west coast of India and encouraged more Arabs to make new settlements on the east coast and even in South-East Asia.⁶ The Arabs rapidly assimilated local customs and manners. They adjusted Arab tribal life to Sindi tribal pattern. In 886 the Qurān was translated into Sindi on the request of a Hindu Chief. On the other hand, Sanskrit works on astronomy, medicine, ethics and administration were introduced by the Sindi intellectuals to the translation bureau at the Abbasid court. The Arab conquest sowed the seed of Islam on Indian soil. The Muslim population began to grow until Sind became one of the Muslim majority provinces. On their part, the Arabs were also greatly influenced by the culture and civilization of the Hindus.⁸ Henceforth Muslim influence grew rapidly. They welcomed as traders and apparently facilities were given to them to settle and acquire lands. Before the tenth century was far advanced they had spread over the whole of the western coast of India.⁹ The political condition of India was substantially different on the eve of Mahmud's invasion in 1000 A.D as compared to the time of the Arab invasion two centuries earlier. In the 10th century when Mahmud invaded India there were two Arab kingdoms viz. Multan and Sind in north in addition to the Arab colonies on the southern coast of India particularly in Malabar. Multan was ruled by Fateh Daud, a Karmathian while Sind was ruled by the Arabs.¹⁰

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Sultan Mahmud (999-1031A.D.), the son and successor of Subuktgin, was a great warrior. He is famous for his Indian conquests. During the twenty seven years beginning 1000 he led as many as seventeen raids into India. He was a great ruler of his time. By virtue of his military genius he built up his empire which extended from Iraq and the Caspian Sea to the river Ganges. His actual rule in India however was confined to the Punjab and some parts of Sind. During the course of his invasions Mahmud never lost a war.¹¹ In spite of all his achievements, Mahmud was not a nation builder and left no permanent institution. The Ghaznavid rule in the Punjab lasted much longer than in Khurasan and was not subject to the vicissitudes of Ghazni. It was free from external invasions for at least 150 years. The governors generally belonged to the Ghaznavid royal house. The contemporary sources do not discuss the administrative framework of Ghaznavid royal house.¹²

The Ghurid conquest of northern India led to the vital changes in the political, economic and social life of the country. The multistate system which had come into vogue during 11th and 12th centuries gave way to a centralized system. The real cause of the defeat of the Indians lay in their social system and caste distinctions, which rendered the whole military organization weak. Caste taboos and discriminations killed all sense of unity-social or political. Even religion was the monopoly of a particular section.¹³ Shahabuddin Ghori (1175-1206 A.D.) within 30 years the entire region between Indus and Brahmaputra conquered. After the Ghoris, the Slaves, Khilijis, Tughlaq, Sayid and Lodhi dynasties continued to bring more territories under their control.¹⁴

During Delhi Sultanate's period the Punjab was inhabited by four main tribes. The Jats comprised the Hindus in the south-east, the Sikhs in the centre and Muslims in the west. The Rajputs, both Hindus and Muslims were distributed all over the province. The jats were in every respect the most important of all the agricultural tribes in the province.¹⁵ politically; Punjab at this time was divided into several parts. The society was divided into two major sections, the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus were not only divided into four main castes of the Brahmans, Kashatrias, Vaishyas and the Shudras, but these four castes were further divided into sections and sub-sections. According to Daulat Rai the members of different castes and sections had neither one religion, nor one desire. Their standards of morality were not the same, their worlds were different, and their language was different. The people had their worthless beliefs and prejudices. The absence of education led to ignorance. Idolatry became common. Every city, every town, every village or even a home had its own deity or gods.¹⁶

The task of correcting the harmful customs was taken up by the saints who appeared in all parts of India. They taught the people that true religion could be tested by good conduct and not by false beliefs. God helped only those who loved truth and service to human beings. The earliest Bhakti leaders were Shankracharya, Ramanuja, Namdev and Ramannad. Among the most notable Bhakti leaders of Guru Nanak's time were Kabir (1440-1518) Vallabhacharya born 1449, Mira Bai born 1449, Chaitanya, (1485-1553), Tulsidas 1532 etc. All these reformers stimulated the people to get rid of priest hood, and caste system. In Punjab disappointment, despair and depression prevailed everywhere. It is believed that Bhakti movement had reached Punjab through Nam Dev during the closing years of the thirteenth century. Baba Sain Das set up a centre at Gujranwala. His

successors established branches at a number of places in Punjab and Jammu reign. Guru Nanak might have heard about them during his journey.¹⁷ The work of giving relief to the afflicted mind of Punjabis was taken up by Guru Nanak.¹⁸

Muslim society in Punjab was ridden by racial prejudices. For nearly five hundred years some Muslim soldiers, administrators, traders, scholars, men of letters and learned and pious men had been adopting the Punjab as in their home. The Muslim society in Punjab, as in some other parts of India, was marked by sectarian divisions as by racial differences. The sectarian differences were important to the contemporaries to whom it mattered much whether one was a Sunni, a Shia an Ismaili or a Mahdavi. The Sunnis formed the largest proportion of Muslim population in the Punjab.¹⁹ The ulema controlled the religious and social life of the Muslim society. They generally supported the rulers. Ziauddin Barani, the famous historian, admitted that they wrongly interpreted the Holy Quran to meet the wishes of the rulers. The Muslim masses bribed them.²⁰

Due to the conversion to Islam of Rajputs, Jats and other tribal groups even in areas predominantly Muslim such as western Punjab from Hinduism, class division penetrated into the Muslim ranks.²¹ The most important forms of Muslim religious life in the Punjab, as elsewhere by this time were embodied in the beliefs and practices of the Sufis, the mystics of Islam.²² Several Sufi orders had come to flourish in India. Already before the mid-sixteenth century the influence of the Sufis had been penetrated nearly all the strata of Indo-Muslim society. The influence of Sufis in the Punjab during the late fifteenth and the sixteenth century was as real and pervasive as in any other part of India.²³

Both in Asia and Europe the state of affairs as it was made the fifteenth century a period of singular mental ability. Important preparations had been in the fourteenth century, when the Christian reformers, Walter Lollard and John Huss preached and suffered death for their opinions; when after the overthrow and expulsion of Buddhism from India by astute and powerful Brahmans, there flourished the exponents of Indian monotheism, the saint Kabir and the Ramanand.²⁴ In India the activities of these thinkers and reformers resulted in the spread of Bhakti movement which starting from south, travelled towards north and on to the Punjab changing its character into Sikhism. The term *Sikh* literally means a *learner, a disciple*. The name was for the first time given to the followers of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith in the Punjab in the fifteenth century. Sikhism was founded, like Buddhism, as protest against the spiritual despotism of Brahmans and as a revolt against the restrictions of the caste system and the exaggeration of Hindu ritual. It aimed at teaching social equality and universal brotherhood, abolishing sectarianism and denouncing superstition.²⁵

Nanak was born on 15 April 1469, at *Rae Bhoi ki Talwandi* now known as *Nankana Sahib* in Shaikhupura district in Pakistan about 65 kilometers west of Lahore. His father's name was *Kalu* a *Khatri* of the subcaste *Bedi* and mother's name was *Tripta*.²⁶ He was married to *Sulakhmi*, the daughter of Mula of Batala, district Gurdaspur. He had two sons namely Sri Chand and Lakmi Das. He visited the holy places of Hindus and Muslims both impressed upon the leaders of both the religions to do away with all formalism and ritualism and understand the reality. In the later part of his life he settled at Kartarpur on the banks of Ravi and there he died in 1539.²⁷

The student of the social history of the Punjab during the time of Guru Nanak is confronted with two major social entities; the Hindu and the Muslim. None of these can be treated as a unified whole, for both formed a part of much larger entities in the Indian subcontinent.²⁸ Guru Nanak's response to his social milieu is a complicated question, more even than the problem of his political concerns. Guru Nanak is generally depicted as a great social reformer. It is believed that he preached liberal social doctrines; he upheld the ideal of equality and advocated a casteless society.²⁹ He was an apostle of 'universal brotherhood' and he condemned caste and class. A notable aspect of the 'social improvement' effected by him was the emancipation of women. For him, men and women were equal not only before God but also before one another.³⁰

Some writers like Macauliffe, Bhai Kahan Singh and Teja Singh are of the opinion that Guru Nanak was a revolutionary because he tried to destroy all the prevalent religious institutions as well as the structures of society of his time. They hold that Guru's bitterest attack was aimed at the annihilation of caste system, and he tried to build a new society in place of the old one.³¹ According to Ganda Singh that Guru was not a mere reformer but the founder of a new religion.³² In the light of these remarks we will try to analyze Contemporary society of Medieval Punjab reflected in the Bani of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak left a large number of compositions which now form an integral part of the Adi Granth, the Sacred Scripture of the Sikhs. A considerable number of his verses contain references to contemporary politics and society as well. Our limited aim here is to try to understand his Bani in terms of his contemporary society. It must be recognized first that the core of Guru Nanak's message is religious.³³ A careful perusal of Guru Nanak's compositions reveals his familiarity with many of the socio-economic aspects of life in the Punjab. The Baburbani of Guru Nanak describes the violent attack of Babur upon the Punjab and the general massacre of the innocent people.³⁴ With the help of Khurasan, Hindustan (India) was frightened; The blame lies with us and not the creator, who hath sent the Mughal (invader) as the angel of death.³⁵

The Kings are like lions and their officials like dogs who disturb the restful people. The officials are like nails (of Kings) which make wounds, (The remnants of the prey) the blood and liver are licked by the dogs. Guru Nanak makes a reference to the social and religious customs, practices and usages of the time. At any rate, Guru Nanak is believed to have condemned many social evils before launching a positive programme of social reform: disparity, caste, sati, slavery of women for instance.³⁶

The Hindu comes to the house of a Hindu. He puts the sacred thread around his neck and reads the scriptures. He puts on the thread, but does evil deeds. His cleansings and washings will not be approved. The Muslim glorifies his own faith. Without the Murshid or a spiritual teacher, no one is accepted. They may be shown the way, but only a few there. Without the karma of good actions, heaven is not attained.³⁸ Guru Nanak's ideal man is a householder and discharges his duties towards himself, his family and society. He is friendly and sympathetic towards the welfare of others. Guru Nanak does not show any appreciation for *bairag*.

Guru Nanak's attitude towards contemporary Islam is very similar to his attitude towards Hinduism. It has been noted that the Muslim and Hindu scriptures are often equated by him; quite often Muslim and Hindu beliefs or practices are mentioned

together.³⁹ In Rag Asa for Guru Nanak illustrates the variety of those who are in search of God by referring to the *jogis*, the *sannyasis* and the *pundits*; in the middle of this passage, he refers also to the representatives of Islam: *the darvish*, the *pir* and the *Paighambar*.⁴⁰ Guru Nanak's familiarity with Islam does not necessarily imply an appreciation for contemporary form of Muslim belief and practice.

The religious leaders of both the communities had become blind towards their true path and were following the path of false hood, violence etc. The Muslim Qazi (Judge) tells lies and accepts bribe.⁴¹ The theology of Guru Nanak was not formal; his sole object was to bring about social and moral reforms. Sikhism remained a pacific and tolerant cult until the social tyranny of the Hindus and political friction with Muslims transformed it into a militant creed.⁴² Guru Nanak preached no complicated philosophy. He spoke to the people in the language of the people and explained his ideas to them with examples drawn from the everyday life of the common people.⁴³

The *Bani* of Guru Nanak related mostly to the spiritual uplift of mankind and social goodwill and understanding among people of different creeds and classes, based on the common fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. According to Guru Nanak, these are but one God who is all-truth and the immortal, unborn and self existing creator, fearless and without hate. Guru Nanak's compositions may not prove a radical departure from the existing social order in social of Punjab, but a radical departure would be justified by his compositions.⁴⁴

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Culture of Tobacco Smoking in Mughal India: A Historical Analysis

Palash Dey*

Tobacco smoking was introduced in India during the Mughal period particularly, during the reign of Akbar. The culture of tobacco smoking more or less affected the human health during 1526-1757. The ill effects of tobacco smoking has manifested with the breaking out of some dangerous diseases like Berger, bronchitis, pneumonia and lung cancer. Several anti-smoking measures have been taken by the colonial as well as post-colonial Indian government like prohibition of smoking in public places. In this work our aim is to shed light on the various issues of tobacco smoking in Mughal society.

Introduction

It is said that the tobacco smoking was introduced in some parts of American continent. Columbus was the first person who introduced it in European countries. However it was the Portuguese merchants who introduced it in Indian subcontinent during the reign of Akbar, the great Mughal emperor. From that time it became gradually a common practice in Mughal society. The ill effects of smoking were realized by the next emperor Jahangir. The custom (smoking) was prohibited by issuing several official orders. In spite of this, the custom became very popular among all the people of various statuses. With these the cultivation of tobacco and trade and commercial activities relating tobacco were also expanded. It is very familiar to us that disease and medicine or in a broader sense the public health condition perform an important role in forming the course of history of human being. The culture of tobacco smoking more or less affected the human health of the period under review. Hence a humble attempt is taken to examine the various issues of tobacco smoking in Mughal society.

A Brief History of the Origin of Tobacco Smoking

In search for the history of the origin and spread of tobacco, a good number of scholars have already done their researches. It is necessary to mention here the two trends among the scholars. According to the first one (who think that tobacco is American), the history of tobacco is actually begins with the discovery of new world in 1492 by Christopher Columbus. Count Corti is one of the earliest scholars in this field of research. He has opined that with the permission and active cooperation by the ruler of Spain, Columbus set for with the crews and one hundred twenty attendants (August 3, 1492). By October, they had reached to an island which was named as San Salvador. The

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inhabitants of that place presented them the strange fruits, wooden javelins, balls of cotton as well as the dried leaves of some plant. In the following month, he came forward to Cuba and sent his two followers, Rodrigo de Jerez and Luis de Tovres. They had noticed there that the people carried in their hands certain dried leaves which they kindled at the glowing coals and with which they apparently perfumed themselves. In order to keep the leaves a light they repeatedly held them in their mouths, alternatively blowing on them and inhaling the smoke¹. The other scholars of this trend are Herbert Joseph Spinden, J.H. Manas, KrikBekholm, and Ernest L. Wynder. All of them deal with the various arguments to establish the fact that tobacco is American².

The second trend of scholars thinks that the tobacco smoking was practiced in China and Mongolia long before the discovery of America. According to their opinion, there must have a probability that the American Indians originated in Asia and then migrated to North America across an Alaskan Land bridge that disappeared during the ice age, and for that reason they came to South America taking seeds of tobacco with them.

From the above mentioned, we may say that the argument that tobacco is American is accepted by most of the scholars till this date. There are many arguments against the views of the second trend. One of them is the travelogue accounts. None of the early travellers in Asia, among whom Marco Polo is perhaps the best known, mentioned tobacco. In 1269, he travelled through Armenia, Persia, India, China and Mongolia and talked about the addiction like the fermented milk by Tartars, palm wine by the Arabians, betel nuts by the Indians. Another argument is that tobacco is anti-Islam and so that it is impossible to address tobacco as a native crop of Asia. The next one is that if the tobacco is used by the Asians, then it should have some mention in early writings of Sanskrit works. But it is not to be. Therefore finally we may draw the conclusion that tobacco is American.

So far as the introduction of the tobacco in Europe is concerned *N. tabacum* was brought to Angouleme, France in 1556 by Andre Thevet for the very first time. In 1561 Jean Nicot presented the seed of *N. Rustica* to the queen Catherine. From there it spreaded the various parts of the European subcontinent. In 1612 six years after the settlement of James Town, John Rolfe was credited as the first settler to successfully raise tobacco as a cash crop. The demand quickly grew as tobacco referred to as 'golden weed' revived the Virginia joint stock company. It is said that the cured tobacco was sent to Spain and Portugal from where a small part was distributed to England and others European countries. In this way the trade of tobacco was started. Later on or most probably in the early years of Seventeenth century, tobacco was produced in Virginia as well as to the various places of the European subcontinent for commercial purpose. Thus day by day the culture of smoking became very common among the people of Europe.

Smoking History in Mughal India

There is a debate about when the tobacco plant was launched in the Indian subcontinent. The great court chronicler of the Akbar's reign, Abul Fazl (1550-1602) was silent in 'Ain-I - Akbari'. According to W.H. Moreland, Tobacco manufacture had started in India during Akbar's reign³. The plant was unknown to his revenue officers and consequently cannot have been grown in any extent during the sixteenth century. It is

believed that tobacco smoking had reached in the Indian subcontinent through the Portuguese and established first in the province of Gujarat where the leaf was obtained. Irfan Habib has observed that within a decade of the compilation of the 'Ain-I-Akbari'(1590), pious pilgrims returning from Mecca had brought news to the Mughal court about the prevalence of the culture of smoking in Mecca region.⁴Asad Beg ,an imperial envoy coming back from Bijapur presented Akbar the great a Hookah(Chillum) which was properly made in every respect. He described the new leaves to the Mughal emperor that it was tobacco which was well known in Mecca and Medina. Beside that he (Asad Beg) sent some tobacco to several of the Nobels.⁵

Akbar inquired of his Druggist about the peculiar qualities of the new plant and was informed that it was an 'untried medicine' in India. From this view point, we may come to the conclusion that the tobacco plant and its related smoking were introduced in the subcontinent during the reign of Akbar the great. During the next Mughal emperor, Jahangir this custom (culture of tobacco smoking) became more popular. From Jahangirnama, we come to know that Khan –Alam (ambassador to Persia) and Yadgir Ali sultan (ambassador of the ruler of Persia) were very much addicted with tobacco smoking⁶. During the reign of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb smoking was adopted by the every people of Mughal society. N.Manucchi (1639-1717) a Venetian traveler to India during the reign of Aurangzeb, observed that the Mughal emperor had withdrawn the tobacco tax. During the period of study, the Travellers and Beggars who took shelter in Inns were not allowed to cook their food. They were served cooked food with tobacco according to the position in life by the servants 'from the public store-houses. It was very common during the Sahib-i-Barat or fair.

Tobacco Cultivation and Tobacco Trade

The introduction and rapid extension of the cultivation of tobacco was a notable feature of the agricultural history of Mughal India⁷. William Methwold (1590-1653), the English East India company's agent in the kingdom of Golconda from 1618 to 1622, said that the cultivation of tobacco in the coromandal coast was begun not only for the local consumption, but also for export to Burma and Red sea as well as Persian gulf areas before 1622. If the tobacco became a prominent crop before 1605 then it is predictable that the tobacco plant was introduced at least by 1595 and not before than that. From this argument it may be said that the cultivation of tobacco was begun on the coromandal coast after two decades from the time of first growth of tobacco in India. These two sets of evidences refer that tobacco cultivation was started in Gujarat (Surat-Broach area) and AndhraPrades (Masulipattanam and interior area) before 1600. The Portuguese Friar Sebastian Monique saw tobacco cultivation in Bengal. The English physician John Fryer travelled India during the period 1672-1681, saw many cultivated fields of tobacco at Broach near Surat. Thomas Bowery a traveler to India Mentioned that tobacco was given as a gift to the Fauquier (holy men) in North India and on the coromondal coast it was served with leaf of betel vine, areca nut (pan and supari) at all Hindu weddings.

Beside this we get much information about tobacco plantation and trade from the records of the English East India Company perhaps the earliest record of tobacco. In the English record is dated 1612 when one Robert Clarkson was employed by the Surat factory for curing tobacco. From this evidence, it may be assumed that a good quantity of

tobacco was available for export in the hands of English East India Company. Edward Terry noticed the production and export of tobacco on his way from Surat to Agra. From 1619 to 1669 there are a good number of references which indicate that the buying and exporting of tobacco by the English East India Company. To Gombroon and other centers in Persian Gulf and Red sea areas, the company exported tobacco from western India. On the Eastern coast they used to send tobacco to the various parts of South-East Asia, like Java, Arakan through the famous port of Masulipattanam. Tobacco was exported on Indian trading ships⁸. We get evidence of the cost of tobacco from Mysore Revenue Regulations that tobacco was 1 ditto.

Culture of Tobacco Smoking and Social Recreation

Tobacco smoking works as a significant means of recreation. Rosalind O'Hanlon has mentioned that smoking played a key role in entertainment in Mughal society and it was a big sign of manliness in Mughal India⁹. From that time, a new concept was grown up that smoking was related with the 'symbol of masculinity'. In other words, smoking and manliness were both interrelated with each other. For, the culture of tobacco smoking gained an important room in the Mughal Indian society. P.J. Marshall pointed out that smoking was common among the Britishers lived in Indian subcontinent¹⁰.

Opposition against Tobacco Smoking

Soon after the introduction of tobacco smoking to the old world, this custom came under frequent opposition from the States as well as Religious Leaders. Murad-IV, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (1623-1640) was among the first to attempt a smoking ban by claiming it was a threat to public health and morality. The Chinese emperor, Chongzhen issued an edict banning smoking¹¹. Later the Manchu of the Qing dynasty opposed smoking in more severe way. In Japan, during the Edo reign banned tobacco cultivation. James-I of England enforced 4000% tax on tobacco¹². We come to know from Jahangirnama that Saha Abbas had also become aware of the bad effects of smoking and ordered that in Persia no one should smoke. Beside these; in 1634 the Patriarch of Moscow stopped the sale of tobacco. The Western Church leader Urban VII criticized tobacco smoking.

In case of Mughal India, the first opposition was raised during the reign of Jahangir and the credit mostly goes to the Mughal emperor himself. As the smoking of tobacco had taken very bad effects upon health as well as mind of many persons, he ordered that no one should practice the habit of tobacco smoking¹³. In case of Muslims he was imprisoned and worried for some days and then set at liberty. When the travelers passed in and their baggage was examined for the custom duties, no leniency was shown if any tobacco was found. Because there were regular licensed sellers of tobacco and a traveler must not carry more than enough for his own use. So far as the army is concerned the common soldiers were not allowed to use tobacco. They (common soldiers) used to drink spirit and smoke bhang (the leaves of hemp)¹⁴.

Summary and Conclusion

In the concluding paragraph we may say that tobacco smoking was introduced in India during the Mughal period (particularly, during the reign of Akbar the Great), the

bad effects of this custom (culture of tobacco smoking) was also realized during this period. This inspired Jahangir to issue some royal proclamations for the prohibition of tobacco smoking. In spite of that, this practice as well as tobacco cultivation and tobacco trade were increased day by day. Thus this custom touched every corner of Mughal Indian society by the end of seventeenth century. The culture of smoking became more popular in colonial and post-colonial India. The ill effects of tobacco smoking has manifested with the breaking out of some dangerous diseases like Berger, bronchitis, pneumonia and lung cancer. Several anti-smoking measures have been taken by the colonial as well as post-colonial Indian government like prohibition of smoking in public places viz. railway stations and the use of pamphlets "Cigarette smoking is injurious to health" in the advertisement, on cigarette packets and recently in scenes of commercial movies related to smoking. In spite of all, we must remember that there is no more effective way to stop this dangerous culture of tobacco smoking without the honest interest and sincere effort spontaneously by the people.

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The New Face of Islam (Two Muslim Shrines in Eastern India) Kaipadar and Jahania Pir

Amal Kumar Mishra *

The homo-sapiens, who were the earliest form of human beings in the Palaeolithic world, gradually desired to adopt and lead a more disciplined and peaceful life, particularly after developing group existence into a society of co-existence with the onset of the Neolithic period. In order to be able to perform and discharge the social responsibilities they evolved different kinds of philosophies based on moral values and ethics which slowly took the shape of religions. Their chief aim and objective were showing mercy and compassion to all and distribution of love and kindness among fellow human beings. In the long run love for all animate and inanimate objects, suppression of narrow and selfish desires, full respect for other's legitimate claims and rights, the idea to live and let live became the mode and principle of each and every religious groups and communities. The real worth and importance of a religion, therefore, could be gauged very well from the extent it upholds and justifies human rights, values, dignity, equality, care and compassion. As a whole, it can be said that the course of the march of civilizations in history is solely for the purpose of building and construction of a just, beautiful, disciplined and organized human society which can take its followers in the right path.¹

Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam et al regard the *Gita*, *Agamas*, *Tripitaks*, *Bible* and *Koran* respectively as their holy scriptures, to the tenets of which generally they adhere.² The preachers of all these religions had given their sermons and preaching on Godhead at different points of time with a great ambition to transform this world into a divine society where there would be no room for quarrel, animosity or inimical relations whatsoever. Their main motive was to remove the sufferings of the teeming millions of their followers while establishing a just and orderly society. References may be made to the ancient sages and seers of India who uttered :

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah
Sarve Santu Niramayah
Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu
Ma Kaschit Dukha Bhag Bhavet

Its meaning is that let all feel happy and contented. Let all be without pains and sufferings. Let all see good and noble things. Let not grief or sorrow overtake anybody.

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Very correctly this blessing was not only meant for any one community but for the entire human population worldwide. Gandhiji once remarked that Allah of the Muslims, God of the Christians and Iswar of the Hindus are but different manifestations of the same divinity.³ Infact, the best offering to the Almighty can be made in terms of unity and brotherhood of all the fellow human beings tied together in the bond of friendship cutting across all barriers like caste, creed, colour, community, gender, countries and continents. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, two important and stalwart nationalist leaders of India of the period of freedom struggle, in a fitting reply to the communalists working for the partition of greater India observed that Allah could never be confined to any one community alone as He actually belongs to the entire human race at large.⁴

The wrong and dubious interpretations of the religions in the hands of fundamental elements of late have put the world on the brink of a near holocaust and great difficulties. In the 21st century when the effort is to attain more self-sufficiency by way of developing research in the fields of science and technology and equipping the present generation with free flow of information and education religious bigotry and ugly human behaviour by some misdirected goons push the entire civilization of the day backwards to the point of animal existence from which we had opted out much earlier. The so-called faithfuls only believe and take for granted what is written in their own scriptures while making contempt of others. A sick mindset, as a result, has developed which upholds only the religion it professes claiming that it happens to be the best one and others worst. It leads to disputes, altercations and unending dialogues on many occasions even to the extent of extermination of the opposing groups or sections, as if they have no right to live. In the maze of overriding passions and emotions basic human values are thrown asunder and take a back seat. The fear that the followers of one sect or religion might grow at the cost of the other is enough to ignite the match stick and derail the peace process.

A reading of the World History and Civilisations⁵ tell us clearly that even great nations and societies got sliced and bifurcated in order to accommodate warring groups. Even thereafter wars and conflagrations continue to take their tolls of human lives. It creates more headaches, insecurity of life and property in various parts of the world. Added to all these killings, bloodshed, rapes and all such kinds of human carnage terrorism has raised its ugly head on the foundation of fundamental ideas and notions about a religion.

Recent violences in India happening on 26/11⁶ and elsewhere, in the world scenario particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 incident are subjects of careful scrutiny and close examination since they give a new dimension to terrorist activities world over. But merely by defaming Islam in the context of terrorism is highly deplorable and disturbing. An attempt to politicize the issues is even more alarming as well as distressing. As revealed Islam has got so many positive aspects which are simply lost sight of in the maze of lots of hues and cries raised against it. In areas of Eastern India, that is in Odisha, so many Muslim shrines and monuments depict and demonstrate to the world the very essence of universal brotherhood, amity, peace and tolerance leading to a new kind of synthesis in the cultures of Hindus and Muslims based on unity, friendship and co-

existence. Among them **Kaipadar** and **Jahania Pir** are two such religious fabrics, which stand supreme, teaching to one and all a new message which the people across the globe must have the heart to understand and know.

Kaipadar, the shrine of Bokhari Baba, which attracts thousands of devotees belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities since the 12th century, is located about 40 km. away from the capital city of Odisha, Bhubaneswar.⁷ Quite interestingly the *Khadim* or the Muslim priest here does the offerings while the Hindu chef prepares the *prasad* (food offering) and a gardener also belonging to Hinduism supplies the necessary flowers and sandal paste. When the offerings are made at that time the beating of the drum invariably is done which is totally forbidden near Muslim religious places like the mosques. The *Urs* ceremony of the Muslim devotees as well as Satyanarayan *pala* of the Hindu devotees also take place here in turns satisfying both the co-religionists. It is because when the Muslims regard the shrine as *Jindapir*, the Hindus revere Him as *Satyapir*.⁸ The common aspect in all these celebrations is that both the Hindus and Muslims share each other's joys and happiness here while taking active part in it. In the evenings amid chanting of *slokas* by Hindu followers the earthen lamps (*dipas*) are lighted in order to seek the divine blessings. On Thursdays particularly a special type of *prasad*, called *khiri / kheer*, a sweet dish, is offered at the shrine and later distributed among the followers belonging to both the communities. Like eight Muslim families working as servitors, there are also some Hindu families engaged to provide flowers, garlands, sandal paste, peacock tail, *tulsi*, *agur*, *sirini* and *khiri* to the shrine. The devotees and followers generally come here to get rid of the evil spirits, diseases and mostly to seek fulfillment of their long standing wishes. They stay here for seven days, twenty-one days and in some cases months together in order to fulfil their own wishes and desires. Coming from far off places like Afganistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq and other Arabian countries including Indonesia and Malaysia they feel great solace while visiting this *Mazhar* or shrine of long standing. According to a popular estimate when the Baba at Ajmer is called *Shenshah-i-Hind*, the Baba at Kaipadar is regarded as *Shenshah* of Odisha.

As per the long held tradition of the land, Hazrat Syed Abdulla Shah *alias* Jalaluddin Shah Bukhari, a Muslim missionary of great repute, set out from Bukhara situated in Central Asia towards Hindustan in the Medieval times and reached here around 1136 A.D. after visiting Mecca and Medina. He found the place, Kaipadar, so enchanting that he wanted to say his Friday prayers here. But before that he wanted some water to quench his thirst and when he was digging the soil with an iron stick at that very moment there arrived a Hindu milkman who became his first disciple. One fine morning he found the Hazrat Baba sitting in deep penance surrounded on all sides by termites and when he urged him to come out the Baba replied that it was the right time to renounce this world for the heavenly abode. When the disciple also expressed his desire to accompany him, it was agreed. Then both of them attained *nirvana* then and there in the holy month of *Ramdan* in 1136 A.D. and what was left of them was a huge termite hill. The people, who came afterwards, started worshipping this hill facing West, draping a cloth of about 22 meters. Later on a shrine of about 100' in height was built up over the holy spot on a 5 acre land containing a mosque, *madrassa* and guest house. In 1735 king Ramachandra Deva of Khurda visited the shrine and donated some lands for its upkeep

and maintenance. He also made necessary arrangements for holding the regular rituals and offering of *prasad* (food) and flowers required for the shrine. Thus, a Muslim *Khadimdar*, a Hindu milkman and gardener were engaged at once for the purpose. Resembling the shrine at Mecca the *Mazhar* here facing the West has also four entry points on all four sides being encircled by the houses of both Hindu and Muslim devotees. On the south of the shrine a big mosque was built during 1923-25 and behind it there is the graveyard of the Muslims. A guest house, in the name of Usmania Sarai, is also located nearby which was constructed in 1928 by one Hazi Usman Ali of Kolkata. In the shrine complex there are seven rest shades, one kitchen, one room for keeping the huge drum and a well. The religious symbol of both the Hindus and Muslims i.e., half-moon topped by a flag adorn the peak of the shrine.

The philosophy and teachings of Bokhari Baba are both quite instructive as well as illustrative in nature. The Baba always advised his followers belonging to both Hindu and Muslim faiths about the real duties in life. With great humility he asked one and all to give up all worldly pleasures and attachments. Also to treat everybody equally well with malice towards none was another important point in his teachings. He inculcated in all a light of hope and advocated social justice, fair play, universal brotherhood, personal purity and most important of all, religious tolerance. He urged upon all to come above narrow considerations of caste, creed and colour and also that of gender. Later on, in 1872 all these tenets of the Baba got a new tone with the introduction of *Satyapir pala*, a special kind of socio-religious celebration, which convinced the people of both the communities, Hindus and Muslims alike in Odisha that Iswar and Allah are but two names of the same great divinity.⁹

Yet another shrine of great importance is that of **Jahania Pir** located on a huge sand dune to the south of Kakatpur in the district of Puri on the sea-beach itself.¹⁰ It is about 25' to 30' in height and the circumference on the top is of 100'. It is believed that the shrine was of a much bigger shape originally but now-a-days due to the disturbances caused by repeated waves of the sea (Bay of Bengal) as well as strong wind blowing over it the shape of the sand dune is slowly being reduced. However, on the top portion of the sand dune one finds a small hut covered with bamboo sticks and palm leaves. The floor of the hut is generally kept clean and a pair of wooden shoes is all that it has. Actually nobody visits the inside except a Muslim priest, who cleans it and after putting the wooden shoes (*kathau*) in the right place lights a lamp before it. A remarkable thing is that a person visiting the site usually leaves behind a walking stick or an umbrella or any other kind of stick inside since such a belief has gained ground over the time that if any one tries to bring them back then he or she would be cursed with incalculable suffering and hardship. A Muslim priest called *Saji* comes in the evening, cooks *fatia*, a kind of *kheer* (sweet dish) prepared of milk and rice, lights a lamp (*dipa*) and offers it to Jahania Pir. Of course, he reads the *Namaz* first and then does the rest of the things only afterwards.

For the daily offerings at the shrine actually 200 acres of lands almost rent free are attached to it. Out of it other kinds of rituals, and expenses incurred towards making better provisions for the pilgrims coming as far as from Iran, Afghanistan, Arab countries and Sri Lanka are usually met. Not only the Muslims but also 95 percent of the Hindus

living in the native area are devotees of the shrine of Jahania Pir. The Hindus forget their other religious obligations and gather here in large numbers particularly during the time of holding of some marriage ceremonies, sickness or fulfillment of long pending wishes and desires. Even the upper caste people here give their new born babies the name of Jahania or Jahan as per their earlier vows taken here before the birth of such babies. Some Hindus, particularly who face litigation also observe rituals called *guharia* i.e., lying in a prostrated form in the shrine for a number of days wishing judicial decrees awarded in their favour.

When actually Hazrat Muhammad Jahania came to Kakatpur and founded his shrine here and from which exact date the rituals began to be performed by the *Sajis* is a matter of controversy and therefore, little obscure in the absence of concrete historical facts and records. What is available now is in the form of a lot of legends and folklores. The diary maintained by Jahania during his life time called *Musafar Nama*, written in Persian, was translated first of all into Urdu in 1904 by one Gulam Ali of Delhi and printed at Lucknow.¹¹ Most probably he made for Hindustan from his native land Persia and after visiting Mecca he reached here during the period of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji, the founder of Khalji dynasty, in 1290-96 A.D. Calling himself *Naosa* or the grandson of Prophet Mahammad he visited places after places in the country and finally came to Utkal i.e., modern Odisha. The people here finding him very wise and kind hearted started regarding him as *Mukaddam*. Thus, he became known as Mukaddam Jahania Pir who could perform so many magical tricks among other such feats during his life time for which the common people attributed divinity to him. One such was that for the purpose of meditation he was daily going inside the sea to a tiny island and again returning to the mainland. The sea as was believed usually receded when Mukaddam Jahania was passing through it. But one day he did not return. Then the people collected his stick, umbrella and wooden shoes (*kathau*) from the sea-shore and started worshipping them by erecting a hut on a sand dune in his honour. Anyway, the shrine continues to evoke a lot of respect and awe not only among the local populace, among which, there are both Muslims and Hindus, the later of course numbering more, but also many devotees coming from outside the state and country.

Kartik Purnima, a holy day in the Hindu calendar falling usually in the month of November every year, happens to be the most auspicious day here when a lot of crowd turns over to offer their prayers and seek divine dispensation and blessings. The most amazing fact is though basically a Muslim shrine the turn over of Hindus on this particular occasion when a big fair takes place, is comparatively more. They chant *Hari nama*, hold *Sankirtans* and offer various kinds of fruits like banana etc. as the *prasad*. The Muslim priest performs the rituals and takes out a portion of the *prasad* as *chanda* as his share. He also receives *dakhina* in the form of small changes for doing this service from the Hindu devotees who feel elated and contented.

The actual philosophy emanating out of the Jahania Pir shrine is that everybody should be treated equally. No discrimination on the ground of caste, creed, colour and religion are allowed. Further, no question of high and low is raised. No issues relating to communalism or fundamentalism ever touched anyone's heart in the last so many hundreds of years. In the place of egoism or disregard for other religions one finds

universalism reigning supreme all the time here. It is basically because preceptors like Jahania Pir in the past had conducted their religious discourses and sermons here without creating any kind of ill feeling, hatred or communal disturbance to the discomfort of religions of other faithfuls.¹²

Islam has thus a new face here, a new dimension in Odisha, and as per the Census of 1981 it happens to be the third most important religion in the state.¹³ In Balasore there is a shrine called Bhujakhia Pir in the honour of a Muslim saint, Shah Swaleh Muhammad and at a little distance away at Dhamnagar another such shrine in the honour of another Muslim saint, Maulana Habibur Rahman also exists. The devotees belonging to both Hinduism and Islam coming from all over the country and even abroad gather here during the time of annual *Urs* for *Fateha* and *Sirini*.¹⁴ There is also another big shrine in Cuttack, the old capital of Odisha, called Kadam Russol, which is visited both by Hindus and Muslims regularly to offer their homage. Odisha thus actually teaches a new way of life to one and all on the basics of Hindu-Muslim unity, cooperation and fellow-feeling while burying deep all kinds of hatred, ill feeling and communal instincts.

The terror attacks like 9/11 in USA, London train bombings and those in Madrid, the NATO storage area near Peshawar in Pakistan and more recently 26/11 in Mumbai confirm that the terror masters are a determined lot who remain at large and are actually focused as they prepare for the next, even more horrendous strike.¹⁵ However, the battle against terrorism must be fought and won not only by making stringent laws but by trying to change the hearts and minds of the people who attempt it believing that they espouse a holy cause and perform a divine mission.¹⁶ The root causes that nurture terrorism of all kinds and hues must be rooted out by holding democratic discussions and debates which have been a liberal tradition of India. In the extremely volatile world of the 21st century if we have to be accepted as a modern society one has to be tolerant of different views and learn to integrate them, or refuse and change them in an orderly civilized manner. The lessons learnt from Odisha may come handy in this important respect.

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Peasant in History of Kashmir

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The word Peasant is derived from the old French word *Paisant* meaning country dweller which is based on Latin word *Pagus* meaning country district. Cambridge dictionary describes peasant as a “person who owns or rents a small piece of land and grows crops, keeps animals, etc. on it, especially one who has a low income, very little education and a low social position. This is usually used of someone who lived in the part or of someone in a poor country.” Similarly, Oxford dictionary defines peasant as “a small holder or agricultural labour of low social status.” This somber image of a peasant was reflected in most of the modern works which did not gave them ample space in the reconstruction of the history of a region and negated their role in its all round development.

The study of the history of a peasant was not given much relevance in the modern times until the subaltern studies came into the fore. With the advent of bottom up studies of people whose history had been previously ignored, the study of the history of peasants came into prominence. This led to the flourishing of the social history from below asserting the importance of peasants as a significant component in the development of the history of a region. Even the term subaltern had peasant origin as in late Medieval English, subaltern term was applied to peasant and vassals. Subaltern studies gave prominence to the history of peasants over and above the state centred historical research.

The history of peasants in India started with the advent of Neolithic revolution when the domestication of plants had started. The origin of peasants in a society will only take place with the establishment of agriculture and Neolithic revolution provided every essential ingredient to the people to start the cultivation of crops. Agriculture was started as a family affair and the members of the same family spent their time in cultivating and harvesting, and later on, incorporated members of other families also and in this process the food gatherers and hunters of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic times turned into food producers. This led to the evolution of peasant as a basic unit of social organization.

The first urban revolution in India is coincided with the Indus civilization which was only possible with a surplus production in agriculture. The discovery of ploughed field at Kalibangan corroborates the agricultural activities at the time of Indus civilization. The state, as is said, appropriated the surplus production and stored it in the various granaries of the region to be distributed amongst its subjects. This gave fillip to

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the trade and commerce of the region at not only local and inter-regional level but international also.

The early Vedic society was considered to be a nomadic and pastoral society in which there was no concept of ownership of land and wealth was seen mainly in the form of cows, horses, camels etc. This view was advanced by D.D Kosambi who said that "there is nothing about division of land or land ownership, let alone buying or selling land, or for that matter any commodities. The main source of wealth, its very measure was cattle; in the second line, horses."¹ The Rig Vedic society hardly produced any surplus but such was not the case in the times of Later Vedic period when there occurred a transition from pastoral to agriculture based economy. R.S Sharma calls this society as non-monetary peasant society in which large scale agriculture led to the development and consolidation of the institution of state. This view also finds support from D.N. Jha who writes that "The Later Vedic people became settled and sedentary and they could perhaps produce enough for themselves and to a certain extent for the support of the priests and the ruling class."²

D.D. Kosambi also advances the view that there was transition from the pastoral-raider to agrarian food processing economy in the times of Later Vedic period which led to the increase in food supply on a regular basis.³ But the surplus produced in agriculture was not adequate enough to support all the people engaged in non-agricultural occupations. R.S.Sharma puts forth the reason for less production in the Later Vedic times to the primitive techniques used by the peasants and the less agricultural knowledge. According to him, "On account of their primitive agriculture; peasants could not produce much for consumption and accumulation by non producers. They generally worked with the wooden ploughshare, and their agricultural knowledge was not very advanced. Further, peasants possessed only as much land as could be worked with the help of their family members and even kings lent their hands to the plough."⁴

Regarding the ownership rights in the Later Vedic period, Irfan Habib has remarked that the rich peasants were masters of their fields and the larger population comprised the subjected lot who worked on the fields for their masters. According to him, "The peasants were masters of their own fields (*Ksetrapati*). But such free peasants belonged to the superior tribes: a larger population would seem to have comprised the subjected *dasyu* communities compelled to part with grain and kine. In the lowest levels were the *dasas* working like cattle, presumably on the field or tending the herds, for their masters. At the apex were the aristocracy (*rajanyas*) proudly driving in their chariots with *Indra* as their model, and the priests (*brahmanas*) who presided over animal sacrifices and a complex ritual. A celebrated hymn in Book X of the Rig Veda offers a picture of this class divided society whose creation the hymn seeks to ascribe to divinity. However simplified, the *varna* scheme of the hymn seems to reflect faithfully the deep division of the peasantry into its free *vis* and the servile *dasyus*, who, transmuted as *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*, from respectively the third and fourth *Varnas*."⁵

The 6th century B.C acted as a watershed in the agricultural history of India when the forest rich Indo-Gangetic basin was cleared with the help of iron axes and agriculture was commenced in its fertile areas. The use of iron ploughshare as an important agricultural tool led to the production of a surplus which further contributed for the rise of

towns and traders. According to R.S.Sharma, "Once the forested areas of the middle Ganga basin were cleared with the help of the iron axe, one of the most fertile parts of the world was opened to settlement. With the help of iron ploughshare and other tools peasants produced a good deal more than what they needed for their subsistence."⁶

Manu, a law giver of the ancient times, has specifically enunciated the ownership rights of the peasants. He says that the field belonged to one who cleared the timber and a deer to one who first wounded it. This principle was not followed everywhere as stratification existed within the peasantry and some peasant cultivators possessed their own lands and some were just mere sharecroppers. According to Irfan Habib, "There was within the peasantry itself a considerable degree of stratification: there were large number who were mere sharecroppers on the field of others. When Manu says that the field belong to one who "first cleared away the timber", he is possibly thinking of peasant cultivators possessing their own field. But he says elsewhere that the claims of "the owner of the field" have precedence over the actual tiller ("owner of the seed"), and the latter can only be a sharecropper. Yajnavalkya underlines this when he says that the owner of the field (*Kestraswami*) had the right to assign it to a cultivator of his choice."⁷

There was a complete transformation in the position of peasants in early Medieval India due to the introduction of land grants to the people in lieu of their salaries. Land was also given to religious people on charitable basis with all the right to 'cultivate it or get it cultivated'. The most significant result of land grants was the emergence of a class of landlords and subjected peasantry. The landlords lived on the produce of the peasantry and collected rent from them on the ground that they were owners of the land.⁸ The system of land grants eroded the rights of the peasants on their land. Highlighting the condition of the peasantry, R.S.Sharma writes, "They were specifically transferred to the beneficiaries, asked to stay in the donated villages and carry out the orders of the new masters."⁹ Most of the land charters of early Medieval India give proof of the conditions of the peasants who were asked to carry out the orders of the beneficiaries of the land grants.¹⁰

The condition of the peasants was further aggravated with the imposition of forced labour and various new levies and taxes imposed on them by their new owners. According to D.N.Jha, "The practice of making land grants gave rise to feudal agrarian relations and forms of exploitation which generated much social tension leading to peasant protest of which considerable evidence is available from the 9-10th centuries onwards."¹¹

Under the Sultanate of Delhi, several economic and technological changes were made which influenced the life and conditions of the peasants substantially and the latter intensified their activities in terms of extension of cultivated areas. They also produced both food grains and cash crops meant for market. The feudal structure of the society in the preceding centuries gave way to a centralized polity with the establishment of the Sultanate. Mohammed Habib has described these changes as an urban revolution in which the balance shifted in favour of the towns and its inhabitants as "the old caste cities of the Rajput period were thrown open to all types of people-high and low, workers and artisans, Hindus and Muslims, Chandalas and Brahmans."¹² According to Irfan Habib, "The shift of the balance in favour of the town as against country is an important element

of Medieval Indian economic History. The evidence for the Sultanate, literary as well as numismatic, suggests a fairly noticeable upsurge in urban life. It is likely that in the Mughal empire the urban population amounted to as much as 15% of the total, a distinctly higher proportion than at the end of the 19th century."¹³ This large proportion of the urban population was dependent on the surplus extracted from the peasantry. A cursory look at the contemporary sources of the medieval period clearly shows that during the 13th and 14th centuries, the land-man ratio was very favourable. During this period, large scale cultivable land was yet to be brought under cultivation. Infact, it was the period of land abundance. It is evident from the contemporary sources that the large tracts of Gangetic plains were still under forests. Land availability in abundance kept the peasants engaged in agricultural activities continuously. It is also corroborated by Moreland's statement when he says that "land was waiting for men with the resources necessary for its cultivation."¹⁴ Thus, peasant's scope in agriculture remained alive in a continuous process and they were able to cultivate the land so as to provide surplus to the state.

Peasant as a social group managed the agrarian activities with the assistance of the state. In the Medieval period, the relation between the peasants and state was two-bound i.e, State as protector of the peasants and peasant as revenue payer to the state. State protected the interests of the peasants through the various relief measures introduced for their welfare. It is evident that the state exempted or remitted land revenue in case of failure of crops and even provided loan to them at the time of famine as is in the case of Mohammed Tughluq who granted *Sondhar* to the famine stricken people. On the other hand, peasants were duty bound to pay land revenue to the state so as to enjoy various facilities of the state. They even paid various customary cesses in the form of *Kismat-i-Khuti*, *Haqq-i-Sharb*, etc. which were the regular contributions of the peasants for the maintenance of village resources.

The social structure of the peasantry during the Sultanate period continued to operate in the Mughal period also with some slight circumstantial changes. Peasants or *Raiyats* were broadly divided into 2 categories: *Khud-Kashta* and *Pahi-Kashta*. *Khud-Kashta* were the peasants who held land in the villages where they lived and cultivated it whereas *Pahi-Kashta* held land outside their native villages. According to Satish Chandra, "Thus, resident status in the village, ownership of the land, and cultivating the land with the help of family labour, supplemented by hired labour were the characteristic features of the *Khud-Kasht*."¹⁵ He further adds that "the *Pahi* or *Pahi-Kashta* who came from neighbouring villages or *parganas* to cultivate surplus land, or to resettle a ruined village or to settle a new one."¹⁶ The land rights of both *Khud-Kashta* and *Pahi-Kashta* were to be retained by them.

Peasant mobility was well accepted in the medieval period for their better financial position. Mughal emperor Babur emphasizes on the peasant migration from one area to the other in search of better land. It shows the preference of the peasants for the land of their choice and the recognition of their land rights by the state. According to him, "In Hindustan, hamlets and villages, towns, indeed, are depopulated and set up in a moment! If the people of a large town, one inhabited for years even, flee from it, they do it in such a way that not a sign or trace of them remains in a day or a day and a half. On

the other hand, if they fix their eyes on a place in which to settle, they need not dig water-courses or construct dams because their crops are all rain grown, and as the population of Hindustan is unlimited, it swarms it. They make a tank or dig a well; they need not build houses or set up walls-Khas grass abounds, wood is unlimited, huts are made, and straightaway there is a village or a town."¹⁷

The land rights of the peasants bring us to an important question of the ownership of land in India during the medieval period. Bernier's notion that land in India belonged to the king and that the "king is the proprietor of the land"¹⁸ started the debate on the ownership of land. But, it did not find any support in the contemporary literary as well as official documents which portray an altogether different picture. The availability of uncultivated land though fit for cultivation i.e. *Uftada-Laik-i-Ziraat* in the medieval period substantiates the fact that whosoever cultivated the land became its owner. The compulsion on the cultivator to cultivate the land was not because he was a serf but because he was a member of the society to which he contributes in his own little way by paying taxes.

The *Farman* of the reign of Aurangzeb addressed to Mohammed Hashim gives evidence to the claim that the land belonged to the cultivator. According to Irfan Habib, "The *Farman* addressed to Mohammed Hashim provides that if the cultivator-*Malik* was found incapable of cultivating the land or abandoned it altogether, it was to be given to another for cultivation, so that there was no loss of revenue. But if at any time the original *Malik* recovered his ability to cultivate the land, or returned to it, the land was to be restored to him."¹⁹ This order of the emperor that the land of the cultivator which could be cultivated by someone else during his absence or on his disability was to be returned back to him as soon as he returned to cultivate is a clear indication towards the recognition of the proprietary rights of the cultivator by the state. The terms *Malik-i-Zamin* and *Arbab-i-Zamin* used for the peasants further corroborate their ownership rights.

Irfan Habib postulates that the recognition of the peasant's right of ownership was due to the state's fear of peasants leaving the land at a time when the land was in abundance and peasants were scarce. According to him, "The willingness of the state to recognize the peasant's right of occupancy, and its anxiety to prevent him from leaving the land, were both natural in an age when land was relatively abundant, and peasants scarce."²⁰ Regarding scarcity of peasants, Moreland has substantiated it mostly on the basis of Bernier's account who attributed it to the heavy assessment of land revenue which led to decrease in number of the peasants in the 17th century. He further remarks that the main concern of the period was the "scarcity of peasants, and their readiness to abscond."²¹

During the Medieval period, the peasant production increased manifold due to certain improvements in the agricultural tools, introduction of new crops, improvement in irrigation facilities etc. The foremost among these was the Persian wheel or *Saqlia*. It was based on pin drum gearing system. The geared wheel was rotated by the oxen going round in circles. Babur has referred to its use in Dipalpur, Lahore and other neighbouring areas. The introduction of Persian wheel led to the diffusion of agricultural communities in every part of the Indus basin and subsequently increased the production. According to

Irfan Habib, "There appears to have taken place a transformation of a large pastoral, camel or cattle rearing population into an agricultural community, in the Indus basin sometime between the 11th and 16th centuries, accompanied by a possible migration of portions of that community from the middle of the basin to the north and then to the east and south eastwards. This development broadly synchronizes with the diffusion of the Persian wheel, which process to judge from Babur's statements, had been completed in the region by the beginning of the 16th century, and also with the reclamation of large areas in the Panjab which allegedly took place during the 15th century...the Persian wheel upon its introduction caused a critical change in the agricultural situation in the Indus basin, leading in due course to a considerable influx of previously pastoral elements into the ranks of the peasantry."²²

The digging of canals on a widespread basis led to the increase in the extent of cultivation which had direct effects on the prosperity of the peasantry. The first ruler of Medieval India who was credited for the promotion of irrigation and the digging of canals was Ghiyasuddin Tughluq but it was Firuz Shah Tughluq who built a number of canals so that the peasantry had not to depend on rains for cultivation. It is said that canal irrigation enhanced the cultivation in the region and where previously only autumn crops were grown but after its introduction, the rabi or spring crops could also be grown such as in Hissar Firoza. This process of digging of canals continued in the Mughal period and numerous canals were dug and water was cut from the rivers to be furnished to the various fields such as Shahjahan's *Nahr-i-Faiz* which cut water from the Yamuna river.

Medieval Indian peasants were known for producing the largest number of crops, both food and non-food. The Indian peasants were proficient in not only growing multiple crops but were always ready to accept new crops as the seventeenth century is known in the agricultural history of India for the introduction of two crops-tobacco and maize. For multiple crops, peasants practiced various advance techniques not known even to the European peasants like the rotation of crops. The role of the peasants in the agrarian economy of a village can be gauged from the fact that the majority of the items of commercial use were procured from land produce such as indigo, cotton, sugarcane, opium, spices etc. These cash crops were the basic contributions of the peasants towards the various industries developing in the 16th-17th centuries. The merchant and industrial activities were largely subjected by the cultivation of these crops and the flow of these articles from the villages to the towns was the dominant aspect of trade and commerce of the region.

The role of the medieval peasantry in the agricultural economy cannot be undermined as they were the sole contributors of surplus produce to the state but their economic condition was not as satisfactory as it should have been. It seems that because of the sharing of their produce with the state or village headmen, *zamindars*, nobility etc. and also their dependence on the bankers and merchants for the selling of their produce, peasants were left with just minimum returns hardly enough for their survival. The scantiness of their clothing can be well substantiated by the remark of Babur who says that the "Peasant and people of low standing go about naked."²³ Contemporary sources report that the peasants generally lived in thatched houses made of mud and were poor in quality. As far as the diet of the peasants is concerned, it mostly consisted of coarse

grains, pulses, vegetables etc. which were of low varieties as Irfan Habib also substantiates that "it was the coarsest varieties out of his produce which the peasant was able to retain for his own family."²⁴

The two way relationship between the state and the peasants changed into a triangular relationship with the emergence of *Zamindars* as a dominant social group. The Indian feudal lords obtained the designation of the *zamindars* of the Mughal period. These zamindars were permitted to evict the peasantry from his land and rent out the land to someone else. Apart from collecting legal taxes from the peasants, they also collected some illegal and miscellaneous taxes and cesses which proved discouraging for the peasants. It led to the peasant mobilization to those areas where zamindars were not the dominant class.

Despite the state's claim as the promoter and protector of the rights of the peasantry, the peasants of Medieval India seemed to be bereft of satisfactory living and were forced to fight for their bare survival. They had to face oppression of both the ruling class and the *zamindars* and as Irfan Habib has observed, "Medieval peasantry was thus beset by a dual exploitation of the ruling class and the zamindars."²⁵ Even if this dual exploitation was not enough, the Medieval peasantry had also to face another kind of oppression in the form of natural calamities like flood and famines. The nature's fury took heavy toll on the lives of the peasantry and led to their economic as well as social stagnation. All these oppressions, natural as well as man-made led to peasant revolts in the medieval period. The root cause of some of these revolts was the heavy demand of land tax at a time when their mere survival was also in question for example the peasant revolt in the time of Muhammed Tughluq in the doab region. According to Irfan Habib, "Peasant uprisings span medieval India; their immediate provocation seems uniformly to have been the demand for payment of land revenue."²⁶

The system of jagirs and their regular transfers also led to the exploitation of the peasantry and created a situation of agrarian crisis in the 17th century. The regular transfers of jagirdars from one jagir to another diminished their interests in following an agricultural policy for the welfare of the peasantry. In order to garner immediate personal benefits, the jagirdars ruined the revenue paying capacity of the peasants through their oppressive acts. The continuous oppression led to the abandonment of the agricultural activities by the peasantry which further created conditions of less cultivation. In extreme cases, the peasants were forced to abscond to other areas, either in search of entirely new profession or continuing with the same one in a new place. According to Irfan Habib, "There is a continuous stream of statements in our authorities to the effect that the oppression increased with the passage of time, cultivation fell off and the number of absconding peasants grew."²⁷

Thus the medieval peasantry had to come across both the happy conditions in terms of large scale productions, multiplicity of crops, protecting their interests by the state etc. and also the distressful conditions in the form of official oppression by the *jagirdars*, *zamindars*, their agents etc.

Like other regions of India, Kashmir was also predominantly a region primarily based on agrarian economy. Both literary sources of Kashmir and foreign accounts depict Kashmir as a picturesque valley embellished with unparalleled landscapes, green

pastures, forests, rivers, lakes, lofty mountain ranges, abundant varieties of fruit and ornamental trees. Much has been written about its eternal beauty and charm and is known to the outside world as a paradise on earth. Kalhana, author of *Rajatarangini*, has mentioned Kashmir as a country which cannot be conquered by the soldiers but by the force of spiritual merits and even the sun does not burn fiercely to show respect to the country that has been created by Kasyapa. He further adds that some things available in Kashmir are difficult to be found even in heaven also. According to him, "That country may be conquered by the force of spiritual merits, but not by the forces of soldiers. Hence its inhabitants are afraid only of the world beyond...Out of respect, as it were, the sun does not burn fiercely, during summer even, in that (country) which has been created by his father (Kasyapa), as he knows that it ought not to be tormented...Learning, lofty houses, saffron, icy water, grapes, things that even in heaven are difficult to find, are common there."²⁸ Pandit Suka considered Kashmir as a second heaven and remarked that "even the king of the serpent with his two thousand tongues, cannot describe the glories of the country."²⁹ These observations of the chroniclers of Kashmir find support in the medieval chroniclers and travel accounts which also appreciate Kashmir for its exquisite beauty. Mughal association with the nature of lands and soils can be estimated from the fact that most of the literary sources from Abul Fazl onwards deal with Kashmir in a thematic way whereas other provinces hardly get such space in Mughal chronicles as Kashmir. It is a well-established fact that Mughal empire was divided into *Subahs* and Kashmir first remained with the *Subah* of Kabul and under Shahjahan, it was made full fledged *Subah*. However, both the *Akbarnama* and *Ain-i-Akbari* devote several pages on Kashmir of which major portion are on the life and conditions of the people of Kashmir. Some of the observations are as follows:

Abul Fazl, the Mughal chronicler of the times of Akbar was mesmerized by the landscape of Kashmir and its natural beauty. According to him, "The country is enchanting, and might be fittingly called a garden of perpetual spring surrounding a citadel terraced to the skies, and deservedly appropriate to be either the delight of the worldling or the retired abode of the recluse. Its streams are sweet to the taste, its waterfall music to the ear, and its climate is invigorating."³⁰

Mughal emperor Jahangir considered Kashmir as a paradise and he was often seen commenting that he had no words to describe the enchanting beauty of Kashmir. According to him, "If one were to take to praise Kashmir, whole books would have to be written. Accordingly a mere summary will be recorded...Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring or an iron fort to a palace of kings- a delightful flower bed, and a heart expanding heritage for dervishes. Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond all description."³¹

Inayat Khan³², author of *Shahjahannama*, considered Kashmir as one of the most favoured regions in the world in terms of its charming and exuberant features. According to him, "Without any doubt it is one of the most favoured spots in the world; or rather it is a combination of the best of all of them, on account of the fresh and bracing salubrity of the climate, the luxuriance of the vegetation and foliage, the abundance of delicious fruits, and the constant succession of lovely gardens and pleasant islands- as well as springs, lakes, cascades and parterres. No other kingdom on the face of the globe has yet

been discovered by the most experienced traveller that possesses such peculiarly charming features.”³³

Francois Bernier³⁴ was also charmed by the exquisiteness of Kashmir. According to him, “You have no doubt discovered before this time that I am charmed with Kachemire. In truth, the Kingdom surpasses in beauty all that my warm imagination had anticipated. It is probably unequalled by any country of the same extent, and should be, as in former ages, the seat of sovereign authority, extending his dominion over all the circumjacent mountains, even as far as Tartary and over the whole of Hindoustan, to the island of Ceylon.”³⁵

A lot has been said about the beauty, exquisiteness and charm of Kashmir but the various social institutions which helped Kashmir in its overall development did not find enough mention in the various accounts on Kashmir. Peasants being considered the lowest stratum of society did not find much space in the history of Kashmir and their lot was neglected by the native as well as foreign chroniclers. Some scattered references are found of the peasantry of Kashmir which is too inadequate to help building up their full account. Kashmir was formerly a large lake in ancient times and the land for cultivation was not available. This fact is corroborated by Kalhana who mentions that “Formerly, since the beginning of the kalpa, the land in the womb of the himalaya was filled with water during the periods of the (first) six Manus (and formed) the lake of Sati...Afterwards when the present period of the (seventh) Manu Vaivasvata had arrived, the Prajapati Kasyapa caused the gods led by Druhina, Upendra and Budra to descend, caused (the demon) Jalodbhava, who dwelt in that (lake), to be killed, and created Kashmir in the space (previously occupied by) the lake.”³⁶

These conditions were not favourable for the peasants of Kashmir who did not had the required resources to cultivate crops. Kalhana further adds that the floods were recurrent in Kashmir which created water locked conditions and reduced the agricultural productions. According to him, “This country of Kashmir always (before) gave small produce, as it was (liable to be) flooded by the waters of the Mahapadma lake, and was intersected by (many) streams”.³⁷ King Lalitaditya of Karkota dynasty is credited with large scale drainage operations in the valley which helped in the lessening of floods and led to increase in agricultural produce. According to Aurel Stein, “Lalitaditya is credited with having supplied villages near Cakradhara: Tsakdar with the means of irrigation by the construction of a series of water wheels (*araghatta*) which raised the water of the Vitasta.”³⁸ Agricultural conditions were further enhanced with the improvements in the drainage system of the valley introduced by Suyya, a minister of King Avantivarman. He regulated the course of Jhelum river which relieved the people of the valley from the disastrous floods and famines. Appreciating the works of Suyya which provided relief to the people, Kalhana writes, “Then through the merits of Avantivarman there descended to the earth the lord of food (*annapati*) himself, (in the person of) the illustrious Suyya, to give fresh life to the people.”³⁹ Kalhana further records that Suyya “embellished all regions with an abundance of irrigated fields which were distinguished for excellent produce”.⁴⁰

These innovative changes led to the reclamation of land and made it available for agriculture. Increase in production was the obvious consequence which brought

prosperity in the lives of the peasantry and who could in turn whole heartedly fulfill their duty towards agriculture. It is also evident from the mention of Kalhana who writes that the villagers were "wholly absorbed in agriculture."⁴¹ Even the kings of Kashmir realized the importance of agriculture from revenue point of view and started cultivating the land themselves. Kalhana has mentioned that King Samkaravarman (883-902 A.D) "cultivated the land himself as (if he were) an agriculturist."⁴²

With the passage of time, the prosperous conditions of peasantry became pitiable as the new kings were feeble and neglected the affairs of the state. Peasants had to pay innumerable taxes and fines apart from the heavy revenue demand which was realized in kind. The civil wars in the valley further brought misery to the peasantry as the soldiers of the warring factions often looted the grains of the peasants.⁴³ Even the Kashmiri village was not self-sufficient as it had to depend on various imported items for its survival. But the difficult trade routes led to the creation of a new class in villages who fulfilled all the requirements of the common peasantry. This new class was called as Damara who mostly acquired wealth by trade. It created conditions of feudalism as all the wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few Damaras who acted as feudal lords and owned most of the land in Kashmir. Regarding the ownership rights, D.D.Kosambi writes that "Land was effectively in private ownership to a considerable extent, and that surplus could be traded either against imported goods, or held over for internal trade in times of famine, to increase accumulation of wealth."⁴⁴

The most oppressive measure which created a subjected peasantry in Kashmir was the system of *Begar* or forced labour. According to Irfan Habib, "The imposition of forced labour on certain sections of the rural population was an old established practice."⁴⁵ Kalhana attributed the introduction of *Begar* to Samkaravarman as he mentions that "He introduced that well known (system of forced) carriage of loads which is the harbinger of misery for the villages, and which is of 13 kinds."⁴⁶ Absence of proper roads and laboring class was detrimental for the cultivators as all the load of carrying their produce fell on them. This led to decrease in agricultural productions as peasants had to be away from the fields for long duration.

The deplorable condition of the peasantry improved to a certain extent with the establishment of Sultanate in Kashmir. The Sultans took measures to lessen the oppression committed on the common people including peasantry by their predecessors. Appreciating the welfare measures of Sultan Shamsuddin of Kashmir and his concern for the peasantry, Nizamuddin Ahmed remarks, "When Sultan Shamsuddin attained to sovereignty, he discontinued all the customs of oppressions and tyranny, which had continued from preceding ruler. He gave a written assurance to the *rai-yats* that he would not take from them a larger revenue than the sixth part of the produce."⁴⁷ But, still, the peasantry of Kashmir was living under the burden of heavy taxation and other oppressive measures of the Sultans which was mainly the result of the civil wars. The Shah Mir rulers were also not able to put an end to the hated *begar* which had a detrimental effect on the peasants of Kashmir. Infact, it was extended to the Hanjis in the times of Shihabuddin (1354-73) under whom they were asked to work wage free for the ruler for 7 days in a month. Later, forced labour was even extended in the Saffron fields where

peasants were forcibly employed to separate Saffron from the petals. In return, they were paid a certain quantity of salt as wages.

Apart from these oppressive measures, certain other measures were taken by the Sultans of Kashmir to develop agriculture and improve the conditions of the peasantry. Reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin is taken to be as one of the golden times for the peasants of Kashmir. He introduced a number of measures to augment agricultural productions. He reclaimed barren lands and cultivated crops on those lands where it was not possible earlier. Increase in cultivated land led to the abundance of agrarian produce which was stored in large granaries and later distributed among the common people. According to Srivara, "Everywhere were seen houses high as hill, full of rice lately grown on extensive fields. These granaries were indeed like the breast of the earth from which the people drained their nourishment and throne day by day. Like Samuyya, the King grew crops in places where lands could be obtained with difficulty, or where they seldom yielded crops before an account of calamities."⁴⁸ This clearly exhibits the commitment of Zain-ul-Abidin towards the welfare of the peasantry of Kashmir. In his conversation with his son, Zain-ul-Abidin had himself talked about his inclinations and his love for his subjects. According to him, "I have, owing to my love for my subjects, increased all the new productions of the country three folds by means of canals, cultivation and by other means."⁴⁹

Zain-ul-Abidin increased the agricultural productions manifold by developing a sound irrigation system in the form of building canals, dams, tanks etc. These canals reclaimed the barren lands and in turn created favourable conditions for the peasantry to sow seeds without depending on rains as "the land was previous dependent on the rain (for its crops), but the king made it dependent on the river."⁵⁰ Describing the construction of various canals by Zain-ul-Abidin and their extension to the numerous fields, Jonaraja writes, "King obtained wonderful fame by joining a waterfall to a stream, and the river which had been dry became filled with water. The king caused the canal, which ran along the field to be extended to the lands at Utpalapura and he thus made both the canal and the lands useful. He caused a canal to be carried down to the desert of Nandashaila and thus made the people think of the Chakradhara in the midst of the sea. This beneficent king held high his unsullied fame and made the country of Karala a theme of praise by means of a canal...The king, whose history is pleasant, caused a canal to be constructed in the lands of Avantipura and the canal was rich in Shali crop."⁵¹

He provided all basic provisions to the peasantry so that they could cultivate their land and produce a surplus required for the nourishment of all the classes of people. As far as the land is concerned, it was divided mainly into four kinds. Giving details of the different kinds of land in Kashmir, Mirza Haider Dughlat writes, "In this region, all the land is divided into 4 kinds- The cultivation is : (1) by irrigation (abi), (2) on land not needing artificial irrigation, (3) gardens, and (4) level ground, where the river banks abound in violets and many coloured flowers."⁵² He further adds that "on the level (ground), on account of the excessive moisture, the crops do not thrive, and for this reason the soil is not laboured, which constitutes one of its charms."⁵³ This shows that the conditions were not favourable for the peasants but, still, they worked hard for their bare survival and came out in flourishing colours as can be judged from the prosperity of the

times of Zain-ul-Abidin. Peasants were given full state support in his times and various measures were adopted so that the good of the peasantry should prevail. Appreciating the concerns of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin towards the peasants of Kashmir, N.K.Zutshi, a modern historian, writes, "The sultan anxiously looked after them in times of distress and comforted them."⁵⁴ He even compelled the thieves to follow the right path and work on land providing them with all the necessities required. According to Srivara, "The king caused the fleet of the Chandala thieves, who ought to have lived by agriculture, to be chained, and he compelled them to work on land. Knowing that low caste men take themselves to thieving when in want of means of livelihood, the king gave them provisions."⁵⁵

Floods and famines were recurrent phenomena in Kashmir and whenever they occurred, they brought with them huge devastation for the peasantry of Kashmir. Srivara describes one such famine caused by the falling of the untimely snow which damaged the crops of Kashmir which were in full bloom. According to him, "Fate augments the happiness of men by increasing the crops and fate also brings calamity to them in the shape of famine. The clouds that make the grass grow by rains also destroy it by the weight of snow. The country was rich in crops, which in the year 31, in the month of chaitra, the sky suddenly rained dust. The country was beautified with the shali rice, when snow fell in the month of Agrahayena and caused distress. The earth covered her face with snow as with a white mantle, as if unable to bear the sight of the people's distress. The ripe shali crop which had gladdened the hearts of men was covered with snow...the monster famine soon stamped its mark on the country; there were emaciated men distressed for want of food, oppressed with hunger, and with eyes inflamed."⁵⁶

Such conditions led to the starvation of the people who were longing for food and their hunger multiplied due to the destruction of crops and the rise in prices of paddy which increased manifold. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin could not see the distress of the people and fed them with the rice stored in the state granaries free of cost till the new crops grew in plenty. He even cancelled the loan deeds between the debtors and creditors so as to provide relief to the distressed peasantry. According to Srivara, "Being a kind disposition, the king became anxious for his people, and after he had fed his distressed subjects for a few months, like his children, which his own rice, a plentiful crop grew, as if on account of the greatness of his heart. Out of humanity he cancelled the deeds on bhurja leaves drawn up between the creditors and debtors."⁵⁷

Peasants under the Sultanate of Kashmir received better attention of the state than the Damara period. Since Zain-ul-Abidin reestablished tradition of *Rajatarangini* selecting Jonaraja and Srivara for the same, Peasant received attention of these Sanskrit historians. Zain-ul-Abidin has been projected by these chroniclers as the well wisher of the peasants and artisans. His policy of promotion of agriculture has been recorded by them into 4 points:

1. Rationalizing taxation policy
2. Digging of canals
3. Assignment of land in charity
4. Preference to cash crops particularly Saffron

Zain-ul-Abidin proved to be a harbinger of relief for the peasants who also worked earnestly for the welfare of the state as a whole. While formulating the state policy, Zain-ul-Abidin always had peasantry in mind as he felt that the prosperity of the land is mainly due to the hard work of the peasantry who cultivate land and produce surplus for the consumption of the state. He reduced revenue to $\frac{1}{4}$ or even $\frac{1}{7}$ of the produce so that the cultivating class did not have to live on bare survival. Giving details of the amount of revenue collected during the times of Zain-ul-Abidin and his advice to the future kings to work on same lines, Srivara writes, "At Svayyapura the king had caused an edict to be inscribed on a copper plate to the effect that at this shrine of Jainagiri, future kings should take one-seventh of the crop that grows as tribute. It ran thus -: Shri Jainallavadina begs future kings to take one-seventh of the produce of the land which he by his money has cleared and brought under cultivation at Jainagiri."⁵⁸ Even the sale and purchase deeds of the times of Zain-ul-Abidin reflect the proprietary rights of the tiller and the peasantry had every right to sell his land to anyone he liked. Such relation which existed between the ruler and the peasantry was not seen in the later part of the Sultanate period as the Sultans were only interested in grabbing throne and creating conditions of civil wars which had detrimental effect on the common people as well as the peasantry.

With the establishment of Mughal rule in Kashmir in 1586, there ushered a new phase of economic development. The conquests of the Mughal emperors were the sources of the foundation of a big empire. But at the same time, they cared for the good governance of the people of the conquered areas and provided them congenial environment for their overall development. Enumerating the benevolent policy of Akbar towards his subjects and his concept of sovereignty, Abul Fazl writes, "The whole energies of the Shahinshah are devoted to the soothment of mankind, a scrutiny and justice increase daily. As he considers that sovereignty means guardianship, he makes no distinction between pain and pleasure. He regards additions to dominion as a means of devotion to God, and sovereignty as the companion of service. With this view he appointed truthful and wise men, in every province that they might duly apportion chastisement and benevolence, and not, from greed, or timidity, fail to do what was proper."⁵⁹

Akbar initiated a policy of socio-economic development in Kashmir after its annexation into the Mughal empire leading to the prosperity of the land and the people. Mughals took keen interest in the welfare of the people of Kashmir and treated peasants as the basis of the strength of a region. On the eve of Mughal occupation of Kashmir, agriculture was in a deteriorating condition due to the prolonged warfare. Akbar not only provided political stability to Kashmir, but he also promoted the agricultural and horticultural productions of Kashmir. Promotion of agriculture led to the betterment of the conditions of the peasants of Kashmir. Abul Fazl mentions about the relief provided to the peasants with the remission of some taxes by Akbar. According to him, "The cesses *Baj* and *Tamgha* were altogether remitted by His Majesty, which produced a reduction of 67,842 $\frac{1}{2}$ *Kharwars*⁶⁰ equivalent to 898,400 *dams*. For the additional relief of the husbandman, five *dams* on the price of a *Kharwar* were thrown in."⁶¹ Akbar reorganized the administration of Kashmir so that the burden of the land revenue was not too great on the peasantry. He sent Qazi Nurullah and Qazi Ali for the revenue settlement of Kashmir. Prior to them, Akbar had sent some officials to enquire about the revenue

conditions of the valley. According to Abul Fazl, "He sent Sheikh Faizi, Mir Sharif Amuli, Khwaja Muhammed Hussain to scrutinize the Maraj while Khwaja Khafi were sent to examine the Kamraj."⁶² These investigators reported to Akbar about the embezzlement of revenue and that the final assessment was not fixed upon actual facts.

Akbar considered the increase of revenue as disastrous for the cultivators which would bring destruction on them. According to Abul Fazl, "the far seeing glance (of Akbar) perceived that an increase in the assessment even though it did not exceed a duly calculated amount, would bring destruction on the cultivators, especially in a newly conquered country."⁶³ Thus Akbar sent Qazi Nurullah and Qazi Ali to investigate the matter. They divided the Sarkar of Kashmir into 42 Mahals. They assessed each village of the Sarkar and the total demand was fixed at 30,63,050 lakh *Kharwars* and 11 *Taraks* out of which 901,663 *Kharwars* and 8 *Taraks* were to be paid in cash. Giving details about the revenue assessment, Abul Fazl writes, "According to the assessment of Qazi Ali the revenue was fixed at 30 lakhs, 63050 *Kharwars*, 11 *Taraks*... Taking the prices current for several years, the Qazi struck an average of the aggregate, and the *Kharwar* (in kind) was ascertained to be 29 *dams*, and the *Kharwar* in money was fixed according to the former rate of 13 $\frac{8}{25}$ *dams*. The revenue, therefore, amounted to 7 *Kror*, 20 lakhs, 22,183 *dams*."⁶⁴ Akbar brought Raja Todarmal to Kashmir on his second visit who measured the whole land and settled the revenue.⁶⁵ During his visit, Akbar made Kashmir a crown land and included saffron, silkworm and the raising of cattle in the *Khalisa*.⁶⁶ On his third visit, Akbar abolished some miscellaneous taxes which brought great comfort to the peasants of Kashmir who were paying them for a long time. According to Abul Fazl, "At this time some attention was paid to miscellaneous imposts. 55 censurable customs were abolished. The husbandmen for a longtime paid these and until the order of remission took effect they did not believe in it (the abolition)."⁶⁷

It is pertinent to mention here that the Mughal emperors from Akbar onwards made a policy of visiting Kashmir to inspect the situation personally. The presence of Mughal emperors in the valley naturally prevented any abuse of power as they personally looked into the affairs of the people and redressed their grievances. Mughal emperors ensured that the people should feel the Mughal rule through the socio-economic measures of the emperor. They introduced annual and periodic checks and auditing so that the acts of cheating and dishonesty were to be eliminated.⁶⁸ The Mughal governors were instructed to respect the local sentiments of the people and some of them were dismissed if their misdoings came to the notice of the emperor. Jahangir has himself recorded in his *Memoirs* that "As some (evil) things had been heard about Safdar Khan, governor of Kashmir, I dismissed him from the government and favouring Ahmed Beg Khan on account of his previous service, I promoted him to be the *Subehdar* of Kashmir."⁶⁹ All these things point to the fact that the concern for the common people was one of the main motives of the Mughal emperors. It is even corroborated by Abul Fazl who writes that Akbar "made the peasantry and the soldiery joyful"⁷⁰ which reflects the policy of the Mughal emperors towards the cultivating class.

Mughal emperor Jahangir, who treated Kashmir as his most favorite region, studied the socio-economic conditions of the people of Kashmir so that he could administer according to the needs and requirements of the people. He devoted a huge

space of his *Memoirs* to the people, water-resources, arts and crafts, flora and fauna and made them as important themes of his *Memoirs*. He also observed the food habits, dress and crops of Kashmir very minutely. The concern of Jahangir towards the betterment of the people of Kashmir can be gauged from the fact that he gave an order to the effect that number of the people accompanying the emperor should be reduced so that the comfort of the people of Kashmir should not be sidelined. It came to the notice of the emperor that the arrival of his retinue in Kashmir always increased the prices of the basic necessities of the people like vegetable, grains etc. and hampered the prosperous conditions of the peasantry who did not produce enough to serve the large forces of the Mughals. According to Jahangir, "As the area of Kashmir is not such that its produce may suffice for the expenses of the force that is always on service with the servants of the army of prosperity, and as, in consequence of the report (of the approach) of the glorious and victorious standards, the price of grains and vegetables had risen very high, an order was given for the public, that those servants who were in attendance on the royal stirrup should arrange their retinues, and only taking with them those who were indispensable, should send the remainder to their *jagirs*, and in the same way should take every precaution to reduce as far as possible the number of their beasts and followers."⁷¹ Jahangir even abolished some of the most hated exactions like *Rasum-i-Faujdari* which had long caused misery to the peasantry of Kashmir.

Irfan Habib has postulated that any study of the peasants should incorporate the relation of the peasants with the exploiting class and also how they pay rent or surrender their surplus. According to him, "Any study of the peasants must involve an enquiry into how they pay rent or surrender their surplus. This necessitates the shifting of the focus, from time to time, from the exploited to the exploiters...But without seeing the peasants in their actual relation with the exploiting classes there can be no peasant history; the relationship is crucial."⁷² As far as the peasant history of Kashmir is concerned, peasants of Kashmir represented a self-sufficient village procuring basic requirements from within the village. They coexisted with other social groups of the village like carpenters, weavers, potters, blacksmiths, cobblers etc. who rendered necessary services to the peasants in the form of manufacture and repair of their agricultural tools and supplements.⁷³ But the peasants predominated other social groups in a village and contributed to its development. The peasantry which comprised both Hindus and Muslims⁷⁴ were generally categorized into 3 main divisions. According to Mushtaq A. Kaw, "Larger group was that of the petty producers who were comparatively self-sufficient in as much as they did not hire out or hire in labour and just lived about their subsistence level. Another group was composed of the owners of large holdings who hired labour to the modern extent. Village Muqaddam and patwari belonged to this group. Third group consisted of the large scale producers who entirely depended upon village labour. Zamindars, Qanungos and Chaudhuris belonged to this group."⁷⁵

Even the size of land holdings differed from peasant to peasant keeping in view their carrying capacity with respect to the cultivation of the land. The availability of land and the rights of peasants over it brings us to the crucial question of the ownership rights of the peasants on the land. According to Mushtaq Kaw, "the apparent legal and fiscal limitations together with some practical difficulties reduced a peasant more to the position of a limited rather than absolute owner of the land in Kashmir."⁷⁶ The argument

of the European travellers that the land in India belonged to the King was also applied in the context of Kashmir. Most of the European travelers who visited Kashmir have remarked that the land belonged to the king in Kashmir. William Moorcroft has commented that "the whole of the land in Kashmir is considered to have been, time out of mind, the property of the ruler."⁷⁷ Kalhana, the most revered historian of Kashmir, has not commented on the ownership rights of the peasants. It was generally believed that land belonged to the ruler and with the passage of time, the private ownership of land started due to the alienation of land by way of sale, making gifts, in lieu of salaries etc. The private ownership of land resulted in the cultivating rights also. The ownership and cultivating rights had no meaning if the peasant did not had the possession rights. The right of possession meant the enjoyment of fruits of the land which the peasants had grown with his hard earned labour. Most of the produce was taken by the officials of the state in the name of revenue and peasants were left with minimum bare sustenance. Thus it was the state who was the real owner of the land as it enjoyed most of the benefits of the peasant's hard work and labour.⁷⁸

Kashmir was a land of abundant water supply and fertile soil. "In Kashmir", writes Jahangir, "there is plenty of water from streams and springs"⁷⁹ which could be channelized into the fields for its utilization in agriculture. Commenting on this utilization of water in the fields which led to good cultivation, Moorcroft writes, "The abundant supply of water from snow and rain is collected into numerous streams and lakes, the overflowing of which, with the evaporation from them, preserve both soil and atmosphere in a humid condition, more propitious to vegetation than to animal life."⁸⁰ Certainly, it led to good cultivation and various crops could be grown in such conditions. Writing further about the richness in vegetation in Kashmir, Moorcroft remarks that "The chief peculiarity by which Kashmir is distinguished from the mountain countries on its confines is the richness of its vegetation. The mountains, although for a considerable part of the year capped in many parts with snow, are coated with rich forests, and at their bases is a productive alluvial soil abounding with verdure, or, where cultivated, with plentiful harvests, especially of rice."⁸¹

Rice was the main crop cultivated in Kashmir and was also the staple diet of the people.⁸² According to Jahangir, "Rice is the principal crop. Probably there are three parts under rice and one under all other grains. The chief food of the people of Kashmir is rice, but it is inferior. They boil it fresh and allow it to get cold, and then eat it and call it *batha*. It is not usual to take their food warm, but people of small means keep a portion of the *batha* for a night and eat it next day."⁸³ Writing further about the food habits of the people of Kashmir mainly living in villages, Jahangir comments that "they boil vegetables in water, and throw in a little salt in order to alter the flavour, and then eat them along with the *batha*. Those who want to have something tasty put a little walnut oil into the vegetables. Walnut oil soon becomes bitter and evil flavoured. They also use cow oil (*raughan* i.e *ghi*) but this is taken fresh from newly made butter (*maska*). They throw this into the food and call it *soda pak* in the Kashmiri language. The wheat is small and of little substance (*Kammaghz*). It is not the custom to eat bread (*nan*)."⁸⁴

Abul Fazl also gives details of the food of the people of Kashmir which mainly includes rice, wheat, fish, vegetables etc. According to him, "The food of the people is

chiefly rice, wine, fish and various vegetables, and the last mentioned they dry and preserve. Rice is cooked and kept over night to be eaten. Though shali rice is plentiful, the finest quality is not obtainable. Wheat is small in grain and black in colour, and there is little of it, and little consumed. Gram (chick pea) and barley are nowhere found.”⁸⁵ Abul Fazl estimates rice of Kashmir sufficient for the consumption of its people. He also identifies lesser produced crops which show that Mughals were concerned with the agricultural productions of Kashmir in accordance with peasants and soil stability.

Irfan Habib postulates that the peasants, generally, could retain only the coarsest variety of their produce for their family and the Kashmiri peasant was no different. Kashmiri people would often cook their food in water and oil or *ghi* were considered luxuries. According to him, “But generally speaking, it was the coarsest varieties of his produce which the peasant was able to retain for his own family. We know that in Kashmir the rice eaten by the ordinary people was very coarse...In Kashmir too, the common people cooked their food in water, and walnut oil and *ghi* were regarded as delicacies.”⁸⁶

As far as the clothing of the peasantry was concerned, both men and women wore woolen clothes keeping in view the cold climate of Kashmir. They generally wore a single woolen garment called *pattu* and kept it unwashed for 3 to 4 years till the time it looked like a rag.⁸⁷ Jahangir has also commented that the people of Kashmir wore *pattu* which was kept unwashed for many years. According to him, “The woolen clothes are well known. Men and women wear a woolen tunic (*kurta*) and call it *pattu*. If they donot put an tunic, they believe that it is impossible to digest their food without it...the common women do not wear clean and washed clothes. They use a tunic of *pattu* for three or four years, they bring it unwashed from the house of the weaver, and sew it into a tunic and it does not reach the water till it falls to pieces. It is considered wrong to wear drawers (*izar*); they wear the tunic long and ample as far as the head and falling down to the feet and they also wear a belt.”⁸⁸

Besides the land, the material possessions of the peasants included a wooden pestle, mortar, few earthen vessels and some earthen jars which were mainly used for storing grains.⁸⁹ The peasantry of Kashmir mainly lived in mud walled and thatched roofed houses which were usually four storied. According to Abul Fazl, “The houses are all of wood and are of four stories and some of more, but it is not the custom to enclose them. Tulips are grown on the roofs which present a lovely sight in the spring time. Cattle and sundry stores are kept in the lower storey, the second contains the family apartments, and in the third and the fourth are the household chattels.”⁹⁰ Generally, the houses of the peasantry were devoid of basic requirements like chimneys, ventilation etc. which led them to live in indigent conditions.

Mughals were very much concerned with the well being of the peasantry and contributed to the development of agriculture as is reflected in an order issued in the reign of Shahjahan. According to Inayat Khan, “In these days, an order went forth from the beneficent presence of the effect that an additional sum of 50,000 rupees from the Kashmir treasury should be disbursed in charity among the destitute inhabitants of that province, as a stimulus to agriculture.”⁹¹ It led to increase in the quantum of cultivation and Kashmir abounded in vegetation. Giving details of full bloom in vegetation, Inayat

Khan further writes, "At this time, with the exception of the almond, which owing to its budding earlier than all the other trees had already shed its flowers, every other species of vegetation in the valley was seen in magnificent full bloom."⁹²

The general prosperity of the peasants was dependent on the increase in cultivation as all their material glory relied on it. More the surplus, more is the prosperity of the peasants. The economic conditions of the peasantry improved a lot due to the measures taken by the Mughal emperors for increase in agricultural productions. Mughals took full advantage of the favourable climatic conditions by not only introducing some new varieties but also improved the existing ones. Mughal emperors paid much attention to the cultivation of fruits and in the reign of Akbar, various new varieties of fruits were introduced. Mohammed Quli Khan, who was the inspector of gardens in Kashmir, introduced *Shahalu* or cherries from Kabul into Kashmir through grafting technique and increased its production.⁹³ According to Irfan Habib, "The technique of grafting aroused aristocratic interests, and its application led to an improvement in the quality of citrus fruits and to the introduction of sweet cherry in Kashmir."⁹⁴ Being a naturalist, Jahangir noticed the fruits of Kashmir very minutely. He gives ample space to the Kashmiri fruits in his *Memoirs* and has vividly described most of them for example apricot, pears, apples, guavas, pomegranates, melons etc.

Even the Mughal officials in Kashmir were instructed by the Mughal emperors to improve the fruit cultivation. Zafar Khan, the Mughal governor of Kashmir in the reign of Shahjahan, improved the quality of cherries, plums and grapes by using new grafting techniques. All these measures created happy conditions for the peasantry and some of the Mughal governors were even rewarded for improving the conditions of the peasantry. According to Inayat Khan, "In as much as His Majesty had readily perceived the happy condition of the peasantry and inhabitants of that region under my father's (Zafar Khan) administration, he graciously bestowed one lakh of rupees on him out of the funds which were due to the royal estates and raised his *mansab*, by an increase of 1000 *suwar*, to 3000 *zat* and a little number of *suwar*."⁹⁵

Mughals also brought a large area under the cultivation of Saffron and improved its production due to its enormous demand. Saffron production increased manifolds during Akbar's reign. According to Abul Fazl, "One of the occurrences was the increase of Saffron in Kashmir. Formerly each seed yielded less than three flowers and the amount received by government did not exceed 20,000 *traks* but was not less than 7000. Once in Mirza Haider's time, it was 28,000 *traks*. This year when it became *Khalsa*, the ruler's share was 90,000 *traks*. Though there was more land under cultivation, yet the flowers were also more than seed yielded upto eight flowers."⁹⁶

The policy of the Mughal emperors towards the welfare of the people of Kashmir was also reflected in the works of the Mughal governors of Kashmir. Saif Khan was the Mughal governor of Kashmir in the reign of Aurangzeb. He introduced many new innovations which had a long lasting effect on the peasantry of Kashmir. He introduced measurement of land for the first time in place of the old practice of making an estimate based on mere conjectures.⁹⁷ Fazal Khan was also the Mughal governor of Kashmir of the reign of Aurangzeb. He is famous for remitting many taxes which had proved taxing on

the peasantry of Kashmir such as *Hasil-i-ghalak*, (tax on earthen jars), *Nimak* (salt duty) etc.⁹⁸

There were also some Mughal governors who indulged in anti-peasant activities and levied many taxes on commodities which hardened the life and conditions of the peasantry of the valley. Itqad Khan was one such governor who was the last governor of the reign of Jahangir and even served in the first few years of the reign of Shahjahan. During his period the farmers of the villages around Pampore were forced to collect the saffron harvest without any payment of wages. The *begar* was levied for the collection of Saffron.⁹⁹ He even levied a surcharge of 4 *dams* on each *Kharwar* of rice collected in revenue. It was also customary for the villagers to give 2 fat sheep or 60 *dams* in cash to the local officials whose revenue exceeded 400 *Kharwars* of rice. He even changed the customary mode of collecting land revenue in kind and demanded its payment in cash that too at an enhanced rate. He appointed his own men to pick up the fruits and sell it at their own prices. It brought great distress to the owners of fruit orchard and they started cutting down the trees and preferred to keep the land uncultivated.¹⁰⁰ When Shahjahan came to know about the anti-peasant measures of the governor, he immediately removed him and appointed Zafar Khan as the new governor of Kashmir. Zafar Khan is remembered for the removal of hardships which his predecessor had inflicted on the peasantry of the valley. He removed all the evil practices which were imposed by Itqad Khan and on the orders of Shahjahan, he inscribed the abolition of these hated exactions on a stone and fixed it on the door of the Jama Masjid so that the general public would know about it.

As already stated before, Kashmir as a region experienced floods from ancient times onwards due to untimely and incessant rains and snowfall. It created situation of famine as the floods destroyed the standing crops of the region. The peasantry of Kashmir was the worst sufferer as its survival came under the question due to the damage caused to the standing crops, reduction of cropped areas, damages to the stored grains, fodder, livestock etc.¹⁰¹ Reduction in supply of grains led to increase in the food prices which created a situation of inflation whose effects were also seen mostly on the peasants of Kashmir and the people at large. Mughal period also witnessed great floods and famines which are authenticated by the contemporary Mughal chronicles. They give ample information on the floods of Kashmir together with consequent situation of starvation. They also provide information on the relief measures introduced by the Mughal emperors in the form of providing food grains, cash grants etc. These were apparently short term measures and we have very less reference to any long term measures like building of embankments, canals etc. which could have channelized the flood waters.

On his third visit to Kashmir, Akbar found Kashmir under the grip of severe famine. Irfan Habib rightly observes, "In 1597, there was an acute scarcity from drought, where destitute people 'having no means of nourishing their children exposed them for sale in the public places of the city'."¹⁰² As the welfare of the people was the main concern of the emperor, so he immediately plunged into relief measures. He ordered that the food grains were to be imported from Pakhli, Bhimbar and Western Punjab.¹⁰³ According to Abul Fazl, "By his orders 12 places were prepared in the city for the feeding of great and small (i.e young and old). Every Sunday a general proclamation was

made in Idgah and some went from the palace and bestowed food and presents on the applicants. Eighty thousand necessitous persons-more or less- received their heart's desires."¹⁰⁴ This shows that the Mughal emperor tried to realize the Kashmiris his concern with their life and conditions. Extending financial and nutritional support to the people of Kashmir at the time of famine, the Mughal emperor made a difference between the Pre-Mughal and the Mughal rule in terms of public welfare activities. Moreover, the Mughal emperors strengthened the concept of social security as a policy of the state.

The floods of 1642 created situation of scarcity of grains as most of the crops were destroyed in the rains. When Shahjahan came to know about the plight of the people of Kashmir, he immediately ordered to export grains from Sialkot, Jalandhar, Lahore, Kalanaur etc. so as to distribute them among the needy people.¹⁰⁵ Describing the relief measures of Shajahan for the famine stricken people, Inayat Khan writes, "An edict was moreover promulgated to the effect that 100 rupees worth of meals should be bestowed daily upon the poor and needy from 5 different places in Kashmir at His Majesty's private expense."¹⁰⁶ It was brought to the notice of Shahjahan that Tarbiyat Khan, the Mughal governor of Kashmir, was not able to manage the affairs of the state and the starving people were further languishing. He immediately deputed Zafar Khan as the new governor of Kashmir and some money was also entrusted to him to be given to the destitute inhabitants of the valley. According to Inayat Khan, "Unfortunately, the above mentioned Tarbiyat Khan was found incapable of managing the affairs of that famished population. Accordingly, His Majesty deputed in his stead Zafar Khan, who had formerly held the government of the country for some years and who by his excellent administration had always caused the natives to be contended and grateful towards him. Before leaving for Kashmir to assume charge, my father was loaded with royal favours; and moreover an additional sum of 20,000 rupees was entrusted in his case, to be dispensed among the destitute inhabitants of the kingdom."¹⁰⁷

This clearly points to the welfare policy of the Mughal emperors who always kept the welfare of the people of Kashmir as their utmost concern and peasantry being the basic social unit of any society was being looked after very well. It is corroborated by Abdul Hamid Lahori in his *Padshahnama* who also points that the welfare of the people was the utmost concern of thee emperor and money was distributed to the people in their times of distress. According to him, "It was stressed that the welfare of the people should be kept uppermost and a sum of 20000 rupees more was sent for the needy and decrepits of the place with him (Zafar Khan)."¹⁰⁸

All these measures, even if short term, brought great relief to the common people in general and peasantry in particular and improvements could be seen in their life and conditions. Huge money was disbursed among the needy people from the royal treasury as charity and when it was felt that additional amount was needed in the agricultural sector to revert back the prosperity of the peasantry, the Mughal emperors did not step back. According to Inayat Khan, "Since it was learnt by the emperor from the *Arzdasht* of Zafar Khan, *Nazim Subah* Kashmir, that the condition of the beggars and the people at large of this region got improved with a sum of 1,50,000 rupees sent there from the treasury for charity (*Khanzanah-i-Khairat*) and the country had started inching towards prosperity but if 50,000 rupees more were for meeting the perquisites of agriculture to

unprovided with means cultivators the prosperity of the country would revert back to its previous condition. A yarleigh of was issued that an additional sum should be assigned to that Suba as *Khairat*.¹⁰⁹

Large scale devastation caused to the peasantry of Kashmir at the time of floods and famines brings out an important question of the collection of land revenue in these times of distress. The economic condition of the peasantry was not such that they could afford to pay the land revenue and it was also realized by the Mughal emperors who often remitted the land revenue to be paid to the state. According to Irfan Habib, "When a famine occurred in Kashmir in 1642, it was ordered that the assessment on the peasants be reduced."¹¹⁰ Land revenue was also remitted during the reign of Aurangzeb when Fazal Khan was the Mughal governor. It is said that Fazal Khan often remitted the land revenue whenever a natural calamity hit the kingdom of Kashmir.¹¹¹

Irfan Habib attributed a situation of agrarian crisis in the 17th century North India which was mainly characterized by official oppression, migration of rural people and severe decline in rural population which further affected the extent of arable land, agricultural produce and the collection of land revenue. The situation was further aggravated by the famines which "initiated wholesale movement of population"¹¹² Same phenomenon was witnessed in Kashmir in the 18th century but of a less magnitude. Mughals were keenly involved in the administration of the kingdom of Kashmir and looked after the common people with utmost gratification and concern. Some of the orders issued by Akbar show his concern for the general people of Kashmir. According to Abul Fazl, "An order was given that the troops should not be quartered in the house of the inhabitants."¹¹³ Akbar even announced that the soldiers should not incur any losses in the cultivators and they were forbidden from entering their fields. Similar policy was followed by the succeeding Mughal emperors towards the peasantry of Kashmir but there were certain factors that created a situation of agrarian crisis in Kashmir. Official oppression of the peasantry and the subsequent demand of miscellaneous taxes and high revenue demand led to the subjection of peasantry. There were various instances of mal treatment of the peasantry at the hands of the *Subahdars* of Kashmir such as Itqad Khan, Muzaffar Khan, Afrasiyab Khan etc. Whenever the Mughal emperors came to know about these evil practices of the governors, they immediately revoked all their measures but till then all the damage had been done and the peasantry had to face the brunt of these officials.

Begar was also one of the reason for the deepening of the agrarian crisis in Kashmir. Peasant of Kashmir was resorted to forced labour as there was less labour force which had detrimental effect on their agricultural produce as they had to lease their fields and neglect their work and instead do forced labour. Mughals introduced many measures to abolish this hated system as can be seen in the reign of Akbar and Shahjahan but still some of its attributes could be seen in the society especially among the saffron cultivators.¹¹⁴

Forced migration of the peasantry of Kashmir, even on a small scale, was the consequence of the recurring floods and famines which retarded the life of the peasantry. Damage to crops and the subsequent starvation of the people created conditions of migration and exodus of people to their neighbouring areas. According to Inayat Khan.

“This year (1642) a severe famine fell upon the territory of Kashmir, so that a vast number of the poor and indigent of the region were forced to emigrate and come with their wives and families to the capital of Lahore, where they proceeded to supplicate beneath the royal balcony.”¹¹⁵ This forced exodus led to decrease in agricultural produce and the subsequent rise in prices. Abul Fazl also corroborates that the conditions of famine led to the migration of the peasantry which created a situation of inflation or rise in prices of the basic necessities of life. According to him, “On account of the deficiency of rain and the dispersal of the husbandmen, prices became somewhat high.”¹¹⁶ Mass exodus of the peasantry continued even in the time of Sikh and Dogra rulers as and they sought their livelihood in the neighbouring plains. According to Farooq Fayaz, a modern historian, “The natural disasters coupled with the callous role of the Sikh and Dogra bureaucracy not only deprived the people of their meagre possessions but also led to the mass exodus of Kashmiri peasantry to seek their sources of livelihood in the plains of Hindustan.”¹¹⁷

The conditions of the peasantry further deteriorated with the establishment of Afghan and Sikh rule in Kashmir. The atrocities committed by the Afghan and the Sikh governors and their deputies in Kashmir further aggravated the economic scenario of Kashmir. Describing the deplorable conditions of the peasantry in the 18th-19th century, Walter Lawrence writes, “It was no wonder that cultivation was bad, and that the revenue was not paid, and that the peasants were roving from one village to another in the hope of finding some rest and freedom from oppression.”¹¹⁸ The new system of appointing deputies on behalf of the governors to rule the province of Kashmir from the times of the later Mughals further created situation of chaos and anarchy as they ignored their duties and concentrated on their personal gains. These deputies unleashed reign of terror and started exacting cruel exactions from the people. Walter Lawrence has attributed the reign of deputies as one of the main factors for the diminishing of land revenue and the misery of the peasants. According to him, “The peasants, one and all, attributed their miseries to the deputies through whom the Maharajas ruled and they have always recognized that their rulers were sympathetic and anxious to secure their prosperity. But the officials of Kashmir would never allow their master to know the real condition of the people, or to find out that the revenue of the country was diminishing.”¹¹⁹

Further commenting on the general condition of the peasantry of Kashmir in the 18th-19th century, Walter Lawrence writes, “Much has been written of the abuses which have prevailed in the administration of Kashmir. They were numerous and deplorable, and when I first came to Kashmir in 1889, I found the people sullen, desperate and suspicious. They had been taught for many years that they were serfs without any rights but with many disabilities. They were called *Zulm-parast*, or worshippers of tyranny, and every facility was afforded to their cult. They were forced by soldiers to plough and sow, and the same soldiers attended at harvest time. They were dragged away from their houses to carry loads to Gilgit, and every official had a right to their labour and their property.”¹²⁰ This clearly proves that the situation of the peasantry was not a happy one in the later part of the Mughal rule and beyond. The continuous exploitation of the peasants in the form of high revenue demand, introduction of unjust new imports, system of *begar* etc. subjected the peasantry to its lowest levels.

William Moorcroft, an English traveller who came to Kashmir in early 19th century, considered the peasantry of Kashmir of his times "in a condition of extreme wretchedness."¹²¹ He remarked that the appearance of the peasantry of Kashmir was in sharp contrast to the beauty of the valley. Describing the wretched and miserable living standards of the peasantry, Moorcroft writes, "The beauty of the scenery, however, ill harmonised with the appearance of the peasantry. Their huts were inferior in comfort to an English cow-house, and their clothes were insufficient to defend them from the cold of the season. Not one-twentieth part of the arable land was in cultivation, and a number of half choked canals attested once careful, and now neglected irrigation...Maha Singh and his Sikhs seemed to be practising the usual system of violence and extortion, as far as we might judge from the clamorous remonstrances of the villagers."¹²²

Sir Jadunath Sarkar has shown a scary picture of the peasantry of Kashmir who lived in abject poverty, dirt, ignorance and roamed naked due to lack of clothing. According to him. "The common people of Kashmir were sunk in the deepest ignorance and poverty; many of the villagers lived in primitive simplicity and went about almost naked for want of clothing; they merely wrapped a blanket round their bodies for warmth. Long distances and lack of roads made it impossible to import grain from outside, and every valley had to be self contained in the matter of its food supply; and when a natural calamity like flood or heavy snowfall cut the communications, the inhabitants perished helplessly of famine in thousands. The province was off the routes of the civilized world, difficulty of transport raised the cost of marketing its produce...The villagers were half naked boors, living in abject poverty, ignorance, and filth."¹²³

This above image of the Kashmiri peasantry as shown by Sir Jadunath Sarkar is an exaggeration of the historical facts and seems to be based on conjectures and hearsay. The contemporary and modern works do not substantiate his claims that the peasantry lived naked and wore nothing except a blanket. It has been already discussed that the Kashmiri people wore woolen clothes called *pattu*. The cold climate of Kashmir could not allow the people to remain naked. The terrain of Kashmir did not support an efficient transport system but it does not mean that it was impossible to import grains. Whenever a famine occurred, the Mughal emperors imported grains from the neighbouring areas so as to support the people of Kashmir.

Mughal emperors always portrayed state as a promoter of the inclusive policy. They tried to remove the miseries of the common people which led to the fortification of the social base of the Mughal rule in Kashmir. It is evident that the agricultural productions remained uninterrupted in Kashmir from the period of the establishment of the Mughal rule in Kashmir till the first half of the 18th century. It is corroborated by the trade of the agricultural productions of Kashmir with other regions of the Mughal empire. Mughals made them available through the process of inter-regional trade. There was huge demand for the agrarian products of Kashmir like Saffron, fresh and dry fruits, vegetables, grains etc. The regular visits of the Mughal emperors to Kashmir also helped in the trade of the Kashmiri products. They were mostly accompanied by numerous traders from Delhi and Agra who purchased these products and sold them in the chief cities of India. Kashmiri Saffron was one of the most costly items which were in great

demand in the Mughal empire. Despite the inhuman practices of *begar* among the Saffron cultivators, its production increased manifold in the Mughal period.

Similarly, the fruit and vegetable productions of Kashmir made it very much visible in various parts of the Mughal Empire. The special treatment meted out to the fruits of Kashmir by the contemporary Mughal sources further increased the prestige and popularity of Kashmir in the whole Mughal Empire. The Mughal emperors procured large supplies of fruits from Kashmir for its consumption in the royal palace and the rest of the supply was consumed by the chief cities of the empire. A large quantity of Kashmiri vegetables, grains and other eatables were exported to the various parts of the empire. They were even sent directly to the royal kitchen to be consumed by the royalty. According to Abul Fazl, "At the beginning of every quarter, the *Diwan-i-Buyutat* and the *Mir Bakawal*, collect whatever they think will be necessary; e.g. *Sukhdas* rice from Bharaj, *Dewzira* rice from Gwalior, *Jinjin* rice from Rajori and Nimlah, *ghi* from HisarFiruza; ducks, water fowls and certain vegetables from Kashmir."¹²⁴ The availability of Kashmiri grains in the royal kitchen can be ascertained by a narrative given by Jahangir. According to him, "On the arrival of Prince Parwiz to the court after a long time, I gave away as means of livelihood, to *faqirs* and deserving people 44786 *bighas* of land and two entire villages, with 320 ass loads (Kharwar, a weight) of grain from Kashmir and 7 ploughs of land in Kabul."¹²⁵

The agricultural productions of Kashmir highlighted the role of the peasantry in the socio-political and economic life of Kashmir very much. It is important to mention that under the Mughals the presence of Kashmiri products in the markets of the Mughal Empire became an important factor in terms of strengthening the Mughal impact on the economic life of the region. It not only intensified the process of cultural ties between Kashmir and other parts of the Mughal Empire but more importantly, the Mughals were encouraged to work for the betterment of the Kashmiri peasants. The continuous trade of the agrarian products of Kashmir with the various regions of the Mughal Empire reflects a satisfactory condition of the peasantry of Kashmir. The importance of the peasantry of Kashmir in the overall economic development of both Kashmir and the Mughal Empire was kept in mind by the Mughal emperors while initiating any policy measures. They also knew that the sound organization of agriculture was always dependent on the prosperity of the cultivating class. Thus, they created an environment in which the peasantry could expand their capabilities for the betterment of both the present and the future generations.

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Women, Nation and Society: Reflections from a Late Nineteenth Century Bengali Travelogue

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The colonial period has been regarded as a water shade in gender relations because the colonial assumptions from its very beginning about Indian society were based on the ideas of India's 'effeminate' character in sharp contrast with its colonial counterpart i.e. 'colonial masculinity'.¹ This British justification of oriental 'inferiority' (effeminacy) and western 'supremacy' (masculinity) provided an useful ideological foundation for shipping on their civilizational 'mission' with an aim of their (British) permanent rule over India. So the position of women in Indian society emerged as the prime objective of the social reforms by the western educated Indian intellectuals of the nineteenth century. But the paradox was that these nationalist male reformers considered women only as a subject of their reforming campaign and failed to produce any equal platform for women on which they could initiate their struggle for emancipation. This dichotomy leads us to several questions about women's unequal positions. Even in the realm of academic discussions the historians and other social scientists treated feminine identity as constructed, instead of accepting it as natural and essential.² Partha Chatterjee argues that the issue of women reform despite of the vigorous attempts on the part of the male reformers during the first half of the nineteenth century had suddenly disappeared from the agenda of public debate toward the end of the nineteenth century.³ In his opinion this caused not because of the fact that it was vanished from the reform agenda or overshadowed by the more dominant and sensitive issues of political struggle, but by restoring the "women's question" in an inner domain of sovereignty, that was far away from the ground of political fight against the colonial state.⁴ This inner domain of national culture was constituted in the light of the discovery of "tradition".⁵ So, according to Geraldine Forbes, attempts for writing women's history have been made by the "subaltern school, originating in Calcutta and from historian interested in resistance in everyday life."⁶ Scholars' endeavor is now directed to trace the origin of women's suffering, explain their present situation and contextualize their current dilemmas. Although the new researches pursuing by the historians have brought to light new course in writing about women's pasts and historicizing gender relations, for the women's movement, as Samita Sen has argued, history itself became a prime resource.⁷

Mass of literature was produced by the nationalist elite of the nineteenth century to relocate the status of Bengali women in the changing socio-political context. The new

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literature which emerged in Bengal in the nineteenth century has been marked by 'the theme of change.'⁸ Henceforth women were to be represented in the arena of nationalism only in a "contributive" role. In this framework of conventional history "women worked within the boundaries laid down by men. The history uncovered in this way is a 'contributive' history."⁹ But at the same time women also responded to set up their exclusively 'own' experiences and feelings though in a passive way. What we know of the lives of these nineteenth century women we know either from memoirs written later, remembered lore, or the accounts of others. Rassundari Devi's *Amar Jiban* (My Life), published in 1876 was the first autobiography written in Bengali which revolved around her day to day experiences as a house wife and mother.¹⁰ Apart from that a large number of biographies and memoirs written by women herself can be found during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹¹ These autobiographies, according to Partha Chatterjee, were not simply variants on men's autobiographical writing but constituted a distinct literary genre.¹²

During the second half of the nineteenth century travel writing emerged as one of the forms of modern self expression. Georges Van Den Abbeele points out that – ".....progress, the quest of knowledge, freedom as freedom to move.....salvation as a destination to be attained...." constituted "the motive of voyage."¹³ In Bengali the word 'travel' does mean *bhraman* which signifies to make a mistake or to error. In the Hindu tradition residing away from home or banishment from home was regarded as a curse that had to face by an ill-fated person whereas pilgrimage provided the only justification for travel. But colonialism marked the point of departure in the orthodox belief. With the introduction of new socio-cultural and political ideas, travel received broader recognition as an important secular practice.¹⁴ Henceforth, the colonial system of instruction resulted in construction of Indian mind by the ideas of an 'alienated self'- an alienation from 'traditional', 'unmodern' ways of living- as well as sense of 'freedom'- the freedom that enabled one to eschew the 'older ways' and form the space of a new culture and community.¹⁵ Here the notion of travel centered round the discourse on 'home' and 'the world', a mobilization from isolation to 'freedom', transgressing the 'domain of the male' (*bahir* i.e. world) by typically the 'domain of the women' (*ghar* i.e. home which represents one's inner spiritual self).¹⁶ This division or separation of domain, according to Parth Chatterjee, leads one to " an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*".¹⁷

A genre of travel writing prevailed during the second half of the nineteenth century which mostly dealt with the experiences of the male travellers.¹⁸ It is only Krishnabhabini Das, a Bengali women who left substantial travel account in this period.¹⁹ Krishnabhabini Das (1864-1919) received education from her husband and accompanied him on his second visit to England. They lived there for eight years. Krishnabhabini wrote her travel experiences in Bengali and the account was published in Calcutta in 1885 as "*Englancy Bangamahila*". But this publication had the writer's name written simply as "*Bangamahila-pronito*"- i.e. written by a Bengali Lady. This book later on is edited with an introduction by Simonti Sen and a preface by Partha Chaterjee. (Published by Stree, Calcutta, 1996)

At the very outset of the travelogue Krishnabhabini very clearly stated her objective in writing this. In her own words: "Readers! Though I am totally unknown to you and staying hundreds of miles away from you, I have stepped in to present in front of you this small and incomplete book to give you some pleasure.....I have seen several new things and these have generated many new ideas within me, I am trying to hold them together at leisure and describe them lucidly in simple language.....the differences between an independent and a colonized nation can only be seen here [in this book]. Now a day the relationship between England and India is gradually increasing. Many young Indians become very much eager to know about England before coming here, so many of them would come to know a few things from this book."²⁰ Addressing particularly the female readers Krishnabhabini asserted: "I think like me many of you are curious to know about England, to fulfill that desire I dedicate this book *Englancy Bangamahila* (A Bengali Lady in England) to you."²¹

The scientific attitude of Krishnabhabini becomes prominent when she talked about her effort to remain impartial and objective in writing her travel account. In fact this was not very much common characteristics of the travellers or even the autobiographers of late nineteenth century Bengal/India. In her own words: "I have written about all the good and bad side of the English that I have experienced. I have tried to be impartial in my judgment so far I can, leaving aside the transformation they undergo at the time of their living abroad, especially in India. It is very difficult for me to assess the virtues of the English people because there are so many differences between India and England and in their relationship as well. Forsaking all the prejudices if the readers go through this book with a broad mind, then they will be able to understand that how far I have been successful in my impartial judgment."²²

Krishnabhabini gave detail description of her journey from Calcutta to London. When the ship was about to leave Bombay for London she extended her 'farewell' in a poetic manner which reflected not only her deep love for her motherland but also the grave concern and understanding of India's backwardness in comparison with Great Britain.

*For many years there is in my heart
A secret desire of hope
To see beloved freedom
To go to the land where it lives.*

.....

*I will go where the goddess of independence
Resides there in every house
With happiness in their wide heart
Where everyone wanders with breath of happiness.*

.....

*With a lot of desire, I want to see
With what power Britain is so worshipped
Trampling poor India with her feet
Clutching education and civilization to her heart.²³*

Krishnabhabini, like the other Bengali/Indian travellers had to face both the dream and the fear of a community that at once saw itself as an inferior 'other' of Europe and differentiate from it. This paradox consisted of a wholesome acceptance and recognition of British excellence and superiority in most matters of ethical and worldly concern with its overall achievements in regulation, control, development, dynamism, democracy and egalitarianism which generated high expectation. On the contrary, the colonized Indian's reactions and imaginations had reflected simultaneously in the ambiguities of - "shame in the subjecthood, backwardness and worldly impotence, and pride not in the perverse sense of reaction or hitting back, but in the more sedate sense of having memories and a sense of belonging to cultural norms and forms that one cherishes and cannot live without."²⁴ After coming to England the colonized people designated themselves as 'we' in contrast with the 'other' European.

Krishnabhabini's critical view on English socio-political and cultural supremacy very often brings comparisons and set of contrasts – such as 'English activity' and 'Indian indolence', 'English organization' and 'Indian confusion' which reflected the inevitable ideological exertion of the west of its construction as "a singular western self identity"²⁵ placing within it several cultures of different parts of the world. Krishnabhabini on entering the Museum addressed her readers that one could see alongside the statue of the Egyptian and Assyrian deities a stone carving of the heavenly court of Indra (the king of Gods in Hindu religion). Moreover, she experienced that it was a matter of great regret that such sculpture which could be invaluable keys to Hindoostan's ancient times were left to lie in the arena of oblivion, and had it not been for the efficient English race, they would still have been lying so.²⁶ Despite of having shrewdness and selfishness in their character, the authoress pointed out that by their efficiency, industriousness and courage the British turned the whole world in their feet and the Indian inferiority and subjection caused by the lacking of these characteristics by the Indians.²⁷

It is pertinent to mention here, as Peter Robb has argued, that these concepts of race did not apply only to anthropological or ethno-linguistic analysis, but infected whole realms of perception and policy, particularly in the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century.²⁸ The nature of British imperialism and its implications in the colonial sphere was 'almost completely dualist and materialist'²⁹ which stresses the western virtues and non-western (other's) evil. The list of virtues of a typical Englishman, in Krishnabhabini's writing, seemingly endless. These 'hyper-active' and 'hyper-efficient' individuals were possessed of an acute sense of independence and discipline. But a noticeable protest can be seen in Krishnabhabini's travelogue in criticizing the non-feminine characteristics of British women – like, lack of politeness in attitude, lacking the sense of sacrifice, affection, modesty; in sharp contrast with the Indian women's great virtue of restoring their centuries old traditional values. She emphatically pointed out the power and courage of Hindu women which were suppressed by the elements like, lack of freedom and education.³⁰ Thus it was now the west that came to be constructed as a 'model of lack,' the co-sharer of that place that had hitherto been exclusively possessed by the East. Krishnabhabini underlined the erosion of human values from 'the land of freedom' which provided the critical civilizational differences. So a new idea or a sense of nationhood germinated not only among those of Indians who rejected the west but also among the admirer of the west who found their standard of politics, education and

professional and scientific knowledge were far superior of them. In this respect she could maintain her own distinct identity, her sense of herself as Indian and also the Indian values and interests.

Travel from home to the external world caused the construction of new homes and the transformation of individual attitude and perceptions. An investigation of the distinctive features of the travelogue leads to one's self discovery which "in turn reveals a number of illuminating parallels between the structures of female identity and narratives of emancipation...."³¹ For Krishnabhabini, the terms 'travel' and 'independence' and also transgressing the boundary of 'home' as well as '*pardah*' become very much identical when she narrated: "I came along with my husband at Howrah station to travel to England from Calcutta via Bombay on 26th September, Tuesday, at eight thirty in the evening. Today I entered into the train opening my veil."³² This 'opening of the veil' as an indication of freeing herself from the prevailed subversions of the society is the first step towards freedom which provided the factors for the construction of her own 'new' sense of 'self'. Thus "the history of women's narratives cannot be understood by referring to an abstract ideal of 'feminist' consciousness but can only be addressed by considering the complex inter-play between the social and material conditions affecting women's life and the relatively autonomous influence of dominant cultural representations of gender, which do not simply constitute 'external' determinants but are embedded at the deepest level of psycho-sexual identity."³³ Here Krishnabhabini's self discovery indicates not only her 'psychological transformation' but also adds some more social implications in the realm of gender issues.

Krishnabhabini's investigation on the English women inevitably brings about certain pertinent questions/issues that influence the whole arena of discourse over Indian women's social status with the sharp contrast of its colonial counterparts that had to react in an allegedly different manner. Krishnabhabini remarked-"Many people of our country treated them [the English women] as unchaste women. Because, they roamed around freely in the streets, fields and in the gardens and interacted with the men without covering themselves under the veil. Their [Indians'] illusions would be removed if they come here. If the English women would not have been god-fearing then there would not be any progress and pride of the English nation or they wouldn't be admired by the other nation.... Here the English women freely mixed with the men, talked with them and despite of doing these those who do not give up the invaluable identity of their femininity, they are the most worthy of getting praised and they have more power in their heart and religion."³⁴ The most important thing to mention here is that Victorian notion of female sexuality was organized around the dichotomy between 'chaste' and 'whore' which were applied, or rather projected in a totally opposite way in the colonial sphere by the colonized people. Thus the Victorian travellers translated this notion of sexual classification into their own idiom.³⁵ Krishnabhabini makes a sharp breach in the understanding of Victorian notion of chastity and whorishness by the colonized people which simply negated as well as stigmatized women's public sphere. Mentioning the value of psychological (more specifically educational) and physical care and multifarious physical activity of the English women Krishnabhabini made a spirited critique on the division of feminine and masculine subjects.³⁶

Krishnabhabini had stressed the differences between the household of England and India. She regretted the fact that – “The Indians were totally unknown to the actual meaning of domestic life. The wife remaining confined within the domestic affairs did not know about the external affairs of her husband and the same way husband did never come to know about the conditions of daily life of his wife. While their husbands were passing a cheerful life by smoking and playing cards and went on outings with their friends, the wives had to remain always busy in their confined domestic life....There were very few people in our country who really understood the actual meaning of the relationship between husband and wife.”³⁷ Krishnabhabini perceived the English system as the most desirable contrast. In England, she wrote apart from the husband’s regular hours of work, the two stayed together, roamed together and read together.³⁸ Family life in England appeared before her eyes as one of real happiness which emphasized the equality of both man and woman. Moreover, she asserted that the most striking difference between India and England, she experienced- “.....while England is the land of freedom India is one of servility. It is said that even a slave, immediately after setting his feet on the soil of England, becomes free. I myself experienced a different feeling as long as I inhaled the free air of England.”³⁹ Krishnabhabini’s perception of “servility” would not be applicable identically with her male counterparts of India or according to Simonti Sen, had nothing to do with the objective situations of political domination or independence. This originated from “a de-contextualized spiritual divergence running through a timeless East and timeless West.”⁴⁰ Durba Ghosh comments that “indigenous women, who were often without full names, were assumed to be voiceless, denied rights or exercising any agency”⁴¹ in their domestic life. Krishnabhabini’s experience of English society led her to the arena of self realization where she came across about the limitations of her previously secluded existence and her unquestioning acceptance of the circumscribed nature of women’s social roles.⁴²

Krishnabhabini’s travelogue, like the other travel narratives, carries a significant value in the genre of personal accounts written by the women because it not only manifests the transformation of her ‘self’ but also incorporates the period i.e. second half of the nineteenth century with its varying degrees of comparisons between the changing socio-political and cultural contexts of England and India. This perhaps has led Parha Chaterjee to argue that – “.....it is difficult to explain why the facts of social history and the development of new cultural norms for the collective life of the nation, rather than the exploration of individuality and the inner workings of the personality, constitute the overwhelming bulk of the material of these life stories.”⁴³ During the time of her staying in England Krishnabhabini could not restrict herself as a mere distant observer of English society and culture. For the better understanding of the foreign land and its different aspects she “[had] taken help of some English books, periodicals and news papers...”⁴⁴ On the one hand she critically described the much developed British society, economy and the strength of the British people who dominated the whole world, on the other hand she was equally aware of India’s backwardness and colonial subjectivity. A striking feature of Krishnabhabini’s account was that she had never been swayed by the influences of British prosperity and power. Moreover, though she talked about English supremacy, at the same time she put forward India’s age old culture and tradition, which were, according to her, by no means inferior to the west. According to Jayati Gupta: “The

writer's sense of wander at encountering the ruling European race in their own country is tempered by maintaining a rational distance, one that was naturally fostered by a conservative social upbringing, cultural differences and feelings of alienation and nationalistic pride.⁴⁵ Side by side, Krishnabhabini was very much emphatic and realistic in terms of finding the remedies of India's servility and according to her this could only be possible through the means of – 'change' and 'development' and not only in the mere exaggerations of India's 'golden past'.⁴⁶ She also asserted that to combat against the foreign domination Indians should give up the superstitious and harmful false practices borrowed from the old generations and to modernize themselves to acquire the equal status in claiming of India's independence. She critically remarks that the Indians should first judge themselves that whether they were capable enough to get hold of independence and to restore it.⁴⁷

The front cover page of the book '*Englandey Bangamahila*' (1885) consists of a four line poem which aptly clarifies the very attitude of the authoress in writing this book.

*Play the bugle, play with this tune
Everyone is independent in this huge world
Everyone is awake with their pride of dignity
Only India sleeps!*⁴⁸

There are several other sections in this book where the authoress expresses her feelings and experiences in poetic manner. At the end of the 'Last Words' (i.e. the last chapter of the travelogue) her inner feelings took a poetic turn which again depicted the character of British domination upon India.

.....
*I can see here immense wealth
Flooding in England
Coming from India
Making India poor forever
It will never be returned.*^{48a}

Thus this travel account of a nineteenth century Bengali women deals not only with the difference between England and India but more importantly gives a critical assessment through the exclusively women's eye which has a great significance in understanding Bengali/Indian society at the time when nationalist protest was about to take a concrete shape. Here lies the historical value of this travelogue written by an eye-witness. This also provides the elements of historical writings on women based on women's account. So in writing the history of women, Bharati Ray remarks: "[T]he information about women has to be collected principally from women's writings, which will reflect their own views and self perception, and interpretation of available data must aim to understand women in their own terms."⁴⁹ Krishnabhabini in her travelogue not only talked about the colonial oppression but at the same time criticized the patriarchal domination in Indian society and categorized it as one of the major factors of India's social crises and backwardness. She appealed to her male fellow Indians who might take the responsibility for the up gradation of Indian women's condition by extending freedom to women.⁵⁰ Krishnabhabini, though criticized the patriarchal hegemony, was not fully able to deny that, in fact depended upon the patriarchal sympathy which according to her,

would be generous enough to approve freedom for women. Though in a sense Krishnabhabini was never revolutionary in her outlook, yet always claimed for the equal status of women in society. Krishnabhabini's 'consciousness' about her society though resulted in a 'voice' of change against patriarchy, but not in its total subtraction.⁵¹ This was perhaps due to the fact, as Partha Chaterjee argues, that- "...the very theme of disclosure of self remains suppressed under a narrative of changing times, changing manner, and customs, and changing values."⁵²

Krishnabhabini's perceptions about India's subjectivity under foreign rule sometimes placed the Muslim and British domination in an equal position i.e. with their alien character.⁵³ Even her expressions after witnessing the English prosperity and pride and in sharp contrast with India's servility and poverty under those factors, aggravated the construction of her nationalist feelings in terms of religious identity i.e. India's ancient 'golden past' which, as she argued, was fostered by the Hindu religion. Here 'nationalism' emerged as a counter force not only to fight against the British exploitation but also to acquire an equal 'psychological stimulae' to stand in front/against the British pride and glory. So to consider this travelogue, like many other personal accounts, or in a much broader sense to reconstruct the history of women the ahistorical glorification or negation of any event or the circumstances should be investigated on the historical parameter of objectivity.

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52. Partha Chaterjee, *op.cit.* p. 138.
53. Si monti Sen (ed), *Krishnabhabini Daser Englandey Bangamahila*, p.151 and in p. 157 the line of her poem 'seven hundred years of tears' also indicated the Muslim rule in a mere tyrannical manner.

Role of the Cooch Behar State Regency Council (1922 – 1936)

Joydeep Pal*

The history of British India is mainly indicated the formation of Paramountcy in the Princely States of India. During the first half of the 19th century one of the policy of the British Government was the implementation of the indirect rule. For that purpose British Government introduced the system of Regency Council in the Princely States. Regency Council is a person or group of person selected to act as the head of the State when the ruler is minor or not present or debilitated. The period of a regent or regents is referred to as regency. Cooch Behar, the tiny Princely State in North – Eastern India is not an exception of that. The geographical location of the State interested the British Government to take some measures in this regard. However, the administration of the Princely State of Cooch Behar found a new dimension from 1863. Here it deserve to mention that after the death of Maharaja Harendra Narayan in 1839, the Colonial Government had the free run in the State. The successor, Maharaja Shivendra Narayan had a pro- British attitude. Therefore, when he ascended the throne, it helped the British Government to fulfill their designs. So, the policy of indirect rule found its strong foothold in Cooch Behar. After that the British helped the Maharaja in all avenues of administration. Regarding smooth running of the State there were broad lines of the British administration for Cooch Behar during the minority of the Maharaja and the general principles of the British Government adopted by the State, was a beneficial scheme for the smooth running of the State.¹

An attempt has been made in this paper to highlight the role of the Cooch Behar State Regency Council during the period of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan. The State had undergone tremendous development due to the allround developmental activities of the Council. The paper is mainly based on the Administrative Reports of Cooch Behar during the period which is the primary source for the study.

At the outset, a brief sketch of Cooch Behar State Regency Council during the minority period of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan has been narrated as a curtain raiser for the period of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan.

As regards the constitution of the Cooch Behar State Regency Council, the British laid down the following Regulations—²

1. The position hitherto occupied by British Government regarding The State was assumed by Maharaja.
2. The functions of the Commissioner were in a general way delegated to the State Council and those of the Deputy Commissioner were divided among three officers, viz. The Superintendent of the State, The Dewan, and the Civil Judge.

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As per the regulations the constitution was as follows -

Maharaja Nripendra Narayan as President, and three members, namely the Superintendent of the State, the Dewan and the manager of the Chaklajat Estate. The first meeting of the State Council was held on 12th November, 1883.

The function of the State Council were three fold viz - a) Legislative, b) Executive and c) Judicial. On the legislative side the Council Passed laws and enactments.

On the Executive side it regulated the management of the different departments (General Department, Revenue Department and Judicial Department). In Judicial the Council was the highest court of appeal.

During the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan three category of authority were created in the State of Cooch Behar viz,- a) Maharaja (the Ruler of the State), b) The Council and c) the departmental heads. Such a category indicated the representative character of the administration.

This Council played a tremendous role from 1922 to 1936 during the minority period of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan under the guidance of Rajmata Indira Devi. It worked on the following measures on behalf the minor king of Cooch Behar.

Education

During his rule important measures were taken by the Cooch Behar State Regency Council towards this end. In 1922-23 the Education Committee of Cooch Behar implemented a further impetus towards the improvement of the sub - divisional Higher English Schools and the issue was that there must be a trained B.T. teacher in each of the Higher English Schools. As a result, permission was obtained from the syndicate, Calcutta University, to send up candidates for the Matriculation Examination in Hygiene form the Dinjata Higher English School with effect from 1924 and the Tufangunj Nripendra Narayan Memorial Higher English School also received permanent recognition from the University.³ A scheme for the improvement of the pay and prospect of the pundits of all the Primary and Secondary Schools in the State was submitted.

Subsequently it was sanctioned by the honourable Cooch Behar Regency Council, offering better inducement for works to the teacher and giving scope for suitable men in the department.⁴ In this year another proposal was introduced in the undergraduate education and it was to open B.Sc. Class in the Victoria College. Since the formation of the Victoria College, the academic stream was only for arts subjects. This proposal was submitted and sanctioned by the Cooch Behar State Regency Council and side by side the recognition of the Calcutta University was applied for. In response to this application the University Inspector paid a visit to the college.⁵

In 1925 implementation has been made on admission and transfer rules for students in higher English Schools.⁶ The formation of Schools for the spread of education was on going under the guidance of State Council. Thus, the number of schools were increased to 344 (Primary and Secondary School).⁷

In 1928 such number was increased to 350, which indicates that spread of education in Cooch Behar was phenomenal.⁸ On 1st April, 1930 one state model school was converted into a Middle English School.⁹ In 1931 Sunity Academy (girls' school) was recognised by the Calcutta University with permission to present candidates for the Matriculation Examination to be held on 1933.¹⁰ Such implementation indicates that girls' education received a warm support in Cooch Behar. Similarly, in 1932 another issue was implemented regarding the admission of girl students in the High English Schools of the State of Cooch Behar. The Regency Council accorded provisional sanction to the admission of 5 girl students for co-education in the Mathabhanga and the Mekli-gunj High English Schools. It was directed that the Managing Committee of the Schools concerned would make suitable arrangements for retiring rooms for the girls and that the Head Masters and other teachers of the Schools would accept the responsibility involved in this new departure.¹¹ During his reign (Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan), girl students were admitted in the Victoria college to spread undergraduate education among the girls.¹² In 1934 Cooch Behar State Regency Council framed new rules for the grant of free studentships in State Institutions. Here it is to be noted that these grants were open to the Cooch Behar subjects, sons and daughters of the State Servants (Cooch Behar), and other permanent residents of Cooch Behar, eighty per cent. being reserved for Cooch Behar subjects.¹³ In this year apart from Middle English Schools, State Model Schools, Middle Vernacular Schools, Primary Schools, Upper Primary Schools, Lower Primary Schools, Night Schools, Girls' Schools; the Industrial School which was under the instruction of Cooch Behar Bayan Silpa Vidyalaya, the only technical school in Cooch Behar got financial support from the authority.¹⁴ In 1937 under the revised regulations of the Calcutta University, elementary scientific knowledge has been made a compulsory subject and accordingly steps have been taken for imparting instruction in this subject. A special grant of Rs. 376 was sanctioned by the Cooch Behar State Council for the equipment of the science Room. The necessary apparatus, chemicals, charts and specimens of rocks and minerals have been purchased. Here it need to mention that a demonstration room, too, has been fitted with a sink and water connection.¹⁵

Medical

The medical system of Cooch Behar was a sound one during the reign of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan. In Cooch Behar the main building of the Sudder Hospital being old and very dilapidated condition, rendered it unfit for further use as a hospital. Therefore, the State Regency Council of Cooch Behar, has been graciously pleased to constructing a two storied building to be built in memory of Maharaja Jitendra Narayan on 20th December, 1923.¹⁶ For maternity cases in 1923 one midwife was employed at Dinjata and another employed at Mathabhanga.¹⁷ In 1924 some measures were taken by the State authority to cure people of Cholera. Temporary medical officers were appointed and a few hands from the existing permanent staff with compounders were sent to the mufussil to cope with the diseases. Two temporary dispensaries were opened in this manner, one at Kholta and other at Bhaishkuchi. Anti - Cholera inoculation was introduced which provided successful. The police and the military forces and the sudder hospital staff were inoculated first as a preventive measures against cholera. A large number of tube - wells were sunk for the supply of good drinking water in the cholera infected places. There were altogether 1,603 cholera cases out of which

1,113 ended fatally and 490 were cured.¹⁸ In 1926 reports of cholera came from all the sub – divisions of the State and the disease threatened to spread in academic form. The diseases was, however, checked in all the sub – divisions except Mathabhanga where it broke out in an epidemic form. The sub – divisions was divided into five circles with a medical officer and staff for each circle, to deal with the outbreak. A large number of tube – wells were sunk in the affected areas to supply pure drinking water.¹⁹ Several taluks of Cooch Behar were infected by small – pox in 1927. In order to cope with the disease, two temporary medical officers were appointed by the authority.²⁰

To improve the treatment facilities, Cooch Behar state council permitted the civil surgeons of the sudder hospital to attend the All India Medical Conference.²¹ The hospitals and dispensaries, sudder jail, sub – jails, police stations and out posts were regularly inspected by the Civil surgeon. Several schools were also inspected by him.²² The health of the students of the Jenkins School was examined by the sanitary officer assisted by the Sanitary Inspector of the sudder circle.²³ Apart from that Cooch Behar state council was regularly monitored various other aspect in the sphere of medical treatment. The statement below shows the receipt under different heads of medical department for the last three years—²⁴

Heads	1927- 28			1928 – 29			1929- 30		
	Rs.	A.	P.	Rs.	A.	P.	Rs.	A.	P.
1. Prescription fees	1,307	4	0	1,377	2	0	1,418	4	0
2. Sale proceeds of Medicine	1,039	15	6	1,083	9	0	1,112	0	3
3. Ditto bottles, & c.	72	12	6	82	7	0	90	8	0
4. House rent of Rajmata cottage wards	184	0	0	202	8	0	371	8	0
5. Subscription for the aided dispensaries	1,362	0	0	1,068	0	0	972	0	0
Total	4,016	0	0	3,813	13	0	3,964	4	3

In 1928 a clinical laboratory was formed by the Medical department of Cooch Behar for diagonistic purposes in the town, because at Cooch Behar Tropical diseases practically prevailed throughout the year. Hence since the beginning of the year 1928, a regular clinical laboratory was started in a miniature scale in the sudder hospital under a specially trained sub – assistant surgeon and every effort being made to improve it gradually.²⁵

For the people of Sitai a cottage dispensary at Sitai was opened with effect from the 1st august, 1932. For the maintenance of the dispensary monthly subscriptions amounting to Rs. 30 was available from local sources. It has been accommodated for the present in a private rent – free house and the superintendent of vaccination, a sub – assistant surgeon has been placed in its charge.²⁶ Regarding vaccination, during the reign of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan serious steps were taken by the medical department. In 1933 four vaccination inspector and 25 vaccinators were engaged in vaccination work.

A subsidiary center for anti – treatment was established at the sudder hospital on the 15th December, 1933, under an officer of the state medical department, who had previously under gone a course of training at the Pasteur Institute, Kasauli. The state

council sanctioned a sum of Rs. 140 for the last months in 1936 for laying out a garden in the compound of the hospital. Under the direction of the Garden Superintendent of the state it was laid out and it had added considerably to the beauty of the hospital building and it is thought that it has not been without beneficial effect psychologically on the more sensitive patients.

Public Works Department (P.W.D.)

During the reign of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan the Public Works Department (P.W.D.) worked on the following schemes under the guidance of Regency Council -

i) Head post – office

A two storied pucca building for the Post Office was completed in 1924. Its main building consists of two storeys. The ground floor has a big central hall measuring 55' x 40', for the post office proper with a treasury room 12' x 10', counter &c. To the right of the central hall is a telephone exchange Room measuring 20' x 13' with a battery room 13' x 6' behind it. At the back a record room 14' x 9' has been provided. The other three sides are enclosed with 7' wide open verandahs. On the 1st floor are the quarters for the post and telegraph masters with separate entrances and staircases.²⁷

ii) Re decoration of rooms in Palace In 1927 the following alterations have also been carried out²⁸ -

- a) Removal of Her Highness' staircase into His late Highness.
- b) Enlargement of late Maharaja Jitendra Narayan's Study room into a bigger sitting room by enclosing a portion of the next room.
- c) Removal of the northern central staircase into the passage to the west of the late father Maharaja's suite of rooms and conversion of the staircase room into a bathroom.
- d) Conversion of the library room into a sitting room, small drawing room into a bed room, gun room into a billiard room and the billiard room into a library.
- e) Providing a complete marble flooring to the new billiard room and marble flooring border to several of the rooms.
- f) Replacing the old large doors with either etched and embossed glass panels or ground glass panels with a fan light on top.

iii) Police barracks at Cooch Behar

The work of constructing a two storied pucca building for the police barracks at Cooch Behar was in progress throughout the year 1928. Rs. 47,647 was expended during the year.²⁹

iv) Construction of a dispensary at Bamanhat

A corrugated iron roofed building on steel trusses and 10" pucca walls consisting of 4 rooms viz. - one doctor's room 17' x 12', one operation room 12' x 8', one store room 12' x 8' and one dispensary 9' x 8' with two side verandahs. The whole work completed in 1928.³⁰

v) Building for Cooch Behar state press

A pucca building 181'-5" x 35'-9" having 7' wide verandah in front and two sides was constructed in 1930 at a total cost of Rs. 39,968 with exception of steps and surface drains. The building consists of 7 rooms viz., one Bengali composing room 35' - 4" x 25', one English composing room 67'- 3½" x 25', one printing machine room 25' x 23', one clerks' room 25' x 12', one record room and other officer's room each measuring 12' x 12' - 3½".³¹

vi) Construction of a Circuit House in Cooch Behar Town

In 1930 a two - storied pucca building having in the ground floor two rooms 20' x 18' each one to be used as dining room and the other drawing room, 2 office rooms 12' x 8' each, 2 bath rooms one 13' - 3" x 8' - 6", another 8' x 8', one stair case room 10' x 20, one pantry 10' x 8', one store room 10' x 8' and two small verandahs in back 13' - 6" x 8' and 6' x 8' and a verandah 8' wide in front and the two sides. Besides the above there is a carriage porch at the front. In the first floor it has two bed rooms 20' x 18' each, 2 dressing rooms 12' x 8', 2 bath rooms 8' x 8' each and another bath room 13' - 3" x 8' and 8' wide verandahs in front and back.³²

vii) Communication

In this avenue there were a lot of schemes implemented by the Public Works Department which were as follows -

In 1923 P.W.D. took the following works (construction of bridges and culvert) regarding communication in Cooch Behar.³³

1. Four feet span pucca culvert in the 1st mile of Baneswar to Natabari road.
2. Eight feet span pucca culvert in the 6th mile of the road from Cooch Behar to Garodhat.
3. Four feet span pucca culvert in the 9th mile of the road from Cooch Behar to Garodhat.
4. Five feet span pucca culvert in the 10th mile of the road from Cooch Behar to Garodhat.
5. Six feet span pucca culvert in the 7th mile of Patlakhawa road.
6. Five feet span pucca culvert in the 5th mile of Patlakhawa road.
7. Four feet span pucca culvert in the 3rd mile of Shahebgunj - Bamanhat road.
8. Strengthening the Iron Bridge over the Girja river in the Four mile of the village path from Dewangunj to Chilahati.
9. A timber bridge in the 17th mile of the Cooch Behar - Sitalkuchi road.
10. Adding a span to the wooden bridge in the 21st mile Dinjata - Mekhligunj road.
11. A 20 feet span bridge on the 7th mile of Cooch Behar - Sitalkuchi road.
12. A masonry bridge in the 45th mile of the Emigration road west of Cooch Behar.
13. One feet span masonry culvert on the Houghton street in the town of Cooch Behar.

In 1925 the following culverts and bridges were constructed by the p.w.d.³⁴

1. One 4' span pucca culvert on the 6th & 9th mile of Patlakhawa road.
2. One 5' span pucca culvert on the 3rd mile of Kakina road.
3. One 4' span pucca culvert on the 20th & 23rd mile of Kakina road.
4. One 6' span pucca culvert on the 3rd mile of Janaki- Tiwary road.
5. One 12' span timber bridge on the 6th mile of the Changrabanda - Jamaldah road.
6. One 6' span pucca culvert on the 7th mile of the Phulbari – Chilkiguri road.
7. One 3' diameter corrugated iron culvert on the 14th mile of the Cooch Behar – Sitalkuchi road.
8. One 3' diameter corrugated iron culvert on the 13th mile of the Katamari – Manabari road.
9. One 12' span iron bridge on the 7th mile of the Lowkuti road.

In 1926 a few works were constructed, which were as follows—³⁵

1. One 5' span pucca culvert in the 6th mile of Rungpur road.
2. One 6' span pucca culvert in the 6th mile of Dinhata -Baxirhat road.

In 1927 the following work was in progress -³⁶

1. 20' span iron bridge on the 14th mile of Baneswar- Pundibari road.
2. 40' span iron bridge on the 4th mile of Latkobari Chowdhurirhat road.
3. 3' diameter corrugated iron bridge on the 10th, 11th, 12th mile of Mathabhanga - Moranga road.

In 1928 -29 P.W.D took the work of metalling the roads in Cooch Behar town namely Nripendra Narayan Road, Sunity Road, Kameswari Road, Smith Road.

Viii) Water Supply Scheme

The water supply scheme is estimated to cost of Rs. 2.5 lakhs. It was decide to spread the expenditure over two years—Rs. 1.25 lakhs being provided in 1926 – 27 and Rs. 1.25 lakhs in 1927 – 28. It was also decide that sum of Rs. 45,000 would be appropriated from the accumulated surplus of the pound fund towards the capital cost of the scheme and that a sum of Rs. 80,000 would be provided for the scheme in the budget for 1926–27, thus making up the total sum of Rs. 1,25,000 sanctioned for the expenditure during 1926 – 27.

The north – west portion of Narendra Narayan Park, which is in The center of the town, has been selected for the location of the water works and power house. A provision of Rs. 25,000 has been made in the Public Works Department budget, 1926 – 27 for the construction of the new power house. The whole scheme will be carried out under the supervision and direction of the chief engineer, public health department, Bengal. The proposal of the chief engineer, public health department, Bengal, in connection with rural water supply were also approved by the Cooch Behar State Regency Council and an experiment is being carried out in the shape of sinking tube wells in 25 taluks (villages) close to Cooch Behar town with a view to seeing, after the experiment has been given a proper trial, whether it will be feasible to introduce a

tube well scheme on a large scale throughout the State with a view to providing the population in the rural areas with a good water supply so far as may be possible.³⁷

ix) Re – organisation of Fire – Brigade

As the arrangements for dealing with Fires in the town of Cooch Behar were wholly made quite for the purpose, the Regency Council sanctioned a scheme for the re-organisation of the town fire brigade submitted by the vice-president, Regency Council. The scheme is briefly as follows—³⁸

1. The purchase of a Dennis Motor Trailer Pump (as used by The Calcutta Fire Brigade) which is connected to, and drawn by, a Motor Lorry.
2. The purchase of a one – ton Ford Lorry Chassis fitted with a body specially designed by the Chief Officer of the Calcutta Fire Brigade.
3. The construction of a garage for housing the Ford Lorry and Trailer Pump.
4. A crew of seven men drawn from the Police Force, who will be trained with the Calcutta Fire Brigade.

x) Motor watering car

To meet the difficulties experienced till now in watering the roads of the town of Cooch Behar, the purchase of a Motor Watering Car at Rs. 3,150 was sanctioned by the Cooch Behar State Regency Council in 1926.³⁹

Xi) Electric supply in the town of Cooch Behar

In 1926 – 27 a sum of Rs. 50,000 was provided for the expanding the electric system of Cooch Behar. In addition to this a sum of Rs. 25,000 was provided in the public works department for that year for a new Power House. An additional amount of Rs. 37,000 was sanctioned for the construction of Electric godown in Cooch Behar.⁴⁰

Economic Measures of the Regency Council

The economic sphere of Cooch Behar during the reign of Maharaja Jagadipendra Narayan moved smoothly under the following heads.

i) New Stamps in Cooch Behar

In 1929 it was decided to introduce into the State of Cooch Behar a new type of Stamps containing the altered Court of Arms of the State, that is, substituting the figure of tiger for that of lion. The treasury officer and the sub – divisional Naib Ahilkars were directed to destroy by burning in their presence all the old stamps that were in, and came to, their possession on the 1st April, 1929, on which the introduction came into force and furnish certificates stating the number and value of the stamps thus destroyed. The stamp vendors also were directed to return on the 1st April, 1929 to the treasury or sub – treasuries all the old stamps in their possession and receive in exchange fresh stamps of the same value and denomination.⁴¹

ii) Rent money order system

To facilitate the payment of rent by the State Subjects (Cooch Behar) the postal authorities were moved to sanction the introduction of the Rent Money Order System in

the State of Cooch Behar. Extension of the system to this state was granted with effect from the 1st August 1935.⁴²

iii) Revision of rates for town and bunders lands

On 21st March 1927 the Cooch Behar State Regency Council implemented an order regarding the revision of rates for town and bunders lands and the classification of the several bunders in Cooch Behar State were as follows—⁴³

1. period of settlement - The period will be fixed at 10 years.

2. classification - Cooch Behar town should be treated separately from the other towns and bunders. For bunders lands in the town of Cooch Behar there will be only two rates, viz.-

Class I - For the entire frontage Rs. 1 – 4 (Rupee one and annas four only) per cubit or Rs. 400 per bigha. Back holding Rs. 10 (Rupees ten only) per bigha. The existing rates are Rs. 400 (Rupees four hundred only) a bigha for the frontage and Rs. 8 (eight only) a bigha for the back holding. All lands comprised in the block of which boundaries are given below come under Class I:-

Two hundred forty – five feet west of centre of Dalton Street and 107 feet Nripendra Narayan Road.

One hundred and seventy seven feet east of centre of Smith Road and 107 feet north of Nripendra Narayan Road. Junction of Sunity Road with kuchcha road east of Smith Road. Junction of Sunity Road with kuchcha road west of Dalton street. Class II - For the actual frontage occupied by the shop As. 12 (annas twelve only) per cubit (20 cubits deep) or Rs. 240 (Rupees two hundred and forty only) per bigha and Rs. 8 (Rupees eight only) a bigha for the back holding as at present. All lands not included in the Class I block come under this class.

It is to be understood that houses other than shops in the block comprising the lands in “Class I” will bear a ground rate of Rs.10 (Rupees ten only) a bigha and in “Class II” Rs. 8 (Rupees eight only) a bigha.

3. For the towns and bunders in the State of Cooch Behar, there will be three rates only viz. –

Class I. – Rs. 100 (Rupees one hundred only) a bigha for the entire frontage, occupied or unoccupied, and Rs. 5 (Rupees five only) a bigha for the back portion of the holding.

Class II. – Rs. 80 (Rupees eighty only) a bigha for the actual frontage occupied by the shop and Rs. 4 (Rupees four only) a bigha for rest of the holding.

Class III. – Rs. 4 (Rupees four only) a bigha for the whole area (bunders), occupied or unoccupied.

For houses other than shops in all the three classes, there will be an uniform rate of Rs. 4 (Rupees four only) a bigha For the whole area, occupied or unoccupied.

The following is a list of the Mofussil towns and bunders Classified according to the rates given below –

Class I

Dinhata, Mathabhanga, Haldibari

Class II

Dinhata sub-division

Chaudhurihat, Gossanimari, Mekhligunj, Bhetaguri, Sitai, Bamanhat, Bakshirhat, Sahebgunj, Gitaldaha.

Mathabhanga sub-division

Siberhat, Nishigunjhat, Ghoksadanga, Sitalkhuchihat.

Mekhligunj sub-division

Mekhligunj, Dewangunj, Jamaladaha, Ranirhat, Changrabandha.

Cooch Behar sudder sub-division

Baneswar, Dawanhat, Pundibari.

Tufangunj sub-division

Bakshirhat, Balarampurhat, Ranirhat (Tufangunj town), Bhaiskhuchi, Bara Mahadeva Bunder, Krishnapur, Ghoramara, Natabari.

iv) Progressive enhancement of revenue and rent

On 11th April 1927 the Cooch Behar State Council made the following orders regarding the enhancement of revenue and rent in Cooch Behar—⁴⁴

1. When the maximum jama (rent of revenue) settled now does not exceed Rs. 5 or the increase does not exceed 75 per cent of the old as well as the existing jamas, the increase is to take effect once, in which the new settlement for a term of 30 years is to come into force.
2. In other case the maximum jama settled now is over 75 percent of the old as well as existing jamas, 75 percent of the higher of the last two jamas (viz. the old and the existing jamas) subject to a minimum of Rs. 5 in any case is to take effect at once and of the remainder of the increase, one half is to take effect in the third year and the remaining half in the fifth year.
3. The jama of no under – tenure will be made progressive unless gradual enhancement is allowed in the case of the jote (or tenure) comprising the under – tenure.
4. As regards the under – tenures of different grades, no under – tenant's jama will be made progressive unless the enhancement of the jama of his immediately superior landlord is made gradual.
5. In the case of progressive enhancement the amount annually payable during the first four years will be separately shown in the terajis (final record of right).

v) Relief of Jotedars and Tenants

In 1932 the Cooch Behar State Regency Council issued an order in favour of jotedars and tenants, which were as follows—⁴⁵

1. For every jote for which the whole of the arrears and current demand has been satisfied with in the current revenue year 1932, the jotedars will be entitled to a remission of one – third of the revenue demand on that jote due for 1933.
2. For every jote for which the whole of the arrears and current demand up to including the kartick (name of Bengali month) kist (installment) of the current year has been satisfied, the jotedars will be entitled to a remission of one – fourth of the revenue demand on that jote for 1932.
3. Similar concessions shall be shown to all the tenants and under Tenants by jotedars and other superior land – lords (whether Jotedars and superior land – lords have themselves received the above concessions or not) in all cases where tenants and under -tenants have paid to their respective land – lords all kists due up to the end of 1932.

vi) Land Revenue Policy

To mitigate the hardships to the subjects of the State of Cooch Behar attributable to the prevailing economic depression, remission of revenue were granted to the jotedars and similar concessions were extended to all classes of under tenants. Extensions of time for payment of kists (indebt) were also granted. Of Jotes in respect of which default had been made for many kists, a small number were made khas (vested land) and brought under the Khas Mehal Department. The result of the policy followed has been on the whole satisfactory in as much as it gave relief to the jotedars to some extent while the revenue collections of the state showed a marked improvement.⁴⁶

Thus the economic sphere of Cooch Behar moved into a advanced and technical way under the super -vision of the royal authority.

Apart from the above mentioned measures the State Council also took active steps in Some other schemes, which can be categories as -

1. Maharaj Jitendra Narayan Prajabatsal Chikitsalaya

In 1923 the former sudder hospital was redecorated with various equipments and facilities. Among the whole scheme Rs. 20,000 was granted by the Maharani Sahiba (mother of Jagaddipendra Narayan), Rs. 12,000 have been deposited with the Imperial Bank of India. Rs. 12,384 was expended during the year for the purchase of some materials. The new hospital building's name was given in memory of Maharaj Jitendra Narayan. Thus the hospital building known as Maharaj Jitendra Narayan Prajabatsal Chikitsalaya (M.J.N. Hospital).⁴⁷

2. Transfer of management of Sunity Academy

With a view to improving the condition of the academy for the education of girls (1925), in which Maharaja takes a great interest the management of the institution, which was an aided one was transferred to the Education Department of the State of Cooch Behar.⁴⁸ It was decide that the existing Committee of Management should continue to function and assist in giving effect to the decisions of the council on the various questions involved, and that the standard of the Academy should, for the present, be so raised that it might teach up to the 4th Class of a High English School. A sum of Rs. 10,000 was allotted for providing additional accommodation for the academy of

which Rs. 5,000 was provided by the Cooch Behar State authority and the balance was met from the funds of the Academy. A ford Motor bus was also provided for bringing some of the girls to the Academy and taking them back to their homes.⁴⁹

3. Narendra Narayan Park

An important order issued by the Council on 19th June 1926 regarding the modernisation of Narendra Narayan Park. The important clauses of the ordinance were as follows—⁵⁰

1. To carriage motor car, motor cycle, bicycle or tricycle shall be driven or ridden in the Park at a speed exceeding 5 miles per hour. They are permitted to be used in the metalled roads only inside the Park.
2. No person shall ride on horse – back in the Park.
3. No person shall bring a dog into the Park.
4. The following acts are strictly prohibited –
The plucking, gathering or digging up of anything growing in the Park, the felling of trees the breaking of benches or plants, the cutting of names or marks on trees or on the branches, the disfiguring of furniture, the removing or disfiguring of labels or marks attached to trees or plants, pie – nicking, shooting bird – nesting, the grazing of horses or cattle and fishing, or polluting the water of the tanks. No bathing is allowed in the tanks after 2 p.m.
5. The playing of football, cricket, hokey, tennis or other out door games in the park is also prohibited.
6. No person shall commit any nuisance in the Park ground or molest or annoy any person or person – resorting to it.
7. Any person convicted of a breach of any of the above rules shall be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs. 20.

4. Public Health Department

For the purpose of better combating epidemic diseases – more specially cholera, small – pox, kala – azar and malaria, the Regency Council accorded sanction to the formation of Public Health Department for the State consisting of one sanitary officer (assistant surgeon), three sanitary officers (sub-assistant surgeon), twenty–five vaccinators, three medicine carriers and three sweepers with effect from the 1st October, 1927.⁵¹

The total cost of the scheme was Rs. 15,800 a year including traveling allowance, disinfectants and medicines, contingencies and house allowance. The sanitary officer has been given one sanitary inspector in reserve whom he can send out in cash of emergencies to any particular place. For the purpose of proper administration of the department, the Cooch Behar State has been divided into two divisions: I Sudder Cooch Behar, Dinahata, Tufangunj; II Mathabhanga, and Mekhligunj.⁵² To each of the two divisions – one sanitary inspector has been posted. Owing to the formation of this department; the existing provisions amounting to Rs. 4971 under ‘vaccination’ and ‘sanitation’ in the Medical budget are no longer required. Deducting this amount from

Rs. 15,800 which is the total cost of the scheme, the extra cost per annum for the department was Rs. 10,829 or Rs. 11,000 approximately.⁵³

5. Cooch Behar Subject

On 3rd August 1932, the Cooch Behar State Regency Council implemented an important issue on the identity of natives. The State Council successfully abolished the so called "Native of the State" and "Domiciled Native of the State" terms and adopted one classification namely, "Cooch Behar Subject" was adopted and such privileges as had before been accorded to "Native" and "Domiciled Natives" were accorded to "Cooch Behar Subject".⁵⁴ A Cooch Behar Subject has been defined as one—⁵⁵

1. Who owes allegiance to His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, his heirs, successors, and assigns and renounces all claims to the status of British Indian Subject or the status of subject of any Indian State.
2. Whose great – grand – father, grand – father and father have continuously resided in the Cooch Behar State.
3. Who has no home or permanent abode without the limits of the Cooch Behar State.

6. Agricultural Officer

To assist the Revenue Department with expert advice regarding adoption of improved methods in Agricultural Operations and to do propaganda work amongst cultivators, an Agricultural Officer in the Department of Agriculture, Bengal, was appointed on Rs. 100 per month for a period of one year from the 1st April, 1933.⁵⁶

In conclusion it can be note that during the period from 1922–1936 the Cooch Behar State Regency Council did a tremendous work on behalf of the minor Maharaja of Jagaddipendra Narayan. More importantly the Council followed the administrative cum social measures for the people of Cooch Behar and set an example of well formed management system in the princely state of Cooch Behar.

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- b) Where the old Jama was Rs. 1 – 8. The existing Jama is Rs. 2 and the Jama settled, was Rs. 6. according to the principle of illustration (a), Rs. 2 plus Rs. 1 – 8 (i.e., 75 per cent of Rs. 2) or Rs. 3 – 8 would be payable annually in the first and second years, Rs. 4 – 12 (i.e., Rs. 3 – 8 plus Rs. 1 – 4) in the third and fourth years and Rs. 6 in the fifth year but as the amount payable on this principle in the first year is less than Rs. 5, the latter amount (Rs. 5) should be paid in the first and second years, Rs. 5 in the third and fourth years and Rs. 6 in the fifth year’.
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Changing Nature of Identity of the Backward People of Assam: A Study on the transition of 'tribal identity' of the Koch-Rajbanshis to the 'constitutional tribe' through a backward caste.*

Rup Kumar Barman*

Identity of an individual or a community is a matter of perception. It depends on the context of analysis and approaches of scholars who aspired to reconstruct the identity of a community. In a broader sense, identity of a particular community takes shapes on the basis of certain characteristics such as language, religion, beliefs, race, caste and certainly a common cultural tradition, which differentiate that community from the others. Social identity of a community again is 'relational'. In that sense the concept of 'backwardness' of a community depends on the 'advance position' or standard of the others. Again a sense about the 'self', mobilizes a backward community for the formation of a standard (forward) social identity to be acceptable to the forward communities. In the multi-ethnic plural society of India, we do generally notice two phases in the formation of identity of a community----- (i) denunciation of imposed identity and (ii) assertion for self. In this context Assam is no exception.

Being a polyphonic and plural cultural region, Assam has a long historical experience about the formation of standard identity of several backward social communities based on tribe, caste, language, religion, etc. Since the concept of identity is 'situational' and 'contextual', the social identity of a particular community is being changed with the changing nature of context and time. With this theoretical background, in this paper I have examined the changing nature of identity of a backward community of Assam (and sub-Himalayan Bengal) called the 'Koch-Rajbanshis' whose identity has become a matter of great concern for the historians. Being a ruling community of Lower Assam and Sub-Himalayan Bengal, the Koches had developed a kind of their Kshatriya (ruling) identity from a tribe. However, 'Koch identity' began to be considered as inferior with the beginning of the nineteenth century. Instead of tribal identity, the Koches of Lower Assam and Sub-Himalayan North Bengal began to consider them as 'Rajbanshi Kshatriya'. It was further stimulated due to the *kshatriyaization* movement in entire Bengal in the early twentieth century. The Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam, however, have changed their agenda of social identity in postcolonial India. Instead of respectable caste, they have been clamouring for the recognition of their pre-colonial tribal identity along with the formation of a 'separate state'. In the present paper I'll highlight all these aspects

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of identity of the Koch-Rajbanshis in historical perspective with somewhat objective outlook.

II

The Koches and the Rajbanshis of Pre-colonial period.

In the present constitutional provision of India, the Koches and the Rajbanshis (also spelled as Rajbongshi/ Rajbangshi) or Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam have been classified as 'Other Backward Castes' (OBC). They are Scheduled Castes (SC) in West Bengal having their large concentration in North Bengal. The term Rajbanshi is also refers to a linguistic community of India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan having somewhat social cohesiveness bonded by linguistic and cultural features. Such international distribution of the Koch-Rajbanshis can be understood from the history of their settlement and polity formation. It has been accepted in the historical researches on the 'Koch history' that Tibet was the land of their early settlement.¹ They migrated to North Bengal and northeast India through the route of Eastern Nepal. On the basis of inscriptional evidences D.C. Sircar has argued that the Koches appeared as a settled tribal community in North Bengal in the ninth century after their migration from Tibet.² Settlements of the Koches as settled tribe in Sub-Himalayan Bengal and Lower Assam in the early thirteenth century have been clearly confirmed in the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, a Persian text compiled by Minhasuddin Shiraj.³

Political history of the Koches, however, was started with the beginning of formation of their chiefdom under the leadership of Haria Mondal (a Mech tribal chief) in the early sixteenth century. Haria Mech, together with the Koches; had founded a small chiefdom at Khuntaghat (Chikina Hill) of Lower Assam. It transformed into a territorial kingdom under the kingship of Biswasimha (c 1515-1540). So the Koches began to transform into a political community. The Koch kingdom got highest territorial size during the reign of king Nara Narayan (1540-1587). However, the kingdom was divided between Raghudeva Narayan (1581-1587, son of Chilarai the Koch military general and brother of Naranarayan) and Naranarayan in 1581. Due to the internal conflicts between Koch- Hazo (eastern Koch kingdom under Raghudeva and his successors) and Cooch Behar (main branch under the successors of Naranarayan), the Koches lost their unity. Koch-Hazo was annexed to the Mughal territory of Bengal. Southern part of Koch-Hazo was finally annexed to the Mughal Empire in 1612. At the same time, the northern part of Koch-Hazo (including Darrang) came under the domination of the Ahom rulers. So the Koch kingdom was reduced to a small territory, extended from the *Tista-Karatoya* in the west to the *Sankosh* river in the east including some portion of Dhubri. The Mughal followed a policy of regular intervention to the Koch kingdom till the 1750s. On the other hand, Bhutan appeared as a great challenge for the Koches in the 1760s from the northern frontier. By 1770s the Bhutanese troops had captured the whole of Koch kingdom except a small tract. So the officials of the Cooch Behar had concluded an agreement with the East India Company (the emerging political power of Bengal) in 1772. Cooch Behar was agreed to pay a suitable indemnity and half of the revenue of the kingdom at the cost of the expulsion of the Bhutanese. By 15 February, 1773, the Company expelled the Bhutanese force from Cooch Behar. Since 1773 the Cooch Behar State maintained its

relations with the British Indian Government (till 1947) as a Native State. It was merged to India in 1949 as a C category State and finally it transformed into a district of West Bengal in 1950.

It appears from the brief political history of the Koches that their settlements have been extended in different parts of Bengal and northeast India through a gradual manner both as 'rulers' and 'ruled'. As rulers, the Koch kings had embraced Hinduism and the neo-Vaishnavism (propagated by Sankardeva) in order to legitimize their rule over the multi-ethnic plural society of Assam and Bengal.⁴ Literary sources of the Koch history particularly the *buranjis* (chronicles) and *vamsavalis* (genealogies) have created a fictitious Kshatriya origin of the ruling family of the Koches. These sources have categorically mentioned that king Biswasimha was born due to the adulterous union between Hira (mother of Biswasimha) and lord Shiva (a prominent male deity of the Hindu pantheon).⁵ Hence, the ruling family was described as '*Shivabanshi*' (descendants of Shiva). They were thus not *Rajbanshis*. Rather, the *Guru Charita* of Ramcharan Thakur, a sixteenth century biography of Sankardeva, had described that the *Rajbanshis* were different than the Koches.⁶

The *Rajbanshis* on the other hand have been appeared as a social community in the pre-colonial period. The Koches who embraced the Hinduism and Vaishnavism began to consider them as *Rajbanshis*. Early colonial sources on the history of Cooch Behar and Assam have recorded the large scale presence of the *Rajbanshis* in Rangpur, Cooch Behar and in Lower Assam.⁷ Buchanan Hamilton, who visited Rangpur and other parts of North Bengal in the early 19th century (1807-14 A.D.); had observed that 'the Koches were designated as *Rajbanshis* although *Rajbanshis* are not Koch'.⁸ It Means that the term '*Rajbanshi*' was a social designation where the tribal Koches got place after abandoning their tribal customs and accepting Hindu traditions and rituals. Hamilton's view was further echoed in B.H. Hodgson's (1847) observation who expressed that the Koches, Meches and the Kacharis originated from the great Mongolian race and Koches or *Rajbanshis* are merely the most *hinduized* form of the common stock.⁹ To them, the Koches were transformed into *Rajbanshi* after their *hinduisation*. So it seems that the Koches began to be designated as *Rajbanshi* since the early 19th century.

III

Colonial Anthropology and Racial Identity of the Koch-Rajabnshis

With the beginning of the colonial anthropology, identity of the Koches and *Rajbanshis* became more complex due to the multiple perceptions and opinions of the colonial observers regarding the people of Lower Assam and Bengal. There are two opinions about the racial composition of the Koch-Rajbanhi people of the Tista-Brahmaputra regions. In 1872, Mr. E.T. Dalton identified the Koches as Dravidian for their physical characteristics.¹⁰ Dalton's view was accepted by Mr. Beverley in the '*first colonial census report*' (1872).¹¹ H.H. Risley, another notable administrative anthropologists, had also described the Koch tribe as Dravidian (in 1891) and stressed on the possibility of their admixture with the Mongoloids.¹²

However, colonial ethnographic view in favour of Mongoloid origin of the Koches was more prominent than the Dravidian racial identity. In his Monograph, *Essay the First on the Koch Bodo and Dimal Tribes*, B.H. Hodgson had convicted that the Koches belonged to the Mongoloid family.¹³ Hodgson was followed by Dr. Latham who accepted the Mongoloid origin of the Koches.¹⁴ Similarly L.A. Waddell had categorically expressed in 1911 that the 'Koches do not as stated by Colonel Dalton, Mr. Risley and others, belong to the dark Dravidian aborigines of India but are distinctly Mongoloid though somewhat heterogeneous.'¹⁵ Similarly S. Endle had accepted the Mongoloid origin of the Koches. He even classified the Koches, Meches, Rabhas, Dhimals, Hajongs, Lalungs, Garos and such other tribes of Northeastern India within the same category.¹⁶ Postcolonial anthropological studies on the tribes of Northeast India also recognized the Koches as Mongoloid.¹⁷ These anthropological studies have created a kind of perception both among the scholars and general public about the physical characteristics of the Koch-Rajbanshis along with their identity as a backward community. To some extent, these studies are considered to be valid proofs for the reconstruction of tribal identity as claimed by the Koch-Rajbanshis in the postcolonial period.

IV

Formation of Kshatriya Identity of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal

Anthropological perceptions of the colonial scholars had created a serious problem in the 1890s regarding the social identity of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal and lower Assam when F.A. Skyne, the District Magistrate of Rangpur (of Bengal), had issued an order to classify the Rajbanshis as Koch in the decennial census.¹⁸ The Rajbanshis had denied accepting that order considering themselves superior than the Koches. They argued that in remote past their forefathers were compelled to take shelter in North Bengal being persecuted by Mahapadma Nanda, the founder of the Nanda dynasty of Magadha (fourth century BC).¹⁹ And they were forced to conceal their Kshatriya identity. So their identity can't be identical with the Koches as 'constructed' by the colonial administrators. The educated section of this community began to reconstruct their identity as kshatriya by composing their self-history.²⁰ It was a significant step in the announcement of a self-identity by discarding the imposed identity.

Feeling of caste Kshatriya origin of the Rajbanshis became more stronger with the foundation of their 'Kshatriya Samity' in 1910 in Rangpur.²¹ Main objectives of this Samity were --- (i) establishment of a *kshatriya* identity of the Rajbanshis, (ii) to inform the government that the Koches and the Rajbanshis are different castes and (iii) publications and circulations of newspapers and periodical about the Rajbanshis and their cultural heritage.²²

Demand for *kshatriya* caste identity of the Rajbanshis was recognized by the colonial government in 1911. The Census Officer of Purnia district (of present Bihar) had issued an order in 1911 to stratify the Koches and the Rajbanshis separately. The Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara (of present Assam) also allowed the Rajbanshis to classify them as *kshatriya*. Even Mr.E.W. Denith, Superintendent of Cooch Behar State; issued a similar order.²³ So O. Mally, the Census Superintendent wrote in 1911 that 'the former

request (of *kshatriyas* status) was granted without hesitation as there is no doubt that at the present day irrespective of any question of origin the Rajbanshis and the Koch are separate castes.²⁴ So it appears that the announcement of 'self' (by the Rajbanshis) by denouncing the ambiguous and imposed identity got official stamp from the colonial state.

Third step of identity formation of the Rajbanshis was the transformation of their kshatriya feeling into practical life. Under the leadership of Panchanan Barma, the Rajbanshis had acquired the prescription of the Brahmins of Mithila, Kamarup, Cooch Behar, Rangpur and Navadwip regarding their kshatriya origin and procured the process of elevation of their social status.²⁵ Eventually 400 delegates of the Rajbanshis of different districts of Bengal and Assam gathered at Deviganj of Jalpaiguri district in 1913 under the banner of the Kshatriya Samity and they publicly declared them as *Kshatriya*. They now began to hold *paita* or sacred thread, a symbol of the Caste Hindus.²⁶ Within a year, the Rajbanshis organized total 292 such gathering in different towns and villages of North Bengal and Assam. More than one lakh Rajbanshis had hold sacred threads (*paita*). They had also adopted some rituals and customs of the caste Hindus. Even they now assumed caste Kshatriya surnames like Barma, Barman, Ray, Singha etc., as prescribed in the *Brihatddharma Purana*.²⁷ So adoption of caste rituals from the so-called dominant caste communities was not merely an attempt of 'sanskritization'.²⁸ It was also a significant step in the process of formation of 'self-identity' of the Rajbanshis.

The Rajbanshis of Bengal had crossed the level of *sanskritization* in regards to their material gain. They had given maximum emphasis on their educational development. Thus they founded a hostel for their students at Rangpur in 1914. The Kshatriya Samity also founded the Kshatriya Chhatra Samity, (a student organization) to mobilize the Rajbanshi students along the line of its caste assertion. It is interesting to note that the Rajbanshis had placed themselves as a kshatriya community in the greater society of all India level (Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahashabha) in the 1920s. In 1920 Panchanan Barma was elected as the Vice President of Bengal branch of the Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahashabha. Representatives of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samity attended the all India conferences of the Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahashabha held at Alwar in 1924 and at Indor in 1927.²⁹ All India connection of the Rajbanshis enhanced their social prestige because most of the Kshatriya leaders of the Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahashabha were the rulers of Native States. The Rajbanshis of Bengal, however, had accepted the Scheduled Caste identity in the 1930s. So their movement for respectable caste Kshatriya identity was transformed into a backward caste identity at least in official level. The Rajbanshis of Bengal also took interest about the provincial politics of Bengal. From 1920 to 1947 the Kshatriya Samity had played a significant political role in the election of Legislative Councils and Legislative Assembly of Bengal.³⁰ Reservation in the political assemblies, government jobs and in the educational institutions had the inspired the Rajbanshis to remained attached with the Scheduled Caste identity since 1936.

Assertion for the construction of Koch-Rajbanshi identity in colonial Assam

While the Kshatriya identity became a matter of prestige for the Rajbanshis of North Bengal in the first quarter of the 20th century, the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam were not remained silent. It is interesting to note that the attempt of formation of Kshatriya identity of the Koches through the construction of 'self-history' was first started in Assam by Hara Kishor Adhikary. His *Rajbanshi Kulapradip* (1909),³¹ after reviewing the classical literatures (such as *Epics, Puranas, Tantras*, etc.), had proved that the Koches and the Rajbanshis have been originated from the Kshatriya dynasties. Immediately after the composition of the work, the Koch- Rajbanshis of Assam (especially upper class and the educated section) began to think about their social identity. The Koch Raj family of Sidli (an offshoot of Koch-Hazo) showed its active interest to the work of Shri Adhikary even when it was in manuscript form.³² In a meeting held at Vidyapur (the capital of Sidly) on 1312 BS (1904), the royal family members of Sidli (including King Avay Narayan Dev, Prince Kumar Niranjan Narayan Dev, Lalit Narayan Dev and others) and the royal priest Shri Saradakinkar Vidyavagis had declared that the opinion of Hara Kishor Adhikary regarding the origin of the Rajbanshis is beyond doubt.³³ Lalit Narayan Dev (prince of Sidli) had also shown respect to this work. The Queen of Bijni Estate (a branch of Koch-Hazo) had also patronized the work of Shri Adhikary.³⁴ So it appears that two branches of former Koch rulers of Assam were highly influenced by the work of Adhikary especially regarding their kshatriya identity. Adhikary's work had also stimulated caste sentiment of the non-ruling section of the Rajbanshis of Assam.³⁵ Being inspired by Adhikary, the Rajbanshis of Bagribari, Vidyapur, Dhubri, Tamarhat, Dhalgaon and Antgao (of Goalpara and Dhubri district of Eastern Bengal and Assam) began to think about the standardization of their caste.

The Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam were also easily induced by the *kshatriyazation* movement of the Rajbanshis of Bengal³⁶ because 'Assam and Eastern Bengal' was a single province for a short span (1905-1911). The Debiganj Mahamilan Conference for elevation of social status of the Rajbanshis was attended by a large number of delegates from Assam. The organizational ability of Rangpur Kshatriya Samity had influenced the Rajbanshis of Assam to form their own social organization. It was translated into practice with the birth of a few social organizations of the Koch-Rajbanhis in different places of Assam in the early twentieth century as given in the following table.

Table 1: Social organizations of the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam of the first half of the twentieth century

Sl. No.	Name of the Organization	Year of Foundation and Place
1	Koch Sammilani	Upper Assam, 1910s
2	Koch Sammilani	Garo Hills, 1910s
3	Baithamari Kshatriya Samity	Bongaigaon, 1930
4	Kshatriya Yubak Sangh	Bongaigaon, 1933
5	Goalpara Zilla Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samity	Goalpara, 1933
6	Kachar Rajbanshi Barkoch Samity	Kachhar, 1920s
7	Kachar Barkoch Rajbanshi Kshatriya Assamiya	Kachhar, 1920s

Source: compiled by self.

At the same time, the trend of composition of 'self-history' (for self identity) was continued in Assam by the Koch-Rajbanshi social workers-cum-thinkers. Here we can mention a few works such as -----*Prachin Kamrupar Kshatriya Jati* of Nagendra Narayan Choudhury (1945),³⁷ *Koch Rajbanshi Dehan Itihas*(1963) and *Kachar Koch Rajbanshir Itihas* (1968) of Khelendra Rajbanshi;³⁸ *Koch Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jatir Sankshipta Itibritya* of Shashi Bhushan Foujdar (1923)³⁹ and *Rajbanshi Kshatriya Jatir Sankshipta Itibritya* (1972) of Sibendra Narayan Mondal,⁴⁰ etc.

Announcement of 'self-history' of the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam got a practical shape with the performance of rituals for *kshatriyaization* (as they did in Bengal). For *kshatriyaization*, they popularized the policy of public gathering called *Milan Kshetra*. First conference of this kind in Assam was held in 1912 at Salkocha (Pradip Tila, Dhubri). It was followed by the Milan Kshetras of Sapatgram (Bhelakoba). Within a decade the Rajbanshis of Lower Assam had organized such large number public conferences in different places of Assam.⁴¹

Kshatriyaization of the Rajbanshis of Lower Assam was further stimulated by the outbreak of the First World War (in 1914) when the Rajbanshi youths of that region began to join the British Indian Army. Publication of news on the performance of Rajbanshi soldiers in different war fronts of the world had strengthened their Kshatriya feeling. At the same time, frequent visit of the Rajbanshi social reformers of Bengal had immense impact on the Rajbanshi Kshatriya movement of Assam. Even the 11th Annual conference of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samity (Rangpur) was held at Dhubri in 1327 B. S (1920).

Till the 1920s, the 'kshatriya identity movement' of this backward community of Assam was dependent on the Rajbanshi Kshatriya movement of Bengal. However, with the growth of social movement among the Bodos of Lower Assam (The Brahma movement), the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam had showed their interest to form their own organization in Assam. Among such organizations, the Baithamari Kshatriya Samity was pioneering one. It was founded in 1930.⁴² Main purpose of this Samity was to spread the message of kshatriya identity of the Koch Rajbanshis in Lower Assam. This Samity gradually extended its activities in different places of Assam what led to the birth of Uttarpar Kshatriya Samity (1933). It was eventually transformed into Goalpara Zilla Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samity. However, the Baithamari Kshatriya Samity continued to exist in colonial and post colonial period with its original objectives.

First conference of the Goalpara Kshatriya Samity was held at Birjhora (Bongaigaon) in 1933 (30th & 31st December). Shri Avay Narayan Dev (the king of Sidli) as the president of the Samity had announced a few purposes of this Samity such as -- (i) to reconstruct the Koch-Rajbanshi society along the line of kshatriya identity; (ii) to spread the education among the Koch-Rajbanshis for their empowerment; (iii) social reforms among the Rajbanshis. In the second conference of this Samity (held at Salmara, Bongaigaon, 1934) it also adopted a resolution to show the allegiance of the Rajbanshis to the British Government for drawing the attention of the government in their favour.⁴³

The Goalpara Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samity became truly independent after the death of Panchanan Barma in 1935. In its third conference held at Bijni (in 1935), the Rajbanshis of Goalpara began to assert themselves as Assamese instead of Bengali for

legitimizing their demand for government jobs in Assam. However, it denied accepting the 'Scheduled Caste' status for the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam (considering it as a derogatory identity) while the Koches and the Rajbanshis of Bengal had accepted the Scheduled Caste status.⁴⁴

The Koch-Rajbanshis of Barak Valley had also announced themselves in the 1940s as Assamese Rajbanshi or Rajbanshi Kshatriya Assamese. We do notice the formation of certain other sociopolitical organizations of the Koch- Rajbanshis of Assam such as Kamrup Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammilani, Salmara (Police Station) Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samity, Sadow Assam Koch-Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammilani, etc. with different purposes of social reforms and identity formation.

It appears that the Koch-Rajbanshis could not establish themselves as a homogenous social group in Assam. Moreover, they were less concerned to identify themselves as 'backward' in the colonial period. They were trying to move forward with their respectable social identity. It is also a fact that the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam were less concerned about the political empowerment like their brethrens of Bengal. They were even less forward looking like their neighbouring tribal communities of northeast India. When the Nagas, Mizos, Garos and the Bodos had formed their political organizations (such as MNFF = Mizo National Famine Front, Naga National Council= NNC, Garo National Council= GNC, 1946) the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam were remained silent about their political future.

VII

Demand for Tribal Identity and Separate State

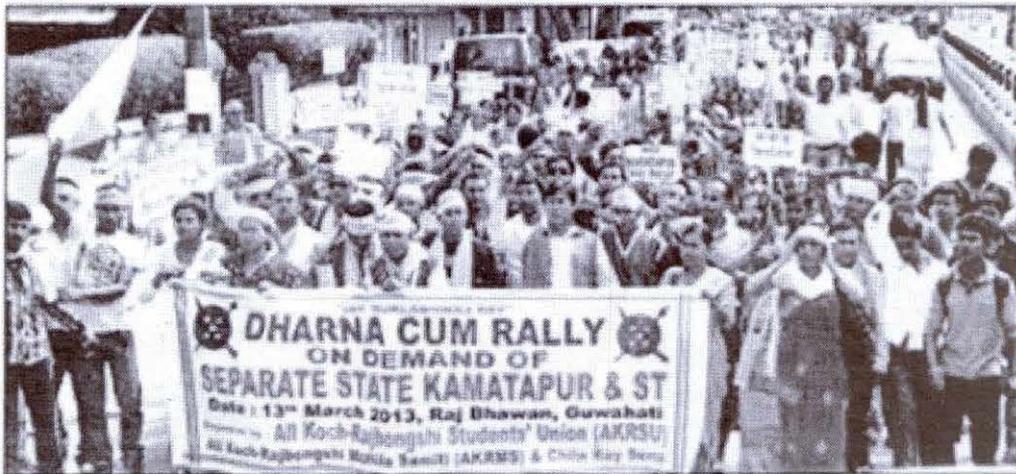
Social movement for the formation of a forward caste identity of the Koch-Rajbanshi of Assam and North Bengal got a new dimension after the independence of India. Since the 1950s to till date, they have been clamouring for certain issues. Such as -- --(i) to establish themselves as backward community especially as Scheduled Tribe in Assam, (ii) to establish a separate state in North Bengal of West Bengal including certain territories of Lower Assam; (iii) enhancement of reservation for the Koch-Rajbanshis, (iv) preservation and advancement of their culture, etc. In order to materialize their demands, they have formed several sociopolitical organizations. In the subsequent section of this article we'll discuss about this trend

VII.I. Demand for Scheduled Tribe Status

We have already mentioned that the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam denied accepting the Scheduled Caste (SC) status while their fellows of Bengal utilized the opportunity of reservation in the late colonial period. After the independence of India, with the adoption of the '*Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Modified) Order (1950)*', like many other socio-economically backward caste communities of India; the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam came forward with their demand for backward status. It became a vibrant trend after the appointment of Kaka Shaheb Kalelkar Commission (First Backward Class Commission) in 1953. The Kshatriya Samity of Goalpara met the Commission and submitted a memorandum under the leadership of Sri Lalit Narayan Dev⁴⁵ claiming backward status

for the Koch-Rajbanshis. On the basis of the recommendation of the Kalelkar Commission, the Koch-Rajbanshis of Goalpara got Most Other Backward Class (MOBC) status with some opportunities. It was, however, not sufficient for the upward development of the Rajbanshis. So the Sadow Koch Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammilani of Assam had raised the demand for their Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.⁴⁶ This demand got more specific form in 1969 in the 10th Annual Conference of the Sadow Koch Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammilani held at Chowtara, Kokrajhar (7th and 8th February 1969). The demand for ST status of the Koch-Rajbanshis was continued what eventually recognized by the Government of Assam in 1991 on temporary basis. The Koch-Rajbanshis could not enjoy this status for a long time. It was withdrawn in 1996. So a sociopolitical movement for the recognition of ST status of the Koch-Rajbanshis is going on in Assam under the banners of the All Koch-Rajbanshi Student Union (AKRASU, 1996), All Kamtapur Student Union (AKSU), All Kamtapur Student organization (AKSO), Chilarai Sena, etc. These organizations are frequently organizing strikes in Assam to draw the attention of the Government towards their demand for ST status. Very recently the AKRASU has submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Assam (13.3.2013) with a justification of their demand.

Photograph 1: Rally of the Koch-Rajbanshis for Scheduled Tribe Status 13.03.2013



VII.II. Demand for Separate State

After the independence of India, demand for smaller state has become a common phenomenon all across the country. In case of the Koch-Rajbanshis it was initiated in Bengal particularly with the question of merger of Cooch Behar State to India in 1949. The Hitashadhani Shabha (a socio-political organization founded by some civil administrators and some notables of the Cooch Behar State) had tried to maintain a separate entity of the State instead of merger with India. But due to its small size and contemporary political situation, Cooch Behar ultimately was merged with India as a 'Chief Commissioner's Province'. Finally it was merged to West Bengal as a district in 1950. This merger issue and the historical past of the region got special attention of the

socio-political organizations formed in North Bengal and Assam under the leadership of the Koch-Rajbanshis. At the same time formation of Andhra state in 1953 and the appointment of the State Reorganization Commission (1955-56) had added fuel to their movement.

In such a situation, the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam had placed a demand to the State Reorganization Commission for the formation of a separate state (Kamtapur) in lower Assam and North Bengal. Santosh Barua and Prakitesh Barua of 'Gouripur Raj family' and Ajit Narayan (of Sidly Raj family) took leading role in this movement. The demand for political autonomy with a separate state was further stimulated with the formation of Maharashtra and Gujarat (in 1960) and Punjab and Haryana (in 1966) on linguistic ground. The Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam and Sub-Himalayan Bengal now founded the Kamtapur Rajjya Sangram Parishad (KRSP) under the leadership of Ajit Narayan (Sidly Raj Family), Girija Sankar Roy, Shibendra Narayan Mondal and Prakitesh Barua (Gouripur Raj Family) for attaining political autonomy.⁴⁷ But this organization was diverted from the political movement when Ajit Narayan was appointed as the Chairman of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission. The KRSP was basically an elite based organization where the Koch-Rajbanshi masses had little participation.

Although the KRSP could not reach to its goal, the Koch-Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Lower Assam were once again organized in 1969 with their new organization called Uttarkhanda Dal (UKD). It raised the questions of influx of the refugees from East Pakistan and their cultural domination, political subordination of the Koch-Rajbanshis and engendered condition of Kamtapuri (Rajbanshi) language. The UKD had also demanded 90% reservation in government jobs for the SCs and STs of North Bengal (SC 50%, ST 40%).⁴⁸ Being induced by the *Bideshi-Kheda* (expulsion of the foreigners) aspect of the Assam movement, the UKD raised the *Bhatia-Kheda* (expulsion of the immigrants) slogan.⁴⁹

While the UKD was engaged in mobilization of the SC/STs of North Bengal, one sociopolitical organization called Bharatiya Koch-Rajbangshi Kshatriya Mahashabha (BKRKM) was born in Assam in 1984. The BKRKM was planed in 1983 under the leadership of Dr. Purna Narayan Sinha (ex M.P. from Tezpur). It got its final shape in 1984 at Dhubri on the occasion of the 474 birth anniversary of Chilarai (Commander of the Koch military as mentioned earlier). This conference expressed that 'the Koch-Rajbanshis are indigenous people of Eastern and Northeastern India, highly backward in social, political, educational and economic affairs although they have Scheduled Caste status in West Bengal and Tripura. But in other states they do not have Scheduled status. So all Koch-Rajbanshis of India should stand united and make efforts to secure equal social, political and economic status as one class'.⁵⁰ The BKRKM also demanded that (i) the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam and Meghalaya should be declared as Scheduled Tribe, (ii) Union Territory status should be given to the erstwhile Cooch Behar State along with the areas specified by the UKD, (iii) the Government of India must stop the infiltration of refugees and deport them from India by detecting them as foreigners, and (iv) the Kamrupi-Kamtapuri culture should be protected from further degradation.

In its second conference (1986), the BKRKM was renamed as the Koch-Rajbanshi International (KRI). The conference resolved that

since the interests, language, culture, social and economic background of the Koch-Rajbanshi Kshatriya are the same whether they live in India or outside, the Bharatiya Koch Rajbangshi Kshatriya Mahashabha be renamed as the Koch-Rajbangshi International and broad based as an international of the Koch-Rajbangshi ethnic nation spread over Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya , North Bengal, Tripura, Sikkim and Bihar and countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh' with a view to consolidate , ameliorate their condition and develop this race of great heritage.⁵¹

The KRI was strongly supported by the UKD, Kamta Rajjya Parishad, Chilarai Sangha, All Assam Koch-Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammelan and the Rajbanshi Bhasha Prachar Samity (of Nepal).⁵² Inspite of a demand for a separate state in North Bengal leadership and the head office of the KRI had been remained in Assam.

Like the KRI, another political organization operated from Lower Assam (Gauripur) called Bharatiya Kamta Rajjya Parishad (BKRP) began to mobilize the linguistic and cultural feelings of the Koch Rajbansis. It demanded a separate state (Kamtapur) for overall development of the Koch-Rajbanshis of North Bengal, and Lower Assam.⁵³ It's main objectives were (i) 'introduction of the Kamtapuri mother tongue in the primary level schools of North Bengal, (ii) broadcasting of cultural programs from Siliguri, Calcutta and Guwahati Centers of the All India Radio, (iii) enhancement of reservation for the Kamtapuris, and formation of a separate state in North Bengal called Kamtapur.⁵⁴ The KRI and BKRP, however, failed to achieve their goals.

Demand for Kamtapur state once again revived in the 1990s with the foundation of the Kamtapur Peoples' Party (KPP, 1996). The KPP is determined to create a separate state (Kamtapur) and recognition of the Kamtapuri/Rajbanshi language. The KPP is said to have supported by a militant organization called KLO (Kamtapur Liberation Organization). It also got active support from the All Kamtapur Student Union (AKSU) and the AKRASU (All Koch-Rajbanshi Student Union). The KPP and the AKSU had tried to mobilize the Koch-Rajbanshi people by organizing mass rally and meetings, publishing books and pamphlets, etc. The KPP was divided in 2003 into KPP (Nikhil) and Kamtapur Progressive Party.

However, the Koch-Rajbanshis have founded a new organization called Greater Cooch Behar Peoples' Association (GCBPA) in 1998.⁵⁵ The GCBPA categorically raised the question of merger of Cooch Behar State to India in 1949 and its transition to a district of West Bengal. To the GCBPA, this transition is invalid and hence Cooch Behar should be declared a separate state .The GCBPA submitted its first written memorandum to the home minister, Government of India, on 26th December, 2000.⁵⁶ Again another memorandum was submitted to the President of India on 5th April 2001 claiming a separate centrally administered territory for Cooch Behar.⁵⁷ It became very much active in Cooch Behar district during the general election of 2004. The GCBPA organized a hunger strike in Cooch Behar town on September 20, 2005 which turned violent. Internal dissension among the members, led to the split in the GCBPA. The breakaway faction formed the Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party (GCBDP).

In June 2008, the GCBDP organized a fast-unto-death hunger strike, demanding the release of its members from Jail. The fast was, however, called off by the party on June 9, 2008, after a talk with the District Magistrate of Cooch Behar and other senior officials.⁵⁸ The GCBDP has established close link with other separatist forces of North Bengal such as the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) and Kamtapur Progressive Party (KPP).

In spite of internal conflicts among different political wings, in the recent years KPP and the GCBDP have come together to form the Greater Kamta United Forum (GKUF) on October 24, 2006 to foster the demand for the separate state in North Bengal.⁵⁹ Again very recently the GCBDP, GCPA and the KPP formed a joint committee called Separate State Demand Committee (SSDC). SSDC had also organised hunger strike following the recent development in Andhra Pradesh on Telengana issue and the GJM's movement in Darjeeling.

Apart from North Bengal, the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam have become very much active for the creation of Kamtapur State. Organizations of the Koch-Rajbanshis such as the AKSO, AKRASU, Chilarai Sena, Koch Rajbanshi Mahila Samity, etc, have been actively working for Kamtapur since the late 1990s. They have raised the demand for a Kamtapur State for the Koch-Rajbanshi of Lower Assam by dividing Assam and West Bengal. The recent strike in Assam on 20th July 2012 and 5th March 2013 organized by the AKRASU and its allies had significant impact in Lower Assam. These organizations are frequently raising slogans like 'No Kamtapur No Rest', 'Divide Assam Fifty Fifty', 'Achhe Astra Dhara Nai', 'Dharle Astra Raksha Nai.' etc.⁶⁰

A brief survey on the organizations claiming Kamtapur State shows that the Koch-Rajbanshis have failed to unify themselves as a strong political force. Formation of numerous organizations for the same purpose instead of materialization of their demands, have led the Koch-Rajbanshis in mutual conflicts and factional politics. So the Scheduled Tribe identity has remained merely as a demand in political movement of the Koch-Rajbanshi of Assam.

Photographs 2a and 2b: Demonstration for Separate State and Scheduled Tribe status for the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam



কোচ-ৰাজবংশীক জনজাতিকৰণ আৰু পৃথক কমতাপুৰৰ দাবীত বঙাইগাঁও আক্ৰমণৰ ধৰ্মা, মঙলবাৰে



জনজাতিকৰণৰ দাবীত গোসাইগাঁৱত আক্ৰমণৰ অৱস্থান ধৰ্মঘট, মঙলবাৰে

VIII

Conclusion

Identity, as a matter of perception; appears as changing in nature at least in case of a backward community like the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam. The Koches, beyond the ruling section were not concerned about their identity in pre-colonial period. So the pre-colonial literatures without any exaggeration have identified the non-ruling ordinary Koches simply as Koch people. Only the ruling section was propagated as Kshatriya or as the follower of Vaishnavism. However, adoption of Vaishnava culture and Hindu religious rituals had changed the tribal culture of the Koches. Instead of forming a separate caste community, the detribalized Koches got the Rajbanshi identity in the society of Lower Assam.

With the beginning of colonial rule, tribal Koches and detribalized Koches (or Rajbanshis) were identified in the dominant and alien observations as 'Koch tribe' and "Rajbanshi caste" respectively. This minor distinction had placed the 'Koches' and Rajbanshis in a great dilemma. The educated Rajbanshis of North Bengal had rejected their relations with the Koches considering the social identity of the later as a derogatory one. On the other hand, the Non-Rajbanshi caste Hindus of Bengal used to consider the Rajbanshi as almost untouchables. So the Rajbanshis of North Bengal tried to get relief from the bondage of casteism through *kshatriyaization* what crossed the level of *sanskritization*. They adopted all methods for their social, cultural and economic development. In the 1930s both the 'Koches' and Rajbanshis in Bengal got a new and common identity called 'Scheduled Castes'. The Koches and Rajbanshis of Assam, however, denied accepting the SC identity considering themselves as Caste Kshatriya people. But the outcomes of reservation from 1936 onwards have changed the attitude of the educated Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam. They were looking for enjoying reservation in the post-colonial period like their brethrens of North Bengal. They got another new identity called Other Backward Class (OBC) what according to the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam is not sufficient. So they have been clamoring for the recognition of their tribal identity in the constitution of India.. At the same time, they came forward with a new identity based on their language which has been a common point in their political demonstration for 'Kamtapur State'. So it appears that the identity of the Koch-Rajbanshis is transitional in nature. For this feature we need a new model of research for analyzing the history of self-identity of the Koch-Rajbanshis of Assam.

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European Trade and Colonial Economy in the Growth of Modern Indian Cities

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The origin of modern Indian cities lay in the expansion of European and colonial commerce, import and export transaction overland and overseas. The 16th century onward, the ups and downs and change of agriculture, commercial and industrial economy made and unmade the structures of the Indian cities and brought the cities to modern day sizes. Of all the objective factors that contributed to the sequential growth of settlements, townships and cities, European commerce being the determining and dynamic factor, the coastal zones of the *Coromandal* and the Malabar as the harbour places of the European companies, gave birth to big sea-port-towns. Consequently, when the British wrested the political power of the country, the growth of urban centres in places of their commercial transactions accelerated. The commercial settlements turned later in the course of colonial establishment to be centres of politics and administration. Though after the Industrial Revolution in England, Indian handicrafts passed through a phase of deindustrialization, but after the First World War, there ensued a resurgence of Indian indigenous industries. Along with this urban growth, the set up of railway communication network leading to the transformation of transport, the innovation of western education and the establishment of academic institutions brought the cities to the environment of modernity.

Commercial cities were not quite new in India. There are certain references to the existence of commercial cities in ancient and medieval India. The Harappan Civilization¹ of remote antiquity had seaports like Lothal; and according to the '*Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*²', some other Indian ports on the western coast had overseas trade relations with the Near-Eastern and Middle-Eastern countries. Indian traders during the Kushana and Gupta period used to sail to the Gulf and the Red Sea from the sea port towns of the western coast of India. Cities like Pataliputra, Banaras, Kashi, Kachpuram, Megapattanam, Dimlipattanam and Madurai were important trade and industrial centres. In the ancient and early medieval Bengal, Tamralipta was a rich port-city. In the medieval period, Calicut appeared as a big sea port town and its importance continued up to the end of the 17th century when the Portuguese and the Dutch waved their business³. In the Mughal period, some north Indian cities served as fortresses and agro-based market places. In medieval India there were many industrial towns. Cotton textiles of Surat, Ahmedabad, Banaras, Patna and Malda; Silk⁴ industry of Kashimbazar and Murshidabad, muslin manufactures of Dacca and paper⁵ of Daulatabad were much known not only in India but also to the people of many other countries of the world. The coming of the Portuguese,

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the Dutch, the French and the English companies brought a new tide of urbanization. The patterns of urban growth and modernization during the ensuing state and period up-to 1947 were distinct in three successive phases.

Urbanization in India before the industrializations of Britain:

The Portuguese businessmen, who came first to India, were followed successively in a long-struggle for establishment by the Dutch, the French and ultimately by the English. In the sixteenth century the Portuguese established many business settlements of monopoly⁶ in Goa, Cochin, Balasore, Dacca⁷, Satgaon, Chittagong, Jessore, Hooghly, Hijli and Tamluk (Tamralipta) on the bank of the river Rupnarayan. The Dutch and the French in sequence occupied many trade settlements of which Surat, Pondicherry, Mussalipattam and Chandannagar were important. The British had their key centres in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta. In the conclusive battles of colonial rivalry for possessional assertions on trade centres and settlements, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French were stripped of their holds nearly one after another. With commerce and superior sea-power⁸, the British got the mastery of India. The Portuguese could only retain Goa and built two cities there - Panaji and Mormugao; though in the mainland of India, the fate of the Portuguese was sealed more by the punitive action taken against them by Emperor Jahangir for their piracy. The last French settlement Pondicherry also grew to be a beautiful city. Most of the coastal settlements and occupied business centres of the British fast developed as commercial cities.

The nature of urbanization in the eighteenth century under the company's administration was determined by the British commercial transaction in the form of importing bullions to India and exporting finished goods to Britain. The coastal ports of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta began to undergo rapid development. Since, the British had to purchase finished goods from India, in this period, the pre-colonial cities like Surat, Ahmedabad, Dacca and Murshidabad did not show still then any sign to decline which later on due to deindustrialization specifically of textile industries became an inevitable course of event. On the other, the British were yet to be able to bring the whole country under their sway. As for instance, Ahmedabad came under the company's rule not before 1817⁹. But the pre-colonial cities certainly came to a stage of stagnation because of British monopoly. The attainment of Dewani (1765), the introduction of Permanent Settlement in Bengal (1793) and the Rayotwari Settlement in Bombay and Madras presidencies offered the British the colonial treasure of bagging taxes from the Indians and running business duty-free. Other European competition of the Dutch and of the French being over, they now monopolized trade, pressurized the cotton weavers and silk-winders by advance investment out of the treasure collected from the country and stopped bringing bullions from Britain. The Indian artisans were bound to serve what the company wanted. These free-tolled monopoly business and colonial economy fomented the growth of the urban settlement of the British in the coastal region. Here underlay also the causative and contributory factors of the drain of wealth from India to Britain in the 18th century¹⁰.

The permanent settlement and the Rayotwari Settlement (in accordance of which tax had to be paid at the rate of one half of the gross produce)¹¹ made the peasants subject to economic exploitation and severe famines. This new land revenue systems hastened

pauperism leading to disintegration of rural economy and mobilized the peasants to the cities. They went by hundreds to test their luck for employment. Till then as there was no easy communication between the sea-ports and countryside market places, Indian labourers were used as low-waged vehicles for transport of commodities and for loading and unloading ships. The growth of the cities in this period was, of course, steady but urban amenities were yet to come.

Urbanization in India in Post Industrialisation Period of Britain

The second phase of urbanization in British India was conditioned by the outward movement of raw-materials from India to Britain and the inward movement of machine-made manufactures from the British industries in Manchester and Lancashire to India. The industrial revolution being full-effective in the second decade of the 19th century, gave rise to big industrial cities in Britain. The British merchants now had to make new markets in the colonies. As a matter of facts, India became the close market of British manufactures and treasure of British raw-materials. Thus the Indian commercial cities turned to be subservient to the industrial economy of the United Kingdom¹². The import of finished goods to India began in 1820s and the export of raw-material stated earlier¹³, though since the issuance of the Berlin Decree in 1806 by Napoleon and the resultant impact of the Continental System, the flow of British merchandise to India had begun nearly in full swing; albeit, that the Act of 1813 legalised it only in the midway. In the inception, cotton manufactures, woollen goods, copper, lead, glass manufacturers and earthen-ware were imported. Subsequently, were added silk goods, machineries and metal manufactures. As a colonial gain, by the abolition of export duties on Indian raw-material in 1860 and import duties on British manufactures, and by passing the Navigation Acts prohibiting the export of Indian manufactures, the British deep-rooted their colonial exploitation of India. These trading policies and the inundation of British manufactures in Indian markets set in deindustrialization in India, and that was followed by de-urbanization of the old Indian industrial cities. This process began from the year 1813, according to Marx¹⁴, and took a concrete shape in 1830. Populations in the pre-colonial industrial cities quickly decreased. As for instance, the population of Dacca; by this time¹⁵ (from 1820 to 1850), came down from 150,000 to 20,000. Surat declined badly in domestic commerce¹⁶; importance went over to the sea-port town Bombay. The British Commercial towns developed in both horizontal periphery and inner physical structure, whereas, the old Indian cities declined phenomenally.

By the mid 19th century, besides Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, the British occupied almost all the areas where cities for commercial and administrative purposes developed. The Marathas and the Sikhs were no longer in power. The great Revolt of 1857 being quelled, the entire tracts of the country fell in the hands of the British. Some of the areas had old townships. The major areas¹⁷ that went into their possession during this time, were Cochin (1791), Trivandrum (1799), Hyderabad (1803), Kanpur (1801), Ahmedabad (1817), Gauhati (1826), Lacknow (1856), Simla (1815), Darjeeling (1835), Karachi (1843), and Delhi (1857). Of these the birth of Cochin lay with the Portuguese; and Karachi was quite unknown before the 18th century. Hyderabad, Locknow and Ahmedabad, were old cities. The opening of Suez Canal in 1869 and the shortening of the sea-route from India to England by more than 3000 miles facilitated shipping and over -

seas trade. As a result, the sea- port towns of India, particularly ports like Karachi developed rapidly. The mineral resource-based centres also gradually appeared as urban centres. The gold mine of Mysore and the oil field of Digboi soon expanded. With the extraction of oil since 1890 and the setting up of the oil-refinery in 1901, Digboi developed as a big town¹⁸.

For more economic gain, the British started extractive plantation, and for the production of more raw-materials Indian agriculture was commercialized. Tea plantation in Assam and North Bengal and the production of Cinchona in Darjeeling were underway from 1864. With extractive plantation, there grew extractive industries. The British took special interest to found the bed-rock of cities in the areas of extractive plantation and in the places of hilly sanitation. Thus Gauhati, Shilong, Darjeeling, Karseong, Kalimpong and Simla developed with townships and these places became resorts and summer asylums. Kalimpong had a special importance as a trade-route to Tibet. Commercialization of agriculture brought about the evil of depeasantisation. For livelihood, the penniless peasants migrated to the cities. Thus, population in the cities increased. In 1831, the total population of Calcutta was 1, 87,081; only within 6 years¹⁹ in 1837, it rose up to 2, 29,714, and in 1850 to 3, 61,619. Since 1870, nearly 70% of the total population of Bombay appears to have been born outside the city²⁰.

The set-up of railways gave a boom to British commerce and brought a massive change of communication between the Indian cities. Nearly all through the second half of the 19th century²¹ the Great Indian Peninsula Railway Company²² set up railway lines. In British India, the spread of locomotives was made in four steps²³ viz. (i) The Old Guarantee System (1848- 1969); (ii) State Construction and Ownership (1869-1924); (iii) The Modified Guarantee System (1882-1924); and (iv) Nationalization (1924-1944). Railways had a bearing to realize a better system of communication than the use of navigable rivers. It modified the landscape of towns and cities; and brought things to present-day sizes. The commercial places, the mine sectors and the hinterlands now were connected with the sea-port towns of Bombay, Madras, Cochin, Trivandrum, Karachi and Calcutta. It permitted unthinkable flexibility in the movement of British manufactures from the port to countryside, and raw-materials from the inland areas to the coastal ports on the way to Britain. In the later years the use of automobiles too changed the entire scene of the Indian cities.

The horizontal expansion and the mounting of physical structure of the Indian cities hastened because of other factors as well. British commerce in India was followed simultaneously by their political power. After 1857 India became a full-fledged British empire and nucleus of their Asiatic strength to dominate the South East and the Middle-East, to maintain business with China, and meet the threat from Russia on the north-western frontier. India got a vital importance in British colonial administration and imperial strategy. Some of the commercial cities now took the shape of metropolitan cities. Madras, Bombay and Calcutta and also the north Indian cities like Lucknow, Delhi and Lahore became key administrative centres. In 1912 the capital was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. From 1778, Kanpur was getting momentum of importance as a military centre for training and camping. During this period, not only the Indians, Englishmen too by hundreds migrated from England to the Indian cities to take part in business and

administrative services, and thus the Anglo-Indian community came into being.

Along the commercial gain and political domination, the British followed 'cultural imperialism'²⁴ at the level of education and religion in the Indian cities. The ecclesiastical department of the Government helped financially the Christian missionaries²⁵. Introduction of European education, science, philosophy and literature increased a cultural mobility in the cities. The Indian Renaissance in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century built a bridge of understanding between India and Europe, the past and the present. This socio-cultural movement in the cities gave birth to the urban elites or the learned middle-class. The Renaissance actually was a struggle for adjustment between rurality and urbanism, tradition and modernism. As a result, India under-went a change to urbanism and modernism. The urban elites now began to cherish interest in the administrative and educational services, and in legal practice in the courts. All these factors again contributed to the growth of population in the cities. The rural youth rushed to the urban areas to be educated and to be in services for better and secured livelihood. Thus the cities became the corpus of new urban economy and cultural trends.

The urban elites²⁶, as picked up the knowledge of modern political system, were able to identify the nature of colonial administration in India and her captivity under the British. They set up the Indian National Congress in 1885; and the cities afterwards became the hubs of national resurgence and movements. Since the cultural trend of the city moulds its values²⁷ and judgement, likewise the elitist cultural disposition of the modern Indian cities naturally began to give shape to the emerging values of modern Indian urban life; and that to a large extent contributed to the elite involvement in politics and urban domination of Indian national consciousness.

Post-First World War Urban Growth:

The third phase of urban growth in British India mainly consisted in economic nationalism, national politics, world war, British economic crisis and the regeneration of indigenous industry. Long before the First World War, municipalities were set up in the major Indian cities. The big cities of Calcutta and Bombay had corporations. Among the old cities, Ahmedabad deserves the credit of having the first municipal administration in 1833. With the pace of the nationalist movement, the Indian National Congress participated in municipal elections later on; urban politics and national politics merged together²⁸. Urban politics in municipal administration had much bearing in shaping the physical structures and cultural set up of the cities.

Before the First World War, the British Government did not want the opening of industry in India. Only some British private enterprises and Indian initiatives established some cotton-textile, jute mills, woollen mills, match and cement factories in the years from 1872 to 1904²⁹. Most of these mills and factories³⁰ were in Calcutta, Lucknow, Poona and Ahmedabad. Few years before the First World War, the Parsees and the Marwaries, who, later on monopolized Indian Industry, began to explore industrial possibilities. The family of Jamshetjee Tata opened the 'Tata Iron and Steel Co.' at Sakchi (Jamshedpur) in 1907-11³¹. To meet the demand of the railways and the urgent need during the First World War, the British Government had to receive a supply of 300,000 tons of steel from the Tata company. But, after all, no pervasive large-scale

industry could be opened owing to British Challenge and the Government's prohibition before the World war. Jeopardy of the British in bringing merchandise from England during the wars-years gave a stimulus to indigenous enterprise. The post-war British economic crises, chronic depression of trade and industry especially in coal, textile, iron and steel³² facilitated the growth of Indian industries. The competition of Japanese cotton piece-goods in the Indian market³³ neutralized the weakening competition of the British. The Indian industrialists moreover utilized quietly the national mass-boycott. In the Civil-Disobedience³⁴ and the quit- India movement were of course, the peak periods; the intermediary periods also exercised boycott. In the post-war period, the British controlled firms in India had to starve the scarce of capital from London; consequently, by 1922, majority of the jute mills in Bengal passed into Indian hands. Cotton textile fast developed in Bombay, Ahmedabad, and Surat. Many other cities also went on developing with industries. The Indian Capitalists like the Birlas, Tatas, Narangs and Dalmias etc. often used Ghandhian hand-spun *khadi*, but with the support of the Rightwing nationalists, inlayed heavy industries³⁵. The Congress Ministry (1937-39) smoothed further the passage of the Indian industries and chambers of commerce to argument the pyramid of capitalism³⁶. The Second World War carried on another heaven-borne opportunity to the Indian capitalist. Later on, from 1945 to 1947, indigenous industries became nearly unchallenged by the British.

On account of all these factors, in the year 1936, Indian produce of cotton goods, sugar, steel, paper, cement and tinsplate respectively rose to 85.3%, 74.1%, 96.0%, 78.0%, 95.4% and 71.4% in import substitution³⁷. In the period between 1937 and 1946, cement industry's capacity rose from 1.5 to 2.5 million tons, paper produce doubled to 106.000 tons and sugar from 1 million tons in 1938 to 1.2 million tons in 1943. Steel produce rose to 1.072,000 tons in 1939. From 1939 to 1946 the number of Indian joint stock companies increased from 11,114 to 17,343; and their paid-up capital from Rs.290 crores to Rs.424 crores. The British controlled 43% of gross assets in 1914 came down to 10% in 1935 and that again fell down to "3.6% in 1948"³⁸. The above study makes it clear that the First World War onward the British gradually lost economic hold in the cities; and industries came under the Indian capitalists. Cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore, Mysore, Baroda, Poona, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Madurai, Coimbatore, Sholapur etc. now, became more or less industrialized³⁹. Population in the cities had a boom in this period. The following table testifies the increase of population in the major Indian cities.

TABLE NO. -1

Name of the city	Population in lakhs in decadal sequence		
	1931	1941	1951
CALCUTTA	12.21	21.67	26.98
GREATER BOMBAY	12.69	16.38	29.66
DELHI	4.47	6.96	14.37
MADRAS	7.13	8.56	14.10
HYDRABAD	4.61	7.39	11.29
AHMEDABAD	3.14	5.95	8.77
BANGALORE	3.10	4.11	7.86

KANPUR	2.43	4.87	7.05
POONA	2.50	3.24	6.00

(Source: Misra, R.P. *Milton Cities in India*, New Delhi, 1978, P. 280)

Thus the cities, though retained commercial character, turned to be industrialized and populated by millions of people. Urban amenities and urbanism now emerged in culture and the way of city life in India. But the condition of the labour did not improve at all. For them there came up unhealthy slum areas in the cities. They had to live in the slums. The total number of factory workers in the end of the British period was nearly two millions⁴⁰. 400,000 workers in the mines; 700,000 in railways, 300,000 in Calcutta jute mills, 150,000 in Bombay cotton mills and 100,000 in Ahmedabad cotton mills, were the main heads in the account. Other cities as well as Jamshedpur and Calcutta-Asansol steel industries had also thousands of labourers. Though population up to 1947 was not too dense, the poor labour had to live in insanitary conditions in the slums such as, the 'Bustee' of Calcutta, 'the Jhopad Patti' of Bombay, the 'Cheri' of Madras and the 'Jhuggi Jhonpri' of Delhi. The low-waged labour of the Indian industries had the fate of the Negroes in American cities⁴¹. In the course of the nationalist movement, the central platform being occupied by the higher middle-class and the capitalists, hardly any scope was made for the labour. The 1930s and 1940s though witnessed communist and socialist upheavals, no economic good and certainty could be achieved for the destitute labour-class. After 1947, the condition of the Indian cities has still remained utterly hopeless. Urbanization here is a phenomenon of unequal economic distribution. In the ensuing period, India has emerged as a country whose rules are determined by the tycoon capitalists, most of whom have already become multinationals. The gap of pauperization and capitalization is now a difference of the two poles. The poor do not have the amenities and cheers of urban life.

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The *Swadeshi* Movement in Contai: Zamindars and Women

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The *Swadeshi* Movement of Contai constituted an integral part of the all-Bengal *Swadeshi* Movement. But the issues, dimensions and dynamics of the movement hold altogether a new picture, and make it clear that the Contai movement in spite of having the all-Bengal characteristics was always to a very great extent Local.

On December 12, 1903 the partition of Bengal scheme in its embryonic form came to be publicly known. Bengal burst into protest against this grievous wrong. Hence all cities and towns and market places assumed a new appearance and a new fervour with the strong determination to resist the implementation of the partition scheme. Protest meetings and protest processions became a regular feature. Newspapers disgorged the wounded feelings of the people. *Nihar*, severely criticized Curzon's divisive scheme without thinking of any ire that might come upon it. It writes, "As Curzon *Bahadur* has decided to partition Bengal however ludicrous be the scheme, so it will surely be effected. But it is a pity that the Viceroy must have it known that the partition scheme will bring about unnecessary changes, and it will unnecessarily disturb the easy and peaceful life of the Bengalis".¹

It is evident from the *Nihar* that Contai was all along aware of the fact that if any partition would occur she would be affected more badly than any other region of Bengal.² Besides she had the great fear that as a result of any partition her geography would be circumscribed, her economy would be crippled much more than it had been during the early years of the colonial rule owing to the destruction of her salt-manufacturing industry and other cottage industries, and her socio-cultural life would be impoverished owing to her arbitrary joining with the culturally impoverished Orissa. That is why thinking of this agony of the Contai people the *Nihar* writes, "The government thinks that India is the play ground of the British national ideas and activities, and it is the amphitheatre for the exercise of the prowess of the ruler, and that the subject-people should only have the fear of the ruling power, and they can have no sense of liberty".³ In this context the *Nihar* delineating the worst bureaucratic features of the government which recklessly disregards the cherished feelings of the people, challenges, "Does the government feel itself so supreme as to make and unmake the land and the people according to its own whims and vagaries".⁴ In this connection it is worth noting that nine days before the partition Rabindranath similarly challenged the ruler: "Are you so strong enough to sunder what fate has bound together, do you really think that our lives are yours to make and break"?⁵

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The partition took effect on October 16, 1905. Mother Bengal was now cut up into two halves. All Bengal shivered in an indescribable agony, pain and sorrow. So the day was observed as the day of national mourning. To all Bengal October 16 was a day of solemn mourning. So the day was observed with two special ceremonies: one was *Arandhan* and the other was *Rakhibandhan*. *Arandhan* signified the depth and gravity of the sorrow of the Bengalis, and *Rakhibandhan* asserted the fraternal solidarity and the unity of the Bengalis. Besides these two ceremonies there were protest processions with *samkritan* parties which sang mournful *kritans* and patriotic songs. In the *Harikatha* and *Kathakatha* sittings there were allegorically stressed what great wrong the government had done to the people. On the day there was organized a vast meeting in Contai town. One local zamindar Sjt. Bipinbihari Sasmal presided over the meeting. He emphatically pointed out that all their humble prayers and petitions to the government for not partitioning Bengal were brushed aside, so they must have to take resort to other means.⁶

Now in place of the moderate, and so long ineffective, techniques of prayers and petitions traditionally qualified with *Vaishnava* modesty and humility there came new techniques tempered with Tantric ideology. By this time the anti-partition agitation was merged into the Boycott and the *Swadeshi* movement. So in almost all the meetings that followed the speakers eloquently explained the meaning and significance of 'boycott' and '*swadeshi*'. According to their interpretations boycott was not merely the abandonment of Briton- goods it was the idea of non-co-operation with the British in every field. In a deeper sense it was an act of self-defence, an act of aggression for the sake of self-preservation. And '*swadeshi*' which literally means a sincere and wholehearted love and attachment to anything and everything of mother Bengal (and also of India) now implicitly referred to the newly awakened nationalism of the Bengalis ultimately aiming at political regeneration leading India towards '*Swaraj*'.

In Contai the zamindars played a significant role in the anti-partition movement. In most cases they themselves took the leading in championing boycott and *swadeshi*. They engaged their *naibs*, *gomostas* and other *amlas* to speak to their tenants in favour of boycott and *swadeshi*.⁷ It was so heard that in one case or two the zamindars by the beating of drums in their estates forbade the shop-keepers to import and sell British goods, and they also forbade the buyers to purchase any such goods.⁸ It is learnt from *Nihar* and *Medini Bandhaba*, the two local weeklys that in the families of the zamindars and also in those of their relations the use of British goods particularly salt and sugar was totally stopped, and that their deities in temples were served sugar-less oblations.⁹

The zamindars of Contai from the very first stage of the anti-partition agitation did their best by all means to put pressure on the government for the withdrawal of the Partition. They conducted the agitation with reckless hostility towards the cruel design of the government, and they tried with every sincerity of purpose to extend and foster the boycott and *swadeshi*. They held regularly protest meetings at their houses, in the *chandimandaps* and in open market places to explain the dire need of protesting against the Partition. The participation of the zamindars in the protest processions and picketings gave an effective impetus to the movement. The personal presence of the zamindars in the processions and picketings and their inflammatory speeches delivered in the meetings

attracted the common mass to the movement and inspired them to keep their religion deprofaned, to fight against the government design to weaken Bengal and the Bengalees and above all to strengthen Bengali nationalism.¹⁰ By virtue of the repeated shoutings of *Bande Mataram*, the singing of patriotic songs and the *samkirtan* in chorus the *Swadeshi* movement in Contai assumed an air of romance and was transformed into a sort of religious festivity.¹¹ As a result of all these all the processionists and picketers along with the leading zamindars were so engrossed in the *Swadeshi* frenzy that they entered into the shops selling Briton cloths and other British goods and destroyed all their articles. It is worthwhile to note that on one market day the processionists led by zamindar Digambar Nanda of Mugberia threw away all the Liverpool salt packets in the Itaberia canal; they also set fire on the British cloths, destroyed sugar and other British goods and glass bangles (*reshmi churi*).¹² The Itaberia incident inflamed the *swadeshi* fire in Contai. All the *thanas* of the Contai subdivision adroitly took the Itaberia model as the proper method of boycottism. To the people *Swadeshi-ism* now became their only one idea, nay the only one weapon of salvation.

The heroic leading of Digambar Nanda at Itaberia fanned the flames of boycott, and incited all the zamindars of Contai to come to the forefront of the movement. Henceforth they engaged their *amlas* to spread the boycott idea among the tenants; they prohibited the shop-keepers to sell British salt and sugar. They asked the students to extend the agitation to villages and to explain to villagers the boycott ideal and to follow the boycott activities whole heartedly as all these would do good for the country and the countrymen. The priests of the zamindari estates came forward to foster the boycotting; and working on the religious scruples by emphasizing the profanities of salt and sugar they carried the boycott into every household.¹³ The zamindars also engaged the *Harisabha*, *Dharmasabha* and *Samkritan* parties to heighten the tone of the boycott-*swadeshi* movement.¹⁴ It was thus the Contai movement attained the character of a religious reform movement. In this connection it is striking to note that in a meeting held in the house of one Sital Prasad Mandal of Chandibheti near Contai some thirty to forty *Harisabha* parties graced the assemblage with an aroma of religiosity. It is evident from the *Nihar* that *Harisabha* and *Samkritan* parties were regarded as one cardinal feature of the meetings organised in the *swadeshi* days.¹⁵ From this one may surmise the heightened the character of religious nationalism of Contai.

To foster boycott and *swadeshi* the zamindars organised *melas* in their estates. The religion-centric *melas* like *Rasmela*, *Dolmela*, *Siva-chaturdashi mela* and *Charakmela* were by virtue of their organisation transformed into *swadeshi melas*. Students and volunteers paraded up and down the *melas*. They sang *swadeshi* songs and lectured on the impurities of the British sugar and salt. In the *melas* stalls of *swadeshi* goods were opened. In most cases *swadeshi melas* became centres of the exhibition of ingenious *swadeshi* goods which drew the attention of the people and attracted them to the dexterity in their production. This is how the *melas* in one sense upheld the significance of the *swadeshi*.¹⁶

The students and their teachers of the High English and Middle English Schools were the life-force of the *swadeshi* movement of Contai. Practically this was so as they added a new connotation to nationalism. To them nationalism was now not merely

religion, faith and creed. It was solely *matri-puja*, worship of the motherland Bengal. In this *puja* their mantra was *Bandemataram*. Now it became the gospel of their new nationalism, and as mother-worshippers they were crusaders. *Bademataram* was their war-cry. The running boycott and *swadeshi* movement was the crusade in which they would be laurelled with victory. They had the firm conviction that they would surely win, and that the government would surely have to reunite Bengal if they would persist in the movement.¹⁷

The students threw themselves heart and soul into the movement caring little for what punishment might come upon them. They had the only one motto that they would make the boycott general and extend it as wide as possible. So they took it as their bounden duty to participate in protest processions and picketing at shops selling Briton-cloths and other British goods, and to organize protest meetings and participate in them.¹⁸ It was found in most cases their picketings bore the desired results, but in certain cases where the shop-keepers did not pay any heed to their protests against the selling of imported cloths, they forcibly entered into the shops and took out all the cloths and set them to fire.¹⁹ This led to police cases and to their flogging and other repressions including imprisonment. In such cases the students sang out: "They have no longer any fear even a little of the red-capped and black-uniformed police. They will all along remain dedicated to adoring the mother land even if the brute force sends them to prison".²⁰ The students were then the leaders in their own right. They organized street meetings in markets on market-days. In the meetings they mostly read aloud leaflets like *Raja ke, Sonar Bangla, Mukti Kon Pathe*, and then explained how the alien ruler had ruined golden Bengal by looting her riches and destroying her industries. They also held before them from the Calcutta-published news papers how the movement was extending and progressing all over the country.²¹

In the *Swadeshi* movement the women of Contai played a significant role of some great historical significance. It is historic in the sense that like Rani Krishnapriya of the Tamluk Raj Estate (1781) and Rani Siromani of Karnagarh of the Chuar days (1794) who heroically raised their heads against the colonial arbitrary rule and economic exactions Rani Haripriya of Garh Basudebpur made a direct protest against the colonial cruel design of partitioning Bengal for weakening Bengal and Bengali nationalism.²² Raniji decided to protest against this grievous wrong; so she unhesitatingly made a direct participation in the running boycott-*swadeshi* movement in which big zamindars of Contai like Digambar Nanda and others had already taken a leading part. In a meeting held in her Estate Raniji spoke to her tenants that Bengal was now in a great crisis. Her society, economy, culture, religion and above all her nationality were now on the verge of ruin. Now it was the duty of all her sons and daughters to stand by her in this her crisis, and to undo the wrong they must have to put pressure on the government by using every possible means. Raniji felt that the boycott and *swadeshi* would be the effective weapons to achieve their desired end i.e. to make the government rescind the Partition orders. She asked her people not to use Briton cloth sugar and salt. Raniji along with all her relations set fire to their valuable *bilati* cloths and smashed all their dear *reshmi* bangles.²³ All these gave imparted a great impetus to the women of her Estate and also to the women of Contai. For these her heroic activities the people of her Estate and also of Contai hailed her as the Rani Siromoni of Garh Basudebpur. Particularly in those days Raniji became a

true role model to women-fighters of all Bengal. And that is why participation of the Contai women in the boycott-*swadesh* movement became a unique episode in the history of Midnapore. Again it is unique in the sense that it was the breeding-ground that gave birth to the heroines of *Lavan* Satyagraha of 1930.

The sacerdotal class i.e. the *purohits*, *goswamis* and pundits played a lot in fostering the boycott movement. The pundits of Contai-*tols* following the dictates of the Nawadwip and Bhatpara pundits condemned the use of sugar and salt in worshipping gods and offering oblations to the forefathers as these two articles were clarified with the blood and bones of cows and pigs, and therefore these two articles would grievously impair Hindu religion. All the family priests took up the matter readily and carried the boycott into every household of their *Yajmans*.²⁴

In fostering boycott and *swadeshi Hari- Katha and Kathakata* sittings played a very significant role. To the Contai people the *Kathak- thakur's Ravana, Duryodhana and Kamsa* and their inhuman and cruel wrong-doings seemed to be the true personifications of the demoniac actions of the alien rulers. All these deeply impressed the emotionally fevered Contai people, so in every evening they thronged to these sittings.²⁵

By the middle of 1907 it became perceptibly clear that the anti-partition movement was gradually declining and by the middle of 1908 it was clear that the boycott programme could not achieve the desired end. The leaders of the agitation were now trying hard to keep the movement alive. But they could not stir up the former enthusiasm of the people. It was found that by this time the zamindars had got dispirited. The pressure of the government circulars drew the students to schools. Practically this time they had lost their fighting zeal and nationalist enthusiasm. The cry of *Bande Mataram* was almost stopped. The agricultural class now questioned what benefit was there in boycotting British goods as the *bilati* goods were much cheaper than country-made goods particularly cotton-cloths. Besides, it became clear to all that there was no possibility of a united Bengal. Contai as well as Bengal was now getting totally changed. The Contai of 1905 and 1906 was now almost a dream. Now all over the country their prevailed an amazing silence. In Aurobindo's words ---- "A hush had fallen on the country". Yet the leading agitators of Contai hoped against the hope that though the first upsurge of the movement was gone, the nationalist sentiment of the Contai people did not disappear. True, the stream of *swadeshi* had lost its life-force in the desert of failure and frustration; at the same time it was also true that the stream would again flow with all vehemence and forcefulness in proper times. Practically and historically this became a reality during the enthusiastic and heroic participation of the Contai people in the Non-co-operation Movement of 1920-21, in the historic *Lavan* Satyagraha of 1930 and also in the Quit India Movement (1942).

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States' woman'ship and Birth of a New Nation in South Asia (Reflections on Smt. Indira Gandhi's role in the emergence of Bangladesh)

Ichhimuddin Sarkar*

Introduction-birth of a 'New Nation', -a glorious but painful history:

Since the inception of Bangladesh as a People's Republic on December 16, 1971 and so far as the various stages of the anniversaries of its liberation war are concerned, it is perhaps incorrect to say that Bangladesh still does not have an authoritative and exhaustive history of its liberation war. Rather one can see that this particular event and many aspects of this war have been studied by scholars from different dimensions. The incapability to investigate the earlier years leading to this event is over and not only from economic and political point of view but from psychological stand point the birth of this nation has been studied extensively by the scholars. The fact remains that the war of 1971 appears in history as the logical outcome of the previous two decades, and not as merely an accidental event of South Asian history. Bangladesh is now an independent and sovereign state- though birth of this new nation is glorious and painful. Because millions of lives were lost and many became destitutes and *Sonar Bangla* (Golden Bengal) was horribly reduced to a land of debris and devastations. But out of this pathetic scene a new nation came into existence and its inception definitely made a mark in the South Asian history and politics. Not only India but a few colossal states of the world as well as neighbouring countries were concerned about the future of that region and ultimately East-Pakistan was transformed into Bangladesh!

Involvement of India as a matter of sympathy for the democratic rights of the People of East Pakistan:

On the night of March 25th, 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman was arrested and sent to Pakistan. From this date till 16th December, 1971, the date of final surrender of Lt. General A.A.K. Niazi, head of the Eastern Command, we do experience many fascinating episodes which no doubt opens a new chapter in the history of South Asia. The circumstances that led to the involvement of India in this war of liberation and how the then prime minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi overcame the crisis with a birth of a new nation are not only attractive but also give a lesson how India responded for the cause of democratic rights and feeling of the people of Bangladesh. Some scholars have however deliberately criticized India for its active involvement on this war and they have critiqued with reference to the chain of events right from 1965 Indo-Pakistan war as well as the

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hijacking of an Indian Airlines Fokker Friendship Aircraft by two Kashmiri Muslims and the order to be landed at Lahore.¹ India's openly stated sympathy for Sheikh Mujib might have provided Yahiya Khan the President of Pakistan with the excuse he needed for accusation of the expected secession is a matter to be investigated. Mrs. Gandhi repeatedly argued that India had no 'territorial ambition' and the support of six point program of Sheikh Mujib as a matter of sympathizing with the democratic rights of the people. Still India and its Government were accused and Smt. Indira Gandhi and Indian Government headed by her had to step in and play a vital role not only to solve the crisis of the people of Bangladesh but also to ensure a peaceful region in south Asia.

Problems of India and the hard realities of involvement:

It is a known fact that after the arrest of Sheikh Mujib the people of Bangladesh were in a fix and when there was no sign of compromise by the Pak army except crashing the Bengalese, the leaders who took shelter in India were compelled to declare East Pakistan as an independent state named Bangladesh. The Government was formed on April 10, 1971 by the elected representatives of the seventy five million people. At a later stage representatives of the Government were sent out to different countries to explain the cause of Bangladesh and gain support of the world communities. Thus the reality of Bangladesh was communicated to many countries of the world but the matter was not so easy to overcome and Smt. Indira Gandhi as prime minister of India had to face four problems as under:

- a; She had to look after 10 million refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan;
- b; She had to take care about the newly formed Bangladesh Government;
- c; She had to tackle the domestic problem vis-à-vis problems of her own Government and the decisive forces which in many ways challenged her leadership;
- d; She had to mobilize the world opinion at this juncture.

The night of 25th March, 1971 and the massacre of the Bengalis:

The people of East Pakistan voted Awami League to form the Government but the leader of the Awami League Sheikh Mujib was not given chance to form the Government. All the more, as it is known on 25th March, 1971 President Yahiya Khan announced Martial Law and in course of time the night of March 25th came as a night full of 'horror and terror' leading to a full scale massacre and genocide of the Bengalis of East Pakistan. Operations of the *Mukti Bahini* started, the *Razakars*, the *Al-badr* and the *Al-shams* played heinous role as reactionary forces and when the west Pakistani forces were told that the Bengali Muslims had joined hands with the Hindus and the gravity of circumstances was as such that only a *Jihad* could save the 'Islamic state of Pakistan'. So there was a war situation which affected the politics of the sub continent and India being the immediate neighbour and highly sympathetic to the righteous cause provided the Bengalis with some ray of hope. At this stage the intelligentsia, workers, peasants and people of various social strata including political leaders and also the press of India came forward favouring the people of Bangladesh.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi's vision for a peaceful zone in South Asia and the logic of war against Pakistan:

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India appealed to the people to take into account that her Government would continue to look after the refugees in spite of all hindrances and recognize Bangladesh as an independent state at any opportune moment. As luck would have it, Smt. Gandhi had to face huge problems at this hour but due to her profound leadership skills and strategies she could overcome the situation at this most unfavorable and trying circumstances. In this respect her strategy and states'woman'ship may be considered as a politician with practical sense and her vision for a peaceful zone in south Asia is still a lesson and example for inter-state relationship. It may be noted that finding no sign of hope against the *Mukti Bahaini*, the Pakistani air force made a sudden attack on Indian airfields at Amritsar, Sri Nagar, Pathankot, Abantipur, Jodhpur, Ambala and Agra on December 3, 1971. Being attacked, India declared war against Pakistan. In a mid-night broad cast Mrs. Indira Gandhi made an appeal to the nation 'at 5.30 today (3, 12, 1971) Pakistan launched a full scale war against us, we have no option but to put our country on a war footing'.²

States 'Woman'ship-(i):

This crisis moment may be taken as a testing ground of the states'woman'ship of Smt. Indira Gandhi as well as to appear as a leading politician of the south Asian Nations. Firstly she wanted to convince the nation that the declaration of war by Pakistan was unprovoked and would be timely repelled. She also made it clear that the war in Bangladesh had virtually become a war on India! She even commented 'peace' cannot last if we cannot guard our freedom, our democracy and our way of life. So today we fight not merely for territorial integrity but for the basic ideas which have given strength to this country and which alone we can progress to a better future'.³ After accepting the challenge of Pakistan, India employed her forces to liberate Bangladesh. In the meanwhile she had also appealed to U-Thant, Secretary General of the UNO. At the same time she took every caution to handle some domestic problems within India. For example, she reorganized her own party named as 'Indira Congress' in order to face the challenges from the opposition parties including the Communist Parties of India.

States 'Woman'ship-(ii):

The next step of Smt. Gandhi was to mobilize the world opinion in favor of her stand on Bangladesh. In this respect, first of all she wrote a letter to Edward Heath, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain (6th December, 1971). Incidentally this date was a date worth remembering since Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared (in the Indian Parliament) India's decision to grant recognition to Bangladesh and at this moment Bangladesh was declared as the *Gana Prajatantri Bangladesh*. In her letter she wrote Edward Heath that India was always particular about highlighting the pathetic incidents of East Bengal and how India had to take responsibility of 10 million refugees from that country. She especially invoked the attention of British Government that despite continuous provocation India had maintained normal situation. Smt. Indira Gandhi also appealed to

the British Government to stop military adventurism leading to genocide of the innocent people of Bangladesh.⁴

In the War of Liberation India and Russia always were supportive of Bangladesh. Smt. Indira Gandhi thought that she had two alternatives to look forward and these were....

- a) To conclude a Defence Pact with some states sympathized with India and the proposed nation named Bangladesh;
- b) To place and plead the case in the UNO during the general assembly session of September 1971.

States 'Woman'ship-(iii):

However, on August 9, 1971 India entered into a friendly alliance with Soviet Russia. Mr. Swaran Singh, the foreign minister of India and Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, signed a treaty known as the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace in terms of friendship and co-operation.

The case of Bangladesh was placed in the meeting of the General Assembly of the UNO held on 29th September, 1971. Mr. Gromyko drew the attention of the world leaders as to the fact that the Liberation War of Bangladesh was not an internal problem of Pakistan and there was a need of relaxation of tension in the region as a whole. This was, according to him, a matter to be solved by discussions.⁵ Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, leader of the Bangladesh delegation, categorically pointed out that the people of Bangladesh would not stop war unless

- i) they got an independent state;
- ii) the unconditional release of Sheikh Mujib, and
- iii) a complete withdrawal of the Pakistani forces from East Pakistan.⁶ The consequences of such gatherings and discussions in the UN General Assembly were no doubt a diplomatic victory of the people of proposed Bangladesh but these two events i.e. Anglo-Russian Peace Treaty (August, 1971) and the stand and views placed before the General Assembly of the UNO changed the tide of international politics centering the issue of Bangladesh. Smt. Indira Gandhi was not spared from this critical politics because the political atmosphere of South Asian politics turned hot in view of the joint involvement of China and USA in the prevailing politics on the question of Bangladesh. The Indo-Soviet Communiqué made it clear that Soviet Russia had extended her support for India and this was further complicated in September when at a launch given in Moscow in honour of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's visit, Mr. Kosygin said- 'The actions of Pakistan in compelling over eight million people to leave their country, land, property and to seek shelter in neighboring India are impossible to justify.'⁷

Reaction of the 'Big Powers' with special reference to the United States of America:

The above situation was viewed by the United States and in spite of its support after 25th March, USA took a different line of action and the approach Mr. Nixon was something to challenge the Soviet political hegemony in the sub continent. In these circumstances there was also a change in the American attitude toward China as well as Dr. Henry Kissinger's brief visit to Pakistan in July, 1971. A few days later president Nixon announced his desire to visit Peaking and the situation can be realized when Yahiya Khan could call it the 'event of the century'.⁸ It is not difficult to understand the background of such a political development and the cause in the shift in American policy towards China. The facts indicate that American president Nixon's policy as to the events in the sub continent was clearly guided by his intention to challenge any Russian dictation in this region.

Diplomatic strategies of the United States:

It is likely that the president of the USA had an impression that he would be able to influence Yahiya Khan to ensure Sheikh Mujib would not have any trouble and some acceptable solution could be ensured between East and West Pakistan. Again it seems that with logic, he would be able to pursue Mrs. Indira Gandhi to moderate her policy on the question of Indo-Soviet Relation for the cause of Bangladesh. But Mrs. Gandhi was not to be persuaded. This made Nixon critique of India and admirer of Yahiya Khan's efforts to solve political problems of Pakistan. This made the American Government adamant and on 6th December, the American ambassador in the United Nations Mr. George Bush expressed through a broadcast in the television how India was guilty for a clear-cut aggression. Before this on 3rd December 1971 all outstanding licenses for military sales to India were revoked. On the 6th December again every kind of United States' economic aid to India was suspended while at the same time it was made clear that the remaining aid facilities for Pakistan had not been discontinued. Another development was that on 6th December President Nixon himself publicly announced sympathy for Yahiya Khan and the intention was to reduce tension in the sub-continent.⁹

Genocide of Yahiya Khan had a political purpose:

It is a fact that Yahiya Khan's promise to hand over power to the elected representatives of the people of East Pakistan after banning the Awami League was a mockery of the freely recorded voice of 75 million Bengalese. It has been perceived as 'acts of racial hatred and sadism devoid of even the elements of humanity'. According to some¹⁰, "in its sheer diabolical thoroughness this policy evokes memory of Hitler's incredible plans for the rearing a 'Master Race' and disposing of the Jewish population in his Nazi Empire". General Yahiya Khan's genocide was thus without any political purpose and it served only as the last act in the tragic history of Pakistan he had chosen to write with the blood of the people of Bangladesh and "India learnt this lesson quite some while ago- the compulsion of the democratic process brought home that wisdom to Indians".¹¹ As to the moral obligation Indira Gandhi herself had admitted in several interviews¹² and even her principal secretary P.C Alexander admits in his (P.C. Alexander) Memoir titled *My Years with Indira Gandhi* that the decision to go to war

with Pakistan in 1971 'was forced on her by the stupidity of General Yahya Khan in ordering the strike on Indian air-fields without any provocation.¹³ Mr. Alexander also wonders how in the face of vehement opposition of her entire cabinet and the chiefs of the armed forces she declared cease fire "when India could, if it wanted, wrest large chunks of territory on the western front immediately after Pakistanis humiliating surrender at Dacca".¹⁴ The private secretary, P.C Alexander has admired Indira Gandhi's extraordinary leadership in this decision and how her practical sense prevailed over the indomitable wishes of her political colleagues and military officers who were in favour of territorial gains in this critical situation of Pakistan.

The case of Bangladesh placed in the United Nations Organization-arguments and counter arguments on the question of Bangladesh:

Indira Gandhi at that point of time was anxious about the consequences due to the involvement of India in the liberation war of Bangladesh. Between 4th and 10th December the East Pakistan question is said to have dominated the deliberations in the United Nations-Arguments and counter arguments were going on. The Pakistani representatives argued that their country was being forcibly dismembered by the intervention of a fellow member of the United Nations. Pakistan, they argued, was very much willing to explore political solutions in the East, but the basic principle must be autonomy within Pakistan not sovereignty with the alleged help of India. On the other hand the representatives of India declared Bangladesh was then a nation with its own Government but Yahya Khan's refusal to release Sheikh Mujib was conclusive evidence of the unreality of his proposed political solution. The Russians supported the Indian case on the ground that Pakistan had failed to take any satisfactory course which they defined in the form of release of Sheikh Mujib and immediate resumption of talks for the formation of a Government in East Pakistan. On this basis the Soviet Union proceeded to veto all resolutions put forward against the solution of Pakistan crisis.

Involvement of Great Powers and India's attitude to honour the patriotic zeal of the people of East Pakistan:

Our study so far shows that the great powers were inexorably drawn into the mounting crisis of East Pakistan by the logic of the mutual relations and by the unending strategy pursued by Pakistan in response to India's pressure and involvement despite Pakistan's expectation of an intervention by the United Nations. Throughout the fourteen days war the Indo-Soviet diplomatic relationship stood for a cease fire and maintenance for peace in the long run. But the United Nations' attempt failed and the great powers got involved directly in the crisis. The United States dispatched the Enterprise Taskforce into the Bay of Bengal. China also complained for the violation of border rules of India on the North East frontier. The Soviet Union kept Mr. Kusnetsov's mission in Delhi throughout the second week of the war. Thus the narratives of the Indo-Pakistan relations and the interest of the superpowers to decide the future of the people of Bangladesh show how the great powers were drawn into the conflict between India and Pakistan and how their various policies affected the evolution of the conflict. The relationship between India and the Soviet Union and the subsequent almost silent role of the United Nations added a new chapter to the history of south Asia and its politics. The response of Smt. Indira Gandhi

and the role of India to the events of East Pakistan after 25th March, 1971 was nothing but to use diplomatic means to put pressure on Pakistan and to maintain peace in the region. What is true about India as a whole is that Indian Government wanted to give honour to the demands of the patriotic people of Bengal. Yahiya Khan's folly was not only disrupting Pakistan but was also straining almost equally India's economy by pushing across the border a large chunk of East Bengal's population as his murder gangs could. It is said New Delhi was spending at the rate of rupees forty crores per month. According to our source, foreign aid in this respect was slow in coming. It was apparent at that point of time that apart from making sympathetic noises about the human problem and sending some aid to the refugees, that international body had washed its hands off the Bangladesh problem. The refugee problem and all other related hazards were of solely India's shortcomings.

Cautious steps of the Indian Govt. on the question of Bangladesh:

The first Indian reaction had, however, come on 26th March, 1971 when Indian Foreign Minister, Swaran Singh expressed his government's concern.¹⁵ At this juncture Mrs. Gandhi responded 'one wrong step or wrong word may have affect entirely different to the one which we all intend'.¹⁶ The resolution adopted by both houses of Indian parliament on 31st March, 1971 was not a call to action but Indian position has always been misinterpreted. It is said that Indo-Pakistan War on 3rd December 1971 broke out at a time when Nixon was trying to bring out a political settlement between Yahiya Khan's regime and the Bangladesh Government in exile in India. It is even said that the US efforts for a political settlement were discussed with Mrs. Gandhi when she visited Washington just 10 days before the war began.¹⁷ India has even been condemned being able to enjoy full backing of a super power namely Soviet Russia and Pakistan was supposed to be unfortunate having no effective military support but only diplomatic support of Washington and Peking. Hence some critics intend to conclude that 'politically and psychologically the victory was of greater significance, India at last was able to dismember her principal enemy and inflict a major diplomatic defeat on her number two adversary, China'.¹⁸

Involvement of the Islamic countries and steps to resist India:

Under these circumstances India was in a critical position as neighbouring country with certain persistent responsibilities to maintain peace and tension-free zone. All the more, the most pressing concern of India and especially of Smt. Gandhi was the public support that Pakistan got from Indonesia, Iran Turkey and Malaysia.¹⁹ It is also said that in the course of the year i.e. a variety of trade and financial support agreements were discussed between Pakistan and some of the richer Arab States, notably Saudi Arabia.²⁰ The criticism alleged sympathy of India for Sheikh Mujib is said to have provided Yahiya Khan with the rallying crying he needed for although India made it clear about her intention i.e. no territorial ambition. But a question arises why the people of Pakistan who once supported Sheikh Mujib and his Six Points Program later on raised the cry resist India. This type of factor have, however, been studied in detail by a Major General D.K. Palit in his book titled *The Lighting Campaign; Indo-Pakistan War 1971* (Thomson Press, New Delhi 1972).

India's sacrifice, co-operation and magnanimity of Mrs. Indira Gandhi:

There may be criticism in view of the involvement of India in the liberation war of Bangladesh. But from a rational point of view as the situation suggests, it is likely that India had no other alternative rather than to respond to the appeal of the people of Bangladesh. The unwanted confusion or misunderstanding may easily be sorted out if anybody looks into the details of the Memoir of Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, the first president of Bangladesh. It is said that Mr. Chowdhury once happened to meet Mrs. Indira Gandhi at Claridges Hotel, London sometime in October, 1971. Abu Sayeed Chowdhury is said to have placed two points before Mrs. Gandhi by way of conversations- a) 'Friendship' and b) 'Reward' for the help and cooperation that India and her Government offered to the people of Bangladesh. For all these, Mrs. Gandhi's reactions were – "Justice Chowdhury, it is kind of you to have mentioned friendship. I think even that should be to the people of Bangladesh to decide when they are free..... you have spoken about reward: the only reward I would expect from a free Bangladesh is democracy, I do not like military rule in the neighbouring country"²¹. There cannot be any best recognition of Smt. Gandhi when in the occasion of her assassination in October 1984; Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury paid tribute by recording "she had long ceased to be only an Indian. She spoke for the Third World. She was the guiding inspiration on the movement of Non-alignment .She stood for human solidarity."²² This has been fairly echoed in the memories of P.C. Alexander, principal secretary of Smt Indira Gandhi, who once wrote, "if Indira Gandhi had not taken the crucial decision to accord full scale recognition to Bangladesh, the history of the subcontinent could have taken a different course. International pressure would have become irresistible to find some sort of a face-saving formula.....if time was allowed for an examination of the pros and cons of an independent Bangladesh and a Bangladesh as an autonomous unit of the Pakistani confederation, the decision would in all probability have been in favour of the latter."²³ How such a situation Smt. Gandhi realistically handled and the very issue has nicely been recalled by Alexander. He again informs "It was here that Indira Gandhi showed exceptional courage and foresight. India's promptness in recognizing Bangladesh took the issue out of the hands of constitutional pundits and international pressure groups. After India's announcement of its decision to recognize Bangladesh, it was only a question of a few days for the new nation to gain worldwide recognition. Indira Gandhi's decision in announcing a unilateral ceasefire and prompt recognition of Bangladesh as an independent nation demonstrated the cool courage of a great statesman and not the brashness of an 'Iron Lady'"²⁴.

The qualities of Smt. Gandhi as a states 'woman':

The qualities of Smt. Gandhi as a states 'woman' no doubt brightened India's tradition and commitment to the broader cause of welfare of the entire human society. She seems to have chosen a life up to the demand of the great heritage that India ever stood for in any circumstances and all in all as Prime Minister she faced many of the toughest challenges of her times and the crisis of Bangladesh was one of them. The manner she tackled justifies her human sensitiveness which virtually turned her into a modern legend among her contemporaries and after. The solution of the Bangladesh problem hints at an ideal of a political leader with practical sense and vision in which she

could prove her worth as a great politician and in the long run it marked a turning point in the history of South Asia.

The Emergence of a New Nation and Indira Gandhi's Commitment For The Cause of Human Rights:

The present paper is not just a write up to record achievement of Smt Indira Gandhi for her services to the cause of Bangladesh but a study how a new nation was born and Smt Gandhi responded to the cause of human rights to the people of Bangladesh. She has duly been recognized and honoured by the Government of Bangladesh on the occasion of completion of the 40 the year of the liberation war of the country on 25th July 2011.²⁵ This honoured has been delayed but not denied . It may be noted that even if Mrs. Indira Gandhi did not want any reward in kind, she has been heartily recalled by the Government and the people of the country. There is a living memory of one Nilima Lambah, wife of Satindar Kumar Lambah, a Foreign Service officer who was posted in Ducca sometime in 1972. In fact what Mrs. Lambah has memorized is not only interesting but indicates the respect and gratitude showed to her due to the services for the people of Bangladesh. This memoir is no doubt a lively document on the occasion of Smt. Gandhi's visit to Ducca on 17th March 1972. How was the glamour of the welcome ceremony let us see what Nilima records, "Bangladesh and Sheikh Mujib warmly welcomed Indira Gandhi. She was given a tumultuous.....it was an account of Mrs. Gandhi's visit that a holiday had been announced. This was also first occasion that Begum Mujib went to the airport. She had not even gone to receive her husband on his return to Ducca after his release from jail in Pakistan. A little known fact is that the president of Bangladesh, Justice Abu Syed Chowdhury vacated his apartment in the presidential house, Banga Bhavan, for Mrs. Gandhi."²⁶

Indira Gandhi's Visit to Dacca, the Capital of Bangladesh and the whole hearted recognition of her leadership:

Mrs. Lambah has also described how the visit turned into a remarkable one. People of Bangladesh said to have 'flocked a thousand glimpse of Mrs. Gandhi, and it was said that Dacca was never seen such crowd'.²⁷ Thus this single incident in life of Smt. Indira Gandhi may be considered a face of her life when she was taken much more than a political person and a public figure. She had no doubt a level of ability to come down gracefully from the high peaks of leadership to a platform where one can locate her not only feminine inside but also quality of imagination. In the words Javier Perez de Cuellar, former Secretary General of the United Nations, "when the history of our times comes to be written in the dispassionate future, it will be seen as a high achievement that Mrs. Gandhi, faced as she was by a plethora of national and international problems, struggled successfully to nurture and give substance to that grand vision."²⁸

Conclusion:

The last century was marked as much by extraordinary human achievements in many fields as by senseless destruction of life and property. Indira Gandhi was born and brought up in these circumstances. She, like her illustrious father Jawaharlal Nehru was a

passionate crusader for world peace and disarmament and sought to mobilize world opinion against the nuclear holocaust and other inhuman activities. She might have followed her father's footsteps who used to say "To read history is good, but even more interesting and fascinating is to help in making history....It is the future that fills our minds, the future that we are fashioning, and the present that absorbs all our time and energy."²⁹ It is likely that Smt. Indira Gandhi had sincerely followed this message of her father and her emergence at the critical hour on the eve of the emergence of Bangladesh was just like a crusader for world peace. It provided great relief not only to a world shaken by the horrors and tension but her efforts and passions for peace sought to avoid the temper of war and promote a climate of peace in South Asia. She seems to have been inspired by Gautam Buddha's concern for 'humanity', emperor Asoka's spirit of 'renunciation' and Mahatma Gandhi's idea of 'Non- violence'.

Key words:

Sovereign state, *sonarbangla*, *muktibahini*, *ganaprajatantri bangladesh*, liberationwar, political hegemony, genocide, humanity.

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Regional Identities and its Implications on the Notion of National Identity: *Some Observations on the Linguistic Reorganisation of States*

V.Krishna Ananth*

We live in times when the political discourse is increasingly falling into a pit where any discussion on the nation or the national or nationalism is being reduced to a sectarian wrangling rather than an informed debate. Any assertion of the regional identity, whether it is based on language, food habits or literature or any other identity (including ethnic, religion and caste) is increasingly being seen as inimical to nationalism and even anti-national at times. In the same way, any concern for the national is either ridiculed or even condemned as *imperialist*, particularly by sections in the academia that are out to interrogate nationalism the *deconstructionist* way. The tragedy is that both sides in this debate clearly lack praxis for action, notwithstanding their strident claims to have one. This paper is an attempt to consider these from a historian's perspective and not in the realm of justifying one or another of the sides. The purpose, in other words, is not to contribute to the corpus of polemical writings on the agitations and the responses to them. This is not to deride the polemics in any way; history, after all, will be meaningless shorn of polemics. It is, hence, appropriate, to begin this exercise by setting out with a statement on what I mean by a historical perspective on the subject and why it is not an exercise in polemics.

I

In the George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures at the University of Cambridge¹, E.H.Carr, contested the proposition that the historian's task was to collate facts and as long as their veracity was not doubted, it constituted history. For Carr, mustering the facts in an accurate manner was indeed a necessary condition of the historian's work and not his essential function. Carr held that such tasks as to ascertain the age of a particular piece of pottery or to decipher an inscription or to establish the precise date of an event by way of an elaborate astronomical calculation were all tasks best left to experts in those disciplines. Facts, thus, are available on a platter and are common for all the historians who live in a particular time. The historian, according to Carr, ends up choosing a certain set of facts to arrive at a certain conclusion. In the same breadth, Carr also contested the widely held dictum that facts speak for themselves. "It used to be said that facts speak for themselves. This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: It is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context..."

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It is the historian who has decided for his own reasons that Ceaser's crossing of that petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossing of the Rubicon by millions of other peoples before or since interests nobody at all... But it will probably be ignored by historians".²

This long invocation of E.H.Carr's idea of history is appropriate to defend the idea of re-visiting the history of the linguistic reorganisation of States through the written evidence that have been available to historians all these while rather than resorting to any oral tradition on the subject. In doing so, I intend dispelling the sense of *déjà vu* that is most likely to be felt in the context of the increasingly strident demand for smaller states, across the country, in recent times. From the demand for the linguistic reorganisation of the States that marked the discourse at the time of independence and the culmination of that struggle in Potti Sriramulu's martyrdom, the setting up of the States Reorganisation Commission and eventually the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, we are now witnessing movements that seek division of the linguistic states into smaller states. This paper will try to dispel the belief that the demand for smaller states is a repudiation of the idea of linguistic organisation of states and in that sense a confirmation of the fears that were expressed against it even in the times when it bloomed.

It will be argued here that the demand for smaller States that is raging out there is neither a repudiation of the principle of linguistic States nor is it a logical sequel to it. It is essentially the fallout of some serious failure on the part of the political establishment in independent India in the domain of governance at one level (particularly in such instances as Uttarakhand, Bodoland, Gorkhaland and others of such kind) and the fragmentation of the political set-up wherein the days of a single party managing to play the balancing act between distinct social groups are over and the party system is fragmented on the basis of social groups (as in the case of Telengana, Bundelkhand, Harit Pradesh, Vidharbha to state a few examples). This, in turn, is the cause for the increasingly strident demands for smaller States. In that sense, it is far too different from the idea of linguistic States.

Having said this, the scope of this paper will be restricted to recalling some of the facts that went into the making of the linguistic states in our short history.

In this regard, it is proper to begin by stating that the idea of linguistic reorganisation of States was raised, argued and held in abeyance by the Constituent Assembly in 1947-49; was glossed over for a while after the Constitution came into force; and revived soon after to be conceded in principle and implemented in stages beginning with the formation of a composite Andhra Pradesh in 1956 and culminating in the trifurcation of Punjab to constitute a Punjabi speaking State by excluding Haryana and Himachal Pradesh from the existing State of Punjab in 1966. And by that, the idea of linguistic reorganisation of states that was internalised by the nationalist leadership since 1921 and identified as integral to the making of independent India in the Nehru Committee Report in 1928 was given concrete shape.

II

In a sense, the idea of linguistic states was recognised by the nationalist leadership in what could be termed as the earliest instance when the Indian National Congress tried to present the shape of things that would be in independent India.³

Section 86 of the Nehru Report, for instance, was explicit on this count. It read as follows:

“The redistribution of provinces should take place on a linguistic basis on the demand of the majority of the population of the area concerned, subject to financial and administrative considerations.”⁴

In many ways, the approach to the national, in the vision of the generation that led the struggle for freedom since the beginning of the Gandhian era, was based on an understanding that it had to necessarily internalise the existence and the importance of the linguistic identity of the people across the sub-continent. Indian nationalism, in other words, was looked at as a concept or a notion that was clearly mediated through the identity of the language that the people spoke. It will be appropriate, at this stage, to note that the Indian National Congress, at its Nagpur session (1920) recorded its appreciation of the idea that the national identity will have to be necessarily mediated through the linguistic identity and resolved to set up the Provincial Congress Committees on a linguistic basis. The demand for such reorganization of the Congress provincial committees on linguistic basis was first mooted by way of a demand for a separate Andhra Congress Province in the Congress sessions in 1915 and 1916 and finally accepted, in principle, at the Congress session in Calcutta in 1917. There was vehement opposition to this idea from Annie Besant (who was also the President at that time), as well as from the Tamil speaking delegates from Madras and even Gandhi felt that such a move could wait. It was Tilak who pushed forward the idea. A sub-committee was appointed in December 1917, to revise and settle the representation for the Telugu speaking people in the AICC (as distinct from the existing scheme where they were to be a part of the delegates from the Madras province). A Sindh Provincial Congress Committee came into being in 1918 itself.⁵

It is, however, important to note here that the Indian National Congress' scheme of organisation of its provincial committees on linguistic basis did not include the regions constituted by the Indian States even where they were contiguous, in terms of the language spoken by the people in those parts that were part of the British Indian provinces. Thus, the Telengana region was not thought of in the Andhra Provincial Committee, the Travancore-Cochin region was not thought of in the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee and so on and so forth. While this incongruity can be explained by the fact that the Indian National Congress had not, at that time, internalised the demand for independence in the Indian States into its core or its creed, the leadership did not consider this as an imperative even at the Haripura session in 1938. Even while the session sanctioned the joining of the peoples' movement in the Indian States with the larger struggle in British India and recognised the reality that the rulers of the States were mere appendages of the colonial regime (if not as “natural” allies of the British) and thus setting out on a radical course of including those into the linguistically organised Provincial Congress Committees in the contiguous regions, the Haripura session

conceded only a part of that. The session resolved that the movement in the Indian States shall be under the direct command of the Congress Working Committee.⁶

The process of internalising the aspirations for freedom in the Indian States, however, could not be stalled given the fact that the logic of colonial domination that guided the birth and the growth of the freedom struggle were equally true in the Indian States as it was in British India. This led to the natural melting down of the distinctions between the people in the Indian States and those in British India in the regions contiguous to those and thus caused a unity in due course. This unity was at all levels; the leadership of the Provincial Congress Committees and those in the States Peoples Movements everywhere were in constant interaction notwithstanding the line adopted at the Haripura session. This process, in fact, was behind the movement for independence and the demand for integration of those region such as Hyderabad, Travancore, Kashmir and elsewhere into the Indian Union. The Telengana struggle as well as the Punnapravayalar movement therefore laid the foundations for the linguistic states of Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

The importance of the Nagpur session in 1920, however, is in the fact that it was here that the Indian National Congress resolved to set up Provincial Congress Committees on exclusively linguistic basis and this, in turn, leading to the re-distribution of Congress Provinces across India into 21. Apart from Andhra⁷ and Sindh that were already there, the Nagpur session resolution led to the constitution of the Kerala Pradesh Provincial Committee⁸ and the Karnataka Pradesh Provincial Committee.⁹ It may be stated here that the Indian National Congress constitution, as amended in 1908, had provided for a separate Provincial Congress Committee for Bihar even though the region was still a part of the Bengal Presidency.¹⁰ This decision of 1908, however, was not based on an informed debate involving the linguistic identities as it was in the Nagpur session.

III

The important point here is that the construction of the national identity during the course of the freedom struggle was one where the linguistic identity was seen as one that mediated the making of the national identity rather than treating it as a threat to the national. And in that sense, the Indian National Movement, treated the linguistic identity as integral to its course and even accorded to it a pivotal role in the making of the national identity. It may be stressed here that the acceptance of the demand or the idea of Provincial Congress Committees on linguistic lines (as against the administrative division of provinces done by the British) was accepted by the Congress session at Nagpur, held within months after the Special Session at Calcutta (September 1920) where the non-cooperation resolution was adopted. It clearly signifies that the decision at Nagpur was indeed an imperative for the Congress in the given context where the platform was transforming into mass movement for independence. And this clearly was also the basis for the Nehru Committee Report firming up the idea as a Constitutional principle.

The linguistic reorganisation of the Provincial Congress Committees was also an explicit statement, on behalf of the national movement that Indian Nationalism, even while it sought to steer clear of religion as a basis of division; in other words, the Indian

National Congress was committed as much to ensure that the nation did not consider linguistic identity as inimical to the making of the nation; nor its existence. The leaders of the national movement, in fact, did seem to internalise the importance of acknowledging India as much a *civilizational* state as distinct from the nations across Europe and elsewhere. And in such a scheme, it was imperative for the organisation of the struggle for freedom to acknowledge and internalise linguistic identities as an inevitable category in the nation making agenda. It is then legitimate to argue that the nationalist leadership did recognise linguistic identities as integral to the making of the Indian Nation and was committed against any attempt to annihilate linguistic identity.

One does find this approach to the past or tradition or the lineage (in whatever words the *civilizational* dimension of the Indian state is described) in Jawaharlal Nehru's writings particularly after 1937¹¹. In one such instance, Nehru writes:

"It was not her wide spaces that eluded me, or even her diversity, but some depth of soul which I could not fathom, though I had occasional and tantalizing glimpses of it. *She was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously.* All of these existed in our conscious or sub-conscious selves, though we may not have been aware of them, and they had gone to build up the complex and mysterious personality of India... The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me: it was an emotional experience which overpowered me."¹² (emphasis added by author)

Lest he be seen as one caught in a time warp and nostalgia, Nehru hastens to clarify his own position in the same essay. He adds:

"It was absurd, of course, to think of India or any country as a kind of anthropomorphic entity. I did not do so. I was fully aware of the diversities and divisions of Indian life, of classes, castes religions, races, different degrees of cultural development. Yet I think that a country with a long cultural background and a common outlook on life develops a spirit that is peculiar to it and that is impressed on all its children, however much they may differ among themselves".¹³

It may be stressed at this stage that the influence that Jawaharlal Nehru came to exert on the making of the various policies for independent India was indeed at par with that of Mahatma Gandhi in the realm of making the strategy for India's struggle for independence. It may also be stressed that both these leaders had internalised the aspects of India's past and its civilizational lineage in their way of thinking. And in this sense, both Gandhi and Nehru could see the need for building a national identity that was essentially mediated by the linguistic identity of the different people speaking different languages. In other words, both Gandhi and Nehru thought alike on the need to preserve the diverse traditions that were mediated and represented through the different languages and clearly opposed to any such thinking that perceived such diversity as a threat to national unity. And this came to be expressed, in categorical terms, in the manifesto of the Indian National Congress for the elections to the Central and Provincial Legislative

Assemblies in 1945. Emphasising the Congress' commitment to equality in all sense of the term – of individuals, the communities and religious groups and “for full opportunities for the people as a whole to grow and develop according to their wishes and genius”, the manifesto made a clear reference to the reorganisation of the provinces in the following terms:

“... it (the Congress) has also stood for the freedom of each group and territorial area within the nation to develop its own life and culture within the larger framework, and it has stated that for this purpose such territorial areas or provinces should be constituted as far as possible, on a linguistic and cultural basis...”¹⁴

IV

The overwhelming majority secured by the Indian National Congress in the various provinces led to the Congress dominating the Constituent Assembly too.¹⁵ In other words, the Constituent Assembly turned out to be the terrain for the struggle demanding the linguistic reorganisation of the Provinces.

That the demand came to be articulated most ardently by the Congress leaders from Andhra was not coincidental. On August 31, 1946, only a month after the elections to the Constituent Assembly, Pattabhi Sitaramayya gave expression to the demand for an Andhra Province in an article to the Hindustan Times: “The whole problem” he wrote, “must be taken up as the first and foremost problem to be solved by the Constituent Assembly”.¹⁶ The first meeting of the assembly was still a few months away and it was usual practice for the senior leaders then to use the columns of the newspaper to vent their ideas and demands. Sitaramayya, at that time, was a member of the Congress Working Committee. And he also presided over a conference on December 8, 1946 that passed a resolution demanding that the Constituent Assembly accept the principle for linguistic reorganisation of States.¹⁷ It may be noted here that this happened a day before the Constituent Assembly met for the first time on December 9, 1946. The campaign persisted, in like manner, within the Constituent Assembly until Jawaharlal Nehru, on November 27, 1947, accepted the principle underlying the demand for linguistic provinces, in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative)¹⁸ and the Government of India stated that Andhra could be mentioned as a separate unit in the new Constitution as was done in case of the Sind and Orissa under the Government of India Act, 1935. The Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, however, found such a mention of Andhra was not possible until the geographical schedule of the province was outlined. Hence, on June 17, 1948, Chairman Rajendra Prasad set up a 3-member commission, called *The Linguistic Provinces Commission* with a specific brief to examine and report on the formation of new provinces of Andhra, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra.¹⁹

It is necessary to stress here that the important leaders of the Indian National Congress, including Nehru, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad, had shown signs of retreat from the unbridled enthusiasm they had, even in the immediate past, for the linguistic reorganisation of the provinces. The experience of partition and the manner in which the demand for Pakistan caught the imagination of a large section of the Muslim community

(within a short period of five years since 1940) had an impact on their approach to all talk of denominational politics. Apart from that, there was also the question of the practical dimensions of a realignment of the provincial boundaries in terms of the time and the efforts it involved. A distinct indication of this came in the proposals of the Sapru Committee as early as in December 1945²⁰ and at least a year before the Constituent Assembly held its first session. The proposals, among other aspects, reiterated that "historical accident and administrative exigencies have contributed to, by no means, an ideal division of the country into provinces" but stressed that the linguistic reorganisation of provinces was taken up by the Government in independent India and rather than be done at the time of making the constitution. The committee recommendations were as follows:

"While it is not desirable that the new constitution should be delayed by the realignment of provincial boundaries on linguistic or cultural considerations, the constitution act shall indicate the machinery and prescribe the procedure for such realignment of old provinces and for the creation of new provinces after it has come into force and, on such realignment or creation of provinces, all consequential amendments may be made in the constitution".²¹

The report of the *Linguistic Provinces Commission* was clearly an elaboration of what the Sapru Committee expressed and served the purpose of the political leadership of the Constituent Assembly.²² It may be noted, in this regard, that the Constituent Assembly as well as the S.K. Dar Commission at this point of time, were face to face with a reality where there was an element of uncertainty over the status of the Indian States *vis a vis* the Constitution. This was indeed of critical importance, given the fact that many such Indian States and parts of the Provinces were contiguous in terms of the language spoken by the people. As for instance, Hyderabad with the idea of an Andhra State; Mysore with the idea of Karnataka; Travancore and Cochin in the case of Kerala; and Vidharba in the case of Maharashtra; these were concrete issues that could not have been glossed over by the Commission.

Submitted on December 10, 1948, the S.K.Dar Commission Report, clearly satisfied the political leadership of independent India and left those campaigning for the linguistic re-organisation of the provinces without any reason to celebrate. Running into some 150 paragraphs, spread over five chapters, the report dealt with the political dimensions of the idea of linguistic states and also the financial, economic and administrative aspects involved in the exercise. With the help of experts whose services it drafted, the Dar Commission listed out a litany of reasons against the idea of linguistic reorganisation in the political sense as well as hard facts to establish that such reorganisation in the given context was also economically and financial un-viable. Among the most substantial reasons that the commission mustered was that the re-organisation on linguistic basis involved decisions pertaining to the nature of the relationship between the Indian States with the Union and held that there was no point working on the subject until this issue was settled. Its report dealt with each of the four proposed States – Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra – in this context.

The more significant aspect of the Dar Commission's report, from the concerns of this paper was on the principle of linguistic states. Even while it reiterated the Indian National Congress' position held for 30 years that the provinces as they existed at that time were administrative units of British imperialism and that they came into existence in a way that was not meant to work as democratic institutions, the Dar Commission went on to stress upon the need to hold on to them. It said:

"But they have taken root and are now vital living organisms and have served the useful purpose of bringing together people who otherwise might have remained separated. And though they may be somewhat disadvantageous in working modern democracy, **they are not bad instruments for submerging a sub-national consciousness and moulding a nation**"²³ (emphasis added).

After ruling out any basis for the creation of the four new states, into which the commission was to look deep, the Dar Commission also lent its advice to the future government of independent India. It was a repudiation of all that the Congress stood for during the three decades since its passed a resolution on the subject at Nagpur in 1920. The Dar Commission Report presented to the Constituent Assembly said:

"In any rational and scientific planning that may take place in regard to the provinces of India in the future, homogeneity of language alone cannot be decisive or even an important factor. Administrative convenience, history, geography, economy, culture, and many other matters will also have to be given due weight. It may be that the provinces thus formed will also show homogeneity of language and, in a way, might resemble linguistic provinces. But, in forming the provinces, the emphasis should be primarily on administrative convenience, and homogeneity of language will enter into consideration only as a matter of administrative convenience and not by its own independent force".²⁴

The Commission report read like a thesis against the idea of linguistic reorganisation of the provinces and spoke against any such effort in the immediate context. And if its arguments were to be taken seriously, it was the Commission's case that linguistic identities were mere sentiments and was even inimical to the stability and integration of the nation. It is appropriate to put this in the words of the Commission itself.

"In order to secure the stability and integration, India should have a strong centre and national language. Indian nationalism is deeply wedded to its regional languages; Indian patriotism is aggressively attached to its provincial frontiers. If India is to survive, Indian nationalism and patriotism will have to sacrifice some of its cherished sentiments in the larger interests of the country...

The only good that we can see in a linguistic province is the possible advantage it has in working the Legislature in the regional language. But this is more than counter-balanced by the obstruction the linguistic

provinces will inevitably cause to the spread of national language or national feeling in this country..."²⁵

Notwithstanding all these, the Indian National Congress organisation, consisting of a large number of persons who were committed to the idea of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra, persisted with the demand and it came to be voiced at the Jaipur session, held only a few days after the S.K.Dar Commission had submitted its report to the Constituent Assembly on December 10, 1948. It was only obvious that the delegates were keen on a political response to the issue rather than one by a commission consisting of a retired high court judge, a former bureaucrat and an *unknown* member of the Constituent Assembly. The issue gained centre-stage with Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who had been in the forefront of this demand in the couple of years before 1948, was elected the Congress President at the Jaipur session. A committee consisting of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Jawaharlal Nehru was constituted by the Indian National Congress by way of a resolution at the Jaipur session to report on the subject.

The specific brief before the Committee was to consider the question of linguistic provinces and "to review the position and to examine the question in the light of the decisions taken by the Congress in the past and the requirements of the existing situation, (i) in view of the report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, appointed by the President of the Constituent Assembly, and (ii) the new problems that have arisen out of the achievement of independence".²⁶

The report of this committee, came to be known subsequently as the JVP committee (Jawaharlal-Vallabhai-Pattabhi), submitted on April 1, 1949 was an endorsement of all that the S.K. Dar Commission recommended in December 1948. Conceding that the Congress had "given the seal of its approval to the general principle of linguistic provinces," the JVP Committee went on to add that "it was not faced with the practical application of this principle and hence it had not considered all the implications and consequences that arose from this practical application".²⁷ The report did place on record that the Congress supported the demand for linguistic states because it found the provinces as they were created by the British were done on an "artificial manner" and that due to a desire to have homogenous cultural units as far as possible. It then said:

"It is clear that in giving effect to this principle a great many difficulties of a far-reaching character have to be faced. Whatever the origin of these provinces, and however artificial they may have been, a century or so of political, administrative and to some extent economic unity in each of the existing provincial areas had produced a certain stability and a certain tradition, and any change in this would naturally have an upsetting effect. It would have far-reaching consequence, political, economic, financial and administrative. These reasons, of course, were not necessarily enough for us to go back on, what had long been considered, a basic principle of the Congress. But these reasons could not be ignored, just as the course of recent history, with all that had resulted from it, could not be ignored. In consideration of this problem, all these factors had to be kept in mind and balanced with each other".²⁸

Interestingly the JVP committee also went on to describe the demand for linguistic states, in the given context, as "narrow provincialism" and that it could become a "menace" to the development of the country. Assuming to itself the responsibility of viewing the problem of linguistic provinces in the context of the times, the report said:

"That context demands, above everything, the consolidation of India and her freedom, the progressive solution of her economic problems in terms of the masses of her people, the promotion of unity in India and of close co-operation among the various provinces and states in most spheres of activity. It demands further, stern discouragement of communalism, provincialism, and all other separatist and disruptive tendencies".²⁹

And without mincing words, the JVP Committee went into the specifics of its concerns by referring to the partition of India. "This partition" the report said, "has led us to become wary of anything that tends to separate and divide". The three leading lights of the Congress who constituted the committee, however, placed on record that the communal problem and the idea of linguistic reorganisation of provinces were not the same. The report did make this qualification in so many words.

"It is true there can be no real comparison between this partition and the linguistic regrouping of India. But it is also true that in the existing fluid state of India, even small things in themselves may lead to evil consequences and let loose forces which do injury to the unity of India".³⁰

The JVP committee also felt that "while language is a binding force, it is also a separating one" but then stressed that it was possible that "when conditions are more static and the state of peoples' minds calmer, the adjustment of these boundaries or the creation of new provinces can be undertaken with relative ease and with advantage to all concerned".³¹

Despite its endorsement of the recommendations of the S.K.Dar Commission, the JVP committee, being one consisting of political leaders who had led the movement for freedom, had reasons to perceive the issue differently. And this was clearly reflected in its report too. Hence, the report said: "Nevertheless, if there is a strong and widespread feeling in an area for a linguistic province, a democratic government must ultimately submit to it, unless there is grave danger to the State and unless this feeling comes into conflict with a rival feeling. If there is general consent and willingness, the of course the difficulties are much less".³¹ It may be noted here that among the three members of the committee, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who was also the Congress president at that time, was a strong votary for the formation of the Andhra State on linguistic lines; he had, in fact, remained the central figure of the campaign until most recently. It is not possible to state as to whether his presence in the committee had led to this observation but then such an inference will not be out of order.

The JVP committee's conclusion that it was not the right time then to embark upon the idea of linguistic reorganisation of States and that any such efforts will retard the process of consolidation of the gains and also dislocate the administrative, economic and financial structure was accepted by the Congress Working Committee soon after the

report was submitted and the political leadership of the Constituent Assembly as well. In other words, the consensus was that the linguistic reorganisation of States be postponed and this clearly was reflected in Article 3 of the Constitution.³² It is to be noted that the makers of the Constitution did not qualify the possible reorganisation of the States as only on linguistic basis and left it open as long as there was agreement to that from the different States concerned with such reorganisation.³³

V

It is now possible to argue that the campaign for the linguistic reorganisation of the States was not merely an abstract idea; and that it was certainly a popular movement even while the Constitution was being drafted. It is also possible to state then that those in the fore-front of the movement, being part of the national movement in every sense of the term and were also an integral part of the Indian National Congress, were as much a part of the consensus that had emerged at that point of time: To postpone the task to a later date. And thus the campaign seemed to have been suspended for a while; but not for long. It is also significant that the resurgence took place with the demand for a separate Andhra State. Andhra, after all, was the first instance of the reorganisation of the Provincial Congress Committees on linguistic basis.

Potti Sriramulu's fast beginning October 19, 1952 and his martyrdom thereafter during the night of December 15, 1952, are events that are now an integral part of any discussion on the subject and suffice it to note here that this happened within months after the end of the first general elections and Jawaharlal Nehru was sworn in Prime Minister in February 1952. And the pace at which the Union Government moved the Bill to form the Andhra State³⁴ reflected the intensity of the movement for the linguistic reorganisation of the States and also the empathy to the idea of linguistic reorganisation of states among those who led the Union Government, including Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

The SRC, however, seemed to remain caught in a time warp and its report, submitted in October 1955, virtually endorsed many things that were stated by the S.K.Dar Commission and all the arguments that the JVP committee had against the linguistic reorganisation in its own time. The three members of the SRC, despite their standing in their own right, decided to lean heavily on the stated position of the Congress party on the subject.³⁵ And for this, the Commission studied the resolutions on the subject at the Hyderabad session of the Congress in January 1953, the Congress Working Committee subsequently in May 1953 and the Congress session at Kalyani in January 1954. The Commission defined the Congress position, in all those instances, in the following words:

“In considering the reorganization of States, all relevant factors should be borne in mind, such as the unity of India, national security and defence, cultural and linguistic affinities, administrative convenience, financial considerations, and economic progress, both of the States and the nation as a whole”.³⁶

The elaborate and somewhat pedantic observations of the Commission on aspects of language and culture revealed that its members perceived diversity as a potential threat to the national unity and also found that the demand for the linguistic reorganisation of the States, as such, could threaten the nation. As for instance, it argued that it was “neither possible nor desirable to reorganise States on the basis of the single test of either language or culture”, and stressed that “a balanced approach to the whole problem is necessary in the interests of our national unity”.³⁷ And in order not to leave anyone in doubt as to what would constitute the “balance”, the SRC sought to stress linguistic homogeneity “as an important factor conducive to administrative convenience and efficiency but not to consider it as an exclusive and binding principle...”. The balance, according to the Commission, was “to ensure that communicational, educational and cultural needs of different language groups, whether resident in predominantly unilingual or composite administrative units are adequately met”. The Commission also made a categorical assertion that “where satisfactory conditions exist, and the balance of economic, political and administrative considerations favour composite States, to continue them with the necessary safeguards to ensure that all sections enjoy equal rights and opportunities...”³⁸

The SRC then ventured into the realm of the political with such assertions as the imperative to “repudiate the *home land* concept, which negates one of the fundamental principles of the Indian Constitution, namely equal opportunities and equal rights for all citizens throughout the length and breadth of the Union”. In the same way, the Commission’s report stressed the need to “reject the theory of *one language one state*” which according to it was neither justified nor practicable.

And in the end, the States Reorganisation Commission recommended reorganisation of the Indian States in a manner that was neither based on linguistic identities nor on the basis of the status quo; the boundaries, as they were, in the view of the commission, were due to historical accidents and administrative convenience and the Commission’s opinion was that it shall not prevail. If the Commission’s recommendation was to be implemented, India would have been made of 16 States (in place of the 27 States that were there at that time). The Commission’s recommended the following States to constitute the Indian Union: Madras, Kerala, Karnataka, Hyderabad, Andhra, Bombay, Vidharbha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Jammu & Kashmir.³⁹ In other words, the Commission’s recommendations were a compromise between administrative convenience and linguistic concerns.

It is important to note here that the Commission’s scheme envisaged Hyderabad to remain a separate State (despite the linguistic, geographical and administrative contiguity of the region with Andhra)⁴⁰ even while seeking the merger of Travancore-Cochin with the Malabar region of the Madras State to form Kerala; and Mysore with some other regions of Madras into Karnataka. The SRC, however, opposed the bifurcation of the Bombay State into Maharashtra and Gujarat but recommended a separate Vidharbha exclusive of the Bombay State. It also rejected the idea of a Punjabi *subha*.

VI

The Nehru regime, however, was guided by the principle of linguistic reorganization of the States to which the Indian National Congress had committed itself since 1920 and this was established, to some extent, in the States Reorganisation Act, 1956. The principle of linguistic states was put into effect in at least a limited sense; Andhra Pradesh, including the Hyderabad State came into existence by that in the same way as Kerala, including the Travancore-Cochin State and the Malabar district of Madras came into existence; and Karnataka came into being including the Mysore State and also parts of Bombay and Madras States. In all these cases, the core principle was linguistic identity. The Nehru regime, however, denied acceding to a similar demand in the case of the Gujarati speaking people for a separate State in that instance. However, this too was conceded in May 1960. And even after all these, the demand for a Punjabi *subha* continued to be described by the establishment as separatist until 1966; in that year, Punjab was trifurcated and two new States – Haryana and Himachal Pradesh – came into existence.⁴¹ The trifurcation of Punjab, however, brought to an end the process that was initiated by the Indian National Congress, in 1920, to put language as the basis for the reorganization of the provinces.

In conclusion, it may be said that the fears that were expressed by the S.K.Dar Commission, the JVP committee and the States Reorganisation Commission turned out to be misplaced. Indian unity, or the notion of the national, came to be threatened only when this principle was run down and the demand for linguistic reorganization of the States was condemned as being inimical to the national. The struggle for Andhra, the agitations in Bombay, Gujarat and elsewhere between 1956 and 1960 and the campaign that the Akali Dal spearheaded for a Punjabi speaking State until 1966 were all evidence to this. In other words, the struggles ceased that very moment when the demand was accepted. In a sense, reorganization of states on linguistic lines strengthened the national and the nation rather than unravel it in any way.

References:

- 1 The Lectures delivered between January and March, 1961 and compiled into a book titled *What is History* will perhaps be a means to liberate history teaching in our schools and colleges. The prevailing method of teaching history in our schools successfully reduces the discipline into a compendium of facts about wars fought, territory annexed and structures that the Kings and the Emperors built. Apart from turning away the young minds from the discipline, it also helps construct a mindset in the present that would celebrate similar acts by the rulers in our own times.
- 2 E.H.Carr, *What is History*, Penguin Books, 1964, page 11.
- 3 In pursuance of a resolution passed at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress (1927), the Congress Working Committee convened an All Parties Conference in February 1928 at Delhi and subsequently at Bombay in May 1928. The Bombay meet of the All Parties Conference set up a committee, under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru, with a brief to “determine the principles of the Constitution for India”. The report of this committee, that came to be called the *Nehru Report*, submitted in August 1928, was indeed acclaimed by constitutional experts as “not only an answer to the challenge that Indian Nationalism was

unconstructive” but the “frankest attempt yet made by Indians to face squarely the difficulties of communalism”.

- 4 For a complete text of the Nehru Report, see B.Shiva Rao (ed), *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents*, Universal, 1967. Volume I pp 59-75.
- 5 Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Padma Publications, 1946. Volume I, pp 56-57.
- 6 *Ibid.* Volume II, page 80.
- 7 The Andhra Provincial Committee did not include the Telengana region and was restricted to the coastal districts and the Rayalaseema region that were part of the Madras Province then.
- 8 The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee was restricted to the Malabar district region of the Madras Province and excluded the Travancore and the Cochin States.
- 9 The Provincial Committee did not have any representation from the Mysore State and was made of representatives from the Kannada speaking region of the Madras Province.
- 10 Sitaramayya, *op. cit.* Vol. I, page 55.
- 11 There is indeed a sea change in Nehru's approach to the past in the post 1937 period from that of his views as stated in his Autobiography (completed in 1935 and first published in 1936). Nehru himself states that his understanding of India was based, until the time he completed his autobiography, on some fleeting visits to places in the United Provinces; and that it began to change during his extensive tours across the country and to the hinterlands, beginning with the campaign tours in 1937 and in the couple of years since then; Nehru's expressions on a variety of subjects changed after these and are found in *The Discovery of India* (completed in September 1944 and first published in 1946).
- 12 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 1981. p 59. The essay, titled The Search for India, from where these parts are cited, is among the many where Nehru delves into the past and its importance to the present and the future of India.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Congress Election Manifesto, October 26, 1945. See Appendix V to B.Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *Why Vote Congress*, Hind Kitabs, Bombay, 1945. Page 77. Also see Sitaramayya, *op. cit.* Volume II, page i.
- 15 It may be noted here that the Constituent Assembly was constituted by members elected by the representatives of the various Provincial Legislative Assemblies that were in existence since early 1946. The indirect election of the Constituent Assembly was found to be the next best alternative to one elected directly by universal adult suffrage (only 28.5 % of the adult population were voters in the elections given the restrictions based on property ownership and other considerations that guided the poll process then. But this proposal was accepted by the leaders of the movement at that time in order to save time and hasten the process of drafting independent India's constitution) and it consisted, to begin with, of 296 members including the Congress, the Muslim League, Landlords, Communists and such others. The Muslim League, however, decided against joining the assembly. Similarly, the Indian States went unrepresented in the assembly at the time of its constitution. 93 members joined the assembly subsequently (in stages) and the process was completed as late as in October 1949, i.e. until a month before the Constitution was adopted by the assembly. It may be added that Hyderabad had not sent its representatives even at that time. The representatives from the States were

either elected (where the Indian States merged with an existing province) or by nomination (by the Rulers where they existed as independent provinces after merger into the Indian Union). All this notwithstanding, the Indian States ceased to exist at the time of adoption of the Constitution even if they were classified as Part B States, was one of the same kind as that of the other provinces.

- 16 Cited in Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, OUP, Delhi, 1966, page 241.
- 17 Austin cites at least 4 resolutions in the first session of the Constituent Assembly in support of the demand and incidentally all those were from members from States that witnessed movements for linguistic reorganization in the decade and half after independence.
- 18 After August 15, 1947, the Constituent Assembly also worked as the Union Parliament and this arrangement continued until the constitution of the First Lok Sabha after the general elections of 1951-52. Nehru made this announcement in his capacity as the Prime Minister.
- 19 S.K.Dar, a retired judge of the Allahabad High Court was its chairman; Pannalal, a former civil servant and Jagat Narain Lal, a member of the Constituent Assembly were appointed members of the Commission.
- 20 It may be noted that the Sapru Committee was perhaps the earliest response to the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks of September 1944. Though not a direct initiative of the Indian National Congress, it is important to note that all the 30 members of the Committee, including its chairman, Tej Bahadur Sapru, and such others as S.Radhakrishnan, N.Gopalswami Ayyangar, Sachidananda Sinha and M.R.Jayakar, were members of the Constituent Assembly and also emerge as the most articulate sections in the assembly. Hence, their views on the various issues including that of the linguistic reorganization of the states assume importance.
- 21 Constitutional Proposals of the Sapru Committee, 1945. Cited in B.Shiva Rao (ed) *op. cit.* Volume I, pp 155-56
- 22 Granville Austin notes that Rajendra Prasad, in his capacity as chairman of the Constituent Assembly had sought a commission consisting of representatives of the various Provincial Governments and that the proposal was dropped on the intervention from Nehru and Sardar Patel. Austin avers that the composition of the three-member Commission formed subsequently had determined the sense of the report too. Austin's description of Jagat Narain Lal, the lone representative of the Constituent Assembly in the Commission, as a "listless member from Bihar" says it all. Austin's conclusion makes sense when seen in the context of the events that followed in this regard.
- 23 Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, December 10, 1948. A full text of the report is reproduced in B.Shiva Rao (ed), *op. cit.*, Volume 4, pp 439-509.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Report of the Linguistic Provinces Committee appointed by the Jaipur Congress*, Indian National Congress, New Delhi, 1948. page 1.
- 27 *Ibid.* page 2.
- 28 *Ibid.* pp 2-3.
- 29 *Ibid.* pp 4-5.
- 30 *Ibid.* page 6.

- 31 *Ibid.* page 8.
- 32 *Ibid.* page 9.
- 33 Article 3, as adopted on November 26, 1949 read as follows: Parliament may by law- (a) form a new State by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States by uniting any territory to a part of any State; (b) increase the area of any State; (c) diminish the area of any State; (d) alter the boundaries of any State;
- 34 The constitutional position in this regard is that a Bill to create a new State either by partitioning an existing State or merging two or more States can be introduced in Parliament only after the President of the Republic makes a reference and the reference is made to the State concerned. It is not necessary that the concerned States have to concur. A mere reference, however, is necessary and sufficient for a Bill to be introduced in Parliament.
- 35 The Bill to form a new State by taking away the Telugu speaking regions from the then Madras State was moved in the Lok Sabha on August 10, 1953. This was the first ever instance of the formation of a State that approximated as much as possible to a linguistic province.
- 36 The Commission consisting of Justice Fazl Ali, K.M.Pannikar and H.N.Kunzru was set up in August 1953 and this was as much a response by the Union Government (as was the Bill to form the Andhra State) to the fast and the martyrdom of Potti Sriramulu.
- 37 *Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, 1955*, Government of India, New Delhi. Page 17.
- 38 *Ibid.* page 45.
- 39 *Ibid.* page 46.
- 40 *Ibid.* page 203. It is important to note here that the Commission's scheme envisaged Hyderabad to remain a separate State (despite the linguistic, geographical and administrative contiguity of the region with Andhra) even while seeking the merger of Travancore-Cochin with the Malabar region of the Madras State to form Kerala; and Mysore with some other regions of Madras into Karnataka. It was also against bifurcation of the Bombay State into Maharashtra and Gujarat but recommended a separate Vidharbha exclusive of the Bombay State. It also rejected the idea of a Punjabi Subha.
- 41 It may be noted here that Hyderabad then was that part which was under the Nizam's rule prior to integration and is not the same as the Telengana State as demanded now. The demand seemed closer to realization at the time of writing this paper.
- 42 There is indeed a consensus among contemporary political thinkers that the long delay in recognizing the linguistic basis in the Punjab was indeed a strong basis for the rise of communal politics in the State and the build-up, in the late Seventies, into a separatist slogan there.

Beauty, Body and Modernity: Understanding Feminism in Contemporary India.

Koushiki Dasgupta *

*'She was fairer than the champak flower
Sweet innocence there was in every line
Her winsome ways did reason o're power
Her sidelong glances charged with wrath divine'*¹

When beauty takes on a sensual tone, accentuating the sensual aspects of embodiment, enhancement of beauty and fulfillment of bodily sensations according to the senses largely depends on external resources to make it perfect and complete. Even if beauty lies within, its manifestation becomes necessary for the modern 'self' because at both the physical and sociological level, the body appears to be crucial for the cultivation and experience of the gendered identity.² Not making much points to the notion that women speaks through her body, it must be acknowledged that the embodied experience of womanhood could be articulated best by the interactions between bodily senses and the conditions addressing the elements of everyday experiences. Infact the body appears to be a means of commutation through which multiple identities of the subject are realized as parts of selfhood. Here the elements of speech, imagination, memory, cultural traits equally play their respective roles in constructing the embodied self like that of male and female gaze.³ This question of gazing as well as the question of being looked at very often comes into a form of power culture where the rubric of controlling the 'self' primarily lays within the structure of practical and material aspects of gendered embodiment because here the body remains neither as subject nor object rather as 'the vehicle of being in the world.' Therefore body evolves as a site for introducing and shaping up worldly experiences in a context of different identities like caste, class, ethnicity and others.⁴ However, it is class which provides the primary impetus of situating the female body into the modern world structured according to the languages of an embodied self in a multicultural milieu.⁵ Keeping in mind the feminist critic on the naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality, it can safely be said that one may not born but rather becomes a women not simply by bodily experience but by a set of socio political experiences making way into the world of bodily senses.⁶ The process is not a simple one .As soon as the so-called distinction between the 'female' and the 'women' becomes visible on the ground of cultural interpretations assigned to the body, femininity emerges as that a way of being which imparts its self definitions according to the embodied styles of presentation depending her position in the society.⁷ Now the body turns to be a machine with parts to be changed, renovated and even modified and it is

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done only to conform the criterions of femininity approved by the embodied self in a world claims to be modern. This project not only denies agency to womanhood as master of her own historical situations but also makes her tool of experiments best fitted with the requirements of modernity sanctioned by the market and the society to a greater extent. This paper seeks to make an understanding of how the female body goes into extreme vulnerability when put into the context of cultural politics addressed by the languages of gender, class and beauty. It is a question to be asked and resolved to take up the challenges put before modernity as a whole from a last few decades. In this paper some selected issues of the Indian beauty industry have been taken into consideration just to open up the debates for further explorations. In the way of discussion the fashion magazines, fashion shows, beauty contests, cosmetic markets, life style products and related issues have been emphasized to interrogate the notions of 'danger' and 'crisis' into the world of beauty appropriating femininity as an embodied subject.

In the understanding of the social and cultural changes in India, the concepts like subjectivity, modernity and nativity have been used widely by the post modernist scholars while negating the meta-narratives of larger historical and institutional forces. But the colonial past and related historical experiences does not provide India an easy access into the world of modernism because the term 'modern' as 'progressive' and native as 'backward' could not be defined by the binary concepts of developed and underdeveloped in post colonial India. The relations of power might have gone through a complex process of change after independence but India could hardly make any escape from the dilemmas of getting into traditional at a time talking about modernism at large. The entire debate on beauty and women embodiment falls into certain norms of structural consequences because in India modernism seems to have been a vague term used differently for different sections of the society. It is not a mere concern but an alarmist issue to define beauty and style of Indian womanhood conforming modernism in a globalised world. The matter is not of 'what' and 'when' but of 'why' and 'how'. The religious rules ascribing the norms of beauty and fashion for women in ancient documents prioritized the caste, class and marital status of a women, however, in post colonial times beauty and fashion statements of any Indian women often creates confusion on her class, age and ethnic identity and the social adaptability of that woman largely depends on the ambiguous impressions drawn by her viewers of different class, age and ethnic backgrounds. For instance woman taking interest on western style of attires and making regular visits to the beauty salons are considered to be less 'traditional' and less 'Indian' in comparison to those adhered to Indian style of attires and beauty statements.⁸ Indian women are forging a kind of physiological as well as sociological fight to look 'progressive' and 'modern' at a same time meeting contradictory demands. No one can deny the fact that women are empowered through their bodies to a greater extent and their class position in the society bears a close relation with their every day bodily experiences. Bodily experiences are being expressed better by self reflecting tropes than any other things but female body in India is being viewed always by the modes of national or community identities—an object of purity and sacredness.⁹ Therefore a modern Indian woman carries the twin responsibilities of fitting her bodily experiences well into the domain of national pride as well as to take the challenges of the world around her. In this world the gendered selves are seen to be in an adjustment with her class and caste context which might have ensured

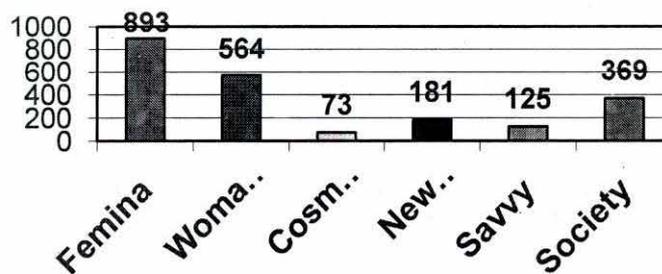
some sort of recognition for the woman in the society. A trend of upward mobility for more recognition could be traced in different caste and class contexts where identities were not made but 'transformed' for status and privileges in the society.¹⁰ The booming beauty product markets in India indicates that within a next few decades India would become the largest cosmetic consuming country in the world. In spite of the global economic recession, the growing fashion consciousness and rising beauty concern of the Indian women, the cosmetic industry registered sales Rs 356.6 Billion in 2009 and the number is increasing rapidly.¹¹ A huge number of international and local beauty brands are opening outlets in the metro cities and huge range of beauty care products are entering into the Indian market every day.¹²

India's integration with the global beauty industry opened up other channels of interrogation of how the female body is getting being endangered apart from the glittering persona entrusted upon her by the so called beauty standards of the market. Marketing the beauty and making beauty marketable is the two parts of the same story. Beauty pageants in India are the best examples shown in this category. In India, *Femina*—the fashion magazine conducts Miss India pageants every year and this contest gives young Indian women a direct chance to step forward into the glamour industry in near future. The whole training programme prior to the event puts the maximum possible effort to create a future Miss India or Miss World by employing the best expert trainers from Indian film, fashion and beauty industry. By simply positioning the women body as not beautiful enough, the training programme makes the contestants objects of experiments and transformation.¹³ Its fundamental attention was on a strict diet regime and a fairer skin. Both of these issues made the bodily experiences an important part of the cultural discourse produced by colonialism into the domain of what it called the 'third world'. In this domain of culture the non western women particularly those from the post colonial countries were placed on a homogeneous category of 'they', different from the white skinned women of the west—referred as 'we' in western feminist discourses. The stereotypes of a slim body and fair skin have been used as the mark of a strategic power relation where the western women appeared as the dictators and others simply as recipients or followers. This process should not be taken as a modified version of westernization or colonization rather it must be viewed as a component of the same cultural politics where power comes either in a form of social mobilization or in a form of psychological perversion.¹⁴ The cultural tropes of slim body and fair skin, if not universally, sprang from the similar hegemonic relation of power in India. Interestingly that group of women, who shared a natural ability to connect themselves with this process, became the chief signatories of modernity in India. They proved themselves able to read the languages of power far more quickly than their other counterparts. The English medium trained girls from an upper class or upper middle class background responded easily to this new culture of modernity, defined and exploited in the languages of domination and control. One may argue in this regard that this process did not have the same impact on women of different class, caste or habitation; however, the drop-outs were not left untouched forever. The beauty pageants, knowingly or unknowingly became the prime markers of social change in India. The social prejudices on fair skin or slim body was taken to a height by these contests while the market forces appeared here as the main beneficiaries of change. But numerous cosmetic products used for conforming the

standards of international beauty somehow spoiled the vision and mission of Indian beauty—a state of purity emanates from within and comes to get manifested fully either by proper cultivation or nourishment. This nourishment had little to do with a diet control slim body or a technical regime of enhancing fairness by external chemicals. Skin bleaching materials, lesser treatment equipments has flooded the market already and the beauticians are not hesitant in prescribing them in the name of making the girls more and more confident. The beauty pageant contestants and the glamour world women are appearing here as the role models for the common Indian women although the doctors and dermatologists are equally paying their concern on the use of chemicals on female body. V.K Sharma, Head of the dermatology department at the All India institute of Medical Sciences said that if anybody applies anything on the skin, there will be side effects obviously,¹⁵ but the advertisements have completely washed up the minds of the people and its now not a concern for Indian society only. Dr. Eliot F. Battle Jr., a dermatologist in Washington echoed that the skin lightening creams “not only contains corticosteroids, but mercury,” a poison that can damage the nervous system also.¹⁶ In India where skin lightening is related with social standards and higher social adaptability, the side effects are rarely been observed or even acknowledged. The steroids used in the products may lead to high blood sugar, hypertension and other fatal diseases like skin cancer. In this regard it may be pointed out that growing incidents of skin cancer have been traced in India from a last few decades. It was proved in medical research that dark skin people are less affected by skin related diseases in comparison to the white skinned people because of the level of melanin present in their skin, protects it from Ultra Violet induced damages and acts as a natural barrier to the penetration of Ultra Violet rays into the skin¹⁷ Dark skin containing more melanin than the fair skin is better protected against Ultra Violet related diseases. The regular use of different fairness creams reduces the level of melanin pigments from our body and the skin lacks its natural resistant against sun burn and other skin related diseases. Side by side continuous use of fairness creams makes our skin photosensitive and a sudden withdraw of those creams cause skin problems. The common concern is that in most of the cases these fairness creams do not mention the amount of bleaching agents on the pack and the consumers use it without any scientific safeguards. Unfortunately there is no law in India which could make the consumers sure about the ingredients used in a fairness cream because the manufacturers are not bound to mention it on the pack and due to lack of chemical knowledge the common consumers do not even understand the meaning of the ingredients. Such a condition does not indicate a healthy picture of medical consciousness in India and the female body has ever remained to be the chief victim of the situation. the first fairness cream, *Fair & Lovely*, was launched by the *Hindustan Liver*, in 1976 . It assured to make skin fairer and beautiful, however, in the era of globalization a host of skin lightening products like the *Fairever*, *Fairglow*, Emami’s *Gold Turmeric and Naturally Fair*, and Revlon’s *Fair & Glow* entering the market. It has been noted that there was a 25 percent increase in the gross domestic sales of cosmetics and personal care products from 1996 to 2000 with the Indian cosmetic market in 2000 estimated at about \$160 million (p. 11) In 2003, the fairness products scored 40 percent of the profits of the Indian cosmetic industry with a rapidly increasing market.¹⁸

The Indian women's understanding of their embodied self was influenced by the international beauty standards to an extent that the beauty contests were seen to transforming the classical notions of beauty in India. Femina, the women's magazine as well as the organizer of Miss India contest very year, is performing the same job of transforming Indian beauty standards in the print media.¹⁹ The image of an Indian beauty with voluptuous body and an overexposed aura of sexuality have been replaced by the western standards of beauty because Femina believes that India women are now exposed to the same stresses and workloads like her western counterparts. As a result the entire vision of beauty must go for a change and the female body should be the focus of these changes. Now the female body, as the Femina interprets is being viewed more than a machine of reproduction rather a mirror of the self which could be the right choice for 'All the Women You Are'.²⁰ Echoing Parmeswaran, it can be said that the women of this society redefine themselves and they employ the pages of a magazine to alter the terrain of society and produce multiple identities for themselves, making sure that representations of femininity, race and nation become alloyed with global culture. However, the Femina has proved be the highest rating magazine in India while the beauty contests holding by Femina already went to a point of imagery from where the Indian women could hardly make any return.²¹

The following figure by the National Readership Survey 2006 on Comparative Readership of Women's Magazine shows the popularity of Femina in a national context.



(The National Readership Survey was conducted by A.C Nielsen, covering population 12 years and above, all India urban and rural areas and a sample size over 200,000).²²

Apart from the stereotype of a fair skin, body weight seems to take the next important place in reconstructing womanhood in contemporary India. An obsession with the body weight affected more or less all the young Indian women including the aspirants of different beauty titles. The urgency of leaving perfect impression on the viewers not only indicates the points of social insecurity of the women but also creates an illusion of getting higher social acceptance on virtue of a slim body. Interestingly the medical benefits of a slim body are widely recognised to get rid of obesity and other diseases, the Indian women's craze for a perfect body shape mainly centred round the very parameters of fashion and beauty. The body is simply appropriated here by the media culture which has evolved as the single tool of constructing multiple identities for Indian women to meet up the western standards. the ideal of an ultra thin female body has widened up the

markets of fitness and beauty industry in India. But the worst effect of this weight obsession is being felt in eating habit disorders resulting in a chain of disease.²³

India is a fast-developing country that has been exposed for more than a decade to Western culture in the form of Western media. With an increase in globalization of the Indian economy and greater emphasis on meeting international standards in every sphere, girls and women in India are increasingly exposed to Western media images.²⁴ However, India is not an exception here. The other Asian countries are also thriving with the same problems of weight obsession among young women population. For an instance in Japan it has been observed that Plumpness has been well accepted in many non-Western cultures as a sign of prestige and affluence. Consequently, many researchers felt eating disorders and the desire for thinness would be rare in Asian countries. Therefore, the recent phenomenon of a desire for thinness in Japan is quite surprising.²⁵ In Africa where body weight and eating ideals had never been an issue but the Black and mix races are now 'in a socio-cultural flux between traditional cultural values and the values installed by the modern western society.'²⁶ If this is rising as a global concern, in the societies like India weight obsession is changing the outlooks of women on their clothing and hairstyle also. In a society where wearing western dresses is getting acceptance as a sign of looking progressive and 'modern', thinness has become a necessity to fit the body into those western attires. As a result both the western clothing and fitness industry is rising day by day in a country like India.²⁷ Side by side the advertising and modeling industry is also making profit out of the trends. Indian females wearing traditional Indian dresses are not considered to be modern or even 'sexy' in comparison to those exposed to these values. However, this trend did not go unparallel. The idioms and aesthetics of multiculturalism is giving way to a similar trend of 'indigeniousim' which has authenticated a new standard of looking 'modern' and 'ethnic' at a same time. But such an impression has mostly been carried by a section of the upper class urban women than the common masses. Infact the determination of an authentic Indian look and beauty has not yet been defined and whose defination would prevail—is a question coming within the beauty industry itself. The sheer anxiety of overlapping the term modernism with westernism has been reduced to a third arena of interrogation where looking sexy and accessible interacted with the ideas of modernity and sensuality on the same tune. This feature particularly posed a threat to the pattern of iconicization of the figure of the women as symbol of the national society. A great deal of writing has already devoted on the way by which the figure of the women has supplied the idiom of nationalism during colonial struggle and in the articulation of post colonial modernity. However, the most influential thinking on the power of 'gazing' comes from the writings of Michel Foucault who has talked about the relationship of knowledge and power in area of practices.²⁸ His theory on the controlling power of the 'gaze' might be seen on the ground of gender discourse where the controlling power of the 'male gaze' has been overemphasized. The clothing style, the beauty fashion statements are the sites of control where the female figure has been projected according to the male gaze fantasy and it is this pleasure of looking which depicted women 'in a quite different way from men—not because the feminine is different from the masculine—but because the ideal spectator is always assumed to be male'.²⁹ However, the question of female gazing has never been taken into priority because it is believed that female gaze has less to do with eroticism and the women have

hardly any control over the politics of business prevalent in beauty industry and media culture. Female gaze is obsessed with the imageries of one's self and a dominant part of this gazing is influenced by the judgement that whether these imageries would be able to satisfy other's expectations or not.³⁰ The definition of this 'other' may change time to time according to the growing priorities of a women in the society the gendered identity of this 'other' could hardly have any change. Mass mediated images of beauty is completely dominated by the male world and its capitalist profit. Fair skin, ultra thin body as well as the tricks to look more 'sexy' are related with a chain of beauty related businesses and the entire beauty industry profits of off female body to the maximum extent.

Viewing the body as a social object means a continuous process of making and unmaking. Therefore, the concept of a embodied or gendered self centers round producing and experiencing and transforming the body into one of a subject body. The body and the self are related with each other so closely and both of them interact with the society in the same mode of communication. In this process of communicating with the society, the public body appears to be different from the private body. The public body remains too much vulnerable to the challenges and threats of a modern world more, but that vulnerability could be transmitted easily into the private body and sense of beauty might have been used here as an tool for negotiating with the languages of vulnerability. In India, the female body as a colonial as we a post colonial construct is easily accessible and open for subjectification by different external forces. In the name of globalization the western standards of beauty are simply stepping into the most vulnerable versions of a female body which has already been perceived as a site of struggle in post colonial India. The growing obsession for fair skin and slim body has brought some new areas of concern into focus. In a poor country like India how the question of eating disorder among the women affects the social condition and economic condition of the people or how the women from lower middle or lower classes are tackling these issue of beauty in opposition to their long standing cultural believes and attitudes. What happens when the spread of western body ideal creates different notions of modernity within the same society, the idea of modernity itself becomes a site of contestation between multiple identities assigned to the female body at certain historical points? These are not mere question rather these issues must be treated as human right issues in a country like India. When the Indian women will be empowered enough to act as agents of active social change, the situation may go for a change. Wide scale media literary and useful policies of the state could help to reconstruct a new image of womanhood in India because it is the woman herself who is the real master of her destiny at last. Making women confident about their power of changing the society, the mental fixity for fairness and slim body could be diminished and only then the real modernity could be achieved by the women. This modernity will not treat her as a body rather an individual self, embodied not as a gendered subject but as the mark of eternal aesthetic beauty.

Notes and References

1. Quoted from Mirza Mohammad Hadi Ruswa, *Umrao Jan Ada*, (translated from the Urdu by Khushwant Singh and M.A Husaini), New Delhi, 2006, pp.21-22

2. Women's embodiment is closely related with the idioms of gender and identity in the everyday life of the woman. Body appears as a ground of appropriating the experiences of the world. Detailed analysis body and embodiment has done by Meenakshi Thapan, *Living the Body, Embodiment, Womanhood and Identity in Contemporary India*, New Delhi, 2009, pp.1-2
3. For a detailed analysis on the controlling power of 'gazing' see Stuart Hall's comments in Evans. Jessica and Stuart Hall, ed. *Visual Culture, The Reader*, London, 1999, pp.309-14 also Brooker.Peter, *A Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory*, London, 1999, pp.89-91. Jamman orraine and Margaret Marshment ed. *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*, London, 1988, pp.1-7 among others.
4. The body and bodily experiences lay at the heart of the society and our sense of the self. How the body is related with the society and how the body is getting being exposed to worldly experiences is a matter of sociological concern. Anthony Synnott described,

'The body social is many things, the prime symbol of the self , but also of the society, it is something we have, yet also what we are, it is both subject and object at the same time, it is individual and personal, as unique as a finger point or odourplume,yet it is also common to all humanity. The body is both an individual creation, physically and phenomenological and a cultural product, it is personal and also state property.' Synnott Anthony, *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society*, New York, 1993.

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7. Judith Butler, 'Variations on Sex and Gender; Beauvoir, Witting and Foucault' in *Feminism as Critique* ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucila Cornell, London, 1987
8. See R.Burnes and J.B Eicher ed. *Dress and Gender, Making and Meaning*, (Providence 1/ Berg, 1992, pp.202-7
9. For example see, Kumkum Sangeri and Suresh Vaid, *Recasting Women, Essays in Colonial History*, Delhi, 2006, pp.1-26; Partha Chatterjee, 'Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question' in the Kumkum Sangeri, *ibid*.
10. See, Sharmila, Rage, 'Dalit Women Talk Differently; A Critique of Difference and Towards a Dalit Feminist Standpoint Position', in Maitrayee Chaudhuri, ed. *Feminism in India*, New Delhi, 2011 pp.211-225.
11. See Upadhyaya, U, India's 'New Economic Policy of 1991 and its Impact on Women's Poverty and Aids', *Feminist Economics*, 2000, 6(3),. pp.105-122

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Epistemic Value of Memoir: Some Reflections

Raghunath Ghosh*

I. Introduction

A memoir is a piece of auto-biographical writing, usually shorter in nature than a comprehensive auto-biography. The memoir often tries to capture certain highlights or meaningful moments in one's past. The memoir may be more emotional and concerned with capturing particular scenes, of the series of events, rather than documenting every fact of a person's life, e.g., auto-biography, confession, diary, journal, letter, personal essay etc. The present paper intends to examine whether the stories gathered through these memoirs have got any epistemic value or not. When an event is proved to be true, it is taken to be having an epistemic value. If some thing has got an epistemic value, it is to be contributory to the formation of history. Whether the incidents acquired through these memoirs have got an epistemic value or not is proposed to be undertaken here.

II. Memoir and its Contribution to the formation of History

Historical data are facts and hence they are taken to be true. The truth of such data is not to be taken as *a-priori* but it is to be authenticated and proved epistemologically. In Indian tradition there many theories of knowledge through which they can be proved to be true. There is long drawn debate in the history of Indian epistemology whether memoir can be taken as a right cognition (*pramā*) or not. The philosophers of Nyāya persuasion believe that there are four types of right cognitions, viz, perceptual (*pratyakṣa*), inferential (*anumiti*), analogical (*upamiti*) and testimonial (*sābda*). On the other hand, the wrong cognitions arise from doubt (*samśaya*), illusion (*viparyaya*) and memory (*smṛti*). In this context a fundamental question remains: Can memoir provide us right cognition? The Indian thinkers consider it as untrue due to the fact that the cognition is generated by trace or impression alone (*'samskāra-mātra-janyam jñānam smṛtiḥ'*) leaving no scope for its verification. In other words, the incidents or statements gathered from memoir cannot be verified on account of the fact that the incident or the content of the statement is not occurring in our presence leading to the impossibility of their verifiability. Impression or trace (*'samskāra'*) is a compulsory factor for any cognition if there is a scope for its verifiability as found in 'recognitive cognition' (*'pratyabhijñā'*) which is stated to be generated by trace (*'samskāra-janya'*), but not by the 'trace alone' (*'samskāra-mātra-janya'*)¹. When there is a recognitive cognition such as 'This is that Debadatta' (*'so'yam devadattah'*), there is the impression of Debadatta seen earlier as well as his presence in a different place and time (*kālāntare*

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deśāntare). That my impression about Debadatta is correct is capable of being verified with the physical presence of him in different place and time. For this reason it is called authentic and hence historical. On the other hand, there are certain cognitions that are known as such depending on impression alone, e.g., memory etc. That is why; this type of memory-cognition cannot be verified due to the physical absence of the object leading to their absence of trustworthiness. Memoir remains in the latter group and hence it is not trustworthy due to their verification problem leading to non-formation of history.

Memoir can be taken as testimony if it comes from a reliable or trustworthy person (*'āpta-vacana'*)². Only the trustworthy person can say-‘My life is the message’ (*'Āmār jīvanai vāñī'*), which is to be taken as testimony by the rest of the people. But what about other ordinary people? Can their statements based on memoir be taken as authentic? A person who is free from illusion (*bhrama*), forgetfulness (*pramāda*), and weakness due to the defect of the sense-organs (*vipralipsā*) is to be taken as ‘reliable’ (*'āpta'*). How do we know that an individual is free from these defects? There is no mechanism to know that they are free from such defects. Even somebody has got record of having no such defects, there is no guarantee regarding the fact that afterwards he has not developed such defects. An individual may be taken as reliable due to not having any past record of cheating others etc. From this can it be proved that in future he may not be involved in such activities? In other words, an individual may not have forgetfulness or weakness in sense-organs for the time being, but it may happen that he develops such habits afterwards. Hence, the cited criteria of reliability are not acceptable.

Apart from above memoir is stated to be associated with the following impediments:

- i) Too much narrative structure, which cannot be verified due to the absence of the object.
- ii) Too much usage of irony, symbolism, imagery, which may lead us to the world of confusion.
- iii) Too much influence of fictional quality which has less importance in ascertaining historicity of facts.
- iv) Language as such cannot grasp the reality as endorsed by the Buddhists who admit that an object is of ‘unique particular’ (*'svalakṣaṇa'*) due to its momentary nature. An entity endowed with such character can grasp the reality, which is ultimately real (*paramārthasat*). Memoir being expressed through language is not free from such defects.
- v) In memoir the whole fact is not documented, but in stead it gives a fraction of the same, which cannot form a holistic picture.

In short, it can be said that memoirs are normally associated with the above factors which may lead us to the realm of skepticism. If there is any skeptical doubt regarding some entity or some explanation or interpretation, it cannot provide us epistemic value due to having its confusive character. An incident or description is stated to be having an epistemic value, if it is verified through some accepted means of knowing (*pramāṇas*). Too much linguistic jugglery including the use of metaphors, imagery etc sometimes hides the real nature of an object. That is why; the Buddhists logicians are in favour of

not accepting language as a means of knowing, because to them 'language' is nothing but 'mental ascription' or 'fiction' ('*kalpanā*'), which covers the true nature of an object ('*samvṛti-satya*').³ Hence an object is to be known directly through perception (*pratyakṣa*) alone.

III. History and its Relation to Time:

History is not the study of the 'past' only but 'the continuous present'. In every moment history is being created. We are 'upon the Time' and that is why, creating history. The theory of Time given by Sri Aurobindo is interpreted as 'Philosophy of History'.⁴ Anything changing under time is history and hence each event is 'historical'. If this theory is accepted, every thing is to be treated to be historical. It is also evident from the following *Mantra* of the Rigveda:

*"Kālo bhūtimasṛjata, kāle tapati sūryah/
Kālo ha viśvā bhūtāni kāle sūryo vipaśyati//"*⁵

The spirit of the *Mantra* quoted above is to show that each and every thing is happening under the influence of time and hence historic in the true sense of the term. The Vedic seers also acknowledged that time has created animals, the Sun shines through the grace of time, all animals in this earth are under time and the Sun can illuminate all through the influence of time alone. Nothing remains outside the purview of time and hence nothing remains outside the purview of history.

Rabindranath also endorses the same idea in his *Śeṣer Kavita*. To him all is historic as opposed to static. When a lover becomes united with his lady-love, time is a causal factor. The same time- factor works when there is a separation of the both. It is nothing but the play of time as mentioned in the following verse:

*"Kāler yātrār dhvani śunite ki pāo? Tāri rath nityai udhāo,
... Ogo bandhu, sei dhāvamān kāl, jadāye dharilo
More pheli tār jāl tule nilo drutarathe..."*⁶

That is, can you hear the sound of the journey of time in this world? The chariot of time is always moving faster. This kinetic time has dragged me towards its moving chariot after spreading its own net. It proves that everything is under the influence of time and hence there is nothing which is stated to be ahistorical.

III. Positive Role of Memoir

Memoir provides us its connection with a particular time. Without the help of memoir creation of history is not at all possible. It is true that memoir of the past, immediate or remote, has got a direct relationship with history which cannot be ignored, but the content of memoir must be authenticated. In order to authenticate the content of memoir other corroborative factors are to be investigated. Truth in it is to be determined through other evidences like relics, old newspapers, literature, old people who had witnessed the incidents without depending solely on what is available in memoirs. The content of the memoir may generate a curiosity in one's mind to determine the truth and falsity of the matter through other corroborative evidences. Hence the content of memoir may be a pointer to the reality which constitutes history and hence memoir has got some

instrumental value of its own. If the content of memoir is substantiated through corroborative evidences, verification and cross references, the past will start speaking many things creating a new history, which we always look for. Rabindranath endorses the same idea with the following lines in his poem-‘*Atīt*’:

*“He atīt, tumi bhuvane bhuvane kāj kare jāo gopane gopane,
mukhar diner capalatā mājhe sthir haye tumi rao/
he atīt, tumi gopan hṛdaye kathā kao, kathā kao//”⁷*

That is, the past acts silently in this manifold world. It remains silent while others are busy with their works. Possessing a secret heart let the past speak silently. In other words, the past, if analyzed or interpreted properly, can explore many untold stories with its secret heart. Even the static stone of the mountain can sing a beautiful song illuminating our glorious past (‘*gīta gāyā pāttharone*’). The past can provide us a lot of information if it is interpreted correctly with the help of other corroborative evidences.

Even the past can illumine us with its inherent light if proper care is taken and proper analysis is done. The same idea has also been expressed in the following poem of Rabindranath Tagore:

*“Atīter tīr hate je rātre bahibe dīrghaśvās
jharā bakuler kannā vyathibe ākāś,
sei kṣaṇe khunje dekho, kichhu mor pichhe rahilo se,
tomār prāṇer prānte, vismṛti-pradoṣe,
haito dibe se jyotih//”⁸*

That is, even the pathetic stories embedded in the past can provide us some ray of hopes in the history if they are properly interpreted. The great sigh arising out of lamentation of the fallen *Bakula* flower paining even the sky has got the capacity of generating rays of hope to our hearts if they are properly ‘searched for’ or ‘re-searched’ (as pointed out by the term ‘*khunje dekho*’) with the help of arguments and other determining factors.

IV. Conclusion

If someone is in a position to ‘search again’ the past, he will create history definitely without repeating the ‘*given facts*’ wherein lies the originality or creativity in history. This phenomenon of ‘*khunje dekhā*’ (‘to see after thorough search’) is otherwise called by the Naiyāyikas as ‘*anvīkṣā*’ (‘subsequent viewing’), from which the book dealing with argument or subsequent viewing is called *ānvīkṣikī*.⁹ Any argument or thesis substantiated with argument is subject to further rational scrutiny, which is called *anvīkṣā* or ‘re-search’ or ‘*khunje dekhā*’. Hence past is not to be taken as a closed chapter, but as store-house of thousand untold treasures that are to be brought out in light. Such creative or original work is history in the true sense of the term. For this memoirs may be taken as instruments if their epistemic values are adjudged through other corroborative factors.

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Language, Cross-cultural communication and Reality

Kantilal Das*

It has often been said that India is culturally rich and the real strength of Indians lies in 'unity within diversity'. India is culturally diversified and such cultural diversification is synthesized through language. The present world is just like a global family hinges on global *family resemblance* and criss-cross overlapping similarities and dissimilarities of cultural heritage. Language, in fact, actualizes our culture. The bondage between language and culture is predetermined. According to Hegel culture is the measure of things taken for granted and language is the most important of such things through which culture is actualized. Even Parmenides observed that the relation of the word to the thing is the key problem about which all culture and all knowledge finally turns. The inseparability of the word (language) and the thing (reality) is the postulate of all positive cultural epochs and the loosing of the word from the thing actually gives birth of *scepticism and relativism*. Humans' culture is all about the development of the relationship between language and things or objects. In this sense, there underlies an entwined assimilation among language, culture and reality. One should not, however, confuse between culture and civilization. One's culture is nothing but a way of explication of one's *baptismal ceremony*. The culture of a community accommodates logocentrism, but there underlies no logo centrism in civilisation. Civilisation is the mark of post-colonialism and post-modernism. Civilization is a radical transformation of individual outlook with the blessing of science and technology. Thus, there always remains a gulf between culture and civilisation.

Culture is something ingrained and *sue-generic* in nature, but civilization is something acquired and relatively transient and transparent.

What then is culture? The word 'culture' is etymologically stemming from the Latin word '*colere*' meaning 'to cultivate'. People learn culture as culture resides in all learned behaviour. According to social scientists culture consists of symbolic, ideational and tangible aspects of human societies and the essence of culture is not its artifacts, tools or other tangible (touchable, concrete, physical) cultural elements, *but how the members of the group interpret, use and perceive them in their form of life*. It is the value, symbols, interpretations and perspectives that distinguishes one people from another in modernized societies. Culture is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies, rather people within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts (things made by man) and behaviour in the similar ways. Culture is also said to be the *mankind's primary adoptive mechanism*, learned and shared human patterns of living pervading all

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aspects of human social interaction. It is also said to be the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another. Culture also includes all historically design, heritages existing at any given time as potential guidance for the behaviour of man.

How does language actualize humans' culture?

The exact nature of the relationship between language and culture has, in fact, fascinated people from a wide variety of backgrounds. It is language, i.e. sounds, words, and syntax of a language through which speakers of that language experience the world. It is true to say that culture reflects value through language and culture is used in the sense of whatever a person must know in order to function in a particular society. According to Goddenough "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves."¹ Therefore, cultural knowledge is socially acquired; it is something that can be learned. It is by no means come from any kind of genetic endowment. It is not something that has been determined generically or biologically. *Culture therefore is the knowledge that a person belonging to this community must possess to get through the task of daily living within his own form of life or community.*

There is no question of doubt that a man is known through his or her culture, his or her *baptismal ceremony* and the dignity of a society is based on the cultural development. Since language is the only medium of communication, people belonging to different culture can exchange their own culture to other. That means cultural exchange is made possible through language. Accordingly, language and culture *inter-alia* play an all important role in shaping individual and collective behaviour and values. One's culture is manifested through his language and the language of different tribes or communities are different. Therefore, there is a mechanism through which an inter-translatability of one language into other is made possible. Thus, the question of universal language and translation manuals come into consideration. Whether universal language is possible or not is a matter of debate, but one thing is sure that one language can be translatable or adaptable into another. In this sense, one can know the culture of other by knowing the meaning of other language through the process of inter-translatability or cross cultural mechanism. University Grand Commission of India in the recent past has introduced cultural exchange program in collaboration with foreign countries, such as, French, Germany etc., for university and college teachers and in this regard importance has been given only to those contenders having knowledge and mastery about language for the country they have desired to apply. This again reflects that knowing language of other country has paramount importance of knowing the culture of that country. Noam Chomsky one says that language is the mirror of human mind. Therefore, a person can be cognized by understanding his or her language through which his or her culture has been expressed. Language and cognition is inseparable. In this sense language is identical or at par with culture. Even Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* understands language through the 'form of life' or custom and it is another important dimension of the relationship between language, culture and reality.

As far as the relationship between language and culture is concerned, there we notice three views such as:

- (a) *The structure of a language determines the way in which speakers of that language view the world.*
- (b) *The culture of people finds reflection in the language they employ, because they value certain things and do then in certain way. Moreover, they come to use their language in ways that reflect what they value and what they do.*
- (c) *There is no relationship between language and culture.*

Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis

The view that the structure of language determines the way in which speakers of that language view the world is associated with the linguist Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf known as *Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis*. According to Sapir the relationship between language and culture is so involved that one cannot be comprehended without knowing the other. Sapir says, "Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of *particular language* which has become the medium of expression for their society."² Therefore, it would be wrong to suggest, Sapir remarks, that one can sense reality (culture) without the use of language and that language has merely an accidental means of solving specific problems of communication. The real world to a large extent is unconsciously built up on the language habits of our community because the language habits of our community actually predispose certain choice of our interpretation. Whorf, being a student of Sapir, has further extended what he has learnt from Sapir. According to Whorf there is a *predisposition or predilection* between language and culture and the relationship between language and culture is a deterministic one. Whorf says, "...the background linguistic system of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas, but rather is itself the sharper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stroke in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process... but is part of a particular grammar, and differs, from slightly to greatly, between different grammars. We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages."³ Whorf further contends that the world is presented before us just like a **kaleidoscope flux of impressions** which has to be organized by our minds and this is largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. The same point has been raised by Noam Chomsky who pronounces in his *Language and Mind* that 'language is the mirror of human mind'. Language as the mirror of human mind reflects the culture of the individual in the society or community in which he belongs to. With the help of linguistic systems we cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significance as we do. This is made possible for us as we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way. This agreement is made up of all the way through our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. According to Whorf, all linguistic observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe unless their linguistic background are similar or can in some way be calibrated.

According to Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis different speakers view or experience the world differently if the languages they use differ structurally. Reflecting on the **Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis**, Fishman goes on to say that if speaker of one language have certain words to describe things and speakers of another language lack similar words, then speaker of the first language will find it easier to talk about those things. For example, physicians' talk about medical phenomena is a case in point. If a person can classify camels, boats, and automobiles in certain ways, he will definitely perceive camels, boats, and automobiles differently from someone who does not require for making these differentiations. The grammatical categories available in a particular language not only help the users of that language to perceive the world in a certain way, but also at the same time limit such perception. In this regard every native speaker will act as a blinker as he perceives what his **language allows or predisposes him to perceive**. That is why Ronald Wardhaugh comments by saying, "Your language controls your 'world -view'. This may perhaps be attributed as the cosmopolitan view of language. Speakers of different languages will, therefore, have different world-views."⁴ One language may not be better than other language and every language is adequate for knowing the culture of its communality. Having said this, it, at times, contains worldviews that cannot be translated into another language. Culture is all about the getting hold of habits where language plays the all important role in facilitating the self-consciousness and rationality of human beings.

What has been said above is that language is just like an eye or just like a microscope through which one can express his own culture. Language determines how does a speaker perceive and organize the world around him. In this sense language helps to form your world-view. Language determines our experience for ourselves and we do not use language simply to report that experience. In this sense language is not neutral; rather language imposes on us habits of looking and thinking in the *form of our life*. This leads us to say that the language of a speaker actually determines his relation to the external world in one or more ways.

In recent times, Professor Bernstein's view of the relationship between language and culture is heavily influenced by Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis. Before the appearance of Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis, Bernstein was committed to the view that the deep structure of grammar actually regulated linguistic communication. In fact Bernstein regards **language as something which influences culture and is in turn influenced by culture**. For example, a child growing up in a particular linguistic environment and culture eventually learns the language of that environment as well as that culture and then proceeds to pass on that learning to the next generation. Bernstein is of the opinion that there underlies a direct and reciprocal or mutual relationship between a particular kind of social structure and the way people in that social structure use language. This relationship, in fact, is not contingent or *ad-hoc*, rather it would be continued from generation to generation. According to Bernstein, a particular kind of social structure leads to a particular kind of linguistic behaviour and this, in turn, reproduces the original social structure. Individuals learn their social roles through the process of communication and this process varies from social group to social group. This again reflects that language is all about of viewing or knowing the culture of a particular community.

The relevance of universal language

It is important to point out here that knowing all forms of language possessing by all communities in all over the world is not viable as it then goes beyond the capacity of a normal human being. That is why a form of universal language has been addressed by linguists. English, for example, may be supposed to be a model of universal language. This does not, however, make sense to say that people of the world, all without exception, know English. Here the term 'universal' should not be interpreted in logical sense. Rather it would be better to assume or presuppose that a universal language is a form of language that can be used internationally. In this way the so-called cultural exchange amongst people is made possible. Let us explain this point with an example. Suppose 10% to 15% people of each country can speak in English. They can learn the culture of others countries interchangeably. Having been acquired or learned the culture of other countries, they can help the people of their respective countries to know the culture of other countries through their native language. In this way universal language can help to know the culture of other countries.

Problem with universal language

What has been said above has a distinct negative impact. To know the culture of other community by interacting with them directly through their own native language is one thing and to know their culture indirectly through universal language mechanism is a different thing altogether. We think that knowing the culture of other community through universal language mechanism cited above is *ad-hoc*, unrevealing and superficial, because in such a case we use language just as an instrument of mere medium of communication. However, language is not just a mere medium of communication. Without knowing the language of other community, it would be very difficult to know the feeling, sentiments, and egos of these communities. As human culture consists of symbolic, ideational and tangible aspects of human societies and the essence of culture is not its artifacts, tools, it is something associated with the emotion, sentiment and egos that can be expressed through their own language. Therefore, knowing the culture of other communities through universal language actually overlooks so many things associated with their culture.

Inter-translatability mechanism

It is known to all of us that inter-translatability mechanism of language can help us to know the culture of other communities or countries. A person having the competence and mastery over more than one language can translate one language into other and thereby can help others to know the culture of other countries or communities. The speech of the Prime Minister of Indian in UNISCO in Hindi is a case in point.

Problem associated with inter-translatability mechanism

Like universal language, we are forced to overlook so many cultural aspects of other communities if attempt has been made to know the culture of other communities

with inter-translatability or cross cultural mechanism. Inter-translatability mechanism hinges on a link process where there are at least three individuals/parties out of which the middle man plays a dual role. Suppose A belongs to Bengali and C belongs to Nepali. A does not know Nepali and C does not know Bengali. B belongs to Shik community who knows Hindi, Bengali as well as Nepali languages. By virtue of knowing both Bengali and Nepali, B comes to know the culture of both Bengali and Nepali communities by interaction with them in their own language. Let us suppose that A is willing to know Nepali culture through B with the help of inter-translatability or cross cultural mechanism and also C is willing to know Bengali culture through B with the help of same mechanism. My own observation is that although both A and B have known the culture of Nepali, but as far as knowing the culture of Nepali is concerned, B would be far more better position than A. Again, although both B and C have known the culture of Bengali, but B would be in a far better position than C as far as knowing the Bengali culture is concerned. The difference actually lies in the *direct-contact theory*. B would be in a far better position than A and C, because B has acquired both Bengali and Nepali cultures by interacting with these communities face to face. This would not be the case in A and C. Knowing or cultivating culture of Nigerians through Television is different from knowing or cultivating their culture by knowing their own native language and also interacting with them face to face. This would be the problem of inter-translatability mechanism cited above.

Native language helps most in knowing culture

What has been revealed from the above is that if language is supposed to be the best possible means of knowing the culture (language is culture) of other communities, then, of course, it would be the native language which helps the most in knowing one's own culture. Since, culture is value, ethos of community, it would be better to know the native language of that community for knowing their own culture. In fact, attempt of knowing the culture of other community through universal language or inter-translatability mechanism actually alienates one community from the other community. It would be just like a *telephonic education* which is completely different from *class-room education*. Although telephonic or distance education is a form of education, but somehow or other it would be different from class-room education. Thus, knowing other culture is one thing and knowing other culture rightly is another matter. My own observation is that knowing other culture by knowing their native language is far more genuine than knowing other culture through universal language or through inter-translatability mechanism. Having said this, we cannot ignore the relevance of universal language or the inter-translatability mechanism as it would be quite ridiculous for people to know the native language of many communities. Therefore, it can be said that inter-translatability is certainly an option of sensing or realizing the culture of other communities. However, knowing the culture of other communities by knowing the language of these communities is certainly a better option.

Is culture language specific?

A relevant question may crop up in our mind: Is culture language specific? If native language of a community is supposed to be the best possible means of knowing the culture of this community, then does it not mean to say that culture is language specific? There is no question of debate that language is the bedrock of culture and one language cannot be better than another. In this sense we are *linguistically nonaligned*. At the same time it may perhaps be the case that there may have some ethos, may be religious ethos, for which specific language may be required. For example, the originality of a particular person or a particular community or a particular region actually lies in its language. The culture of a particular person is therefore manifested through his native language. Language helps one to know the culture of a community through which the values lies in such culture can be revealed.

Concluding Remarks

On the basis of the above observation I can draw the following observation as far as the relationship between language culture and reality is concerned. I do believe that language and culture play an all important role in shaping individual and collective behaviour and values. Language reflects culture and, in turn, culture equally reflects language. They are two sides of the same coin. The identification of a community is the identification of its culture. Here the sanctity of the ownership issue comes first. Language, to some extent, is cultural specific. Therefore, knowing the culture of one community by other community largely depends on how far one community knows the language of other community.

I also think that Universal language and inter-translatibility are definitely two important avenues through which one can come across the culture of other community, but these means are *ad-hoc* and contingent. Following Quine, we can say that there remains indeterminacy in translation manuals. Excessive reliance on universal language eventually opens up the possibility of devaluation of cultural diversity. Metaphorically, it can be said that universal language is just like *first-food or continental food* in which cultural diversity of the traditional homely food (native language) is mostly absent. First-food or continental food is a kind of food which is suitable for all communities, but it definitely misses the cultural diversity of the traditional food of different communities. The difference between universal and native language of a particular community is just like this.

Any successful communication between two language communities, I do believe, requires some appropriate common measure between the languages used; otherwise communication between the communities would break down. In fact, the cross-language communication breakdown is the essential sense of Khan's notion of incommensurability. However, I do believe that even though language is predominantly culture-specific, but translation manuals and the concept of universal language help immensely to make successful cross-cultural communication. In this regard, one must assume conceptualism as a background of making cross-cultural communication successful. Moreover, one can take a lesson either from the unified core of conceptual scheme of P.F.Strawson or from absolute conceptual relativism of Quine. Mere form of translation does not bear any sense

of making communication successful, but conceptualism of any form will play the vital role in making cross-cultural communication successful.

Language so to speak is creative in nature. For example Heidegger says that language makes man possible. Language opens up the avenues of man's becoming. Language mirrors the world before us. In this sense language has immense capacity and diversity. Every natural language must be an extremely rich system. However, a speaker perhaps will not be aware of some degree of circumlocution in the absence of familiarity with another language. In fact every natural language not only provides its speakers with a language for talking about every other language, but also provides them with an entirely adequate system for making any kinds of observations that they need to make about the world. People use language in daily living to refer to various kinds of kin. In fact there we find a considerable literature on kinship terminology in our natural language. Kinship system is a universal system of languages, because kinship is so important in social organization. However, as social conditions change, we can expect kinship systems to change to reflect the new conditions. What we can say here is that as the social structures evolve, the use of language also evolves in the course of time and in this process there will emerge some difficulties which are very much relative in nature.

I think that the phenomena of language and culture are inherently related as both phenomena are unique to humans. Language, of course, is determined by culture and in turn culture is determined by language. Even early anthropologists believed that language and its structure were entirely dependent on the cultural context in which they existed. This view is presently known as *standard social science model* which states that human mind as an infinitely malleable structure capable of absorbing any sort of culture without constraints. According to the memetic theorist Susan Blackmore, language developed as a result of memetic evolution. The definition of a culture in memetic theory is an aggregate of many different meme sets shared by the majority of a population. In this regard, it can be said that language itself created by memes and language and culture are united by memes. Thus, we can conclude by saying that language is not just the medium of culture; language, so to speak, is also a part of culture.

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