



ISSN: 2229-4880

Karatoya

NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol.10

March 2017

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal)

UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities, Serial No. 42512



ENLIGHTENMENT TO PERFECTION

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
Raja Rammohunpur, Dist. Darjeeling

ISSN: 2229-4880

Karatoya

**NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF
HISTORY**

Vol. 10

March 2017

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal Published Annually)

UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities, Serial No. 42512

Editor -in-Chief

Dr. Sudash Lama

Associate Editor

Mr. Varun Kumar Roy


HEAD
Department of History
University of North Bengal

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
RAJARAMMOHUNPUR, DIST. DARJEELING
WEST BENGAL, INDIA, PIN: 734013
PHONE: 0353-2580998

Karatoya: NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol. 10

March 2017

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal Published Annually)

UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities, Serial No. 42512

Editorial Office

Department of History,
University of North Bengal, P.O. North Bengal University
District: Darjeeling, West Bengal, India, Pin: 734013
Telephone: 0353-2580998
Email: historydept.nbu@gmail.com

Editor –in-Chief

Dr. Sudash Lama

Associate Editor

Mr. Varun Kumar Roy

Editorial Members

Prof. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar, Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya, Dr. Amrita Mondal

Note from the Editor-in-Chief

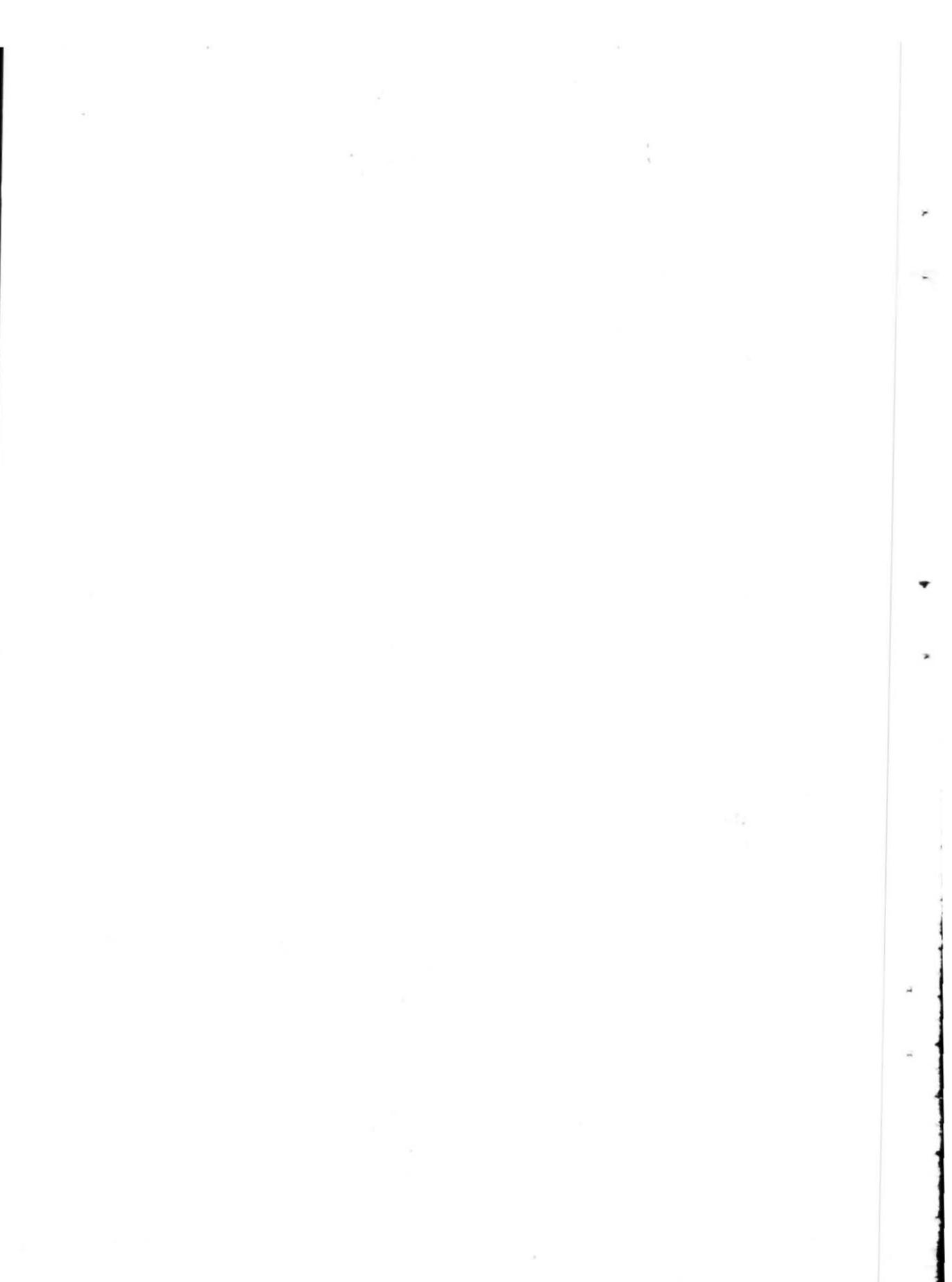
On behalf of the Department of History, University of North Bengal It is my privilege to present to the readers the Volume 10 (2017) of the Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History. The journal has incorporated the research papers from ancient Indian History, Medieval Indian History and Modern Indian History and contemporary as well. The Volume 10 is being published after all the articles having been refereed and peer reviewed and with the ISSN 2229-4880. The Karatoya: North Bengal University Journal of History is a UGC Approved Journal of Arts and Humanities with Serial No. 42512

The editor of the journal do not judge for the facts stated, opinions expressed and conclusions reached, it is entirely that of the authors concern and the editor of the journal accepts no responsibility for the same.

It is my solemn duty to express my gratitude to our Honorable Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Finance Officer for their generous concern on Academic Endeavour. I am thankful to my colleagues of the Department of History for their warm encouragement and necessary cooperation for publishing this journal. Mr Varun Kr. Roy, associate editor of this volume deserved huge appreciation for his constant help in publishing this volume.

I am also grateful to all the contributors for providing valuable research papers. Last but not least, the Officials and the Staffs of the North Bengal University Press deserved heartiest thanks for their cooperation in printing the journal within limited span of time.

Dr. Sudash Lama



Contents

Buddhists and Buddhist Legacies in Modern Bengal	1
Dr. Karubaki Datta	
History of Buddhism: Its Advent and Spread in Darjeeling Hills	20
Dr. Sudash Lama and Gyamit Lepcha	
Comparative Study of Nagara and Vesara/Chalukyan Style of Temple Architecture	41
Arka Acharjee	
Situating the Historical Chronicles of Tripura in Traditional Indian Historiography	60
Deepayan Chakraborty	
Historical Assessment of Floral and Faunal Representation of Ancient Indian Sculpture	82
Dr. Sudash Lama & Anamika Choudhury	
Nashya Sheikhs of North Bengal in Historical Perspectives: A Study of Ethnicity & Identity Dynamic	95
Md Nabiul Islam	
Islamization of the Kamarupā Text 'Amritkundā'	113
Chanchal Adhikary	
Urbanisation, Trade and Markets in Colonial Bengal: A Case Study of Murshidabad (C. 1757-1857)	122
Varun Kumar Roy	
Colonial Penetration, Land Revenue Reforms and Transition of Cooch Behar from a benevolent to a Predatory State 1772-1923	135
Shelly Das	
Sarojini Naidu and the Cause of Indian Women	142
Roshani Rai	

Partition and the Saga of Uprooted Women in West Bengal: A Review	150
Madhuparna Mitra Guha	
A Glance on the Movement for Democracy in Sikkim (1947-1975)	164
Anira Phipon Lepcha	
Bengal-Bihar Merger Movement of 1956: A Glance of West Dinajpur, A District of West Bengal	175
Arun Ghosh	
Lepcha-Bhutia Relations in Sikkim from Mid-Seventeenth Century to Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Study of Its Historiography	200
Rupan Sarkar	
From Obscurity to a Sub-Divisional Headquarter: Siliguri in Colonial Period	210
Minakshee Kumari	
Meghnad Saha: Scientist and Critique	232
Gourav Lama	
Role of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Combating Women Trafficking in Darjeeling Hills	251
Dr. Ujjwal Bhui and Persis Mukhia	
Fifty Years of Naxalbari Uprising: Looking Back	270
Dr. Swapan Kumar Pain	
Exploring Roots of Ethnic Convergence of the Indigenous and the Exogenous Hill People: A Historical Study of Colonial Darjeeling.	281
Tahiti Sarkar	
Crime, Criminality and Punishment in Colonial Darjeeling District	298
Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya	

Buddhists and Buddhist legacies in Modern Bengal¹

Dr. Karubaki Datta²,

Abstract

In the ancient period Bengal used to be a seat of Buddhism. The archaeological ruins and the accounts of the foreign travellers bear testimony to the expansion and richness of this heritage in ancient Bengal. Yet it was not before long that the religion degenerated and became almost extinct. There was hardly any trace of Buddhist practices and heritage in the medieval period when Bengal was ruled by Muslim rulers. There has been a revival and resurgence of Buddhism in modern period almost all over India and it has found its reflection in Bengal as well.

The Buddhists of Bengal are few in number yet the Buddhism they practice is not uniform and represent both the Hinayana and Mahayana schools of thought. Northern Buddhism as it had developed in Tibet is followed by the Tibeto Mongoloid population of Darjeeling, the northern district of Bengal . Even though Bengal had connections with Tibet in the ancient period, the Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism that the people of the this region practice was introduced from Tibet itself in the early modern period through certain particular groups of people who migrated either from Tibet or the other two Himalayan kingdoms of Bhutan and Sikkim. In contrast, the Bengalis who practice this religion in the plains of Bengal are almost universally Baruas who claim to be the original descendants of the ancient Buddhists of India.

¹ An earlier version of the paper was originally presented in the 49th Annual Conference of the Institute of Historical Studies in Adi Sankara Nilayam, P.O. Veliyanad, District Ernakulum, Kerala between 20th and 22nd February, 2014

² Professor, Centre for Himalayan Studies, North Bengal University.

Existence of these different schools are the legacy of the different phases of history of the region and that of the religion itself. The variations in rituals and practices add to the cultural diversity of the state and highlight the different shades in the practice of the religion itself.

'Buddhism' survives in Bengal in another form. Buddha's philosophy has stirred and inspired the psyche of the Bengali intellectuals irrespective of the religion they actually professed. Even this has been possible due to some historical developments in the colonial period. Interest in 'Buddhism' has unleashed a plethora of literature on life and message of Buddha . Foremost among those writers was Rabindranath Tagore.

There may not be many practicing Buddhists in modern Bengal but there is a deep rooted respect for "Buddhism" in Bengali psyche- not for any particular sect or school of the religion but for what Buddhadeva had originally preached and proved with his life.

Keywords: *Buddhism, Bengal, Chattagram, Baruas, Mahayana, Theravad, Bengali intelligentsia, Rabindranath,*

Introduction

In the ancient period Bengal used to be a seat of Buddhism. The archaeological ruins and the accounts of the foreign travellers bear testimony to the expansion and richness of this heritage in ancient Bengal. Even though there is no definite evidence as to the time when Buddhism first gained influence in Bengal, there is no doubt that Bengal had developed a connection with Buddhism from a very early period. On the basis of the Sanskrit *Vinaya* texts, it can be assumed that Buddhism had probably obtained a footing in North Bengal even before the reign of King Asoka.

Archaeological evidence even suggests the existence of Buddhism in North Bengal as early as 2nd century B.C. Paucity of archaeological evidence from Bengal proper makes it difficult to say anything on the conditions of Buddhism in Bengal during the early centuries of the Christian era but the flourishing state of the religion at the beginning of the Gupta period presupposes that the religion had been prospering in different cities of Bengal during the earlier period as well. Description about the state of the religion and the religious institutions like the monasteries can be obtained from several contemporary texts, archaeological remains and from the accounts of the foreign travellers - particularly the Chinese. Fa Hien, in 5th century A.D. had mentioned *stupas* and residence of monks in different parts of the state of Bengal. Tamralipti alone is said to have contained 22 monasteries. His account is corroborated by writings of Ta - ceng - teng, Tao- lin, I tsing, Sheng -chi and of course Hiuen tsang. The latter had also described the different schools of Buddhism that flourished in Bengal at that time. There were some very big Buddhist universities in the region and a close connection had developed with Tibet which was visited by several eminent scholars from Bengal and adjoining regions .

One reason of the prosperity of Buddhism in Bengal was the patronage that it received from the rulers of Bengal. The Pala kings, although patrons of Brahminism, had promoted the cause of Buddhism in Bengal and in Bihar. Many minor dynasties of Bengal of this period were also followers of Buddhism.

The religion had changed its nature in course of time. The ancient schools of *sarvastivada* and *sammatiya* gradually lost their existence and the Mahayana school developed forms of mysticism like Tantrayana, Vajrayana and Kalachakrayana. On account of the great emphasis on esoteric aspects of the religion, Buddhism was soon unhinged. As time passed on, less and less importance was attached to the ceremonial aspects and it was not long before what remained of Buddhism was

absorbed in Brahmanical and *tantric* systems of Bengal and finally it was completely assimilated with *saktism*.

The *Pravrajya* and the consequent observances of the rules of monastic discipline lost relevance as monasticism was dead and the formal aspects of the religion were completely discarded. The process began before the end of the Pala period and was completed before the 14th century. Finally, after the Muslim invasion, Buddhism went out of Bengal leaving almost no trace of the religion in this part of India. It is believed that in order to save their lives many escaped to neighbouring countries of Arakan, Pegu, Nepal and even Tibet. Thus, even though Buddhism flourished in Bengal for a very long period and enjoyed the royal patronage, its history is also the history of loss of its basic characters and finally assimilation with Brahmanism which, in other words indicated the gradual degeneration of the ideals preached by Buddha himself.

Excepting a very few cases, we find almost no reference to Buddha in the medieval Bengali literature from the 14th to the 18th centuries. Of course one exception is the *Charyapada* (c. 10th century) which were composed by the *Vajrayani* Buddhists on some mystical thoughts and ideas. Of the local gods, Dharma *Thakur*, worshipped till today in parts of Bengal, is sometimes believed to be *Buddha Niranjana* by some scholars but that has not been acceptable to all.

There has been a resurgence of 'Buddhism' in Bengal from the late 19th century onwards. The religion as practiced today in Bengal, represents both the two sects of Mahayana and Theravada practised in the northern and the remaining parts of Bengal respectively. Even though the actual number of people who profess the religion has never been considerable in Bengal, Buddhist principles came to be held in high esteem by the non Buddhist Bengali intelligentsia in general. All these aspects will be discussed in the following sections.

The Buddhists of Bengal today

The number of Buddhists in modern Bengal (West Bengal in this case) is not great. As per an estimate it has been only 81,665 in 1951, 12,1504 in 1971 and 203,578 in 1991. There are two distinctly separate groups among these Buddhists – people from the plains and from the hills. The religion as practiced by them is also different – belonging to both the Theravada and the Mahayana or more specifically, the Tibetan Buddhism. The Chittagong district of erstwhile East Bengal (modern Bangladesh) is inhabited by several groups of people of tribal origin who are traditionally Buddhist by religion.

The single major group of Buddhists in the plains of Bengal are the Baruas of Bengal. Practitioners of the Theravada school of Buddhism, they are said to be the survivors of the original Buddhists of the ancient Buddhist period itself and are believed to be practicing the religion from the very old days. Not much research has been done on these Barua Buddhists and the literature on them is scanty. All the Barua Buddhists of West Bengal today are basically from the Chittagong district of Bangladesh or erstwhile East Bengal. Oral evidence has it that originally they belonged to the present Bihar state and other parts of Northern India and some of their ancestors had migrated to Chittagong during the period of Brahminist resurgence in India undertaking a long and arduous journey through Assam. There are different theories regarding the chronology of the migration. Some think that in the 6th century A.D. with the rise of Brahminism, Buddhism declined and Baruas from India then came to Chittagong. Others believe that in the 12th century when Bakhtiyar uddin Khilji conquered Magadha, a prince from Vriji community with his 700 relatives came to Chittagong and they are the ancestors of the Baruas. Since there is neither any archaeological nor any epigraphical evidence in support of these

theories these are not beyond question. Another theory has it that the Baruas are the descendants of the Buddhist kings who are said to have ruled Bengal from 6th to the 13th centuries. These Bengali speaking Buddhists, are generally believed to have maintained an unbroken lineage from the original Buddhists of India.

The Chakmas, Tanchangyas, Chaks, Marmgs (Moghs), and Mrues are the other Buddhist communities of Chittagong. A few Rakhain Buddhists are also found in the district of Patuakhali. All these communities have distinctive Mongoloid characteristics in their looks, and they also have their own language, literature and script. While the Baruas claim to be the inheritors of the North Indian tradition of ancient Buddhism, these other Buddhist communities of tribal origin, now living in the Chittagong part of Bangladesh do not make any such claim. Rather they highlight their Arakanese connection from where they are believed to have immigrated. Thus, in view of the many contradictory accounts of the origin of these Buddhists of Bangladesh it is difficult to arrive at a final theory regarding their historical origin.

According to the Arakanese history, *Dengyawadi Aradafunf* it is learnt that the Chakmas had their own independent state in upper Burma and Arakan where they reigned for 500 years and it was in 1418 that following a severe repressive policy of the king of Arakan, they finally migrated to Chittagong. The Marmas or the Maghs are also from Arakan.

Even though all these groups of people professed Buddhism as their religion, by the 18th century the religion on the whole had greatly degenerated and could at best be said to have maintained a precarious existence. They had incorporated many Hindu practices like worship of different deities and even some sacrifices to God. Monks were almost ignorant about the practices of Vinaya. The first reform to the religion was initiated by Chakma queen Rani Kalindi(or Kanindri) who invited Ven.

Saramedha Mahasthavira to her Rajanagar monastery in 1857. This proved to be a turning point in the religious history of the Buddhists of Chittagong . Shocked to see the degenerated condition of the Buddhists of the region, he took upon himself the task of reforming the religion in accordance with Dhamma, Vinaya and Tripitak. It is said that the queen conferred the title Sangha Raja on him and in 1869 built a bhikku Sima at Sakyamuni monastery at her capital Rajanagar. .

The Theravada based religious reformation inspired the monks and people of the region. Eventually they discarded their Tantric practices and other superstitions and reverted to Theravada monastic disciplines. This was a kind of revival of the religion itself.

There is another section of Bengali speaking Buddhists who belong to Mahasthabir Nikaya which is a Bengali order of Buddhist monks. Even though they are not doctrinally opposed to Sangharaja Nikaya and in fact have some identical practices in many respects, they are opposed to the idea that Bengali Buddhists should come under influence of a foreign personality. It is out of this prejudice that they advocate different day to day practices for their monks in order to maintain an organizational front.

19th century proved to be a turning point in the history of the religion in other parts of India as well. Changes leading to resurgence came from different quarters one significant development being the foundation of the *Bauddha Dharmankur Sabha* in 1892 by Venerable Kripasankar Mahasthabir for the regeneration of the religion in India . He was a contemporary of Anagarika Dharmapala , the founder of the Mahabodhi Society of India. Both worked for the same cause of reforming and reviving the religion in Bengal. Among the Bengali Buddhists there were some who were attracted towards Buddhism as a result of the missionary activities of these two.

On the whole however it can be concluded that even though the Bengali Buddhists are maintaining their religious identity they are quite similar to the Hindus and observe some Hindu practices as well and do not always maintain the puritan Buddhist traits established through the reform movement.

In contrast to these Buddhists from the plains, there are the followers of Mahayana Buddhism, basically among the people of the Himalayan borderland of Darjeeling. These Buddhists are the Lepchas and the Bhutias, the Sherpas and the Tamangs and of course the Tibetans, all of whom are people of Mongoloid origin. The religion they follow is the Tibetan type of Buddhism commonly known as Mahayana or Northern Buddhism.. Numerous monasteries and the *lamas* (monks) belonging to all the major sects of Tibetan Buddhism indicate the influence of Tibet in this part of Bengal.

The reason of the existence of these people in this part of Bengal is the history of close contact between this region and Tibet.

Historically, the district of Darjeeling used to be a part of the kingdom of Sikkim that became a part of Bengal only in 1835 when the king of Sikkim made a gift of this region to the British in Bengal. The present day subdivision of Kalimpong came to be attached to Darjeeling in 1866. This place too was originally a part of Sikkim which had been occupied by Bhutan in 1770. After Bhutan returned it to the British in 1865 the latter joined it to Darjeeling. Although both of these regions were basically uninhabited at the time of annexation, the people, however small they might have been in terms of number, shared the same Buddhist culture that prevailed in the two states of Sikkim and Bhutan.

The state of Sikkim was traditionally ruled by the Bhutia monarchy. Originally migrants from Sikkim, these people were Buddhist by religion and once they were able to set up their government in Sikkim, in 1642 they embarked upon a policy of

spreading their religion through converting the Lepchas, the original inhabitants of the land and also through construction of monasteries. The influence of the religion was profound on the government and politics of Sikkim. So the religion had already taken its root among the people of this region when Darjeeling was handed over to the British and the tradition continued in Darjeeling.

These Bhutias who are people of Tibetan origin are not homogenous in nature. L.S.S.O' Malley in his Darjeeling District Gazetteer used the term to denote four groups of people.

1. The Sikkimese Bhutias – a mixed race of Tibetans and Lepchas . Basically they are the descendants of Tibetans who had settled in Sikkim a few centuries ago.
2. Sherpa Bhutias who had come from the east of Nepal.
3. Drukpa or Dharma Bhutias whose home was originally in Bhutan
4. The Tibetan Bhutias from Tibet.

In addition, the large number of Tibetan refugees who have settled down in Kalimpong and Darjeeling are also Buddhists. There are some Buddhists among the Nepalis as well. The Tamangs, the Sherpas and the Yolmos are Buddhists while Newars can be either Hindus or Buddhists. Tamangs claim to be the largest single group to practice Buddhism. However their religion is not a pure form of Buddhism and some Hindu elements have been mixed with it. This is true in case of the Lepchas also. They , in spite of their conversion into Buddhism are said to have retained some of their original animist traditions and rituals. As per the census data, the total number of Buddhist population in Darjeeling district in 1981 was 12,0,846 which was 11.85% of the total population of the district and in 1991 their population was 15,5,295 which was 11.05 %of the total population.

All these Buddhist communities maintain their monasteries in the region and observe similar rituals and rites. Some of the monasteries of this region had direct contact with Tibetan monasteries and some were even affiliated to some particular monastery of Sikkim or even Bhutan. . A few were in fact founded by Tibetan monks who often visited this part of Bengal through the mountain passes of Jelep-la and Nathu-la.

Many more monasteries have been set up in recent years by the refugee Tibetan *lamas* . Unable to practice their religion in their own country these lamas now have the urge to preserve their heritage in these newly founded centres and to pass on the tradition to the next generation. Darjeeling has become one of the centres of diasporic Tibetan Buddhist population. Monasteries are established in Siliguri town also. The number of *lamas* or Tibetan monks are considerable in this region. They provide the Buddhists of their particular sects with spiritual support and perform the rituals.

Practices of the Tibetan Buddhist communities of this region, are different from the Buddhists of the rest of Bengal . They add to the ethnic diversity and multiculturalism of the state and highlight the shades in the religion itself.

Revival of interest in Buddhism in Bengal

Even though the number of practicing Buddhists is not high in Bengal , Buddhism has exerted a very deep influence on the Bengali intelligentsia from the late 19th century onwards. Buddha's message of sacrifice, love of humanity, ideal of *ahimsa* and non violence, his *karuna* and *maitri* made an immediate appeal to the enlightened Bengalis irrespective of caste, creed and sex.

The Christian missionaries of Serampore initiated the earliest researches on Pali language and literature and thereby drew attention to the life and works of Lord

Buddha. In 1808 Felix Carey, Son of William Carey went to Rangoon for spreading Christianity and came in contact with Pali language and literature. He even authored a book on the language and translated some of the *suttas* (religious hymns composed in meter) into English.

Interest in the life of Buddha and Buddhism actually revived in late 19th century after the foundation of the *Bauddha Dharmankur Sabha* in 1892 by Venerable Kripasankar Mahasthabir for the regeneration of the religion in India. As mentioned earlier, he was a contemporary of Anagarika Dharmapala, the founder of the Mahabodhi Society of India.

Thanks to Ven. Anagarika Dharmapala, the late 19th century saw the resurgence of Buddhism not only in Bengal but in other parts of India as well. It all started with the publication of a number of articles by Sir Edwin Arnold (author of the famous book *The Light of Asia*) in the London based periodical the *Telegraph* drawing attention to the neglected state of the temple of Bodhgaya and its surroundings. These articles caught the interest of Ven Dharmapala who was deeply moved by these. He came from an aristocratic family of Ceylon but became *anagarika* (homeless) and dedicated his life to the restoration of the temple at Bodh Gaya as well as the *Dhamma* itself in the land of its birth.

After a visit to India in 1891 he founded the Maha Bodhi Society in Colombo in the same year. The initial task of the Society was the maintenance of a staff of *Bhikkhus* in Bodh Gaya representing the Buddhist countries of Asia and publication of Buddhist literature in English. It also held an International Buddhist Conference in Bodh Gaya in 1891. In course of the next few years he visited America to spread the philosophy of Buddha and also opened branches of the society in Madras, Kushinagara and Anuradhapura. In 1915 the Society became a registered body with Asutosh Mukherjee as its first president and within next five years the Dharmarajika

Caitya was built in Calcutta. In recognition of the position it had won, the Society was presented in 1920 with a casket containing the relics of the bones of Buddha which were to be enshrined in the *vihara*. These relics had been discovered by Archaeological explorations in 1891 and were preserved in the Madras Museum. Around the same period, Bauddha Dharmankur Sabha came into existence in 1892.

Impact of Buddhism on modern Bengali intelligentsia

It was from the last few years of the 19th century that inspired by some archaeological discoveries and by writings of some Orientalists, Bengali intellectuals became interested in Buddha's life and his message. . Sir Edwin Arnold's his book *The Light of Asia* in 1879 also made a profound impression in this country . Devendranath Thakur, father of Rabindranath, was the first Indian to take interest in Pali literature and Buddhism. He made a sojourn to Ceylone in September 1859 and joined in prayers and worships of the Buddhist monks. Back in home, he founded a religious institution called Brahma Vidyalaya in which can be identified some traces of Buddhist ideas and practices. Bankim Chandra Chattapadhyaya made an assessment of Buddha and compared him with Jesus Christ and Rousseau as early as in 1873

Kesavchandra Sen who accompanied Devendranath in Ceylone, was a zealous Brahma but he too was so influenced by Buddhism that he started celebrating the birthday of Lord Buddha . He even made a visit to Bodhgaya and initiated an annual programme for religious discussions called Shakya Samagam in 1880. Devendranath's two sons, Dwijendranath and Satyendranath wrote books on Buddhist history and philosophy. This was the period when several books were being written on Buddhism and history of Buddhism by Bengali scholars. These included the researches made by Indologist Rajendralal Mitra, Haraprasad Sastri, Satischandra

Vidyabhusan and Romeschandra Dutt. Haraprasad was a great Orientalist. Besides writing papers on Buddha and Buddhist texts, he made landmark contribution to Bengali literature by discovering the Charyapada-the Buddhist mystic songs. Well known dramatists and poets Girishchandra Ghosh and Nabin Chandra Sen adopted Buddha's life as subject matter of their creations.

Of all the Bengali literati it was Rabindranath who wrote most extensively about Buddha. He wrote not only about the life events of Buddha but made an original interpretation of his philosophy as well. As early as 1883 he had written in his book *Samalochana* "I am a devotee of Buddha....Whenever I go for pilgrimage where Buddha's tooth is preserved or where I look at the rock where Buddha's footprint is carved, I feel how I gain him in my own self". In 1903 he described Buddhadeva as follows –

Buddhadeva made man great. He discarded all caste divisions and relieved man from the compulsion of observing various rites and yagnas. He removed gods from being the object. He declared the power of Self. He refused to beg mercy and welfare of man from heaven and invoked it from within man's own self.

His writings on Buddha and related themes began in the last decade of the 19th century and continued almost till the last year of his life. Rabindranath did not of course go on with professional scholarship of Buddhist scriptures but the specific characteristics of Hinayani and Mahayani ideals were clear to him. In his essay 'Bauddhadhrme Bhaktibad' (1911) he made his own observation. He was for the Mahayana ideal of universal love. He emphasized that truth and love were identical. He compared Buddha's teachings to the Upanishadas.

For him, the truth as declared by the Upanishad is same as the Buddha's concept of love for the animals. *Maîtri* is the special term used for love and Buddha is the embodiment of *karuna* and *maîtri*. Rabindranath did not find any dissimilarity

between the teachings of the Buddha and those of the Upanishads. In the essay 'Brahmavihara' he explains *mangala* to be the goal of life, and he equates this *mangala* with *nirvana*. He differs from the Theravadi conception of *sunyata*. *Nirvana* for him cannot be eternal nothing. The object of life cannot be negative. It must be something positive and that has to be love or *maîtri*. This interpretation of Buddhism was certainly original. It is generally accepted that for Buddha, attraction to this world only creates *Tanha* – endless sorrow. One has to be free from this attraction. But Rabindranath resolves it this way –

'People at that time used to believe that to attain the supreme state by practicing austerity is the ultimate goal. But when Buddhadeva attained Buddhahood he immediately set himself to work. That was pure action, because it was free from fear, greed, jealousy and dotage. It was beyond any selfish interest. It was action purely of love and mercy.'

Rabindranath did not accept that the total extinction of self is the *Nirvana*. On the other hand, to do good to mankind is the urge that must remain.

Rabindranath's writings on Buddha are of three types – poems, dramas and addresses. He also composed dance dramas on Buddha theme. In the early years of his career he composed a number of poems and dramas the first literary composition on this theme being *Malini* (1896). It is based on the *Mahavastu-avadana* and gives a glimpse of conflict between the Brahmanas and the Buddhists. The same *avadana* provided him the central theme of the poem *Parishodh* ((1899) which was later in 1939 developed into the dance drama *Shyama*. The other poems based on the stories of different *Avadanas* are *Sreshtha Bhiksha*, *Nagarlakshmi*, *Abhisar*, *Samanya Kshati*, *Mulyaprapti*, *Pujarini* and *Mastakbikray*. The stories of some of his dramas were also taken from Buddha's life and message. These include *Raja* (1910), *Achalayatan* (1912), *Natir Puja* (1926). All the basic stories were taken

from Rajendralal Mitra's book -. *The Sanskrit Buddhist literature of Nepal* (1882) which is a descriptive account of various *avadana* stories and was used by Rabindranath as a constant companion.

In the later part of his life Rabindranath travelled to Siam, Java, Bali and Ceylone where Buddhism was still a living faith. Standing before the ancient relics he remembered the ancient glory and greatness of Buddha . Even in the last year of his life, when he was in Kalimpong, the local Buddhist residents came to pay homage to him on his birthday. Rabindranath was moved and composed poem in which he remembered Buddhadev. Buddha was, in fact the symbol of the philosophy of his own life.

That Buddha's ideals had a profound influence on Rabindranath's outlook is also reflected in the fact that the concept of *sangha* was very much in his mind when he founded his *Brahmacharyashrama* in Santiniketan. Even though it was modeled on the *Tapovana* style where students gathered at the feet of their teachers , at the same time they were taught to love a life in a body of united cooperation as in a *sangha*.

In his essay *Vishva Vidyalayer Rup*(1932) he explained how he loved to think that Visva Bharati would develop in the line of great Buddhist seats of learning like Nalanda, Bikramsila and Taksasila.

Several renowned scholars like Sylva Levi, Bidhusekhar Sastri, Prabodh Chandra Bagchi, Sujit Kumara Mukhopadhyaya, and the like joined Visva Bharati on his invitation.. The Cheena Bhavana turned out to be a widely known centre of Buddhist studies and later, the Department of Tibetan studies was also founded to pursue higher studies in Buddhist history and philosophy.

Tagore's deep regard for Buddha moved his young contemporaries like Satyendranath Datta as well. His poem *Buddha Purnima* or On the sight of the full moon on Buddha's birthday is well known. The trend continued. Younger poet

Mohitlal Majumdar interpreted his philosophy in a new light in his Poem *Mahamanaba* or the Great Man . Some of the compositions of other modern Bengali poets like Jibananda Das, Sudhindranath Datta, Birendra Chattapadhyaya and Amiya Chakravorty are also based on themes from the life and philosophy of Buddha.

As for modern Bengali prose , events from Buddha's life have been the theme of many a Bengali short stories and even novels. As early as 1883 , Haraprasad Sastri had written the novel *Kanchanmala* which was followed by *Bener meye* – published in 1919. A historian of eminence, Haraprasad Sastri had an impartial attitude and even though the themes of these two novels were from the history of Buddhism, he did not hesitate to show the shortcomings of Buddhist organizations and practices. Another novel -was written by the distinguished archaeologist Rakhaldas Bandopadhyaya which was serialized in the periodical *Manasi* during 1912 to 1914. Saradindu Bandopadhyaya was another popular Bengali writer who based many of his short stories and novels on themes related to Buddhism. Famous among his novels are *Kaler Mandira* (1951), *Gourmallar* (1954), *Tumi sandhyar megh* (1958), in addition to several short stories. Very recently, Bani Basu in her novel *Maitreya Jataka*, narrated the achievements of Buddha in a modern frame of mind.

Conclusion

History of Buddhism in Bengal has passed through various phases. In the ancient period Bengal used to be a seat of Buddhism. The archaeological ruins and the accounts of the foreign travellers bear testimony to the expansion and richness of this heritage in ancient Bengal. Yet it was not before long that the religion degenerated and became almost extinct. There was hardly any trace of Buddhist practices and heritage in the medieval period when Bengal was ruled by the Muslim rulers. There

has been a revival and resurgence of Buddhism in modern period almost all over India and it has found its reflection in Bengal as well.

Buddhism continues as a practicing religion among small , diverse groups of people in Bengal. On one hand the presence of the Mahayana Buddhists in the hills of Darjeeling region reminds one of the interaction between the Bengalis and the trans-border communities in the north and on the other hand, the tribal Buddhist communities in Chattagram region of Bangladesh bear the legacy of Bengal's connection with the kingdoms of Myanmar and Aracan at one point of time. Some communities even claim to carry the legacy of the religion from the heartland of India. The presence of these different groups of people practicing different forms of the same religion reminds one of the different phases of the history of Bengal as well as the different shades of the religion itself.

More important than that is the fact that Buddha's philosophy has stirred and inspired the Bengali intellectuals since the nineteenth century. Even Vivekananda, the Hindu Sannyasi, was highly respectful of the teachings of Lord Buddha and there are many refernces to Buddha in his writings. All the educated Bengalis in general are aware of Buddha's life and teachings. There is a deep rooted respect for "Buddhism"- not for any particular sect or school but for those concepts that he Buddha had originally preached and proved with his life. This has been possible for several reasons. The archaeological discoveries of the 18th and 19th centuries and foundation of the institutes like Mahabodhi Society created the interest in Buddhism and the Bengalis loved the pieces that the literati produced on the themes of Buddha's life and work. Researches carried on from the Asiatic Society of Bengal too had contributed to the creation of an awareness about Buddhism in general and the new archaeological discoveries that brought the history of Buddhism to light. Rabindranath on the other hand not only perpetuated this respect through his writings

but has enlightened them with his own insights into and interpretation of the religion itself.

This respect for Buddha and his preaching is one characteristic of resurgent Bengal.

Bibliography

1. Bhikshu Bimal – ‘Buddhist minority in Bangladesh’ in Monirul Hussain and Lipi Ghosh (ed) *Religious minorities in South Asia ;Selected essays on Post colonial situation*, Vol. Nanak Publications Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, 2002
2. Chakrabarty Sumita- ‘The influence of Buddhism on Indian literature’ in Narendra K Dash (ed) *Buddhism in Indian Literature*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study , Simla and Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2007
3. Coward Harold G. –‘The Revival of Buddhism in Modern India’ in Robert D Baird (ed) *Religion in Modern India*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 2001
4. Datta Bhabatosh - ‘Buddhadeva in Modern Bengali Literature’ in Dr. Buddhadev Bhattacharya (ed) *Dimensions of Buddhism and Jainism*, vol.2, Sanskrit Book Depot, Kolkata,2009
5. Datta Bhabatosh- ‘Buddha in Rabindra literature’ in Narendra K Dash (ed) *Buddhism in Indian Literature*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study , Simla and Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2007
6. Datta Karubaki– ‘The Buddhist Monasteries of Darjeeling Hills’ in Karubaki Datta (ed) *Essays on Tibetan Cultural Heritage*, Serials , New Delhi, 2008
7. Sen Majumdar Gayatri-*Buddhism in ancient Bengal*, (Revised and enlarged edition), Mahabodhi Book Agency, Kolkata, 2013
8. Kantowsky Detlef- *Buddhists in India Today*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 2003

9. Majumdar R.C. (ed)*The History of Bengal –vol.1,Hindu Period* (1943) Reprint B.R.Publications, Delhi, 2004
10. Valisinha D– ‘The Mahabodhi Society’ in P.V.Bapat (ed) *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, (1956), 6th reprint 1959

Website –

1. A brief introduction to the Barua community of Bangladesh, written by Ven. Upali Sramana. [http://www.booksie.com/article/kabyasikhari/-a-brief-introduction....](http://www.booksie.com/article/kabyasikhari/-a-brief-introduction...)
2. Buddhism in Bangladesh, text source from a booklet by Sitangshu Bikash Barua, 1990,
[http://www.buddhanet/e-learning/buddhanetworld/bangladesh.](http://www.buddhanet/e-learning/buddhanetworld/bangladesh)

HISTORY OF BUDDHISM: ITS ADVENT AND SPREAD IN DARJEELING HILLS

Dr. Sudash Lama¹ and Gyamit Lepcha²

Abstract

The religious blending of North Bengal and the Himalayan countries held themselves together from the seventh century. In Tibet Buddhism developed into a state religion after the days of Guru Padmasambhava's visit. From then onwards Tibetan Buddhism spread to Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Bhutan, Subsequently after the decline of the Palas and the Senas, the Buddhism disappeared from Bengal and the main land of India but Tibet preserved and developed Buddhism. It spreads towards Himalayan states of Sikkim and Darjeeling areas.

Keywords: Himalayan region, Buddhism, Lamaism, Darjeeling, Viharas or Gompas, Tibetan Buddhism

It was from the earlier days of the Palas, the Buddhist gurus from the universities of Nalanda and Vikramshila visited Tibet. The Historians also acknowledged and the people of Sikkim and Bhutan claim it that the great Buddhist Guru Padmasambhava entered Bhutan and Sikkim from Tibet. In the Himalayan region Guru Padmasambhava is more recognized and worshipped by the name of Guru Rimpoche meaning 'the most precious preceptor'. It is accepted that Guru Padmasambhava

¹ Dr. Sudash Lama , Asst. Professor, Department of History, North Bengal University

² Ph.D Scholar (Rajiv Gandhi Fellow), Department of History, North Bengal University

went to the Himalayan states in the seventh century A.D. From the seventh century Buddhist link started in the Himalayan region and the masses steadily developed a faith towards it. During the Pala period North Bengal became an important hub for Buddhist. The Pala kings Dharma Pala and Dev Pala supported and were patron of Buddhism. The spiritual union between North Bengal and the Himalayan countries held themselves together from the seventh century. In Tibet Buddhism developed into a state religion after the days of Guru Padmasambhava visit. From then onwards Tibetan Buddhism spread to Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Bhutan. Subsequently after the decline of the Palas and the Senas Buddhism disappeared from Bengal and the main land of India but Tibet preserved and developed Buddhism. It developed towards Himalayan states of Sikkim and its areas.¹

SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN HIMALAYAN REGION AND THE ROLE OF LHATSUN CHENBO

The Buddhist followers of Sikkim and Tibet believe that Guru *Padma – Sambhava* (Guru Rinpoche) was the founder of Lamaism. As L.A Waddell describes “St.Padma Sambhava visited Sikkim during his journeying in Tibet and its western borderlands and although he left no converts and erected no buildings. However, with the legendary accounts of his visit, it is alleged by Sikkhimate Lamas that their Lord Guru Padma entered the country by the “Lordly pass” *Jo-la* and on the east side of the pass is pointed out a rock on which he sat down called *Zu’ti*, or throne. And he is said to have returned to Tibet by way of the *Jelep* pass, resting en-route on the *ku-phu* and creating the *Tuko la* by clearing up the rock to crush on obnoxious demon.² It is believed that when Guru Padmasambhava visited Tibet he on the way passed through Sikkim and Buddhism spread with his visit. But the introduction of

Buddhism in Sikkim dates firmly from the seventeenth century with the arrival of *Lhatsun* from Tibet.

In Sikkim Lamaism was introduced about the middle of the seventeenth century from the time of *Lhatsun's* arrival. In Tibet during that period Lamaism had become a most powerful order and was actively extending its creed among the Himalayan and Central Asian tribes. With these the three generations of Tibetan from the bordering Chumbi valley had settled on the eastern border of Sikkhite-Tibetan, and from them only was elected the king of Sikkim by *Lhatsun Chembo*. *Lhatsun* introduced the Sakya sect in the region and even now it is believed that his spirit incarnate in the body of the present Sakya Lama. He firmly established the faith with a Buddhist state.³

Lhatsun Chembo was a native of *Kongbo* in the lower valley of the *Tsangpo*, which has a climate and physical appearance very similar to Sikkim. His name means "The great victorious Essence of Goodness". He is also known by the title of *Lhatsun namkha Jig-med* or "The Reversed God who fears not the sky," with reference to his alleged power of flying.⁴

Lhatsun is acknowledged as real founder of Lamaism in Sikkim. He was born in the fire bird year of the tenth of the sixty year cycles, corresponding to 1595 A.D. in the district of *Kongbu* in south eastern Tibet. He spent many years in different monasteries and in visiting all over Tibet and Sikkim, in the year 1648 arrived in Lhasa and obtained a great status by his scholarship and attracted the favorable notice of *Nay-wan*, the greatest of the Grand Lamas who became the first Dalai Lama in Tibet.⁵ Around that period there was a search for a way to Sikkim "*Lhatsun* guided the lamas through different ways to reach the land from the Western gate and

the Southern gate by way of Darjeeling and Namchi. Two other Nyingma pa lamas also arrived with *Lhatsun* and the place where these three lamas met was called by the Lepchas *Yok-sum* which means “the three superior ones or noble men” a literal translation of “the three lamas”.⁶

The Tibetan Lamaism came to Sikkim with a view to converting the country to their faith. These Lamas had come from north, west and south. Then going towards the extreme east near Gangtok they met a man named *Phuntshong*, who was coronated as the first king of Sikkim with the title ‘*cho*’ which mean the ruler who rules according to the Buddhist righteous law. *Phuntshong Namgye* was aged 38years at that time, which is said to have been 1641 A.D.

“The Dalai Lama recognized Phuntsog Namgye as the ruler of the southern slopes of the Himalayas (Sikkim) and is also credited to have sent ceremonial presents such as silken scarf bearing Dalai Lama’s seal, the Mitre* of the Guru Rimpoche, phurpa* and the most precious sand image of the Guru. Consequently the newly established Bhutia principality of Namgyal dynasty was tied to Tibetan theocracy. Since then upto 19th century the Bhutia rulers of Sikkim looked up to Tibet for protection against their political foes”.⁷ Lhatsun Chenpo then spent the greater part of the rest of his life in Sikkim exploring its caves and mountains recesses for making temples and monasteries. He first of all built a hut at Dubde which afterwards became the monastery. It is believed that he built crude shrines at Tashiding, Pemiongchi and Sangna Choling. Lhatsun died in the latter end of the seventeenth century and with his effort Lamaism or Buddhism had steadily progressed in Sikkim. As Buddhism was declared as the state religion of Sikkim and Darjeeling used to be the part of the independent Buddhist kingdom prior to 1835. Darjeeling also flourished in Buddhism with many monasteries and Viharas.

SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN DARJEELING

The district of Darjeeling used to be a part of the independent Buddhist kingdom who ruled the territory from “Thangla near Phari in Tibet in the North to Tagangla near Puro in Bhutan in the East from Titaliya or Keshenganj in Bihar in the south to Tomar river in Nepal was bigger than what it is today.”⁸ Much of the area what comprises the present day Darjeeling district was handed over by the seventh Chogyal of Sikkim, Tenzing Namgyal on 1st February 1835 to the British East India Company.

“The Governor General having expressed his desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages I, Sikkimputtee Rajah out of friendship for the said Governor General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the land south of the Great Rangeet river, east of the Balasar, Kahail and Little Rangeet rivers, and west of the Rangpo and Mahanadi rivers.”⁹ This land was regarded as worthless and uninhabited and the number of people was also few who believed in Buddhist culture that prevailed in the Himalayan Buddhist Kingdoms (Sikkim and Bhutan).

In Darjeeling “on the summit of the observatory hill and worshipped by the Hindus as well as the Buddhists and as a matter of fact, paid homage to by many nationalities was in the beginning inside the cave. Orisons had been offered by Hindu priests ever since 1815, if not earlier, that is to say, at least two decades prior to the year 1835, when the district was gifted by the Maharaja of Sikkim to the East India Company. Dorje Lama who is accredited with all that is antiquarian about this hill station and to whose name is ascribed the philological origin of the word Darjeeling appeared on the scene.”¹⁰ The description of the high level lama or

Dorjeling pa lama came from Bunthang (Sikkim) and in their short stay. They happened to build the monastery in the observatory hill and from then it is known as Darjeeling. It has been described as “that by Mr. Paul that Darjeeling properly Dorjeling may owe its name to the terton Dorje-lingpa, who visited the Kartokpa Doling (properly Dorjeling) monastery in Sikkim, of which the Darjeeling monastery was the branch.”¹¹ “In 1765 or 156 years ago, as a branch of the Phodong Monastery of Sikkim. It was looted and sacked by the Nepalese in 1815, leaving only a small shrine called Mahakal on the site which marked its location.”¹² The longchuk is believed to be remaining of the monastery which is worshipped by both the Buddhist and the Hindu community till now. Buddhist belief and practices started with the introduction of Buddhism in the Himalayan territory and Darjeeling as a part is studded with Buddha Viharas or gompas.

When the hill tract of 138 square miles which was the nucleus of Darjeeling District was acquired by the East India company from the Raja of Sikkim in 1835 it was ‘almost entirely under forest and practically uninhabited.’ The development began in 1841 when the first tea plantation was established here and the industry was organized in 1856. In the wake of this accelerated development programme, a large number of people settled there for good. The Darjeeling, Kalimpong area, therefore is now inhabited by diverse mountain people and majority of them are Buddhists.”¹³

THE DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES THAT FOLLOW BUDDHISM

Darjeeling hills are inhabited by the different racial groups due to the migration from the neighboring states and countries during the colonial period and the post-colonial period. And most of the people in the hills are of Mongolian Origin belonging chiefly to various Nepalese castes, but also including large number of Lepchas,

Bhutias and Tibetans.¹⁴ The two major groups of people to practice Buddhism are the Bhutias and Lepchas who are the aboriginal inhabitants of the region.

Lepchas are the aboriginal inhabitant of the country who call themselves Rong i.e; the squatters and their country the land of cows. The word Lepcha as it should be spelt Lepcha or Lapche means the people of vile speech and a contemptuous appellation given to them by the Nepalese. Formerly they possessed all the hill country of Darjeeling and Sikkim but about 250 years ago the Tibetans occupied their country and drove them into the lower valley and gorges and in 1706 the tract east of Tista which is now included in Kalimpong was conquered and taken from them by the Bhutanese. They are born naturalists and have separate names for nearly every bird, plant, orchid and butterfly. With the introduction of settled cultivation and the reservation of the forest, they have had to give up their old nomadic cultivation and have lost much of their jungle craft. There was a cultural shift and they now have learnt in its places how to make terraces for rice fields and the methods of agriculture practiced by the Nepalese.¹⁵

They are primarily people of the forests and have tended also to move away from the neighborhood of Darjeeling as it became more developed. In Sir James Hooker's account of them (1854) they appear as having become Buddhist only in relatively recent time. Dr A Campbell's note of 1840 reflects to the effect that "the Lepchas are Buddhists", and that some of their lamas "are educated at home" while others "go for their education to the great monastic establishments beyond the snows(i.e; Tibet)," and that they have also some Tibetan lamas. J.A.H. Louis who travelled in North Bengal and Sikkim in the 1890's described the Lepcha as partially converted to Buddhism but still clinging to old superstitions and old forms of fetishism or demonolatry. He adds that many of the ceremonies of Sikkim Buddhism for the

propitiation or subjugation of evil spirits is no doubt of Lepcha origin, and other writers of the same period would describe Burmese Buddhism as a gross degeneration from the pure Buddhism of the Pali texts.¹⁶

The Bhutias of Darjeeling consists of four classes, the Sikkimese Bhutias, who are a mixed race of Tibetans and Lepcha being the descendants of Tibetans. They were settled in Sikkim few centuries ago and intermarried with Lepchas, Sherpa. Bhotias who came from the east of Nepal, the word share merely meaning east, the Drukpa or Dharma Bhotias from Bhutan and Tibet. The great majorities of the first class are found in and around Darjeeling of the second to the west of the district, while the third class is practically confined to Kalimpong where they are the descendents of the Bhutanese who were settle on the land at the time of the annexation. There they have been re-entered in forests by the immigration of Tibetans from the Chumbi valley and its neighborhood, who have been attracted by more fertile country and more regular form of Government than that of Tibet.¹⁷ The Bhutias are a community in a cultural and religious sense; they have been described as Mongoloid population of Buddhist faith and Tibetan speech. The term Bhutia, or Tibetan people can thus mean either those who are of Tibetan religion and culture, Buddhist belief and practices may have been introduced to the Bhutias as early as the eight century when Guru Padma Sambhava as the founder of Buddhism in their country, but its establishment there in the form in which it is now known as a powerful hierarchical institution dates only from the mid- seventeenth century when it was introduced from Tibet.

The word Sherpa “signifies men of the east” (shar-east pa-men of). Thus the Sherpas have quickly been able to acquire a personal identity since the name suggested by them for themselves has entered in common parlance. Lamaism is the religion

professed by the Sherpas. It is widely accepted nomenclature applied to Tibetan Buddhism. The Sherpas are quite well known all over the world for their virility as porters and guide in mountain expedition, they have a number of exogamous clans which can broadly be divided into two groups- khadev and khamedu, the former holding a higher status than the later. They are recognized as one of the scheduled tribes.¹⁸

The Nepalis of Darjeeling are predominantly Hindu, but among the non-Hindu tribes there are the Sherpas, the Yolmos, the Murmis or Tamang Newars and Gurung. Of these the Tamang are numerically the largest in Darjeeling district, they are referred to in some of the older literatures as murmis whereas some of the present inhabitants of Nepal are descended from Hindus who moved into the area at the time of Muslim expansion in north India. It is accepted that Buddhism entered their country from Tibet in the eighth century at the time of its conquest by the Tibetan king Svanson Gempo.¹⁹ The Murmis are a Nomad and pastoral branch of the Bhotias, who always seemed to be more allied to the Nepalese. They are also known as Tamang Bhotias and Lamas.²⁰ They have settled in Darjeeling, Sikkim and Jalpaiguri district and constitute one of the largest Buddhist group and provide a centre of Buddhist solidarity for other smaller groups.

The Yolmos or kagatey are also a little known tribe. Their traditional occupation was paper making. They used to be treated as one of the Tamang groups but today they are subsumed under the Bhutia group and given the status of scheduled tribe. Though traditionally a Buddhist tribe, they believe to have migrated from Himalayas of Nepal and held closer social ties with the Nepalis than the Bhutias.²¹

Newars are also fairly numerous, they usually bear the title Pradhan. There is the dearth of information regarding the descendents of Newars Lichchavi epigraphs mention Mandri and Koli in connection with the royal lineage. The derivation of Newar is from Nepal itself. Baburam Acharya believes that Nepal is derived from Newars a people whom he holds to be early settlers of Austric origin. They are now traders and artisans, agriculturists and domestic servants and some still adhere to their old religion Buddhism.²² The Newars who are in Darjeeling are known by the surname Pradhan and are divided religiously. Some are Buddhists others have become Hinduised, the former are known as Buddha margis but their original culture appears to have been Buddhists and it is possible that the newars have some claim to represent a surviving tradition of Indian Buddhism. Gurungs are also numerous in number and some of them follow the Buddhist religion.

The Tibetan refugees who have settled in Kalimpong and Darjeeling are also Buddhists. The political unrest had initiated the process of migration of Tibetans before the invasion of the Chinese around 1950. Some of them came to India as traders before the invasion and many more have come since as refugees. The Tibetan refugees are also the strong holder of the Buddhist faith in Darjeeling.

The tradition of respect to Hindu and Buddhist deities is continued even by the Nepalis in the Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalaya. Besides the Buddhist Newars, the Tamang and Sherpas worship Hindu deities and celebrate Hindu festivals as much as other pure Hindu groups. And most Nepalis revere Buddha and respect the Buddhist monks. They also celebrate Buddhist festivals like Losar (new-year) and Buddha Purnima.²³

EARLY MONASTERIES AND ITS BACKGROUND IN AND AROUND DARJEELING TOWN

In Darjeeling Buddhism was introduced around seventeenth century as a part of Sikkim. According to the historical information, the first monastery of Sikkim was built in 1701 at Dubdi and since then monasteries have been constructed almost regularly. There are certain monasteries that are known as Tibetan while most of the monasteries are known by the name of the communities whose need they used to serve.²⁴

In Darjeeling town two old monasteries founded under some first monasteries of Sikkim are **Bhutia Busty Monastery and Ging Monastery**. It is commonly known as Bhutia Monasteries. The monastery in Bhutia Busty is regarded as one of the oldest monastery. The monastery once stood on observatory Hill was built in 1765 or 156 years ago, as a branch of the Phodang Monastery of Sikkim. It was looted and sacked by the Nepalese in 1815, leaving only a small shrine called Mahakal on the site which once marked its location. What remained of it was transferred in 1860-61 to the flat to the north-east of St. Andrew's Church and in 1878-79 was finally removed to Bhutia Busty where it still exists.²⁵



Monastery of Bhutia Busty Darjeeling (1878-1879)

Source: Collected by researcher on the month of November 2015.

As popularly known as **Bhutia Busty monastery** its actual name is **Karma Kungyur Drupgya Choeling Monastery**. Its parent monastery is the Phodong monastery of Sikkim. The old Monastery was destroyed by an earthquake in 1930's and later it was built by Tashi Namgyal the Chogyal of Sikkim. In the main chamber the Buddha idol is worshipped and they follow the Kagyurpa seat. There are about 20 lamas attached to the monastery, ten are from Sikkim and others are the Gelongs Lamas who are married house holders and live elsewhere only on special occasions they gather at the monastery. The monastery receives a sum of 2,000 per annum from the Sikkim Government as aid. The Chham festival is organized every year. The monthly puja of the Padma Sambhava is also one of the important festivals. The Buddha Purnima is the biggest ceremony where processions are taken out. The

monks of this monastery also visits the temple in observatory hills (Mahakal temple) where the monastery was situated before and two lamas perform the daily rituals there and whatever they receive from the temple are used for the expenses of the monastery.

The description of the early historical foundation of the monastery is related with the observatory hill as Ronaldshay describes in his book 'Lands of the Thunder Bolt'[1923] "Darjeeling the name of the famous hill station which was the starting point of all the expeditions which form the subject matter is said to be a corruption of Dorjeling "the place of the thunderbolt" the name of the monastery which once stood on a well known eminence in the modern town now known as observatory hill, the word attributes the Dorje in the first half of Darjeeling to the name of a lama, Dorje-rinzing, who founded the monastery which once stood on observatory hill. The shrine was subsequently removed to the Bhutia Basti where it remains to these days, but the former site retained the name of "the place of Dorje lama".²⁶

The Ging monastery the actual name is **Sanchhenthong Delling Gomba** was founded in 1818. The Ging monastery which is three miles to the north of the town is reached by the Rangeet road to the east of the Mall. It was originally situated below the village of Ging but was demolished under certain political differences. When these differences were settled in 1879, after the Sikkim trouble, by the late Sir Ashley Eden, a thatched structure was erected on the present site, which in 1896-98 was rebuilt in stone through the exertions of the present high priest, Lodio lama to which let it be added no contributions were received from the Pemionghi body.²⁷ J.D Hooker has also described about the Ging monastery as, "Below Lebong is the village Ging surrounded by steeps cultivated with maize, rice and millet. It is rendered very picturesque by a long row of tall poles, each bearing a narrow,

vertically elongated banner, covered with Buddhist inscriptions and surmounted by coronet like ornaments or spear heads, rudely cut out of wood or formed of basket work and adorned with cotton fringe. Ging is peopled by Bhotan emigrants and when one dies if his relations can afford to pay for them two additional poles and flags are setup by the lamas in honour of his memory and that of sanga, the third member of the Buddhist trinity”.²⁸ L.A Waddell in his book *Among the Himalayas* (1899 pg.73) has also described “*at the end of this spur is the little lamaist monastery of Ging. Its altar is covered with idols, objects that are worshipped as fetishes, and candles and sacrificial implements. Its wall is frescoed with atrocious daubs, representing many devils, deities and saints of Chinese design. The place however is worth visiting by those who have not seen the finer paintings in Tashiding and the larger temples of Sikkim.*”



Monastery of Ging Darjeeling (1818)

Source: Collected by researcher on the month of November 2015.

The monastery follows the Nyingmapa sect and the head lama is in charge of the monastery. The lamas were trained in Pemayangtse monastery. The main ceremony of the monastery used to hold after Losar (the Tibetan New Year) and some lamas from the parent monastery visit the place for the ceremony. For the income of the monastery, it used to get a grant of Rs. 2000 per annum from the Sikkim Government, this grant was the major source of income and the lamas are paid donations for performing the rituals. Now the head lama does not reside in the monastery and the grant from the government is also not regular. This monastery is in a wrecking stage.



Yiga Choeling Monastery (Ghoom) 1850

Source: Collected by researcher on the month of November 2015.

In Ghoom another Tibetan monastery is situated nearly 5km away from the main town of Darjeeling. The **Yiga Choeling monastery or the Ghoom monastery** was

founded by a Mongolian monk Lama Sherpa Gyatsho in 1850 who had come to India in 1820s. It is not clear whether it was he who founded the monastery or it was handed over to him. The Ghoom monastery was founded in 1875 by lama Shherabgyatso, one of the Yellow – sect Geylukpa and at first it was used primarily as a place for meetings, later as a monastery. Previously it received a grant of Rs. 60 per annum from the government. It is managed by a committee and a secretary and has some monks who reside there. E.C Dozey wrote “on 27th March, 1918 this monastery was the centre of much interest for some, 5000 people visited it on that day to witness the unveiling and consecration of an image of Champa or Maitraya (the Coming Buddha) Buddha. This huge image, which is over 15 feet in height, was constructed under the personal supervisor of Trome Gishay Rimpoche an eminent Lama of Chumbi. The construction proceeded almost day and night until the image was completed in the course of a single month and cost some 25,000 rupees. The lower portion is made of clay within which are located 16 volumes of the sacred commandments of Buddha printed in Tibet from blocks. It is alleged that the interior of the image is full of precious stones, emblems and other costly articles, while the surface is made of a composition of clay and pounded gold and valuable stones”.²⁹ The monastery has also constructed an extension hall for nunaye (the prayer and meditation with fasting) which is held every year by the monastery.



Maitreya Buddha statue (Yiga Choeling monastery Ghoom).

Lama Anagarika Govinda came to Darjeeling as a delegate from Ceylon to take part in the international Buddhist Conference. In his book "The Way of The White Clouds" (1966 pg.14) also describe about the Yiga Choeling monastery where he resided for few days and changed his mind for an unforgettable journey into Tibet. He describes the monastery as "a big square hall, presided over by the gigantic statue of Buddha Maitreya, whose head would have lost itself in darkness of the temple's upper regions had it not received the daylight coming through an opening of the raised central part of the roof, which was supported by the tall red-lacquered pillars with richly carved and gilded brackets. During the night Maitreya's golden face reflected the mellow light of the Eternal lamp, which stood in the centre of the hall before a marble table with offerings."



Makdhog monastery Aloorbari (1914) source-collected by researcher on January 2016.

The **Aloorbari monastery** of Darjeeling its formal name is **Makdhog**. The monastery was established by Lama Sangay who came from Nagpuchay in Nepal. In 1914 the construction of the monastery was started and was completed in 1919, as it symbolize the end of war (first world war) so the monastery was named “Makdhog” that is war ended. The sect which the monasteries follow is the Ningmapa. In its main chamber Guru Padma Sambhava’s idol is worshipped. The monastery functions under the Yolmo Buddhist Association. In 1934 the old monastery was damaged by earthquake and it was again constructed. Previously the monastery used to hold kangyur ceremony on October and now it is held on the month of April. From this monastery in Darjeeling the nunaye ritual was first started. Buddhapurnima is also celebrated every year and the processions are taken with colorful attire. Now seven monks with household are related with the monastery.



Phuntsog Nyabchooling Jorebunglow (source- collected by researcher on January 2016).

The **Phuntsog Nyabchooling** of Jorebunglow is also one of the oldest monasteries of Darjeeling. The monastery follows the Nyingma sect and has some branches in Kalimpong. The exact date is not confirmed or known but it was established in mid nineteenth century. Guru Padmasambhava's idol is worshipped in the centre of the chamber. They regard Zate Rimpoche as their spiritual guru. All the major festivals like Buddhapurnima, new-year ritual celebration is performed in the monastery. The monastery also runs a school for the monks. the local people have a great faith in this monastery.

Thus the advent of Buddhism in the Himalayan region after seventeenth century brought an important transformation with the establishment of the Chogyal rule. With the rule of an independent Buddhist ruler the indigenous people also started to follow the new religion. The growth of Buddhism led to the acceleration of the monasteries and its development which became one of the important religious and

cultural aspects of the region. Monasteries are the important center of the Buddhist community and are regarded as a holy place by the local peoples as the temples are. Local Hindu also visits the monasteries and the temple of Mahakal baba in Darjeeling stands as the Hindu Buddhist union, where the Hindu and the Buddhist priests sit side by side and bless the worshippers. The entire Himalayas forms the Buddhist zone though apparently the Buddhists may be in minority but most hill tops are studded with stupas and monasteries. Monastery building activities were more accelerated after the Tibetan immigration in the region. There is a peaceful coexistence of the Buddhists and Hindus and most of them regard the religion as one.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Debnath Sailen,(2008) Cultural history of North Bengal, pub , p.2-3.
- ² Waddell L.A,(1978) Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet , Heritage pub, p.45.
- ³ I bid, p.46.
- ⁴ Risley H.H,(1985rep) The Gazetteer of Sikkim, B R publisher, p.248.
- ⁵ Waddell L.A, (1978) Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet , Heritage publisher, p.47.
- ⁶ Risley H.H, (1985rep) The Gazetteer of Sikkim, B R publisher, p.249.
- ⁷ Sinha A.C,(2008) Sikkim Feudal and Democratic, Indus pub company, p.47.
- ⁸ Datta Karubaki,(2008) Essays on Tibetan Cultural Heritage, Serials pub, p.
- ⁹ Malley LSSO, (1985rep) Bengal District Gazetteer Darjeeling, logos press, p.21.
- ¹⁰ Bhanja K.C,(1993rep) History of Darjeeling and the Sikkim Himalayas, Gyan pub, p.25.
- ¹¹ Risley H.H, (1985rep) The Gazetteer of Sikkim, B.R publisher, p.250.
- ¹² Dozey E.C, (2011rep) A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835 with a complete itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the district, N.L pub, p.75.
- ¹³ Ahir D.C,(1993)Himalayan Buddhism Past and Present, Sri sat guru pub, p.124.
- ¹⁴ Ojha Kasinath, (1999) Nineteenth Century Bengal: A Study in urbanization (1835-1890) unpublished thesis,Dept of History, p.208.

-
- ¹⁵ Bisht S.N Bankoti, S.T(ed) Encyclopedic Ethnography of the Himalayan Tribes vol.2, Global vision pub house, p.13.
- ¹⁶ Ahir D.C,(1993) Himalayan Buddhism past and present, Sri sat guru pub, p.126.
- ¹⁷ Malley LSSO, (1985rep) Bengal District Gazetteer Darjeeling, logos press, p.44.
- ¹⁸ Subba T.B, (1989) Dynamics of a hill society, Mittal publication Delhi, p.46.
- ¹⁹ Ahir D.C,(1993) Himalayan Buddhism past and present, sri sat guru pub, p.127-128.
- ²⁰ Malley LSSO, (1985rep) Bengal District Gazetteer Darjeeling, logos press, p.42.
- ²¹ Vansittart E, (1894) Clans and Castes in Nepal, pub by Vipin Jain vintage books, p.19
- ²² Subba T.B,(1989) Dynamics of a hill society, Mittal pub Delhi, p.46.
- ²³ Subba T.B, (1990) Flight and Adaptation, Library of Tibetan works and Archives, New Delhi, p.70.
- ²⁴ Data Karubaki, (2008) Essays on Tibetan Cultural Heritage, serials pub. p.194.
- ²⁵ Dozey E.C, (2011REP) A Concise History of the Darjeeling District Since 1835 with a complete itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the district, N.L pub. p. 75.
- ²⁶ Ronaldshay Earl, (1923) Lands of the Thunder Bolt, Constable and company ltd London , p.07-08.
- ²⁷ I bid, p.76.
- ²⁸ Hooker J.D, (1969rep) Himalayan Journals vol.1, today and tomorrow's printers, p.134.
- ²⁹ Dozey E.C, (2011rep) A Concise history of the Darjeeling District Since 1835 with a complete itinerary of tours in Sikkim and the district, N.L pub. p.76.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NAGARA AND VESARA/CHALUKYAN STYLE OF TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Arka Acharjee¹

Abstract:

The origin of Indian temple goes back to the pre Christian era and its evolution into a monument of great architectural merit is marked by conscious efforts on the part of several ruling dynasties from the 4th to 17th centuries, making it an institution of enduring importance in the social, economic and political integration of the sub-continent. There are several regional variations in the process of its development as a symbol of Indian culture. Undoubtedly its historical past, therefore, makes a charming study. As a centre for worship, the temple is mainly a creation as well as a visual medium of the puranic tradition. Hindu myths, legends and beliefs are selected and put together in texts, collectively called the Puranas. The Hindu Pantheon of gods originated from the texts of two Brahmanical sects, the Vaishnava and the Saiva, which with other minor religious system are part of the Puranic tradition, under what is known as Hinduism. The Hindu temple, in more than one sense, represents the multiple facets and complex process of this development through its architecture. So through this article one attempt has been made to ventilate the views about the comparative study of Nagara and Vesara/Chalukyan style of temple architecture (from ancient to early medieval period).

Keywords: *Cruciform Plan, Hybrid Type, Star-Shaped Plan, Straight-Lined Cone, Stellar Design, Admixture/Amalgamation/ Fusion.*

¹Arka Acharjee is Asst. Professor in Department of History, ABN Seal College.

Origin of the Indian Temples:

• **“Architecture is the matrix of civilization”**

-Lethaby¹ (Brown 2014, 1)

The important question arose here is how or what has contributed in the evolution of the Indian Temple? Is it a single tradition or is it an amalgam of various traditions? It is believed by some that the temple form is derived from the Vedic alter, the earliest known sacred structure (Vedi) which had the square as its essential form. Apart from the square Vedic alter, other non-Vedic non-metaphysical and more historical beginnings are assigned to the temple for example, the present day flat roofed shrine is commonly/generally seen as an offshoot from an aboriginal prototype, the stone dolmen or a sepulchral (Funereal) structure which first appeared in the megalithic age in the centuries immediately before and after the beginning of the Christian era.

Another significant derivation of the temple was from the tabernacle of the forest (made of bamboo or branches of large palm leaves only) in which a divine presence was known to dwell. The tabernacle, seen as alter, enclosed the space by the high shape of four curved branches, with their ends gathered to a point in gradual reduction of the three dimensional form in one direction. This is still a familiar form in village huts. This form gives way to the curvilinear Sikhara (Superstructure) of the north Indian temple, ascending in diminishing units towards a finial, marked by the Kalasa, a vase of pitcher² (Champakalakshmi and Kris 2001,23-26).

Early Temple Styles:

The Practice of erecting sanctuaries probably goes back to the 2nd century BC apparently built in perishable materials; these sanctuaries provided little scope for the application of the principles of architecture as an art.

The Gupta period marks the beginning of structural temple architecture. As evident from the extant monuments, there was experimentation in a number of forms and designs, out of which two significance temple style evolved, one in the north and the other in the south. The following well defined types may be identified: 1) Flat Roofed, square temple with a shallow pillared porch in the front. 2) Flat Roofed, square temple with covered ambulatory around the sanctum and preceded by Pillared porch, sometimes with a second storey above. 3) Square temple with a low and squat Sikhara (Tower) above. 4) Rectangular temple with an apsidal back and a barrel vaulted roof above and 5) Circular temple with Shallow rectangular projections at the four cardinal faces.

Neither the fourth nor in the fifth type seem to have any marked effect on subsequent development. But the first three types are seen as precursors of later Indian temple styles. Illustrative examples of the first include Kankali Devi Temple at Tigawa and Vishnu and Varaha temple at Eran, all in Madhya Pradesh. The second type is seen in the Parvati Temple at Nachna Kuthara, the Siva Temple at Bhumara, both in Madhya Pradesh. The example of third type of temple architecture is a disputable issue. Some archaeologists said that the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh (Jhansi District) and the brick temple at Bhitargaon are the examples of 3rd type of temple architecture. But the other did not agreed on their view in this issue³ (Swarup 1968, 135-138).

The second and the third type of Gupta temple are called “Vimana”, (Storeyed) and “Sikhara” (cruciform) types. In the following centuries, these two types supposedly underwent further improvements and crystallized to form two distinctive temple styles respectively in the South and North.

Emergence of later temple Styles (Nagara, Dravida and Vesara):

The major temple styles listed and described in the “Vastu Shasta” texts are the Nagara, Dravida and Vesara, of which the prime position is assigned to the Nagara of North India as the reading style. Next in important is the Dravida in South India. All the available texts are agreed on the point that the Nagara style was prevalent in the region between Himalayas and Vindhya. The Dravida country is well known and the texts rightly confine the Dravida style to that part of the country lying between the river Krishna and Cape Kanyakumari; while the Vesara style is sometimes associated with the area between the Vindhya and Krishna River. Hardy points out that Nagara and Dravida should be understood as architectural languages, in the sense that they provide a vocabulary, a range of elements and a family of forms which can be put together in different ways ⁴(Singh 2008, 625).

Comparative study of the Nagara and Vesara/Chalukyan style of Temple Architecture:

From earlier references we know that Hindu Temple Architecture was categorically divided into three styles. Vesara style was the ‘least known’ temple architecture in comparison with two other. We know from various earlier sources like “Isanasivagurudevapaddhati”⁵, “Samaranganasutradhara”⁶ etc. that the name of ‘Nagara’ occurs frequently in that texts but the name of ‘Vesara’ does not occur because its name was contradicted with the name of ‘Varata’ ⁷(Kramrisch 2015, 286-287).

The word 'Nagara', as derived from Nagara, a city, means 'Pertaining to a city or town'. This is generally accepted meaning (Kramrisch 2015, 287). However, from another sources we know that the meaning of Nagara is 'Universe (Visva)'. The temple is like a Universe is Nagara⁸(Kramrisch 2015, 288).

On the other hand 'Vesara' means "a mule", an admixture/ amalgamation of heterogeneous parents⁹ (Kramrisch 2015, 291) i.e. Nagara and Dravida. This style of temple architecture mainly evolved, practiced and developed by the influence of Chalukyan kings of Deccan. That is the sole reason of the fact that this type of temple architecture also famous by the name "Chalukyan Style of Temple Architecture".

From various sources we know that Nagara temple is quadrangular all over i.e. from the base to the stupa. Beside, Vesara/Chalukyan temple style in its initial stage generally evolved as a replica of the Dravidian style i.e. octagonal style but soon this style gradually changed and developed as a distinct style mainly by its star-shaped plan, projecting angles lying in the circles whose centres were in the middle of the shrine and mandap respectively¹⁰ (Fergusson 2012, 425).

Gradually, two main orders of the temple architecture (i.e. Nagara and Dravida) in course of full formation begin to emerge and also there geographical distribution clearly represent as North and South Indian. But, in course of time in a very different sequence the Deccan region of Peninsular India represent a hybrid style which was popularly known as 'Vesara'. This style mainly extended in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra region & flourished as a highly florid architectural design in the Chalukya (North & Central Karnataka), Hoyasala (South Karnataka) and Kakatiya (Hyderabad, Warangal and adjoining areas) temples¹¹ (Champakalakshmi and Kris 2001, 44) from 7th to 13th centuries.

The Northern (Nagara) type is distinguished by its bold curvilinear spire with ribbed "Amalaka"¹² (Kramrisch 2015, 216-217) - fruit of Vishnu's blue lotus, which caps the tower and carries the Kalash, symbolising the Jar of Nectar.

On the other hand the Vesara style is totally an amalgamation of Nagara and Dravida temple style. In plan it is Dravida and in shape it follows Nagara style which means it denotes a mixed style¹³ (Kramrisch 2015, 291). Two important earlier examples of this style are the Papanath and Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal. The former mainly inheriting the Nagara features but using decorative motifs unknown in Northern temple style; the latter blindly followed the Dravida style in its design and execution¹⁴ (Champakalakshmi and Kris 2001, 89).

Every temples of the north India, irrespective of its situation and date, reveals two distinct features – I) in planning ii) in elevation. In plan, the North Indian temple is always a square one with a number of graduated projection in the exterior. In elevation, it exhibits a tower (Sikhara), gradually inclining inwards of several layers of convex curve; usually crowned by an 'Amalaka'. These two features –the cruciform ground plan and curvilinear Sikhara¹⁵ (Singh 2008, 625) hence, be regarded as the salient features of Nagara temple. In those respects, the archetypes of the Nagara temple may be seen in the third (Sikhara) type of Gupta temples, in which these features supposedly occur more or less in a rudimentary stage.

Plate LIII

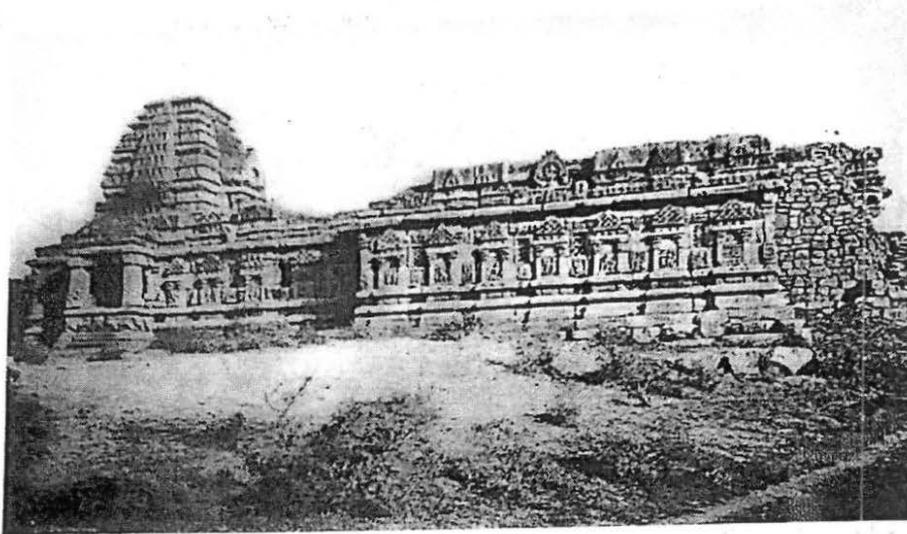


Fig. 1. Pattadakal: Temple of Papanath; c. 680 A.D.

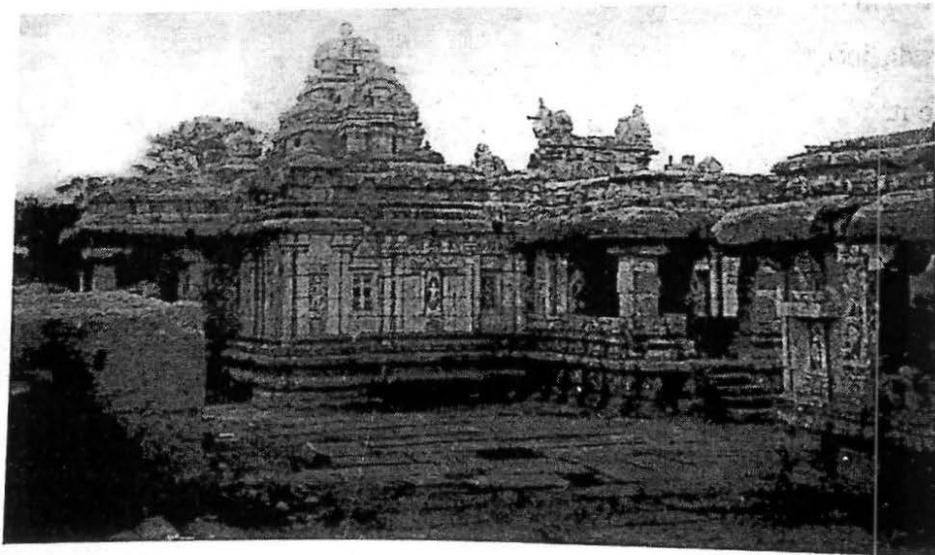


Fig. 2. Pattadakal: Temple of Virupaksha; c. 740 A.D.

*[Source: Plate-LIII- BROWN, PERCY -*Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)*, New Delhi,CBS Edition 2014]

Beside, from the remains of the earlier examples we conceived the fact that at first the Vesara style followed the general pattern of the Dravidian style but some features were included like the prominent corners by flat increments, slight projections on the walls, the Sikhara & roof become stepped etc. But after some years the general plan was changed and it come to be star-shaped from the octagonal Dravidian shape. The pillars were arranged in square and lathe turned. The treatment of this style in wall surface, the design and order of the pillars and the arrangement in 'Mukha-Mandapa' are distinctive. It's uniqueness also prominent in its architectural features like its stellar design on the outer projections, carvings from base to finial in a three sectional elevation and its sculptural treatment¹⁶ (Champakalakshmi and Kris 2001, 92-93).

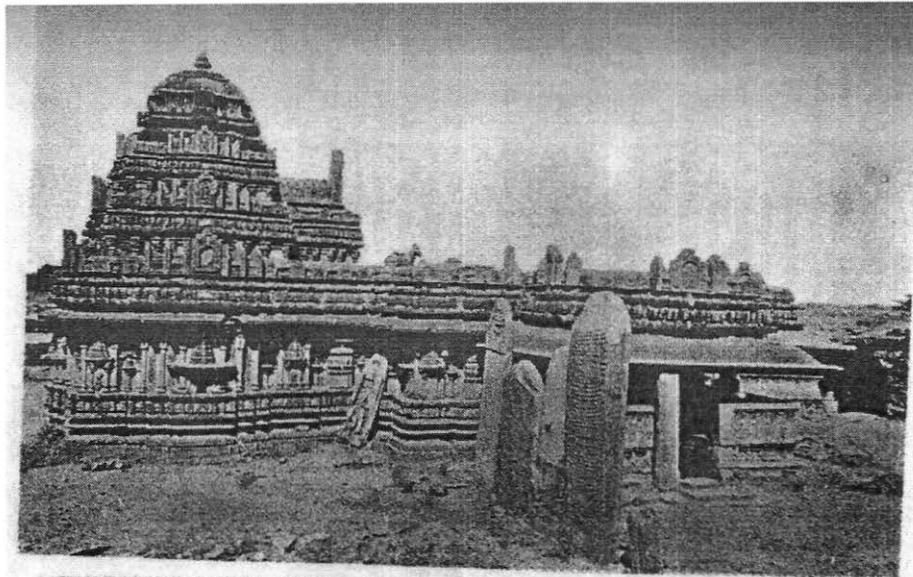
Actually the later temples of this style mainly distinct itself from the Nagara and Dravida influence by the grouping of three shrines round a central mandap or hall. Also its pillars are markedly different from the Dravidian and Nagara type; they are massive, circular, richly carved and highly polished. Their capitals are far wide and shaft is carved with circular moulding and vertically held¹⁷(Fergusson 2012, 423) which was completely different in comparison with Northern style.

Initially, the temple originated as a flat roofed square structure in the form of a cell (Shrine), with a pillared porch in front. Variants of the flat roofed structure persisted under the post Gupta dynasties of the North and central India and the Nagara style emerged with the evolution of a Sikhara over the super shrine. The subsequent development of the Nagara style can be traced through in the Dashavatara temple at Deogarh and Brick temple at Bhitargaon (both in up). The beginnings of the typical Nagara Sikhara can be seen in the Mahadeva temple at Nachna Kuthara (7th century A.D.) in MP. The fully developed Nagara style is

evident in the Lingaraja temple of Bhubaneswar and Sun temple in Konaraka (both in Orissa) by 8th century A.D.

The history of the Vesara style begins by the hands of early Chalukyan rulers. Architectural activity of the Chalukyans mainly centred on three sites (i.e. Badami, Pattadakal and Aihole). In those sites the Chalukyan rulers erected hundreds of temples which were the best example of the beginning of hybrid Vesara style. In these sites no single temple represented entirely to Dravida or Nagara style but originated as a mixing or trying combination and amalgamation of two styles as represented the Papanath(680 C.E.) & Virupaksha (740 C.E.) temple at Pattadakal. Earlier it was mentioned that this two temple were the masterpiece of emerging Vesara style and this credit went none other than Chalukyan artisans. They successfully did a tremendous job i.e. the fusion of two style which lead to manifestation of completely new, distinct, different and popular style known as Vesara/ Chalukyan style.

The most representative examples of the later Northern Indian 'Sikhara' style temples (from the 6th century A.D.) are the Dasavatara temple at Deoghar (U.P.) and the Brick temple at Bhitargaon (U.P.). The Dasavatara temple presents an unusual feature apart from the Sikhara in the arrangement of three sculptured niches on the three walls; each as a panel framed by two pilasters on either side. This niches along with the projection of the door frame in the front wall appeared to set off in the middle of the each phase. Such an arrangement may be regarded as the beginning of a device that subsequently be developed into the practice of setting forward and become the characteristics of the ground plane of Nagara temple of later days. This two temples show a rudimentary Sikhara which became the most characteristic feature, of the Nagara style of temple architecture.



CHAUDADAMPUR TEMPLE OF MUKTESWAR FROM THE SOUTH-WEST (to face page 429, Vol. I)

*[Source: Plate-XV- Fergusson, James-*History of Indian and Eastern Architecture (Vol.I)*, Delhi, Low Price Publications-2012]

On the other, the development of the Vesara style continued by the Later Chalukyans and the Hoyasala dynasty (from 1050 C.E. to 1300 C.E.). The dharwar district may be considered as the centre of this development. The important temples of this site are Saiva temple at Ittagi, Kallesvara temple at Kukkanur, Somesvar temple at Gadag, Kasivisvesvar temple at Lakkundi, Chaudadampur temple of Mukteswar, Mallikarjuna temple at Kuruvatti, Dodda Basavanna temple at Dambal etc., all dating from 11th to 12th century. The Saiva temple at Ittagi considered one of the highly finished and architecturally perfect shrines of the Vesara style of temple architecture. According to Meadows Taylor, its decorative art is much superior to any other temple¹⁸ (Fergusson 2012, 424). However, in case of the tower formation

the development of this style commenced from Ittagi, Kukkanur and Gadag temples ultimately matured in black stone temple at Chaudadampur. But the artistic features of the beautiful plastic ornamentation, an innovative pattern in the Sikhara and the sculptural decoration in the doorways reached its zenith in the Kasivisvesvar temple at Lakkundi and Mallikarjuna temple at Kuruvatti. However a totally different plan of the Vesara style found in the same Dharwar district by the attendance of the famous Dodda Basavanna temple at Dambal. It presents us with what came to be a late form of the Chalukyan Sikhara, the star shaped stellate plan appears both in the sanctuary and also in the 'Navaranga'¹⁹, richly carved antechamber, most beautiful doorstep design and richly chiselled four pillars which supported the mandap. This temple regarded as one of the latest designed temple in early medieval India and also the masterpiece of Vesara style.

The Nagara style of temple architecture reached its highest climax/watermark in the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar, Sun temple at Konaraka (both in Orissa) and the Khajuraho temples in central India. At first, we discuss about the Lingaraj temple. It consists of all the four chambers for temple ritual, the 'Deul', the 'Jag Mohan' the 'Nat mandap' and the 'Bhog mandap'. The deul with its gracefully tapering tower, standing out prominently in the on first composition, is undoubtedly the most imposing feature of the temple. The Sikhara now attains the complete, beehive shape in the balanced formation of which the Lingaraj manifests the magnificent fulfilment of the Nagara style of temple architecture.

The grandest achievement of the northern India style reflected in the temple of the Sun at Konaraka. It illustrates the finality and maturity of the Nagara style of architecture. Every part of the temple large or small, was not only perfect in itself, but so systematically co-ordinated, that the temple of the sun present an architectural unity hitherto unknown. The god Surya has been traditionally visualized in Hindu

mythology as blazing across the heavens his fiery golden chariot of seven horses –an allegory which the Konaraka architects so splendidly tried to express in the temple form. Undoubtedly this temple is one of the finest example of the Indian craftsman.

On the other hand, before reaching its full-fledged form a simple but notable example of the Vesara style of temple architecture must be mentioned i.e. temple at Buchhanapalli which is adjacent to Haidarabad. The roof of this temple is in steps with a flat band on four principal faces. The peak of this temple beautified with a vase though in an incomplete form. The porch composing with of 16 pillars arranged in a same distant manner. The Sikhara of this temple is a straight-lined and conical form. The decoration of the Sikhara is completely different than the Nagara curvilinear outline and Dravida spire in storeys. The arrangement of the pillars in porch is also considered as a distinct style because it is different than the bracketing arrangement of the Southern style or domical forms of the Northern style. So by these architectural features it is undoubtedly proved that this temple is completely demonstrated the unique features of Vesara style and exhibited this style as a separate and distinct style of temple architecture²⁰(Fergusson 2012, 435-436).

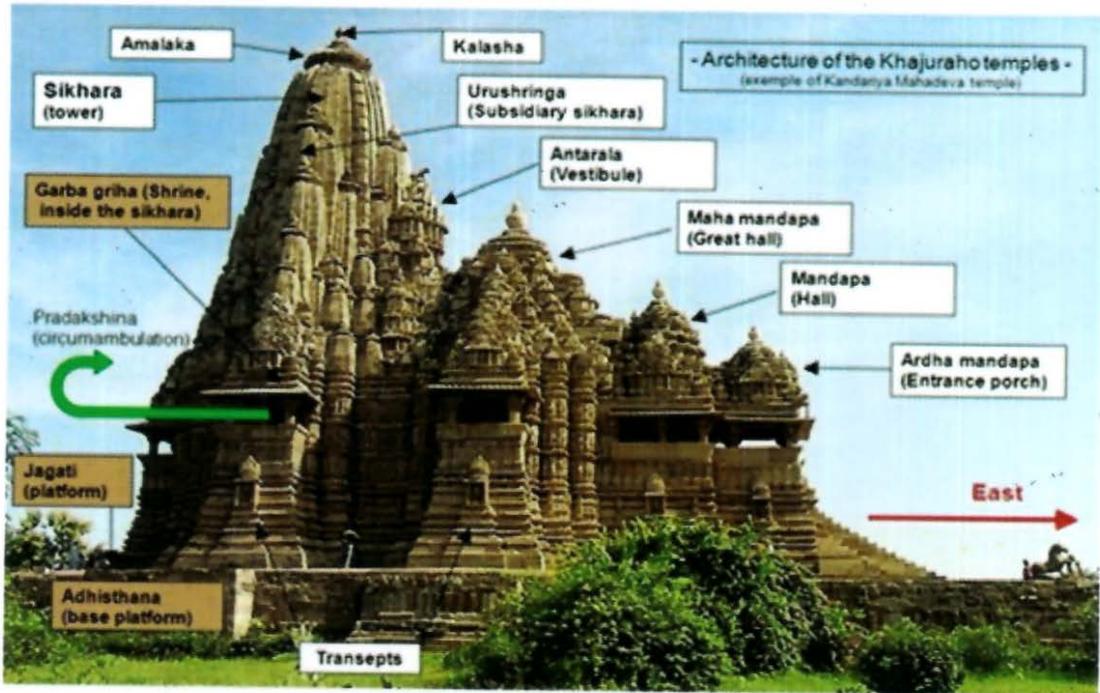
Plate LXXXIX



Fig. 1

Fig. 1. Konark Sun Temple; c. 1250 A.D.

*[Source: Plate-LXXXIX- BROWN, PERCY- *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)*, New Delhi, CBS Edition 2014]

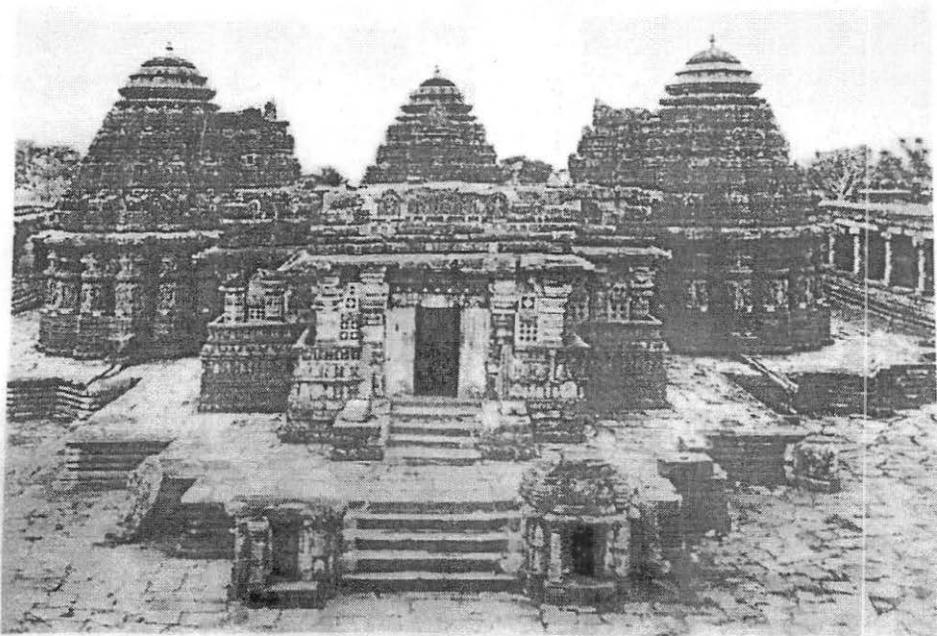


*[Source: <https://iasmania.com/temples-styles-in-india/>-retrieved on 15/06/2017 at 7 p.m.]

On the other side, perhaps the extra ordinary group of temples at Khajuraho in central India, sums up all that is best and most elegant in Indo-Aryan style of architecture. These temple built in during the supremacy of the Chandelle Rajput's (950 A.D. to 1050A.D.). The finest and the largest of the group is "Kandariya Mahadeva" temple. This temple, like the other stands on a high and solid mercenary terrace. Differing from the Orissan temples, Khajuraho is maintained in a compact whole and not through a conjoined group of separate buildings. In general, the magnificence of the Khajuraho Shrines depends on the beauty of the proportions, elegance of contours and a perfectly harmonious blend of the structural and decorative elements with the introduction of sculptured bands on the central zone of

the temple. So, undoubtedly we say that the Khajuraho temple made an evolution in the Nagara style and reached this, temple style on unique position.

Vesara style of temple architecture reached its highest climax under Hoyasala dynasty (1000 C.E.-1300 C.E.). The Chalukyan-Hoyasala builders mainly used a greenish or bluish black chloritic schist for the creation of these remarkable temples under Hoyasala patronage. One of the notable temple in Mysore region is the Kesava temple at Somnathpur (1268 C.E.). This temple is architecturally borrowed all the characteristics of a hybrid style. This temple is unique in its stellar design on the outer projections, carvings from base to finial in a three sectional elevation, treatment of the wall surfaces, the design or order of the pillars and a triple shrine with a common 'Navaranga'²¹ (Champakalakshmi and Kris 2001, 92-93).



Somnathpur, Mysore: Kesava Temple; 1268 A.D.

*[Source: Plate-CXXV- BROWN, PERCY- *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)*, New Delhi, CBS Edition 2014]

The supreme climax of Vesara style reflected and manifested in the Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid (12th century C.E.). It is a double temple and has four entrances. The temple itself is 160 ft. in north and south by 122 ft. in east and west. Its height is most probably 25 ft. from the terrace on which it raises. Each temple is cruciform in plan, each have 'Nandi Mandapa' (open pillared pavilion). This temple chiefly on account of its comprehensive sculptural ornamentation, is, without exaggeration, one of the most remarkable monuments ever produced by the hands of man. This temple is also recognised as the grandest achievement of Indian architecture in its most superb plastic manifestation, phenomenal concentration, tremendous technical skill, ingenuity, unstoppable imagination and profound religious significance²² (Brown 2014, 142-143).

Essence of differences between Nagara and Vesara/Chalukyan style:

The differences between the Nagara and Vesara style lies in the configuration of the building, the shape of the plan, the treatment of the wall surface, the design and order of the pillars and most important distinction is the design and treatment of the tower or Sikhara. Generally the Sikhara of the Vesara temple style is a straight-lined cone which is unlike to the curvilinear outline of the Nagara style. The porch is also a unit of difference. Mainly the porch of the Vesara temple is open and comprised of columns arranged equidistantly over its floor different from the domical forms of the Northern style. Vesara style is also unique in its grouping of the shrines round a central hall which is unlike to Nagara style. The plan of the Nagara temple is naturally quadrangular while Vesara temple is star-shaped. The design of the tower of Vesara temple is very high standard, recognised as one of the best plastic ornamentation in its sculpture texture. On the other hand the building of the

Nagara temple mainly stressed to its structural strength rather than beautiful ornamentation. However, both are created on the principle of diminishing squares. According to “Manasara –Silpasastra” the distinguishing features of the two styles also seems to be the general shape of the Sikhara²³ (Acharya 1996, 48).

Conclusion:

The history of the Indian temple architecture which started from the ancient times Vedic alter reached its highest climax in the Nagara, Dravida & Vesara style. In defining this two types (Nagara & Vesara/Chalukyan) we can say it in words that the former to be called ‘Sikhara’ type and the later was Hybrid (‘mull’) type. While the Chalukyan/Vesara form flourished dynastically (Especially by Chalukyan and Hoyasala dynasty), the Nagara style developed regionally, each region manifesting its own particular qualities, undoubtedly impressed at every place by the same ideals principles and forms of art. So, after the above study and discussion we can say that although those two styles of temple architecture had its own distinctive features and forms but both contributing greatly for the enrichment of Indian temple architecture.

Notes and References:

-
- ¹ Brown, Percy. *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)*. New Delhi: CBS Publishers & Distributors Pvt. Ltd., 2014, P.1. .
 - ² Champakalakshmi, R. and Kris, Usha. *The Hindu Temple*. New Delhi: Lustre Press Roli Books, 2001, pp.23-26.
 - ³ Swarup, Shanti. *5000 years of arts and crafts in India and Pakistan*. New Delhi: B.Taraporevala Sons & Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1968, pp.-135-138.

- ⁴ Singh, Upinder. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*. Chennai: Pearson, 2008, P.625.
- ⁵ It is a monumental book on Tantra, divided into four parts and consists of 119 chapters which deals of variety of topics such as the science of magic, hymns of various deities and their applications, construction and renovation of temples etc.- Sastri, Ganapati(Edited). *ISANASIVAGURUDEVA PADDHATI OF ISANASIVA GURUDEVA (VOL-II)*. New Delhi: BHARATIYA VIDYA PRAKASHAN, 1990
- ⁶ It is a voluminous book on Indian architecture, divided into 83 chapters which deals with house and temple architecture, sculptural arts, paintings, town planning etc. - https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarangana_Sutradhara-retrieved on 10/02/2018 at 10 a.m.
- ⁷ Kramrisch, Stella-. *The Hindu Temple (Volume-1)*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Pvt. Ltd., 2015, pp. 286-287.
- ⁸ Ibid, P.288.
- ⁹ Ibid, P.291
- ¹⁰ Fergusson, James. *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture (Volume-1)*. Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2012, P.425.
- ¹¹ Champakalakshmi, R. and Kris, Usha. *The Hindu Temple*. New Delhi: Lustre Press Roli Books, 2001, P. 44.
- ¹² Notched ring stone Kramrisch, Stella-. *The Hindu Temple (Volume-1)*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Pvt. Ltd., 2015, pp. 216-217.
- ¹³ Ibid, P.291.
- ¹⁴ Champakalakshmi, R. and Kris, Usha. *The Hindu Temple*. New Delhi: Lustre Press Roli Books, 2001, P. 89.
- ¹⁵ Singh, Upinder. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*. Chennai: Pearson, 2008,
- ¹⁶ Champakalakshmi, R. and Kris, Usha. *The Hindu Temple*. New Delhi: Lustre Press Roli Books, 2001, pp. 92-93.
- ¹⁷ Fergusson, James. *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture (Volume-1)*: Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2012, P.423.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, P.424.
- ¹⁹ It is an open hall with two rows of four pillars at the side, all the pillars except two being carved with large female figures in the relief in the front- Acharya, Prasanna Kumar. *A Dictionary of Hindu Architecture (Manasara series I)*.Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2015,
- ²⁰ Ibid, pp.435-436.

-
- ²¹ Champakalakshmi, R. and Kris, Usha. *The Hindu Temple*. New Delhi: Lustre Press Roli Books, 2001, pp. 92-93.
- ²² Brown, Percy. *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)*. New Delhi: CBS Publishers & Distributors Pvt. Ltd., 2014, pp.142-143.
- ²³ Acharya, Prasanna Kumar. *Indian Architecture (Manasara series II)*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996, P.48.

Situating the Historical Chronicles of Tripura in Traditional Indian Historiography

Deepayan Chakraborty¹

ABSTRACT

The sub-discipline of history named historiography is concerned with the history of history writing. India had more than one genres of traditional history-writing before the establishment of the Colonial British rule in the Subcontinent. Though initially not taken up seriously by the scholars of the new ruling class, some from within that group soon found them useful for studying the ancient and medieval history of the country. Situated in the southernmost corner of North East India, the province of Tripura too can boast of a strong tradition of historiography. Mostly written in Bengali language, they are essential for undertaking any research on the history of the Medieval Kingdom of Tripura, particularly from its formation in c. 15th Century C.E up to the end of the 18th Century C.E. This paper tries to locate the traditional historiography of Tripura within the earlier-mentioned Pan-Indian Traditional Historiography. It will also try to bring out the unique features of the historical chronicles of Tripura.

Keywords: *itihās-purāna, Rājmalā, Kṛsnmalā, Ghīzanāma*

¹ Assistant Professor, Dept of History, Michael Madhusudan Dutta College, Sabroom, Tripura (South).

Introduction

Nestled in the southernmost part of North East India, Tripura is presently one of the states or provinces of the Union of India. Geographically, it corresponds more or less to the erstwhile Kingdom of Tripura under the Māñikya Dynasty as it existed before the Partition and independence of India¹. One of the chief features of that Kingdom was the existence of a tradition of historiography which is, despite some controversies, the chief source of information for its history, particularly for the period from its formation to the 18th Century C.E. On the other hand, the nature of this historiography cannot be understood without placing it within the Pan-Indian Traditional Historiography. This paper tries to view the traditional historiography of Tripura as part of the Pan-Indian tradition of history writing and delves into its unique features. It is not an endeavour to provide a mere description of the literary chronicles of Tripura. A short discussion on Indian traditional historiography is to be done at the beginning of this study.

Traditional Indian Historiography

The academic discipline of History deals with past events related to human activity. Its goal is to narrate and analyze the Past *as accurately as possible*. On the other hand Historiography is an ancillary discipline of History which deals with the techniques and ideas of writing history. It is concerned not only with the writing of history according to modern line, but to delve into the ways into which various cultures and people of different ages visualised *The Past*. This is preliminary to any endeavour in historical research. The essential features of historiography are the methods of using source materials or records of past events, both literary and archaeological (in the case of ancient and medieval histories), critical methods of

analyzing the source materials and a keen sense of the past². It deals with the history of history writing. It is concerned with the way various cultures had notion of *the Past*.

Since the days of the great 19th Century German historians Barthold Niebuhr and Leopold Von Ranke, modern method of history writing has come to mean to reconstruct the past in “a scholarly fashion, sticking to certain definite rules of establishing facts, interpreting evidence, dealing with source materials etc”³. The modern academic discipline of History follows this line of operation. But historiography is not concerned solely with this method. Even before the crystallization of the modern method of history writing and sometimes coterminous with it, various cultures looked into the Past from their own perspectives. Even the modern method of history-writing had to go through evolution, absorbing various aspects of the Classical or Greco-Roman, Medieval Christian, Renaissance models. History of history writing has to take account of the way various cultures viewed their own past.

The search for a tradition of historical writing in Ancient India⁴ during the Early British colonialism, starting from the 18th Century C.E period, followed the modern scheme of history writing with emphasis on source materials and their interpretations, causation, humanistic orientation, proper chronology etc. A legacy of Renaissance historiography, these were the principles used to judge Ancient Indian or Sanskrit literature. Going by these yardsticks, the Classical or Greco-Roman, Chinese and Arab or Islamic models of historiography were thought to be the exemplary ones among the cultures belonging to the Pre-Modern World. Even the Biblical traditions were not written off outright. But no such comparable tradition with the features mentioned above was found in India⁵, particularly in the Pre-

Turkish period. Nevertheless, realization soon dawned upon these early exponents of Indology that information given in the 'Hindu' or Sanskrit texts, though haphazard in nature, had kernel of historical truth⁶ and attempts were made to systematize these information. Gradually Buddhist and Jaina texts too began to be used for this purpose. But the overriding idea that Ancient India lacked historical writings in line with the contemporary ancient cultures mentioned earlier in this paragraph lingered on and was accepted even by some of the nationalist historians⁷.

Such extreme views have been modified to some extent in the recent past. The authenticity of the information is not the only yardstick through which to look into this issue here. As has already been mentioned in this paper, historiography is concerned with the way a society in a particular time views *The Past*. It is itself a part of culture of any particular society. The established methods of history writing are still intact in the modern academic world, despite occasional challenges. But historiography should take into account the *other* forms of the notions of *the Past* as well. This exercise, though, must not fall into the trap of obscurantism.

In the context of North India, Romila Thapar⁸ identified two broad divisions of traditional historiography- itihāsa-purāṇa tradition which was brahmanical or Hindu in nature and śramaṇa one which was represented by Buddhist and Jaina writings. This observation has relevance for other parts of India as well. Apart from the two traditions mentioned above, the oral traditions preserved by bards and even inscriptions can be accepted to be branches of Indian traditional historiography. The traditional writings are more often in Sanskrit language (barring the Prakrit inscriptions). The word itihāsa means 'thus it happened' and purāṇa literally means 'old events'. Starting its journey from the Vedic period, the itihāsa-purāṇa tradition

got crystallized during the Mid 1st Millennium C.E when the Hindu purāṇas and upapurāṇas as well as the epics were given the final shape.

Together with the genres mentioned above, the Indo-Persian historiography which began in India from the time of the establishment of Turkish rule in the country in the 13th Century

C.E and regional historiography or 'histories' of various regional polities are two other genres within the field of traditional Indian way of history writing. Mention should also be made of a genre that became evident in the Early Medieval India—historical kāvyas or poetical works based on the lives of one or more than one hero or of illustrious kings (carita).

The brief discussion that has been done in this section was necessary to understand the nature of historical chronicles of Tripura. The relation of the traditional historiography of Tripura with the Pan-Indian traditions mentioned above will be analysed later in this paper.

Traditional Historiography of Tripura

Four literary works in Bengali language and one fragmentary work in Sanskrit constitute the traditional historiography of the Kingdom of Tripura. The Bengali works are Rājṃālā⁹, Kṛṣṇāmālā¹⁰, Ghazināmā¹¹ (pronounced 'Gājināmā' in Bengali) and Campakavijaya¹² (pronounced Campakabijaya¹³ in Bengali). The Sanskrit one is titled Rājaratnākara. Another interesting work on Tripura history is Tripura Deśer Kathā or Tripurā Burañji, composed by Arjun Dās Bairāgī and Ratna Kandalī Śarmā, two envoys sent by the Ahom King Swargadeva Rudra Simha to the royal court of Tripura. They came and stayed thrice in the Māñikyā court during the 1709-1715

C.E period. Originally written in Assamese language, this book, though, should ideally be considered as a part of the rich historiography of the Ahom Kingdom. Hence this work is kept out of the purview of the present paper. Tripura Vamśāvalī of Dvija Baṅgacandra is actually a shorter version of Rājmālā, and Śreṇimālā, composed by Durgāmaṇi Ujir, is really a genealogy of the Māṅikya Dynasty. Though valuable source materials for the history of Medieval Tripura, these works, too, are kept out of the scope of this write-up.

Apart from the works mentioned above, some epigraphs have also been found in Tripura which gives some information of her history. But their scanty numbers and meagre information that they provide prevent them from being treated at par with the mainstream historiography mentioned above, though in the Pan-Indian context the inscriptions are treated as one form of traditional historiography¹⁴. The coins issued by the Māṅikya kings add to the information on Tripura History¹⁵. But these are not part of any tradition of history writing. So both the epigraphic and numismatic sources are not within the scope of discussion here.

RĀJMĀLĀ

The most important and well-known literary source for the history of Tripura, despite the controversies associated with it, is Rājmālā, the historical of the Māṅikya rule in Tripura patronised by the Royal Authority of the Kingdom. But it is to be mentioned here that the books written on the subject with the title Rājmālā are more than one. Kaliprasanna Sen, the editor of Śrīrajmālā which is the most detailed and authoritative of the lot, refers to the traditional view that the first volume (lahar) was

written during the reign of King Dharma Māṇikya during the Mid-15th Century C.E period by two scholars or traditional pundits from Sylhet (presently Bangladesh) – Śukreśvar and Vāṇeśvar with the help of the royal priest (cantai) Durlabhendra. The second and the third ones were composed towards the end of the 16th Century C.E during the reign of King Amara Māṇikya and in the second half of the 17th Century C.E during the reign of Govinda Māṇikya respectively. The fourth lahar was written by Viśwāsa Nārāyaṇa with the help of Jaideb Ujir (Wazir) in the second half of the 18th Century C.E during the reign of King Kṛṣṇamāṇikya. The fifth and the sixth ones were composed by Dugāmaṇi Ujir in the first half of the 19th Century C.E during the reigns of Kāśīcandra Māṇikya and Kṛṣṇakśor Māṇikya respectively.

In an article on Rājmalā¹⁶ published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society, Reverend James Long accepted the traditional view about its author or period of composition mentioned above which occurred in a copy of the work kept in the Asiatic Society. Scholars such as Dinesh Chandra Sen¹⁷ more or less accepted this view. Though an early scholarly view on the subject, its uncritical acceptance of the date of the text and the view Long propounded that it was the oldest specimen of Bengali composition are rejected by later day scholars¹⁸. Presently it is assumed¹⁹ that in the Tripurā Era 1238 (1828 C.E) Durgāmaṇi Ujir, a highly ranked royal officer, corrected and edited the whole narrative. This is referred to in the text itself where it says --

Purātan Rājmalā āchilo rachita |

Prasaṅgete alagnik bhāṣā je kutsita ||

Bārośo āṭṭriś san Tripurā jakhani |

Tāhāke sudhilo puna Ujīr Durgāmaṇi ||²⁰

In the first two lines quoted above from the Text it is said that the older Rājṃālā was written in a vulgar language. It is not clear to which language this *kutsita* (vulgar) language refers. It might refer to an earlier Bengali version full of grammatical and other errors or in a local dialect of South Eastern Bengal or Kokbarak, the language of the Tripuris and the majority of the tribal population of the Kingdom. But the latter did not have any alphabet in the medieval period. Was it then written originally in Kokbarak with Bengali characters? Or was it prevalent as oral history? Any way the original language Rājṃālā is a controversial issue.

Various kings tried to create their own versions of Rājṃālā. The traditional view itself shows that additions and writing of new volumes kept on taking place during the reigns of different kings. This trend continued in the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th Centuries. The most notable of these efforts took place during the reign of King Bir Bikram Kishor Māṇikya (1923-1947) when Mr. Kaliprasanna Sen edited the first four volumes, mainly on the basis of the edited works of Durgāmaṇi Ujīr. By the end of the 19th and in the first half of the 20th Centuries a trend of writing local histories of various districts of the British province of Bengal was in vogue,²¹ more as a search for a history of the *Bengalee People*. Mr. Sen, a contemporary of the period when this trend was in full swing, might have been influenced by it while editing the work. In that case he might have treated the medieval history of Tripura as part of Bengal History.

This work, named Śrīrājṃālā, has been published by the Govt. of Tripura. A shorter version of Rājṃālā in Bengali was written by Ramnarayan Deb²². A very important

work of the same kind named *Rājmalā bā Tripurār Itihās* in Bengali was composed by Mr Kailas Chandra Simha²³ which, however, did not get much royal favour. But the latter work is much complete in nature compared to the traditional *Rājmalā*. In fact, it was the first attempt to write the history of Tripura on modern lines. Still, the work of Kaliprasanna Sen, despite its uncritical attitude towards the mythical accounts pertaining to the pre-15th Century C.E period, is the most reliable version of the Text available today. It is to be noted here that it was Mr. Kaliprasanna Sen who coined the term *lahar* to describe the volumes of the text.

The first lahar or volume gives the supposedly earliest account of the Kingdom. The Māṇikya royal dynasty was shown to be descending from the mythical lunar (candra) dynasty. This was the dynasty to which the protagonists of the great Sanskrit epic Mahābhārata belonged. The Māṇikyās were even linked to Lord Śiva of the Hindus. Needless to say that these mythical accounts were conjured up to lend legitimacy to the Māṇikyās and can be compared with similar processes undertaken in some other tribal polities of North East India. But the events such as the establishment in and later the migration of the Tripuri tribe from the Barak Valley of Assam towards Tripura, described in this section, are accepted by the scholars to be authentic²⁴.

Despite Mr. Kailas Chandra Simha's view that the story of the Tripurā kings from King Tripura should be taken seriously²⁵, the account of the Kingdom prior to King Chenthumpā as described in the text, cannot be taken to be authentic history and should be seen as acts of legitimization of royal authority or to put a halo of purity on the royal dynasty, an integral part of state formation process in North East India. Ratna Phā was the first Tripuri ruler to use the title Māṇikya. According to *Rājmalā*, it was conferred upon him by the Sultan of Gauḍa (Bengal). The relation between the

Sultanate of Bengal and the Kingdom of Tripura is an interesting part of this lahar and forms an important facet in the state formation process among the Tripuri tribe. This volume also refers to the migration of the Bengalees from the Bengal Sultanate to the Plains of the Māṇikya Kingdom.

The second lahar deals with the period from the reign of Dharma Māṇikya up to the period prior to the time of the accession of King Amara Māṇikya in 1577 C.E. As it has already been said, during the reign of the latter-mentioned King his General Raṇacatura Nārāyaṇa narrated the story. Though the identity of Dharma Māṇikya is controversial, this volume is important for Tripura History from the perspective that it deals with the reigns of some of the greatest rulers belonging to the Māṇikya Dynasty such as Dhanya Māṇikya and Vijaya Māṇikya II. Particularly important here is the reference to the two successful battles with Sultan Hussain Shah of Bengal during the reign of King Dhanyamāṇikya in the first quarter of the 16th Century C.E. The use of cannon during these battles by the Sultan of Ben) pre-dates even its use in the first battle of Panipat in 1526 C.E.

As has been said in this paper, the traditional view of the composition of the third lahar is during the reign of King Govindamāṇikya during the second half of the 17th Century C.E, though even within the text there is reference to the fact that it was composed during the reign of the latter's son Rāmadeva Māṇikya (c.1676-1685 C.E)²⁶. Starting from the beginning of the reign of King Amara Māṇikya (1577 C.E), it deals with the political history of Tripura up to the reign of King Kalyāṇa Māṇikya (d.1660 C.E). One of the most important episodes of this period is the capture of the Plain areas of the Kingdom by the Mughals. Gaṅgādhara Siddhāntavāgīśa is referred to by Kaliprasanna Sen to be the original author of this lahar. But there is controversy among modern scholars in accepting this claim.

The fourth lahar, supposed to be written during the reign of King Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya in the second half of the 18th Century C.E, deals with the period from Govinda Māṇikya onwards. This king's life and achievements are discussed in detail here. The account comes up to the reign of King Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya, which can be tallied with some other texts like Kṛṣṇamālā and Ghāzināmā dealing with the political history of Tripura in the Late 18th Century C.E period. The Editor of Śrīrājmālā was not able to finish its editing. On the other hand the 5th and 6th volumes, provided they ever existed at all, are no longer extant and not discussed in the present paper.

The controversies surrounding the time of composition and language of the Text have been dealt with previously in this paper. Even then, to accept some of the assertions made in the Texts in their face value is problematic. *Firstly*, in none of the Texts the name of the writer is given. The names which have been taken to be of the writers of the *lahars* by Pundit Kaliprasanna Sen are, in fact, described in the Texts themselves as narrators. Still, in the absence of any proof on the contrary, the view that the narrators were the real writers cannot be rejected outright. *Secondly*, even after disregarding the attempt in the first lahar to connect the Māṇikyas with ancient mythical heroes, a reader encounters some instances of wrong information or no information at all in the portions of the Text pertaining to the historical period. The controversy regarding Dharma Māṇikya's identity is a case in point in this regard.

Still, Rājmālā in its present form is a good specimen of Indian traditional historiography. The history of Medieval Tripura is almost entirely based on this work. Whatever controversies it attracts is common to all the genres that prevailed before the emergence of the *modern* methods of history writings. In fact, these shortcomings even more bolster its claim to be part of the traditional forms of Indian historiography.

KRSÑAMĀLĀ

As the discussion done above shows, the history of Tripura from c.15th Century C.E to the reign of King Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya (1760-1783 C.E) is almost entirely dependent on the accounts of Rājāmālā. Though not comparable with Rājāmālā in terms of scope or gigantic span of time, some other local chronicles in Bengali dealing with some specific portions of her history came up in the Kingdom of Tripura. In terms of style of narration they follow Rājāmālā. One of such works is Kṛṣṇāmālā. Written by Dvija Rāmagaṅgā or Rāmagaṅgā Viśārada at the behest of King Rājadhara Māṇikya II (1785-1804 C.E) , it deals with the life and career of Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya, one of the rulers of Tripura whose reign saw much tumult, in a much more detailed way than done in Rājāmālā. The text suggests that it was narrated orally by the royal priest Jayanta Cantai to King Rājadhara Māṇikya II who happened to be the successor and nephew of Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya. It puts forward a detailed picture of the Kingdom as prevailed during the second half of the 18th Century C.E. A brief description of the subject matter of the text is given below.

After the death of King Mukunda Māṇikya in 1738, Tripura was going through an unstable period. The relations of the Kingdom with the Nawab of Bengal who represented, at least theoretically, the Mughal authority in the region was tenuous and short tenures of kings named Jaya Māṇikya, Udaya Māṇikya and Vijaya Māṇikya (the last two not to be confused with much more illustrious earlier kings of Tripura with the same names) speak of a disturbing and unstable phase. The Text, though, does not refer to these kings, perhaps because of its pre-occupation with Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya.

The story opens with a peaceful picture with King Indra Māṇikya ruling with the help of his brothers, the Crown Prince (Yuvarāja) Kṛṣṇamaṇi (later Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya) and Harimaṇi. But

the non payment of taxes²⁷ to the Nawab authority (called *Mughal* in the Text) of Bengal gave rise to the misfortune of the Kingdom. A rebel named Samsher Ghāzi (called a *taskar* or robber by the author) attacked the Kingdom with the help of the then Nawab of Bengal, Alivardi Khan. The latter was instigated by an official named Hāji Hussain, a friend of Samsher. After facing setbacks against the Rebel, Indra Māṇikya went to meet with the Nawab in Murshidabad (in the present province of West Bengal in India). Before leaving, he told his brother Kṛṣṇamaṇi to retreat deep into the hilly regions of the Kingdom along with other members of the royal family. Following the order, the latter moved to Kailasahar (in the Present Unakoti district of Tripura) and then to the friendly Heḍamba or Cachhari Kingdom, all along facing hardships. On being entreated by his Kuki subjects, Kṛṣṇamaṇi entered into the region peopled by this tribe within his Kingdom.

Meanwhile, though Samsher became the ruler of Tripura, almost all the high ranking officials in the capital Udaipur refused to accept his suzerainty. Cashing in on the situation, Kṛṣṇamaṇi waged war against him. Finally, Samsher's fortune declined. He was detained and assassinated at the order of the Nawab of Bengal.

While facing Samsher's challenge, Kṛṣṇamaṇi put down a Kuki rebellion. On the other hand, after the death of his friend King Rāmacandradhvaja of the Heḍamba Kingdom, the ministers became powerful there. Faced with the hostility from this section, Kṛṣṇamaṇi led successful campaigns against the Kingdom. Then he settled temporarily on the bank of the river Khowai in West Tripura and after obtaining the

formal permission from the Nawab of Bengal, Kṛṣṇamaṇi became the King of Tripura with the title Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya in 1760 C.E. This was followed by the phase of his relation with the British power. Muhammad Reza Khan, a top official of Bengal having seat of power in Chittagong (in present Bangladesh) attacked Tripura. This was followed by the British attack on the Kingdom.

Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya regained the throne in the confusion and tried to maintain a friendly relation with this newly emerging power at the back of his kingdom. Though not mentioned in the text, the Plain areas of the Kingdom came under the British sway at this time.. By 1767 the King's long drawn struggle seemed to have ended and he was able to establish royal authority from this time. But the text again mentions the instability and famine in the Kingdom after the death of the King in 1783 till Rājadhara's accession to the throne in 1785. The role of the British in the process of the accession of the new King too is mentioned in the text.

Despite concerned with a small period, much space is given to this chronicle in this paper because of several factors.

Firstly, the hero of this historical poem is the only one among the rulers of Medieval Tripura whose life and activities have been documented with such precision.

Secondly, as the narrator is contemporary of the events mentioned in the text, its reliability is much higher.

Thirdly, the relation of Tripura with the Mughal or Nawab authority of Bengal or later the British is referred to here. In fact, this was the threshold time in the history of India with the victory of the British in the battle of Plassey in 1757. Kṛṣṇa Māṇikya's reign saw the beginning of this transition.

Fourthly, the Kingdom's relation with the neighbouring powers in the East such as the Cachharis/Dimasas of the Heḍamba Kingdom or the Jayantias is touched upon in the text.

Fifthly, The centrifugal tendencies of the Kingdom are reflected in the King's relation with the Kuki and Tripuri Sardars and the rebellion of Samsher Ghāzi.

Sixthly, the geographical information and the description of the Kuki tribe in the text give a picture of the Kingdom **not** to be found from any other source.

So in many ways Kṛṣṇamālā holds a unique place among the local chronicles of Tripura.

GHĀZINĀMĀ

Pronounced Gājināmā in Bengali, this historical kāvya or poetical work, was composed by Shaikh Manuhar (Manohar?) in Bengali probably at the latter part of the 18th Century C.E. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it was not a royal chronicle, unlike other chronicles of Tripura. It revolves around the life of Samser Ghāzi, a controversial figure in the middle part of the 18th Century C.E in Tripura. While Kṛṣṇamālā, in line with its nature of being a royal chronicle, paints him as an upstart, Ghāzināmā, on the other hand, hero-worships him. It gives a different perspective and more extensive description of Samsher's rebellion vis-à-vis Kṛṣṇamālā.

The storyline narrated in the Text starts with Samsher, the son of a Muslim *faqir*, being raised by Nasir Muhammad, the landlord of Dakshin Shik which formed part of the Plain areas of Tripura. But the latter became jealous of Samsher after a Brahmin astrologer and a Muslim mendicant or *faqir* predicted a 'spectacular' future for him. Though Samsher became an officer under Nasir Muhammad after attaining

adulthood, his ambition soared, egged on as he was by the predictions of his future greatness. A clash broke out between the two when Samsher infuriated his master by seeking marriage with Daiyā Bibi, Nāsir's daughter. Ultimately after a chain of violence that saw the deaths of Nasir, his two sons and even Daiya Bibi, Samsher became the landlord of Dakshin Shik area. Having heard of Nasir Muhammad's plight, the then King of Tripura, Indra Māṇikya sent armies against Samsher. But employing clever tactics, Ghāzi forced the King to recognize him in the new position. The hostility between the two continued which ultimately led to Samsher capturing the

capital of the Kingdom, Udaipur. After assuming the authority of the realm he obtained formal recognition from the then Nawab of Bengal, Alivardi Khan. He maintained order, the Text claims, throughout the areas under his control and undertook many works of public utility. The Text speaks of Samsher's popularity and the peace prevailing in the realm:

Gājir doyāi pāre nagare bājāre |

Gaje nāhi mare loke byāgre nāhi dhare²⁸|

But at the height of his glory, Samsher went to Murshidabad to meet the Nawab in 1751, disregarding the suggestions of his counsellors. Though he established good rapport with the Nawab there, his enemy in Nawab's court, Agha Khan, tried to kill him by blowing him up by cannon. But Samsher's death is not confirmed by the author, in line with the hero-worshipping tenor prevailing throughout the Text. Thus, the end of Samsher as described in the Text needs to be tallied with other relevant sources.

Samsher Ghāzi's rebellion is an important phase of Tripura History. The centrifugal tendencies within the Kingdom came to the fore through this event. Being one of the most important source of information dealing with this phase, Ghāzināmā brings out a reliable picture of contemporary Tripura, the references of the supernatural events in the Text notwithstanding. Moreover, the syncretised religious tradition followed at least by some sections of the Muslims of Bengal and Tripura is evident from some of the references in the Text.

Campaka Vijaya

Composed by Shaikh Mahaddi (or Mahaddin), Campaka Vijaya is another work belonging to the traditional historiography of Tripura. Probably written towards the end of the 17th or in the beginning of the 18th Century C.E, this historical kāvya or poetical work describes the political situation of the Kingdom in the beginning of the reign of King Ratna Māṇikya II. Though this work is named after Campaka Rai, a high official of the realm, other characters, particularly Mīr Khan (Āmir Khan in Rājmalā) who happens to be the patron of the poet, too play important roles in the narrative.

After King Rāmā Māṇikya's death, his five years old son Ratna Māṇikya II ascended the throne under the guardianship of Balibhīma Nārāyaṇa (the brother-in-law of the deceased King). Apart from Balibhīma, Campaka Rai was the other Prince (Yuvarāja) of the realm who had important say in the state of affairs. But dispute with regard to the payment of tax led to the conflict between the Mughal authority of Bengal and Tripura, ultimately resulting in Balibhīma's imprisonment by the Mughals. Campaka Rai, though, continued to hold important position in the

administration of the Kingdom. But cashing in on the confusion resulting from the Mughal intervention, Naṛendra Māṇikya, a nephew of Rāma Māṇikya, captured the throne. Campaka Rai ran away and prepared for a showdown with Narendra in order to re-install Ratna as the King. The Text suddenly ends at this juncture.

Divided into four chapters (khaṇḍa), the major issues in the Text are the tumultuous Tripura-Mughal relation and the clashes waged by Narendra Māṇikya, a claimant to the Tripuri Throne. But its information needs to be tallied with other relevant works like Tripura Deśer Kathā. Still this is a valuable source to know the political scenario of Tripura towards the end of the 17th Century C.E, though some wrong or disputed information lessens its importance compared to the three other works discussed before it in this paper.

Apart from the works discussed till now, one Sanskrit work called Rājaratnākara deals with the mythical origin of the Māṇikya dynasty of Tripura. Its narrative is akin to the mythical accounts of the first lahar of Rājīmālā. It is, though, of not much value for the study of the medieval history of the Kingdom. Besides, royal genealogies like Śreṇimālā also supplement the texts already discussed in this paper.

Conclusion

The discussion in the paper done till now is divided into two segments – the first one dealing with the pan-Indian or Classical Indian tradition of historiography and the second one with the traditional historiography of Tripura. This concluding part will discuss whether there was any relation between the two.



⁷ For example, a) Raychaudhuri, Hemchandra --- *Political History of Ancient India* (With Commentary by Bratindranath Mukherjee), Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 9th impression, 2010 b) Majumdar, R.C (ed) – *History and Culture of Indian People*, Vol.1, Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Mumbai, 1996

⁸ Thapar *op cit.*, p. 50.

⁹ In this work the first four *lahar* (volumes) of Rājmalā edited by Mr. Kaliprasanna Sen in the first half of the 20th Century and later published by the Tribal Research Institute of Tripura is followed.

¹⁰ Rāmgāṅgā Viśārada (edited by Debbarman, Kumar Sahadebkishor and Jagadish Gana Chowdhury) ---- *Kṛṣṇamālā* (in Bengali), Byasdeb Prakashani, Agartala, 1995

¹¹ Sekh (Saikh) Manuhar (Manohar ?) (edited by Barman, Ramendra Dr.) --- *Gājīnāmā* (in Bengali), Akshar Publication, 1st Edn. 2nd Impression, Agartala, 2001

¹² Mahaddi, Shaikh (edited by Jagadish Gana Chowdhury) --- *Campaka Vijaya* (in Bengali), Byasdeb Prakashani, Agartala, 1995

¹³ In this paper the spellings of the oriental names of texts or writers or characters mentioned in the texts generally follow the pattern of Sanskrit (or Perso-Arabic) pronunciation instead of the original Bengali ones, except in the case of Rājmalā. For example, Instead of Gobinda Māṅkya it is spelt Govinda Māṅkya or Ghazīnāmā, in place of Gājīnāmā in this paper.

¹⁴ Thapar *op cit.*, p. 547 – 548

¹⁵ Acharjee, Jahar --- *Tripurār Itihās (pratham bhāg)* (in Bengali), Raj Kusum Prakāśaṅī, Agartala, 2012, pp 113--146

¹⁶ Long, Reverend James – *Analysis of Rājmalā*, Journal of the Asiatic Society, Vol. IX, 1850

¹⁷ Sen, Dinesh Chandra – *Brihat Banga* (in Bengali), University of Calcutta, Kolkata, 1934

¹⁸ Sen, Sukumar – *Bangla Sahityer Itihaas* (in Bengali), (New Hardcover Edition), Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2015

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ As quoted from Rājmalā (3rd lahar) in Dutta, Ramaprasad --- *Tripurār Prācin Puthi Prasāṅge* (in Bengali), Paunami Prakashan, Agartala, 1999

²¹ Various works on the district histories of Noakhali, Mymensingha and other districts of the undivided Bengal came up during this time. As representative of this genre, one work is mentioned below- Chaudhury, A.C -- *Srihatter Itivritta* (in Bengali), Saraswati Library, Silchar, 1917

²² Deb, Ramnarayan – *Rājmalā* (in Bengali), Deptt. of Education, Govt. Of Tripura, 1967

²³ Simha, Kailas Chandra – *Rājmalā bā Tripurār Itivritta* (in Bengali), Akshar Publications, 3rd Edition, 2013

²⁴ Boruah, Nirode – ‘Early State’ Formation in the Kapili Valley in Assam, in J.B Bhattacharjee and D.R Syiemlieh (eds.), *Early States in North East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2013

²⁵ Simha *op cit.* p-36

²⁶ Dutta *op cit.* p-17

²⁷ *Since the time of the first Mughal military intervention of Tripura in the first quarter of the 17th Century C.E, the practice of paying ‘gifts’ or taxes in the form of elephants and ivory to the Mughal authority of Bengal by Tripura Kings became a recurrent affair and it became an annual affair by the beginning of the 18th Century C.E when Murshid Quli Khan became the Nawab of Bengal.*

²⁸ as quoted in Dutta *op cit.* p-77

Historical Assessment of Floral and Faunal Representation of Ancient Indian Sculpture

Dr. Sudash Lama¹ & Anamika Choudhury²

Abstract

The Sculptural art of India occupies the foremost place in the history of world art. The artist in India had attained a high degree of excellence at a very early period and specimens produced by him are truly marvels of human industry and skill. One finds in them an intensity of feeling, a revelation of the powers of the unseen which is not approached in the art elsewhere in the world. The success of artistic production depends on the intensity of the artist's realization of his beauty and his ability to interpret his experience to others.

Keywords: Sculpture, Animal figures, Maurya, Rhythm, Flora, Fauna

Introduction:

The feeling of art was dictated by man's devotional approach to such experience. This was the higher purpose of A art; higher only in the sense that its theme was of a sublime world, not that art was in any way the preserve of the select few only, and inaccessible to the masses of people, or deliberately kept back from them.

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal

² Ph.D Scholar, Department of History, University of North Bengal

It was realized that art had a mission and a purpose which must be expressed through forms whose appeal was irresistible and meaning unmistakable. Such language was devised in the form of symbols which played such an important part in Indian art. The symbols sometimes occupy the centre of the picture in the form of the images of divine beings, saints and seers who themselves typify certain great ideas accepted as truth through ages by a devout humanity. The symbols also served the purpose of decoration, adornment and space filling. Even here, they have their values and are linked to a predominant common purpose, namely expression of ideas through an aesthetic medium, with a charm that enhances their appeal and in a manner that contributes to the enrichment of the outer forms of life in relation to the inner growth of the mind.

The Sculptural art of India occupies the foremost place in the history of world art. The artist in India had attained a high degree of excellence at a very early period and specimens produced by him are truly marvels of human industry and skill. One finds in them an intensity of feeling, a revelation of the powers of the unseen which is not approached in the art elsewhere in the world. The success of artistic production depends on the intensity of the artist's realization of his beauty and his ability to interpret his experience to others.

I

The earliest sculptures come from Indus valley. The human and animal figures excavated in that region show a high degree of finish and excellence and disclose an advance stage of development of art in the third millennium B.C. The people of *Indus Valley* had developed a lithic industry of making stone statuary. The highlight is the bearded head and bust of a male figure wearing a scarp with a *tre-foil*

decoration originally filled with red paste. The *tre-foil* pattern had an international background being found in *Mesopotemia*, *Egypt* and *Crete* where it is associated with a religious character which makes it probable that the Mohenjo-daro bust was intended to portray a deity or perhaps a priest.

The *Harappa* modelers also showed a considerable skill in modeling animal figures in the round in faience and metal and their innate plastic sense is evidenced in the bronze figure of a *Buffalo* and the faience model of a *monkey* both from *Mohenzo-daro*. A discussion of *Harappa* art must remain incomplete without a reference to the numerous seal engravings which are the most characteristic among the objects of the *Harappa* civilization. The most characteristic design consists of figures of animals. Some of these animals are evidently imaginary, such as *unicorns*, and *chimeras*. The noble series of *bulls*, *buffalos* and *bisons* represent forceful and monumental compositions. Not only are they faithful renderings of the physical forms of the animals, but also do have they constituted the most successful studies of their nature and character. In the representation of the humped *bull* the noble dignity of the animal is evident in its mighty body surging with pent-up energy. The spirited attitude of the *buffalo*, with the head raised powerful horns. The same bold draughtmanship is also manifest in the arched shape of the *bison*. In every instance the muscles seem to ripple under the skin in the most naturalistic manner. A bronze chariot drawn by two *oxen* along with the charioteer, and bronze figure of *elephant* a *buffalo*, a *rhinoceros*, copper dog and bird figures are preserved.

In the *Prasada* was built on a solid foundation or basement (*Vaththu*). In this connection some architectural elements are to be noted, e.g. pillar (*Stambha*), *Sanghata* (capitals of pillars with pairs of animals and human beings as *Hayasanghata*, *Gaja-Sanghata*, *Nara Sanghata* etc.) *Gopansi* refers literally *bull's*

nose, (a caitya window like motif on the outside of the walls where rafters were placed). A roof-apartment (*Simha-Panjara*, *Lion-cage*) is clear in some of the sculptures. The whole building was decorated with many kinds of figures and motifs, e.g. *Ihamiga* (fabulous animals), *bulls* (*Vsabha*), *horse* (*Turaga*), *deer* (*Ruru*), *Sarabha* (lion like figures), *Crocodile* (*Magara*), *birds* (*Vihaga*), *serpents* or *dragons* (*Valaga*), *elephant* (*Kunjara*), *wild creepers* (*Vanalaya*) and *lotus-creepers* (*Paumalaya*).

Polished ring stones about 40 in number found at several ancient sites are the main items for floral and faunal representation of the *pre-Mauriyan* age. A circular sand stone plaque from *Mathura*, showing an eight-petalled *lotus* in the centre from which four stalks shoot out in the four directions and bend in various foliated patterns, showing the terminal or pericarp eight female figures, in dancing hand poses. The female figures alternate with the design resembling the '*muchuknda*' flower. A ring-stone from *Mathura* (diameter 3.5", Mathura Museum No.2471) showing in the centre a full blown *lotus* flower without spreading tendrils, of which the first band depicts four animals in the four intermediate directions, viz., a *lion* an *antelope*, a *bull* and a *stag*, and the outer band showing four flowery motifs above the four animals, and in the four cardinal points four female figures are depicted. Fragment of a ring stone from *Kosam*, showing outer and inner bands of *rosette-followers* (now in the *Allahabad Museum*). One ring-stone from *Rajghat*, (in *Bharat Kata Bhavan*), shown three Mother-Goddess alternating with three *linga* symbols flanked by two *cobras* and an outer band of trapezoid design. A fragment of ring stone *Rajghat* showing on the inside head and bust of the Mother Goddess with the upper portion of a *palm tree*. Another fragment from *Rajghat* showing in the inner band four Mother-Goddess alternating with *Palm-trees*, three of whom are seen and

in the outer band a series of *lizards* or *crocodiles* (*Makara*) of whom there were originally eight, five being still preserved. Ring stones from *Rajghat* (Now in Lucknow Museum) showing – (a) Mother-Goddess with hare on right and moon symbol below, and *deer* on left with a taurine symbol in front of him; (b) *Palm tree* with a *bird* on right and an animal on left with symbol of moon and sun clearly; (c) Mother-Goddess with a *Sarasa* like bird on right, the figure on left effaced; (d) *Palm tree* of which only the lower most portion of circular railing is now left; (e) Mother-Goddess, the full figure with splay feet and stiff straight arms, and turbaned head, being preserved flanked by two animals. The left being a horse; (f) *Palm tree* in railing with a bird on right and *horse* on left. A cylinder seal from *Kosam* engraved with bird and animal figures in chequered pattern. A cylindrical seal from *Rajghat* showing a bull with a crib similar to that on the *Indus Valley* seals. A stone from *Patna* city found in sewer excavations showing a fifteen petalled *lotus flower* in the centre encircled by a beautiful garland of 18 taurins in small size, a motif well known in early art. A ring stone from *Patna* city showing three concentric bands, the first showing 21 petals, the second 12 animals and birds including a *horse*, a *lion*, an *elephant*, a *rhinoceros* moving in a file, and the third a design like pencils of light. Recently three more ring stones from the *Allahabad* museum, have been published, showing in the outer band a row of *Makara* figures and in the inner a row of *lions*. The meanings of the ring-stones are clear in the context of Indian religious beliefs of worshipping the Mother cult with its attendants.

II

The coming of the *Mauryas* represents a definite landmark in Indian history. The new outlook, political, intellectual and psychological, proved to be of immense significance for the development of the formative arts of the country.

Strength and Majesty were the hall-mark of Mauryan Institution and they are seen at best in monuments of *Mauryan art*. A clear idea of the form and composition may be drawn from *Lauriya – Nandangarh* in *North Bihar*. The highly polished tall and well proportioned columns standing free in space and cut out of gray sandstone. The shaft always plain and smooth, circular in section and slightly tapering upwards without any base and invariably chiseled out of one piece of stone. The capital having the shape and appearance of a gently arched bell (commonly known as the ‘persipolitan bell’¹) formed of *lotus*-petals, joined with the shaft by a copper bolt of cylindrical shape. The surface of gently arched bell shaped capital is decorated with highly stylized longitudinal *lotus petals* with sharp and thin ridges in the middle and wide and roundest border moulding. The real aesthetic significance of beauty arched and elegantly ribbed floral bell of the Mauryan capital lies in its gentle curve. In form, shape and appearance the *Mauryan* bell which along with the *Achaemenian* may have originally been derived from stylized *lotus* design and which may have been common art in both Indian and *Iranian* art heritage. The *Lauriaya-Nandangarh* capital consists of a sajjant *lion*, a round abacus decorated with pecking *geese* pattern and an inverted *lotus* below. The lower most portions are covered with overflowing re-curved and stylized petals. The figure of the *lion* expressed much more vigorous and intense attitude in this monument. The details of the nerves and the veins are more sharply defined, yet the whole figure is marked by a good deal of stylizing.

The *lion* figure of the *Bakhira* capital is clumsy and crude in style. The animal is uncomfortably place on its abacus. The feeling for linear rhythm is evident in the flowing line gliding downwards from the top of the head. The facial expression is quaint and primitive and the entire attitude lacks dignity. The abacus, the inverted lotus and the standing shaft all point to an inferior workman who had not

the ability to integrate all the three elements of the pillar with the capital. We miss here the essential majesty which is associated with the *Mauryan* pillars.

The *Sankissa elephant* capital, *Rampurva bull* capital, The *Rampurva lion* capital figures are well executed and displays all those qualities that are associated with the master-pieces of *Mauryan* sculpture. An *elephant* carved in the rock at *Dhauli*, near *Bhuvaneshvara*, may recognize a note and feeling different from those manifested in the animal figures surmounting the pillar capitals. It represents a fine delineation of bulky volume and living flesh, natural to that animal, along with a dignified movement and linear rhythm that have no parallel. At *Kalasi* (U.P.) over the edicts, appears the engraving of an *elephant* leveled as *gajatame*, which is also characterized by the same kind of rhythm. Aesthetically, the *Dhauli elephant* is superior to the animal figures on the capitals, though it may be less advanced tectonically. The only sculpture of capital group that nearly approaches it in artistic conception and experience is the *bull* on the *Rampurva* capital which also, like it, exhibits a remarkable plastic sense for form and volume along with a quite dynamism, in strong contrast to the stylized presentation and tradition, unburdened by anything extraneous, were at work in these remarkable animal studies.

The animals forming the crowning members of the capitals of the pillars are not particularly associated with Buddhism alone. *Lion* either single or in group of four, appears on the majority of the capitals, *elephant* on the *Sankissa*, *bull* at *Rampurva* and in a group of four at *Salempur* and *horse* at *Rummindei*,² these four are also represented round the abacus of the quadric-partite capital at *Sarnath*. Some scholars try to find a specific Buddhist association of these animals: *lion* means the 'lion of the Sakyacian' (*Sakyasimha*); *elephant* is associated with the legend of the conception of the *Buddha*; *horse* with that of the 'Great Renunciation'; *bull* to

denote the Buddha who was often addressed as *muni-purigava* or as *Sakya-purigava*. These animals are sacred to *Brahmanism* and to a certain extent, to *Jainism* also. The *Lauriya Araraj* column, which in all probability, was crowned by the figure of *Garuda*³, may be regarded to have a distinct *Brahmanical* association. The view of *Agrawala*⁴ seems to be more convincing. He identifies the *lion*, the *elephant*, the *bull* and the *horse* as the four 'noble' animals (*maha ajaneya pasu*) held sacred in Indian tradition for a longtime past and for a longtime after. The view of *Benjamin Rowland*⁵ trying to explain these animals as heraldic devices derived from the west. *Bloch* was the view that they stand for the four gods, *Indra*, *Siva*, *Surya* and perhaps *Durga*, whose *vahanas* they are and consequently they are meant to indicate the subordination of these gods to *Buddha* and his law. It may be said at the outset that the *Sarnath* capital is the product of a supreme religious symbolism in which each part is a conscious conception in the aggregate. To a certain extent, every form in the entire capital of Sarnath Pillar is Indian in spirit and breathes, so to say; the tender sympathy for the animal kind which was inculcated by the doctrine of *ahimsa* (non-violence) preached by the Master and propagated by *Asoka*. The next constituent part comprising the decoration on the abacus falls in line with the ideal of serving the masses through *Dharma*⁶. The four animals and the four chakra taken together give a complete picture of the *Anotapota* or *Manasarovara* lake which was a cosmological concept accepted both by the *Brahmanical* and *Buddhist* traditions. The long *lotus* leaves covering the outlet side of the Vase, standing independently, the Indian pillars produce an independent effect, simple and harmonious in design, with a feeling of vigor and dignity that remind "fresh and elemental strength."⁷

III

Unlike Maurya court art, the art of the time of the *Sungas* is born of India's own seed with deep and intimate ethnic and local roots. *Sunga* naturalism on the other hand does not ignore the outer aspect of things but links it in an inherent connectedness with a pre-existent situation. This view of the visible world gives to *Sunga* art its lively and fluid character, a quality that is ever present in Indian plastic art. The tradition of building monumental *Stupa* realized in great splendor seen as at *Bharhut*, *Sanct* and the art of carving transferred from wooden to lithic medium in established convention. The two stupas are closely inter-related not only by their massive architecture but by the exhaustive documentation of religious ideas and art forms and especially the traditional folk cults and various floral and faunal motifs depicted and epic scale.

The two tall pillars of each gateway (*toranadvara*) are ornamented by a full medallion in the middle, and by a half medallion at top and bottom, all of which described as *Padma*, *nilotpala*, *pundarika* and other synonyms of the *lotus* flower or its compositions of *petals*, *buds*, *sepals* and *leaves*. On some pillars the flowers bear *elephants*, *winged horses*, *monkeys*, *peacocks* while *parrots* and *squirrels* hang from the branches and nibble the fruits. A historical scene showing the visit of *Ajatsatru* to *Buddha*, *Nagraja Etapatra* kneeling at the foot of the *Bodhitree* visit of kind *Prasenjit* of *Kosala* to the shrine of the Dharma Chakra, worship of the *Asvatha* and *Banyan* trees of *Goutama* and *Kasyapa Buddhas* respectively by wild *elephants*, etc. The *lotus* flowers with buds and leaves and creepers play an important part in the decoration of a *Stupa*. One of the most important features of *Stupa* of *Bharhut* is the presence of meandering creepers showing ornaments and textiles and other objects of food and drink from the *Kalpavrksa* trees or creepers in the Uttarkuru countries.

Wines bottled in jars of *jack-fruit* form, technically known as *panasa* and also *mango* shaped pendent containers for the lac-dye to paint the feet of young ladies. The main theme of the composition is the flowing linear rhythm of the plant, the creeper and vegetation, and it is not without reason that *Coomaraswamy* describes such reliefs as belonging to the '*plant style*'⁸. *Winged lions*, and *leogriff* (*Singhavyala*) formed part of wide canvas of motifs common to India and Western Asia⁹. The architrave of the Eastern gateway shows a royal retinue and a king and queen descending from an *elephant* and afterwards doing worship at the Tree¹⁰. A female figure with slightly bending on a *Sala tree* or as shown holding the branch of an *Asika tree* with her left hand and standing in a graceful attitude named *Salabhanjika* found both *Stupa-I* and *Stupa-II* of *Sanci*. *Salabhanjikas* have variously been called *Vrksikas*¹¹ (the personified female tree), *Asoka dohada* (the flowering of Asika tree), *Sura Sundari* (a celestial dancer) *Uddalaka puspa bhanjika* (romantic girl plucking flowers) etc. It is one of the several forms of *Yaksi*. *Kramrisch* collectively describes this art as representing the school of *Madhyadesa*.¹² In this context it would be useful to refer to an inscription on the west gateway which describes the reliefs to be the works of the ivory-carvers of *Vidisa*¹³.

The most popular rock-cut cave in Western India is *Karle* and *Kanheri*. The chaitya window decorated with *lion-faced Kirtimukhas*. In the *Ajanta* cave and also *Kanhere* we found the use of *Kirtimukha*¹⁴ motif carved on lintels of doorway or friezes of buildings. The reigns of the imperial *Kusanas* like *Kaniska*, *Huviska* and *Vasudeva* form the Golden Age of the Indian sculpture. In the *Kusana* age *Mathura* became a great centre of art activities, where Nature is freely represented and partakes in a real manner of the joys and emotions of human beings. Certain groups

of *Mathura* sculptures dealing with foreign elements, which Tentatively described as representing '*Herakles with the Nemen Lion*', the motif it appears has been derived from Greek classical source. *Benjamin Rowland* recognizes in it the wholly "Indian feeling of fleshy warmth and fullness"¹⁵. In the early *Kusana Buddha* and *Bodhisattva* type of *Mathura* the seat is never a *lotus* but always a *lion throne (simhasana)* without miniature figure, while in the case of standing figures there is often a seated *lion* between the feet; the gestures and features are expressive of enormous energy, rather than of repose or sweetness, nor is there any suggestion of intended grace. The *lion* between the legs indicates the portrayed is that of *Sakyasimha*,¹⁶ or '*the Lion of the Sakya people*', i.e. the historical Goutama Buddha. The representation of fauna in the *NagarjunaKonda* sculptures is two classes, namely the real and of the mythical animals (*ihamrgas* or *Vyalas*).¹⁷ The later are in a limited variety, and include *lion* with horn, beaked or with wings and the *lion* and *makara* type. The real animals comprises with *lion, elephant, horse, bull, buffalo, cow, monkey, boar, dog, goat, ram, rat, lamb, jackle, antelope, spotted deer, hare, reptiles like snake* birds like *parrot, peacock, crow, dove*, and aquatic animals such as *fish, duck*, etc.

IV

The *Gupta* period witnessed a heightening of the aesthetic consciousness leading to the fulfillment and culmination of the earlier trends and tendencies. The classical concept in Indian sculptures reaches its supreme expression in what is described as the golden age of the *Guptas*. At *Bharhut* and *Sanci* the human figure appears in the composition as a part of nature. With the growing importance of human figure nature recedes into the background but in so doing it leaves behind it unending and undulating rhythm in the human form. Even if nature is practically eliminated from

the composition during this period, it is interesting to notice that the volumes and curves found in nature supply the norms for the representation of the various parts of human body to be coordinated in a form that is at once naturalistic and aesthetically ideal. The *flower*, the *leaf* or the trunk of a *tree*, a *bird* or an animal constitutes the criteria on the similitude of which the various parts of the body are enjoined to be rendered. According to Indian view of art a superior uniformity and grace of form may be recognized in the animal and vegetable worlds than among the human beings.

So, from the above discussion we may realize that sculpture was the favoured medium of artistic expression on the Indian sub continent, where nature has been an integral part of it. The flora and fauna representation in ancient Indian sculpture convey the message of conservation of nature and it also supported by the ancient scriptural text, the *Ishaupanishad* over 2000 years ago. The representation of flora and fauna in art reflects the Indian mind of nature worship.

References

1. Agrawala, V.S., Indian Art (1965), pp 99-100.
2. Watters, T., On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India. This statement is also supported by a passage in the inscription on the Rummindei pillar.
3. Chanda, R.P., Beginings of art in Eastern India (Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India, no.30) p.23.
4. Agrawala, V.S., op.cit. pp. 98-100.
5. Rowland, Benjamin, The art and Architecture of India, pp. 43-44.
6. Agrawala, V.S., Chakradhvaja or, the Wheel Flag of India, op.cit. pp.102-103.
7. Bachhofer, L., Early Indian Sculpture (1929), Vol.I, p.5.

8. Kramrisch, Stella, Indian Sculpture, p.26.
9. Rowland, Benjamin, The art and Architecture of India.
10. Fergusson, Tree and Serpent worship, p.145.
11. Srivastava, Vijay Sankan, Gupta, M.L. – Roopankan pp.38-48.
12. Kramrisch, Stella, op.cit. p.24.
13. Marshall, John. Guide to Sanci (2nd ed.) p.52.
14. Panchavakra or Kirtimukha motif, Purana Bulletin, Vol.II; July-1960, pp.97-106.
15. Rowland, Benjamin. Art and Architecture of India, p.90.
16. Saraswati, S.K., - A Survey of Indian Sculpture, p.66.
17. The term was generally used from olden times for fabulous animals (Valmiki, Ramayana, Sundara, 9.13, 8.18), but from the Gupta period onwards the term vyala came into frequent use. The vyalas such as suka, Garuda, Mesa, etc. were known. (M. Dhaky, The vyala figures on the medieval temples of India.) (Varanasi, 1965), p.7

NASHYA SHEIKHS OF NORTH BENGAL IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY OF ETHNICITY & IDENTITY DYNAMICS

Md Nabiul Islam¹

Abstract

North Bengal comprises of Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Alipurduar and Kalimpong districts. The residential Muslim population is one of the most important indigenous people of this region and all together as per census encompasses 25 percent of the total population in North Bengal. In this context the Muslims are the most important minority religious group in this region. They have been living in this region, even before their conversion to Islam and a large portion of indigenous Hindu population converted to Islam in 15th to 18th century. This research paper deals with the Nashya Sheikh of North Bengal with special reference to their ethnicity and Identity dynamics.

Keywords : *Nashya, Nasto, Gentiles, Bhabo Musalman, Rajbangshi Muslim.*

Now a central question emerges that – “who are the *Nashyas*?” The Muslims who resided in Koch, Mech, Polia, and Rajbangsi societies etc. were basically converted in Muslims from these communities, who later on were known as *Nashyas*. It is these *Nashyas* who are popularly known as *Nashya Sheikh*.¹ During the period of 13th to 17th century Muslims attack occurred frequently in Kamrup, Kamtapur and Koch Behar. Perhaps for this might be the reasons for which Islam entered in North-Eastern part of India? The Brahmans, who were the holder and protector of the

¹ Md Nabiul Islam, PhD scholar, Dept. of History, North Bengal University

society, announced the indigenous peoples as a fallen group for the untouchability problem with Muslims. Sometimes the villages become fallen by the entrance way of Muslims soldiers.² These outcaste peoples become spoiled (*Nasto*) and religion less. These peoples were compelled to convert into Islam. Still they were spoiled (*Nasto*) and religion less to the upper castes people. Gradually the word 'Nashya' had originated from the above mentioned term '*Nasto*' as a distorted pronunciation.³ We found the name of "Panbor Nashya" as a recipient, fathers name "Asaru Nashya", caste Muslim from a reference of document in 1901(Koch Behar state). Now I would like to shed light on "Sheikh". The word Sheikh means "Greatest". The Sufi saints like Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi who came to the undivided Bengal from Afganisthan, used the word Sheikh in front of their name. The Nashya Muslims protested about their dishonourable title and after refusing that title they introduced them self as Sheikh as the disciples of "Sheikh" and used the title Sheikh. For an example we can say that we found the name of Mamud Sheikh whose father name was Tangru Nashya, caste Muslim.⁴ But here it's noticeable that the migrated Sheikh use the title Sheikh in front of their name and the Nashya used title after their name. For an example we can say the name of Jalaluddin Tabrazi and Piyar Mamud Sheikh. With this respect it may be mention that after the conversion into Islam, the Nashya Sheikh started ideological struggle with Sufism by the influence of Shariatism and got change their names and title. After changing the names like Tangru, Sandu, Domashu, Pedda, Tonda which belongs to Rajbansi community, they started to use the name like Hajrat, Suleman, Abubaquar, Osman which belongs to Arabian origin. Vis a Vis they started to refuse their title Nashya and also they refuse their title sheikh as the title of "Shia community". They started to use of surnames like Rahaman, Ali, Main, Hussain, Sarkar, Islam, Ahmed, Uddin, Hoque, Abedin etc. At present simultaneously they are also using their previous surnames.⁵ If we look for

the answer for this, then we have to go through the anthropological study of the community. The similarities we find among the people of six districts of North Bengal, Purnia district of Bihar and Dinajpur and Rungpur districts of Bangladesh with Nashya sheikh to some extent reflect their old connection with each other. The Mongoloyed community and Rajbangsi community people had been living in this particular area. There are four kinds of people like Koch, Mech, Polia and Rajbangsi indigenous people. The various kind of reason were responsible for the conversation of huge numbers of people four community such as oppression and suppression of Brahmanism, social untouchably and economic and political. This process of conversion in Bengal continued from Sen. Period to British period. The new converted Muslim community wanted to prove them self as an indigenous community. Because the indigenous community felt themselves as a upper class within Rajbangsi society.⁶

In this regard the famous politician and social worker Upendranath Barman wrote that, 'originally the Rajbangsi Muslims were converted from Hindu society and they entitle Nashya Sheikh. In this regard we have to mention another eminent writer's view about Nashya Sheikh. Panchanan Barma an eminent Rajbangsi leader in colonial North Bengal also noticed the conversion of Rajbangsi into Nashya Sheikh in large number, since the heydays of his career as an advocate. The term Nashya was came from the word '*Nasto*' as such kind of community were converted from conservative Hindu society that's why they were announced by the Hindu as diluted or *Nasto*, even in the government records, Gazette, *Dalil* etc. Nashya Sheikh however speaks in Rajbangsi language. Not only in language their food habits, dress up, culture, profession etc. are very much similar that of the Rajbangsi's. Nashya Sheikh are peace loving and has a cordial relation with their neighbours. Religiously

they are also liberal and less orthodox, even they are also very much close to Hindu Rajbansi people and it is remarkable that among them the Purdha system was very rare. But economically Nashya Sheikh were dependent on village Cultivation, very few among them were service holder as the same time they were not interested in business, Small handicraft Industry. Though cultivation was their main profession yet they were mostly landless. As a result most of them are below the poverty line.⁷

To Risley goes the credit of first making anthropometric studies that strengthened the hands of sociologists, anthropologists and historians concerned with Indian phenomena, Risley took special interest in the Bengal situation. Among other things he contended, on the basis of anthropometric data on a limited scale, that the Muslims of Bengal were primarily local converts from the lower rungs of the Hindu caste ladder. It is understandable, if undeniable, that Ripley's pioneering venture is not above criticism. But there is little sense in treating his work as a mere scrap of paper, as both Fazle Robbie and Rahim would have us do. It would be a mistake to think that Riley made a generalisation about the whole Muslim community in intended to do was to show that the Bengal. All that he lower strata of both the Muslim and the Hindu society of Bengal sprang from the same ethnic stock. This is why he relied on the anthropometric data regarding Muslims collected from some one hundred and eighty-five jailed convicts belonging to lower echelons of the social structure. This again is Risley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal is a monumental work in two volumes, each volume being further sub-divided into two parts. Vol- I contain the Ethnographic Glossary and the second one contains detailed tables of Anthropometric Measurements. the reason for the corresponding measurements of the Hindus being taken caste wise to establish the identity of the former group not with the upper section of the Hindu society but the lower one, which is quite evident

from his figures" This resolves the doubt raised by Rahim as he points out: Risley took the measurement of the nose of very lower [sic] class Muslims, while, on the other hand, he had the nasal examination of the persons of all classes of the Hindus, The real point of weakness in Risley's work lies in the extreme meagreness of his data and the lack of adequate scientific method and equipment necessary for such investigations. Risley, however, had set the a process of inquiry which was carried on and stage for applied to the Bengal situation by P.C. Mahalanobis, B.S. Guha and others. he most systematic and adequate study has, however, been made through the collaboration of an anthropologist, D.N. Majumdar, and a statistician, C.R. Rao, under the auspices of the Indian Statistical Institute. The result of their work has been computed, analysed and incorporated into a quantitative study entitled Race Elements in Bengal. The most important feature of this investigation is that they proceeded independently on the basis of common data and arrived at similar conclusions. Among other problems, which they set themselves, one was whether Muslim and non-Muslim groups can be said to belong to two different populations Beverley, and if not, what was the relative place of Muslim groups, vis-a-vis the Hindu castes and tribes. It is not our purpose to go into the main lines of their investigations. We content ourselves with certain broad conclusions with closest bearing on our problem, which vindicate the position of Risley. To quote from the Report: As regards the relative position of Muslim groups, we notice that nine groups out of a total of fifteen fall within a narrow range of mean nasal height (21.80 to 22.20). All these nine groups have almost identical mean values as the two Namasudra groups, five have lower mean values and stand very close to tribal cluster and only one, i.e. Muslim of Dacca [the name applied to a group under study] occupies a position close to the caste groups. The Report proceeds: If we agree as to the competence of nasal height in defining group divergences, I feel that we should

look among the tribal and scheduled caste non-Muslim groups of Bengal for a possible origin of Muslim population of Bengal, and not in the high caste groups, a fact which differentiates the Muslims of U.P., who cluster with the higher castes in nasal height from those of their co religionists in Bengal. The serological data collected by Majumdar from practically all the districts of Bengal lead to the same. The Candalas have changed their caste name to Namasudra since the census of 1901.⁸

Referring to the Koch women of north Bengal with special reference to Rangpur, Glazier observes: the women of the common people wear the old Kamrup dress, which offers a marked contrast to the common Saree of Bengal. It consists of a square piece of coloured cloth, indigo-striped, passing under the arms and round the back, so as to cross in front where the upper corners are tucked in, leaving the head and shoulders bare, and reaching to the knees below. All women, Hindus and Muhammadans alike, dress in this fashion; and they also attend the markets and transact the buying and selling, to the almost total exclusion of men. Shihab ud-Din Talish writes, The Muslims whom we met in Assam are Assamese in their habits and Muhammadans but in their name, In fact they liked the Assamese better than us.⁹

Foreign elements must be looked for chiefly in the ranks of the Saids, Pathans and Mughals. Even here there are many who are descended from Hindus, and ... high caste converts are often allowed to assume these titles, and, in some cases, to intermarry with those who are really of foreign descent, their number, however, is possibly only a small proportion of the total, and may be neglected. If the above estimates be taken as a basis, it would appear that the strength of the foreign element amongst the Muhammadans of Bengal cannot, at the most, exceed four millions, or say, one-sixth of the total number of persons who profess the faith of Islam, Besides

local conversion, the other aspect of the question, concerning the social and cultural background of the majority of the indigenous converts, is also a very complex one. History does not help dispel the mist surrounding the actual process of conversion of such a vast number of people in the country, beyond a few recorded sporadic cases; these are quite inadequate for making generalizations on their basis. Besides, those cases have elusive reference to the upper sections of the Hindu society. Not much can be made out of this. Common knowledge and impressions, backed up by ethnological facts, point strongly to a conclusion about which history maintains an unfortunate silence, this need not take us by surprise nor drive us to wrong premises. If the conversion of the masses does not find place in history, the history of the masses is of recent development. The affinities of the Muslim masses of east Bengal have been observed with the Chandals and the Pods, and those of north Bengal with the Rajbansis and Koces. The conclusion is based not only on their striking physical resemblance, but also on the fact that the proportion of Hindus of other castes in these parts of the country has always been very small. The Koces are generally supposed to have spread in any numbers only as far westward as the Mahananda, which runs through the Purnia district. East of that river, where the bulk of the population was Koch, no less than two-thirds were Muslims, while to the west of it, where the Koch element was weak, less than one-third of the population was returned under the religion. The main castes were the Rajbansis (including the Koces) in north Bengal, and the Caalas, 3rd and others in east Bengal. It may also be recalled that the Report of Maunder and Rao points out that nine out of the fifteen Muslim groups spread over the different districts of Bengal studied by them have almost identical mean values in the matter of nasal height as the two Namadra groups, and five have lower mean values and stand very close to the tribal cluster. The Muslims belonging to this social and economic level constituted, at the census

of 1901, about five-sixths of the total Muslim population of Bengal. Here again Rahim as his own statistical figures and conclusions. We quote him without comment: of the 70 per cent converted Muslims, at least half of them came from the upper strata of the Hindu and the Buddhist communities and the rest was recruited from the lower class. Thus the Bengali Muslim population was formed of about 30 per cent converts from the upper class non-Muslims and 35 per cent converts from the lower strata of the Hindu society. This explodes the theory that the Bengali Muslims were converts mostly from the low caste people of the Hindus. No society of the sub-continent could claim to represent a larger percentage of the immigrant Muslims and converts from the upper class Hindus as well as the Buddhists.¹⁰

If the indigenous element was a significant constituent in the forces of change and adjustment, the fact that the character of the Muslim masses in Bengal was predominantly rural was not less consequential for the development of Islam in the land. Islam may be characterized as 'a religion of the townspeople', and to the Muslim, 'a town was a settlement in which his religious duties and his social ideals could be completely fulfilled. While discussing the question of Indian Muslims from this standpoint, Mujeeb notes: Islam has, in all countries, promoted urban life, and Muslim civilization has everywhere been essentially urban in character ... the standards of life and culture have been urban: the ideally good life has been life 'among men', in habitations where the variety of habits, tastes and conditions has provided sufficient opportunity for cultural and spiritual experience. Educated Indian Muslims have, therefore, thought of their community as consisting primarily of city-dwellers, and judged themselves as a people setting up and conforming to standards of city-life; the Uneducated, uninformed population of the countryside has not been given the consideration to which it is entitled by the very fact of its existence. This is

understandable, because, almost the whole contribution of the Muslims in manners, in literature, in art, is seen in the cities. Bengal marks a significant departure from this pattern of Islamic culture.¹¹ In Bengal the Muslims appear to take less readily to a town life than the Wolf, E.R., *passim*; Watt, W.M. Muhammad at Mecca, *passim*; also, his *Islam and the Integration of Society*¹²

There is considerable controversy regarding origin and ethnic identity of the Nashyas. It is usually believed that they are the converts to indigenous ethnic groups of North Bengal and bear a mixed ancestry. Actually they are considered to be the descendant of those Muslims who entered the fold of Islam from some indigenous groups, namely, Mech, Koch, Rajbansi and Polia. History reveals that the Pirs and Fakirs as well as some ruling personality's of late Medieval era made a significant contribution to the growth of Nashya community in North Bengal.¹³

The etymological meaning of the word Nashya is rooted in Bengali word 'Nasto'. The Rajbansi Hindus and others Hindu caste groups of the locality regard the Nashyas as their fallen (degraded or converted) section thus called them as Nasto-jati, which in local colloquial popularized is as Nashya Jyati. Since the Nashyas are converts of recent past they also known as Nao-Musalman, i.e., the new Muslim. They are highly integrated with the local population, i.e., Rajbansis, particularly in respect to their language and little traditions. Thus, at first sight they appear to be Rajbansis (a local Hindu caste group), but are really an indigenous Muslim group. Considering their ethnic origin and social culture history the Nashya are popularly known as Rajbansi Musalman or Rajbansis.¹⁴

They are also designated as Bhabbe Musalman. It was only a few decades before the Independence that the Nashyas were en masse exposed to and influenced

by the process of Islamization. As a result, in recent times, they are integrated with the structural framework of Muslim society in Bengal. But they still retain many elements of their pre-Islamic past (tradition) which gave them a unique identity. Considering their ethnic origin, social history, cultural attributes and retention of many elements of pre-Islamic traditions the Nashya are not favourably looked upon by other Muslims (Asraf or Khas) of the region. In this regard it may be noted that there is a Persian word 'Nosb' meaning a drinker. The Nashya perhaps had the drinking habit which is forbidden in Islam. Hence they were treated as a fallen Muslims. But the empirical reality of such a view of the higher status Muslims is difficult to establish.¹⁵

The traditional occupation of the Nashya community is agriculture. But now-a-days they depend on various occupational pursuits. In rural areas they are primarily cultivators, a few share-croppers and many are agricultural labourers. Once there was many Nashya Jote-dars, but nowadays for various reasons they have lost their big holdings. The Nashyas living in urban areas are engaged in shop-keeping, tailoring, masonry, rickshaw-pulling and blue-collar services. Women belonging to poor Nashya families are engaged in various economic activities. They work as agricultural labourers, construction workers and housemaids. Economically, the Nashyas of both the rural and the urban areas are poor. The Nashya community is endogamous in character. The community is further sub-divided on the lineage which is reflected by the use of their surnames. The most popular surnames among the Nashya are Bapari, Pramanik, Sarkar, Sardar, etc. Intermarriages take place among them. Hence there is no social differentiation on the basis of surnames.¹⁶

As a community the Nashya are endogamous. Marriage between Nashya with other Muslim groups, particularly with so called higher social status is not a usual

practice. Monogamy is the most common type of marriage among them, but polygamy may occasionally be found (3%). The average age at marriage of Nashya males and females are 23 years and 17 years respectively. Marriage by negotiation is a traditional practice. Widow Remarriage is allowed among them. Both surrogate and levirate systems are also followed. Payment of bride price was once prevalent among the Nashyas, but nowadays, it is completely replaced by the dowry system. The marriages are solemnized as per Islamic rules, but rites and rituals in marriage are very much governed by the local traditions. Simple nuclear families are in prevalence among the Nashyas. However, joint families are still noticed among the landowning families. The average family size of the Nashyas is of 5 members. The Nashyas follow both classificatory and denotative types of kinship terminology. Their kinship terms show a mixture of Bengali, Arabic and Urdu terms mixed with the local language. An important feature that occurs among the Nashyas as a result of Islamization is in the realm of kinship and marriage alliances with the cross-cousins (FSD and MBD) and are normally avoided the parallel cousins (FBD and MSD). But in the present time Nashya Muslims are adopting both the parallel and cross-cousin marriages.¹⁷

Traditionally, the Nashya are organized among themselves at the village and local level through elder's council locally known as paich, had multifarious roles to govern the community and to look after their socio-religio-cultural issues. But today it has lost many of its traditions due to influence of formal statutory panchayats and party politics. The Nashya today participate in modern political process, but their position in power politics is of peripheral significance. The representation of the Nashya in different political bodies at local, regional, state and national level is

however very low. The socio-economic backwardness of the Nashyas is considerable to be the primary reasons of their political marginalization.¹⁸

The state of education among the Nashyas is very disheartening. For historical, situational and socio-cultural reasons the educated middle class has not been properly developed among the Nashyas. Since the content of the middle class among them is significantly very small, the Nashyas do not figure in any significant number either in white-collar jobs or in politico-administrative matters of their locality. A case study among the Nashyas of a Village in Darjeeling district reveals that, among them 40.27 percent was illiterate and 59.73 percent literate and educated. Among the literate and educated 27.82 percent had primary education, 24.86 percent had secondary education and only 7.05 percent had higher secondary and college education. Another case study of a Cooch Behar village shows that among the Nashya 48 percent was illiterate and 52 percent was literate and educated. Of the literate 24 percent and 5.38 percent had higher secondary and college education.¹⁹

The Nashya are Sunnis and follow the tradition of Honafi School. In social-religious matters they follow the guidelines of the Barelvi School (Madrasha) of thought. But in recent times the Deobondi School (Madrasha) of thought through Tableau activities has made significant impact on them. The belief in Pirism is still a typical feature among them. Thus they are affiliated to the Muslim saints or Pirs. The Nashyas celebrate all the major Muslim festivals and perform the basic religious rites and ceremonies. But they tend to accept without much criticism the traditional social customs, which have passed to them from previous generation. This continuity of little traditions facilitates them to integrate and assimilate the local society dominated by the Hindu Rajbansis. On the socio-religious level the Nashya cultivate the traits of

Islamic great tradition to operate within the framework of wider Muslim society. The process of Islamization helped them in achieving a social position within the structure of a Muslim Society in Bengal. Local Moktabs, madrashas and masjids (mosques) which are either associated with the Barelvi or the Deobondi traditions play a very significant role in Islamizing the Nashya community. The major life-cycle rituals observed by the Nashya are on the occasions of birth, circumcisions (in case of boy), marriage and death. The basic rites in respect of all these events are followed and performed according to local traditions. The Nashya women do not follow the strict seclusion or Purdah system, which is a characteristic feature of Muslims belonging to the upper strata. The women folk of poor Nashya families participate in agriculture and other economic activities to support their family. The Nashya enjoy ambiguous social position. The Muslims of upper social strata usually keep a social distance from them on the ground of their pride being 'high-born' and attributes of Islamic culture. But the Nashya believe themselves as a part of Muslim Umma (community) and strongly condemn the ethno centric views of other Muslim groups of so-called higher status who accorded the lower social position to them.²⁰

For achieving higher social status Nashya followed the path of Islamization in various aspects of their social-cultural life even in naming and designating their own community. They claimed themselves as Nashya-Sheikhs to elevate their social position within the larger framework of the Muslim society. They have adopted the title sheikh in the ground of their affiliation to Pirs who happened to be the said social (ethnic) category. Apropos the Sufi sheikh they named their community Nashya Sheikhs and thereby justified their social position in the local society. But the high status Muslims in general are not ready to accept the Nashya Sheikhs at their par. This is because of the fact that the Nashyas used the title 'Sheikh' as suffix,

but not as a prefix, which has been a normal practice among the higher status Sheikhs of India. This debate and counter-debate lead to a very complex social situation and it motivated the Nashya community to think about themselves in respect to their social position in Muslim Society.²¹

A cultural-duality is extremely visible in Nashya community. As a Muslim group, the Nashya have been Islamizing some of their cultural traits to get a social status (recognition) within the larger framework of Muslim society, and for this they interact with the other Muslim groups of their locality. On the socio-religious level the Nashyas cultivate the traits of Islamic great tradition for achieving a wider Muslim identity. The institutions through which they cultivate the Islamic great tradition are the Mosques and Madrashes. In recent times the most important organization of the Nashyas is Tablique-Jamat. This is purely a religious mission and a movement, and its basic goal is religious devotion rather than Jihad. While on the other hand, the backward socio-economic condition of the Nashyas and the ethno-political situation of the region have made them ethnicity conscious, and forced them to sink into the cell. As a matter of fact on the politico-cultural level the Nashya emphasized to revive and cultivate the traditional cultural traits of their pre-Islamic past as a mark of their ethno-cultural identity and community solidarity. The media through which they revitalize their tradition are dialect, material culture, food habit and various elements of the little tradition. These they follow along with their non-Muslim neighbours. For various reasons an ethnic trend is getting prominence in the Nashya society. A very small section of their leadership has been demanding Kamatapuri language as their mother tongue. These two social processes of different nature i.e. universalistic Islamization (Muslimization) and particularistic traditionalization among the Nashya of the present times. These unique features of

social organization and cultural dualism are maintained by them through the process of compartmentalization.²²

The socio-economic life of the Nashya which we have examined in the foregoing sections clearly reveals that they have been suffering from the stigma of backwardness. Their low social position, lack of educational advancement, political marginalization and inadequate representation in the fields of trade, commerce and government service have put them in to a precarious social position and emerging ethno-political situation of the country made the Nashya Sheikhs ethnic as well as class conscious. This mind-set has motivated them to sink into the cell. As a result, socio-politically the Nashyas have been emphasizing to revive their indigenous cultural traits of pre-Islamic past as a mark of their ethnic identity and community-based class solidarity. The media which they follow along with their neighbouring non-Muslim communities are the Rajbansis. The emerging ethno-political movement of North Bengal and neighbouring areas of North-East India as well as other parts of the country have made a great impact on the Nashya community. The backward class movement and the State recognition of the OBCs have also influenced the said society. In recent times the Nashya Sheikhs living in different parts of North Bengal are very much aware of their ethnic, social, economic and political positions. Various obstacles to social uplift gradually strengthening their 'in-group' ('we') feeling. This has made them ethnic as well as class conscious. Consequently ethnicity is getting prominence in the Nashya society.²³

The government of West Bengal so far identified 8 Muslim Group as OBCs on the basis of their occupation and socio-economic condition. These groups are Jolha (Ansari/Momin), Fakir (Sain), Howari, Dhunia, Patidar, Kasai, Nashya Sheikh and Pahadia Muslim. The Muslim OBC movement in West Bengal is slowly but

gradually gaining momentum. Although there is no strong state-level organization of OBC Muslim in West Bengal, but the evidence of their activities are very often noticed at a local and regional levels. The most notable among them is Uttar Bongo Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samiti (UBAMSS). The Samiti is Government Registered Social Organization of OBC Muslim in West Bengal (Reg. No. S-95179). The community leader of the Nashya Sheikh sans many other Muslim groups are now the active members of UBAMAA and through which they raised their own profile. The Samiti has recently entered into the political scene and has been demanding reservations and other benefits for the Muslim OBCs, especially of North Bengal region. The Samiti has developed a strong organizational network at micro- and macro-level by constituting the village, block, district and control committee within the region of North Bengal. The activities of the Samiti are very much enthusiastic in organizing movements to protect the interests of the Nashyas and Sheikhs and other indigenous backward Muslim groups of the region. The leader of the Samity are ended very successful in scheduling the Nashya Sheikh as one of the Muslim OBC group in West Bengal (Notification No. 84-BCW/RC-302/97, dated 1 march 1999). The Samiti is taking much initiative to help the members of the Nashya Sheikhs and other Muslim OBC groups (Ansari, Momin, Pahadia Muslims) who face several difficulties at the ground level to obtain OBC and other benefits. The activities of the Samiti have created an atmosphere, which encourage youths of the Nashya Sheikh community to strive for economic and educational benefits like reservation of seats in government jobs, political bodies, and educational institutions. The Samiti is very successful in awakening the indigenous and backward Muslim groups of North Bengal.²⁴

Ethnically, most of the Muslims of the district are not very different from the indigenous Rajbanshis or Paliyas but they are undoubtedly Muslims who show signs of foreign extracts” (Page -88). There are many other observations which go to show that the physical features, socio-cultural characteristics of the Koch, Rajbanshis (Scheduled Caste) resemble with those of their Muslim counter-parts here, majority of whom have been converted from the Rajbanshis. Deeds of land produced show the names recorded as Saban Nashya, Jamir Nashya, Sayam Nashya etc. All the above records and evidences to show that they are an identifiable low social Muslim community who in the past four centuries have emerged as a result of conversion from the low ranked communities (Rajbanshi, Koch, Paliya). They speak the local Rajbanshi dialect in North Bengal. Their life style resembles in every respect, such as, dress, food, occupation, physical features, beliefs, customs, socio cultural and economic activities etc. with the Rajbanshi and the Paliyas. Although the Nashya Sheikhs are Muslims they have still retained their traditional customs, rites and rituals followed in connection with birth, marriage, death and in different festive occasions. Majority of them live in villages. A few, who reside in town due to their employment there, still have close connection with their relatives and fellow people in villages.²⁵

REFERENCES

1. Fulchad Barman, 'UttarbangerRajbansi Muslim Samaj: Prosango Nashya Sekh,(in Bengal) 'Angikar'(Sharad^oankhya), Arbinda Press, Cooch Behar, 1417(Bengali Year), pp.181-184.
2. Suraj Chandra Ghoshal, 'A History of Cooch Behar' (Translated from original Bengali) Chudhary,Khan Amanatullah, 'Coochbeharer Itihas' ,(Ed) Hiten Nag, National Library, Siliguri, Reprint, 2005, pp. 257-259.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Land document of Tungru Nashya, Asaru Nashya, Piyar Mamud Sheikh, (Koch Behar State in 1901).
5. Fulchad Barman,*op. cit.*
6. Bishnu Prasad Mukhapadhaya, *op. cit.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
17. Herbert Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, vol. 1*, 1892, pp. 45-65.
18. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-138.
22. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, pp. 122-130.
23. *Ibid.*
30. Sheikh Rahim Mondal, *op. cit.*, p. 315.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*,p.317.
34. Sheikh Rahim Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the Nashya shaik of North Bengal,' of Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Misra(Ed.) *Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007, pp.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 320-321
40. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
41. *Ibid.*, p.322
42. West Bengal commission for Backward Classes-Report-8, 29th Oct, 1997.

Islamization of the Kamarupā Text 'Amritkundā'

Chanchal Adhikary¹

Abstract:

It is an acknowledged fact that, Sufism prescribes not only ascetic rituals but also provides a model of social practice. On Sufism various researches have been done so far in various parts of India and elsewhere, those researches particularly articulated that, Sufism was Indian in origin; side by side it also argued that, from the first appearance of the term in European languages 'Sufism' was characterized as essentially different from the dry Semitic religion of Islam. For example we can mention the work of William James in 1902, who observed that, 'Sufism must have been inoculated into Islam by Hindu influences'.¹ Though some opines that, in India as in Islam, music, poetry and the dance are spiritual exercises. Whatever may be the debate, which is also not the part of this article but this present article will examine an another issue, that, how a yogic text known as Amritkundā, which was authored by a Kamarupā scholar Bhojar Brahman, influenced the Islamic world with the translations and how the translators made deliberate Islamization of the Yogic text.

Keywords: Sufism, Amritkundā, asanas, yogi, qazi

There are no known copies of the original Sanskrit work *Amritkundā*, what we have are many translations in Islamic languages, indicating the enormous influence of this

¹ Department of History, Kurseong College, Darjeeling-734203

work in beyond Bengal and the subcontinent. From the first translation of the book which was done by Qazi Rukn-ud-din al-Samarqandi in AD 1218 we know that,

There was in Hind an authentic book well known among the philosophers and learned men named *Amritkund*, i.e. the 'cistern of Nectar'. When the Muslims conquered cities of Hind and the banner of Islam was flown there, the news reached Kamrup, the extreme territory of Hind where lived its learned men and philosophers; and one of them came out to hold discussions with the learned divines of Islam. His name was Bhojar Brahmin, the yogi, meaning in Arabic an ascetic. He reached Lakhnauti in Bengal during the regime of Sultan Ali Mardan, entered the mosque on Friday and enquired about the Muslim divines. The people pointed out to him the abode of the Qazi Rukn-ud-din of Samarqand. The Yogi asked him, who is your prophet? 'Muhammad, (peace be on him) is the Apostle of God,' was the reply. The Yogi then asked, 'is he the same Prophet who said about the soul'? It is by order of my Lord. 'Yes you are right', the Qazi affirmed. The Yogi then declared, we have found this Prophet in the Scripture of 'Brahman' or two Abrahams (i.e. Abraham and Moses). Thereafter, the Yogi embraced Islam and learned Islamic sciences to such an extent that the Muslim divines permitted him to pronounce legal decisions. The Yogi then presented this book to the Qazi (God's mercy on him) who admired it and practised the science of Yoga so much so that he reached the Yogi's stage. Then he translated the book into Persian and from Persian into Arabic.²

This Yogic work *Amritkundā* translated by Qazi contained ten chapters and fifty verses. The subject matter of the book is the Yoga philosophy or this book survives as a manual of tantric yoga affirmed the characteristically tantric correspondence

between parts of the human body and parts of the macrocosm, 'where all that is large in the world discovers itself in the small'. One of the verses refers to the names of Minanath and Gorakshanath, the two famous Nath teachers, thus indicating that the book belongs to the Nath yogis and their philosophy. The narrative suggests an overall framework for interpreting yogic practices as a means of discovering the true self through discipline of the body and mind. Actually the yogic and tantric practices were common to the Kamarupa and Koch Bihar regions during that period thirteenth and fourteenth century. Although the origin of Kāmākhyā is uncertain, she is the Mother Goddess of Assam, and Koch Bihar worshipped by orthodox Hindus, heterodox Hindus, Tantric devotees as well as tribal peoples. The Muslim sources also perceived Kamarupa as a fabulous and mysterious place inhabited by expert practitioners of the occult, of yoga, and magic. Iban Batuta mentioned that, the inhabitants of this region are noted for their devotion and practice of magic and witchcraft.³ *Baharistan -i -Ghayebi* and *Ain-i-Akbar* also described the place of Kamrupa and Koch Bihar as a place where the inhabitants possessed knowledge about magic and *tantra*. *Baharistan -i -Ghayebi* mentioned Khuntaghat region, in western Kamarupa as 'notorious for magic and sorcery'.⁴

After Qazi Rukn-ud-din al-Samarqandi *Amritkundā* with its repeated translations into Arabic and Persian circulated widely in several places of Indian subcontinent and beyond. The north Indian Sufi Shaikh 'Abd al-Quddus Gangohi absorbed the yogic ideas of *Amrtkundā* and taught the ideas of *Amritkundā* to his one own disciple whose name was Shaikh Sulaiman.⁵ In the mid seventeenth century, the Kashmiri author Muhsin Fani found a Persian translation of the *Amrtkundā*, around the same period an Anatolian Sufi scholar Muhammad-al-Misri mentioned *Amritkundā* as an important book for the study of yogic practices. He also mentioned that, in India

such practices had become partly integrated with Sufism.⁶ A Persian recension of *Amritkundā* has been introduced in Gujrat by great Shattari Shyakh Muhammad Ghauth of Gwalior in AD 1563. A prologue to this version written by one of his disciple recorded how the yogic ideas of *Amritkundā* influenced the Sufi tradition of the Islamic world. According to this text,

This wonderful and strange book is named *Amṛtakunḍā* in the Indian language (i.e., Sanskrit). This means “Water of Life,” and the reason for the appearance of this book among the Muslims is as follows. When Sultan ‘Ala al-Din (i.e., ‘Ali Mardan) conquered Bengal and Islam became manifest there, news of these events reached the ears of a certain gentleman of the esteemed learned class in Kamrup. His name was Kama, and he was a master of the science of yoga.

In order to debate with the Muslim ‘*ulamā* [scholars] he arrived in the city of Lakhnauti, and on a Friday he entered the Congregational Mosque. A number of Muslims showed him to a group of ‘*ulamā*, and they in turn pointed him to the assembly of Qazi Rukn al-Din Samarqandi. So he went to this group and asked: “Whom do you worship?” They replied, “We worship the Faultless God.” To his question “Who is your leader?” they replied, “Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah.” He said, “What has your leader said about the Spirit [*rūḥ*]?” They replied, “God the All-nourishing has commanded (that there be) the Spirit.” He said, “In truth, I too have found this same thing in books that are subtle and committed to memory.”

Then that man converted to Islam and busied himself in acquiring religious knowledge, and he soon thereafter became a scholar (*muftī*). After that he

wrote and presented this book to Qazi Rukn al-Din Tamami [Samarqandi]. The latter translated it from the Indian language into Arabic in a book of thirty chapters, and somebody else translated it into Persian in a book of ten chapters....And when Hazrat Ghauth al-Din himself went to Kamrup he necessarily spent several years in studying this science....The name of this book is *Bahr al-hayāt*.⁷

Beyond the Indian subcontinent the translations in multiple recensions of the text *Amritkundā* also proved its existence in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Urdu languages. Recently a Judaeo-Arabic version also found notice in Yemen.⁸ But now the question is that, how and what were the procedures to study this yogic text *Amritkundā* in the Islamic world with its different translations? The textual history indicates that the readers and translators of the book engaged themselves in a process of Islamization, involving scriptural Islamic themes, philosophical vocabulary and the terminology and the concepts of Sufism. If we go through the different translations of the text, it is enough to indicate that the translations were exclusively made for a Muslim readership, the translations versions often introduced with Prophet Muhammad and it is sprinkled with terms and phrases from the Islamic religious vocabulary. The translators carefully attempted to describe practices that include Sanskrit chants or mantras, breathing techniques, postures for meditation, and invocation of feminine deities and present themselves with their Islamic counterpart. According to the analysis of Carl W Ernst the relationship between Islamicate and Indic features of this text indicates, however, that, generalities about Hinduism and Islam are relatively useless for shedding light on the significance of the text, nor does the provide provide any insight into overarching questions of inter-religious exchange. Many different strands of meaning have been interwoven by the

translators, who eclectically drew together practices of yoga and divination from different sources that cannot be identified with any particular surviving text on hatha yoga, providing in any case a very limited picture of hatha yoga practice.⁹

Now for example I would like to mention some Indian god and goddess, and planets which actually replaced by another name of the Islamic importance in the translations. Such as *Sanicar* (Saturn) has been identified as *Zuhal*; *Mangal* (Mars) has been identified as *Mirrikh*; *Brihaspati* (Jupiter) as *Mushtari*; *Bhanu* (Sun) as *Shams*; *Sukra* (Venus) as *Zahra*; *Budh* (Mercury) as *Utarid*; and *Candra* (Moon) as *Qamar*. On the other hand some other Indian concepts and terms have been replaced with the Islamic related expressions. Such as the Indian name *Brahman* has been identified with Arabic *Alim* ; *yogi* has been identified with *murtard*; *yoga* has been identified with *riyada*; *Brahma and Vishnu* has been identified with *Ibrahim and Musa*, *Gorakh* who was a *yogi* has been identified with *Khidr*, *yogi Matsyendra* has been identified with *Yunus*; *Chaurangi* has been identified with *Ilyas*; *mantra* and *yantra* have been identified with *dhikr* and *shakl* or *ashakl*; *mandala* as *mandala*; *homa* as *dua* or *prayer* and *Japa* as *Azima*.¹⁰ One important factor is Indian term *alakh* which meant separation, was assumed and translated as *Allah*.¹¹

The Arabic version of this text contains a variety of practices. Of which some though are not distinctively Indian or restricted to yoga, but are widely practiced in some other traditions. This is the case with the recommendation of fasting, vegetarian diet and sexual abstinence. But other practices are clearly associated with hatha yoga. Prominent of them are practice of breath control with reference to sun and moon breath as associated with the left and right nostrils. The passage are not clearly related to standard Indian cosmologies, however later Indian texts such as *Yoga Upanishads* often employ the time unit of the *mantra* to count the duration of

breaths.¹² According to *Amrtakundā*, the breaths are five: fiery, watery, airy, earthy and heavenly.¹³

Psychological techniques mentioned in the text include the purification of body by the postures recognisable as yogic *asanas*. The Arabic text acknowledged the traditional number of 84 postures but described only five of which Virasana, Kukkutasana, and Uttamasana are notable. The Arabic text also analyzes the importance of these postures for the physical and mental health. It is sure that the yogic postures of these kinds were closely associated with the Nath or Kanphata yogis for whom these were a characteristic utterance. On the other hand seven Sanskrit mantras or chants associated with the seven chakras are all boldly declared to be translations of the Arabic invocations of the names of God. Thus Sanskrit syllable *hum* is translated as *ya rabb* (O Lord) and *aum* is translated as *ya qadim* (ancient one).¹⁴

So from the above discussion it is confirmed that, all these are instances of deliberate Islamization of the Indian terms in which the translators decided to use Islamic terms and refuse the Indian text. It is found that the overall translations of the text consist of translators own addition to the text, which actually differentiated from the idea of original text. The translators in doing that omitted many Indian terms and place names and also distorted many Indian references. The Islamization of the text even proceeded on the visual level. The Arabic translation includes fourteen diagrams for visualization during meditation, of which nine relate to Cakras. Comparison of manuscripts indicates a subtle but unmistakable process of grammatization, in which diagrams increasingly turn into Arabic letters or the cabalistic figures common to Arabic works of occultism. There is no doubt that the translators of the book clearly wanted to establish the canonical authority of their work, and part of their techniques

consisted of adding enough of familiar Islamic structures of authority to convince their readers to pay attention. It is striking to see how the Arabic version of this text preserves the strategies of treating this book of wisdom as divinely inspired and a source of great benefit. One of the translated version of the text mentioned, "Regarding his desire for knowledge and devotion to it, he heard of one of the books of the philosophers of India, among their kings and scholars, rare and highly prized by them. It was the root of their culture and the head of all their knowledge, the guide to every benefit and the key to search for the hereafter and the work of salvation".¹⁵ So we can conclude that the translators deliberately manipulate the original words for their spiritual benefit of Islamic favourable through which they deliberately denied the origin of Sufism with Indian tradition but it was found that they influenced much by the text *Amrtkundā* for the introduction of yogic elements in the Sufism.

Notes and References:

¹ William, J., *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, New York, 1958, pp. 308.

² As quoted in, Karim, Abdul, *Social History of Muslims in Bengal*, Dhaka, 2014 (rpt.), p.94.

³ Battuta, Ibn, *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, (tr.), Mahdi Hussan, Baroda, 1953, pp. 238-9

⁴ Borah, M.I., (tr.) *Baharistan-I-Ghaybi - A History of the Mughal Wars in Assam, Koch Bihar, Bengal Bihar and Orissa During the Reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan* by Mirza Nathan, Vol. I, Gauhati, 1936, p.273.

⁵ Rizvi, S.A.A., *A History of Sufism in India Vol. I, Delhi, 1978, p.335.*

⁶ Eaton, Richard M., *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204-1760*, New Delhi, 2014, (rpt.), p.78-9.

⁷ *Islamic Culture*, 21, 1947, pp.191-2. The Persian extract published in *Islamic Culture* was taken from a manuscript copy of the *Bahr-al-hayāt* in the library of Pir Muhammad Shah of Ahmedabad (No.223). see, Eaton, Richard M., *op cit*, pp.79-80.

⁸ Ernst, Carl W., 'The Islamization of Yoga in the "Amrtakunda" Translations', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol.13, No.2, 2003, pp. 199-226.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.205.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.209-10.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.211.

¹² Srinivas, T.R., (tr.) *The Yoga Upanishadas*, Adyar, 1952, p. 308.

¹³ Ernst, Carl W., *op cit*, p.217.

¹⁴ Dermenghem, E., 'Yoga and Sufism: Ecstasy Techniques in Islam', in Pitirim A. Sorokin (ed.), *Forms and Techniques of Altruistic and Spiritual Growth*, Boston, 1954, pp.109-16.

¹⁵ Francois de Blois, *Burzoy's Voyage to India and the Origin of the Book of Kalilah Dimmah*, London, 1990, pp. 39-41.

Urbanisation, Trade and Markets in Colonial Bengal: A Case Study of Murshidabad (C. 1757-1857)

Varun Kumar Roy¹

Abstract:

City planning is not a colonial or modern invention. A tightly executed plan is vividly discernible in the scores of unearthed ruins of the Harappan Civilisation that flourished more than four millennia ago. Its cities and townships had grid patterned streets, uniform rows of brick housing, plumbing, public baths, drainage, granaries and other public spaces and amenities that strongly presume an efficient and well-endowed, if somewhat unimaginative municipal administration.¹ The earliest connection of the East India Company with this district was marked by the establishment of a factory at Kasimbazar

Keywords: bazaar, port, routes, silk, cotton, marathas

Major Tull Walsh, a colonial civil surgeon of Murshidabad, as early as 1902 points out that the history of the district of Murshidabad represents the downfall of the Mahomedan Subahs of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, who ruled as the Viceroy's of the Emperor of Delhi, and the rise of British power and commerce, through a long series of years of fighting and striving, until England had not only ousted all European competitors, but had entirely subjugated a vast and warlike population, from whose rulers they had, at first by favour, and humble petitions, obtained a footing for

¹ Asst. Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal, Darjeeling

purposes of trade ; and to whom, until after the battle of Plassey, they had paid tribute, as the weaker section.

Introducing the region:

The earliest connection of the East India Company with this district was marked by the establishment of a factory at Kasimbazar. The factory was situated on the western bank of the river Bhagirathi, and south of the land occupied by the French and the Dutch.² In the beginning of the seventeenth century the town of Murshidabad, which then bore the name of Makhsusabad, began to assume importance as a commercial depot. Its silk attracted the attention of two English agents, Hughes and Parker, who were sent from Agra to Patna to set up a trading station there—so much so that next year they reported that they had invested Rs. 500 in purchasing samples of silk from Makhsusabad.³

Cossimbazzar was one of the favourite of the English East India Company though they looked at it's propensity with Hooghly. In 1758, the court of Directors at Hooghly mentions Hooghly, Balasore, Patna and Cossimbazar as "the four factories which we determine shall be settled in the Bay of Bengal" and sets forth that the "four officers above mentioned are to be appointed at Cossimbazar." The use of the future tense makes it uncertain whether the Cossimbazar factory was actually started in this year, and Sir Henry Yule is of opinion that it is doubtful whether it was regularly occupied before 1659. The East India Company's first representative were John Kern, who was Chief on £40 a year, Daniel Sheldon, second member of Council, on £30, John Priddy on £20 and Job Charnock, fourth member, on £20. Job Charnock was subsequently posted at Patna, but returned as Chief in 1680 and stayed there till 1686.⁴ "In 1678," writes Mr. Beveridge, "a lady with charming ignorance of

Anglo-India requirements, sends her brother-in-law at Cossimbazar a box containing a cravat and cuffs and ribbon of the newest mode and a border of lace for his night cap. Alas, he was dead before the box left England."

The Trade Routes: Roadways and River ways

The importance of Murshidabad grew leaps and bound in the eyes of the Company as the Town was blessed with facilities of trade routes through river Ganges. The shores of river Ganges and its tributaries linked Murshidabad with almost all important towns and cities of West Bengal. This perennial river was a boon making Murshidabad the most suitable place for internal and external trade. The other river Bhagirathi, was well fed with water during summer and monsoon seasons but during winter season it refused to give way to heavy laden ships because of decreasing water level. We have examples at our disposal that Bernier while coming from Sutti, thirty-five miles away, north of Murshidabad, as compelled to traverse through Qasimbazar by land route because the river offered obstruction owing to stumpy water level.⁵ In the same way, though there was always water in the Jalangi it was sometimes un-navigable during the dry months.⁶ Both rivers had declined as the Ganges had accommodated herself to the changed circumstances caused by the enlargement of the Jamuna.⁷ For part of the year, therefore, trade by water yielded to trade by land. This was conducted mainly with pack animals and with carts drawn by oxen or buffaloes. The owners of cattle, when they were not required for agriculture, used them for transport, themselves buying goods at one market and selling at another, or hiring them out to merchants.⁸ Malley pointed out that the district was favourably situated for trade, as being served by the two first deltaic off-shoots of the Ganges, viz., the Bhaglrathi and Jalangi, through which there is boat communication with Calcutta. The eastern half of the district, enclosed

by the Ganges, Bhaglathi and Jalangi had, from time immemorial had been the seat of large commercial towns.

Puran Chandra Majumdar in his book "The musnud of Murshidabad (1704-1904) A synopsis of the History of Murshidabad for the Last Two Centuries' beautifully points out the two day travel distance between Murshidabad and Calcutta in 1764.

FROM MURSHIDABAD TO CALCUTTA IN TWO DAYS, IN 1764⁹

Meer Jaffer wrote in 1764 to the Governor and Council at Calcutta - as soon as I receive intelligence of Lord Clive's arrival at Ingelee, I, hope long- to have the pleasure of seeing him, will set out from Murshidabad and make it but two days Journey to Calcutta. I have fixed my departure on the 22nd of Jemady-ul-aula (the 17th November,) there being- no luckier day in the month. The Nawab returned to Murshidabad with Nanda Cumar on the 20th December,] 764, and the latter wrote to Calcutta —"I despatched today, on boats from the city, the sum of two lakhs balance remaining- of the twenty lacs on account of the damages sustained by the merchants, please God they will arrive in five or six days; a list of the several sorts of rupees is sent to Nobokissen Munshi, he will deliver the same to you."

Besides river route there were well defined road routes connecting Murshidabad with other trading points. The mughals had maintained certain 'trunk roads' for military and commercial purposes to link the provinces with the capital cities of northern India. Thus in 1773 Gilbert Ironsides, an English officer at Qasimbazar, in a letter to Robert Orme, described one such road connecting Qasim bazaar with Rajmahal, Bhagalpur and Patna, some 285 miles away, from whence it ran north westwards via

Patna to Agra and Delhi; another running to Malda, Dinajpur and Rangpur, 153 miles distant; and other which linked Qasimbazar with Dacca, Calcutta, Burdwan and Birbhoom.¹⁰ Many of these old imperial roads were also noted by Rennell in his Description of the Roads in Bengal and Bihar. The local roads of major commercial importance were those from Murshidabad to Bhagwangola, to Jellengi and thence via Plassey to Burdwan, and to Suti and so to Rajmahal.¹¹

The Markets and Trade

The cotton market grew to be so significant that Duncan, Collector at Benares wrote in 1788, "the market at Mirzapur is chiefly influenced by the selling price at Bhagwangola," where merchants from Dacca, Calcutta and other places come to purchase their cotton.¹² The markets as well as the ports were taken immense care so that there was a smooth flow of trade and commerce. We have examples that the Nawab round the time posted thousands of soldiers and cavalry in around the ports in order to "preserve the communications for supplies open between the Ganges and the city".¹³ The Maratha menace is an important chapter in the history of Bengal. The loot and plunder of the Maratha was dreaded by everyone.

Cotton prices in different districts of Bengal (pence/pound)¹⁴

Districts	1836	1848	1859
Murshidabad	4.80	3.20	7.75
Jessore	-----	3.00	7.27
Burdwan	4.00	3.63	5.74
Midnapur	4.80	4.39	6.98
Calcutta	3.65	3.00	5.18

The silk industry has been the principal non-agricultural industry in Murshidabad for the last three centuries. It was this which attracted the East India Company to the district, where its enterprise was stimulated by competition with the Dutch, French and Armenians. The centre of the industry was Cossimbazar, where the Company started a factory at about 1658. At first the operations were on a small scale. In 1618 out of a total stock of £230,000 invested by the English company in Bengal, £140,000 was employed at Qasimbazar.¹⁵ Bowrey commented upon the large numbers of rich merchants in the town.¹⁶ According to Bernier, the Dutch employed 700 or 800 persons in their factory at Cossimbazar, and the English and other merchants as many more. It soon began to develop with European capital and organization.¹⁷ In 1670 a factory "well skilled in silk was sent out from England to Cossimbazar, and in 1681, when the Chief was Job Ornock, the future founder of Calcutta, out of 230,000 sent out by the East India Company as "investment to Bengal, 140,000 was assigned to Cossimbazar. From this time onwards the Company made unremitting efforts to foster sericulture and extend the trade in silk, until by 1776 Bengal silk drove all competitors, except Italian and China silks, out of the English market. An English commercial agent was posted in the town from 1658, and by 1667 the increasing commercial importance of the place had led to the appointment of a member of the Bengal Council as chief at Qasimbazar.¹⁸

The value of the trade to this district may be realized from the fact that, 'in the time of Alivardi Khan, raw silk to the value of 87 lakhs was annually entered in the Custom House books at Murshidabad. This is exclusive of the European investments, which were not entered there, as being either duty free or paying duty at Hooghly. As regards the European investments, we find that, in 1763, out of a total of 40 lakhs required as "advances for investment"¹⁹ the Cosimbazar filatures demanded 9 lakh,

or as much as any other two agencies excepting Calcutta itself. Colonel Rennell wrote (dr. 1779) as follows: "Cossimbazar is the general market of Bengal silk, and a great quantity of silk and cotton stuffs are manufactured here, which are circulated throughout great part of Asia; of the unwrought silk, 300,000 or 400,000 Ibs. Weight is consumed in the European manufactories." The filatures and machinery of the Company at this time were estimated to be worth twenty lakhs of rupees. Another important centre was Jangipur, where silk filatures were established as early as 1773; it was described by Lord Valentia in 1802 as "the greatest silk station of the East Indian Company with 600 furnaces and giving employment to 3,000 persons." The Company continued its operations until 1835, when it gave up its commercial monopoly. After this, large European firms, such as Messrs. Watson & Co., James Lyall & Co., Louis Payen & Co. and the Bengal Silk Company, came into the field.²⁰

In the eighteenth century the city rapidly expanded as the chief market for silk and silk peiece-goods. Indeed the popular name for the Bhagirathi at this period was the Qasimbazar river, and the area bounded by the Ganges, the Bhagirathi and the Jalangi came to be known as Qasimbazar Island.²¹ The output of raw silk was set by Grose at 22,000 bales, each of 100 pounds weight, per year.²² Of this unwrought silk between three and four hundred thousand pounds were consumed in the European manufactories.²³ Qasimbazar was also a great weaving centre, great quantities of raw silk and cotton stuffs being manufactured there and exported through all parts of Asia. The city retained its dominant position as the chief market for silk and piece-goods throughout the eighteenth century. It was not until the early nineteenth century that the busy trading mart at Qasimbazar began to decline, partly as a result of the changes in European trade, and partly because of the change of the course of the Bhagirathi River.²⁴

As for the Murshidabad city itself, this had been a small place before it became the capital of Bengal in 1704. There had been a silk trade there in the previous century, witness the visit of the English agents Hughes and Parker in 1620 to buy sample consignments.²⁵ But it was from the transfer of the provincial capital that its rapid growth in size and importance must be dated. The presence of the court, of the army and provincial administrators, of manufacturers and of merchants, both European and Asian, greatly increased its wealth.²⁶ According to the Commercial Resident at Jangipur, at the end of the eighteenth century, there was a time when the silkworm was introduced from further east, probably China, since its first home was in the Brahmaputra valley. From Persia, too, India may have received some "seed," as there was a time—fifteenth century—when the silks of Persia were very highly esteemed. In 1619 this silk was being sold in the London market for and Mr. Geoghegan gives the export as 2,000 to 3,000 bales. The first distinct allusion to Bengal silk in the old records is an order to the Company's agents, in 1621, forbidding further purchases. This, it is suggested, was partly due to a hope that the Shah of Persia would grant concessions to English Company. The negotiations were not successful, and merchants then began to give serious attention to the possibility of extending the industry in Bengal. Factories were established, one of the earliest being at Kasimbazar. The Company's chief factor, from Madras, visited Bengal in 1679, and reported favourably on the prospects. The oldest species of "foreign worm known to Murshidabad was the *Bombyx tussor*, called from its size bard palu (big worm).²⁷ Their silk reeling factories were established at Jangipur as early as 1773.²⁸ In 1802, Jangipur was described as the "greatest station of the East India Company" with six hundred furnace had a man who spun silk from the cocoons, and a boy who reeled the thread and was eventually promoted to a spinner after having acquired

sufficient experience, the rest of the employees were woodcutters and water – carriers.²⁹

With the passage of time there was decline in the output of raw silk.³⁰

Yearly average	Raw silk in maunds	Value in rupees
1749-53	19,503	5,544,873
1754-58	14,937	4,182,668
1759-63	10,113	2,831,716
1764-68	6,858	1,920,541

The same could be seen in the silk pieces the following figures bears testimony to this from the period 1750-1777³¹

Yearly average	Silk goods, pieces	Value in rupees
1749-53	105,051	630,307
1754-58	71,380	428,275
1759-63	81,651	489,907
1764-68	71,495	428,968
1775	23,271	162,897
1776	43,106	301,742
1777	56,462	395,234

The Patna figures for 1775-77 do, however, give one brief glimpse of the markets for Murshidabad's major exports, since they record the ultimate destination of goods passing through Patna custom house. For the three years combined the totals are as follows³² :

Raw silk in *manuds*

Benares	Mirzapur	Agra	Delhi	Lahore	Multan	Aurangabad
511	12,568	598	427	3,851	1,649	1,471

Silk piece goods, pieces (1775-76 only)

505	3,855	1,590	-	3,700	-	7,820
-----	-------	-------	---	-------	---	-------

Taffetas

1,552	8,992	326		2,020		8,437
-------	-------	-----	--	-------	--	-------

Silk Filatures in 1852

Jangipur	Rajarampur	Katlamari	Kartikpara	Dabeepur	Kasimbazar
Sunkurpur	Kawulkuwar	Rangamati	Rampara	Baydanga	Mirzapur
Narkelbari	Durgachurun's Fy.				

Indigo Factories in 1852:

Kishanpur	Bliugwanpur	Dogachi	Choukah	Urmari	Dubreebunni
Kaliganj	Monghurpur	Kadamsar	Ealagachi	Gysabad	Rajshaye,
Nurpur	Khandurpaekura	Bampura	Khurbunna	Chandpur	Torapur
Noncha	Katlamari	Rajapur	Furidpur	Sahebrampur	Subdulpur
Dadpur	Akriganj (sunk in the river, factory moved back to Muricha).				

Conclusion

It is clear, from all the corroborations available that throughout the whole period 1765 to 1857, the trade and industry of Murshidabad continuously declined. There were many reasons for the decline of trade and commerce. With the progressive curtailment of the powers and the income of the Nawabs at Murshidabad, the reduction of the military forces, and impoverishment of their nobles, all of which flowed from the East India Company's emergence as a political power, Murshidabad further declined as a centre of consumption and trade. The transfer of the revenue administration of Bengal and of the civil and criminal courts from Murshidabad to Calcutta, and with them the great numbers of officials, clerks, bankers and clients, Murshidabad ceased to be a lucrative market and increasingly assumed the appearance of a small district headquarters town.³³

The principal seats of trade were Azlmganj, Jangipur, Jfiaganj, Khagra and Dhulian on the Bhaglrathi ; the Jain merchants of Azlmganj are among the richest traders in Bengal. Other important markets are Bhagwangola, Beldanga, Saktipur, Jalangi, Kandi, Gokarna, Lalbagh, Sagardighi, Baluohfir and Chhapghati. Periodical fairs are held at Dhuliau, Jangipur, Chaltia, Saktipur and Kandi. The external trade is mainly with Calcutta. The chief imports are European piece-goods, salt, coal and kerosene oil; the chief exports are silk and agricultural produce, such as rice, wheat, gram, oil-Beeds and jute.³⁴

However, Murshidabad developed as an urban centre of great significance under the Bengal Nawabs. Murshidabad had royal palaces, residential zones, streets, bazaars and markets, rest houses, places of common utility, educational institutions and flourishing trade and commerce of international repute.³⁵ Different institutions like Khanqah, mosque, madrasah, etc., were built in Murshidabad. The city was

divided into residential zones depending on different professions of common people.³⁶

REFERENCES

- ¹ Partha Dutta, *Planning the City: Urbanization and Reform in Calcutta c. 1800–1940*, Delhi: Tulika Books, 2012, pp. 332
- ² K.M. Mohsin, *A Bengal District in Transition: Murshidabad 1765-1793*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dacca, 1973
- ³ W. Foster, *The English Factories in India, 1618-21*, pp. 194, 253.
In a letter, dated 12th July 1620, they refer to "Serbandy silk, the best of Mucksrude and Sideabunde (i.e., Makhsusabad and Saidabad), See O'Malley. L.S.S., *Gazetteer*, 1914
- ⁴ *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XCIV, 1892, Cf. Hedges Diary, Vol. II, p. 242.
- ⁵ *Murshidabad District Gazetteer*, P. 10 , Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Vol. 2, p. 78
- ⁶ W. Hamilton, *The East India Gazetteer*, Vol. 2, p. 243.
- ⁷ R.K Mukherjee, *The changing Face of Bengal*, p. 9
- ⁸ H.T. Colebrook remarks on the Husbandry and Internal Commerce of Bengal. P. 155, Buchanan, *An Account of the district of Bihar and Patna in 1811-12*, Vol. 2, pp. 706-07
- ⁹ Majumdar, Puran Chandra., *The musnud of Murshidabad (1704-1904) A synopsis of the History of Murshidabad for the Last Two Centuries*, Omraoganj, 1905. p-310
- ¹⁰ *Orme Mss.* (I.O.L.), Vol. 41 pp. 117-134, K.M. Mohsin, op cit., 1973, p-12
- ¹¹ H. Blochmann, *Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal*, J A S B, vol. xiii, part 1 (1873) , pp. 211-241. K.M. Mohsin, op cit., 1973, p-15
- ¹² J.F. Royle, *On the culture and commerce of cotton in India*, p. 43., K.M. Mohsin, op cit., 1973, p-15
- ¹³ Holwell: op. cit., p. 195, C. Steward , *The History of Bengal*, p. 480.
- ¹⁴ Medilicott, *Cotton Handbook for Bengal*, p.159

-
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Thomas Bowerey, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal*, pp. 213-15.
- ¹⁷ F. Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, vol. 2, p. 184
- ¹⁸ J. Long, The Banks of the Bhagirathi, *Calcutta Review*, vol. 6, (1846) p. 435
- ¹⁹ O'Malley. L.S.S., *Gazetteer*, 1914, 150
- ²⁰ Ibid.,
- ²¹ Rennell, A Bengal Atlas, Map No. XI.
- ²² T. Grouse, A Voyage to the East India Indies, vol, 2, p, 290.
- ²³ J, Long op. cit., p. 434,
- ²⁴ R. Mukherjee ,op. cit. pp. 149-181
- ²⁵ Murshidabad, *District Gazetteer*, p. 21, W, Foster (Ed.), *The English Factories in India*, 1618-21, pp. 194 and 253,
- ²⁶ N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, vol 2. P, 228,
- ²⁷ Tull Walsh, A History Of Murshidabad District, Londoan, 1902.
- ²⁸ Viscount Valentia : Voyages and Travels to India etc, vol. I, p. 51.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ BPC, R, I, vol. 44, 19 June 1769.
- ³¹ Ibid.,
- ³² Patna Custom house registers, B O R M P., R. 98, vols. 18, 20 and 22.
- ³³ K.M.Mohsin, op.cit, p-42
- ³⁴ O'Malley. L.S.S., *Gazetteer*, 1914, 156
- ³⁵ K.M.Mohsin, op cit, pp.45
- ³⁶ Ibid., pp.42-43.

Colonial Penetration, Land Revenue Reforms and Transition of Cooch Behar from a Benevolent to a Predatory State 1772-1923

Shelly Das¹

Abstract:

Cooch Behar a native state of India in Colonial terminology is situated in the North-Eastern part of India. The territory of modern Cooch Behar originally formed part of the ancient kingdom of Kamrup, and had no separate existence of its own as a district principality before the division of that country between the King Nara Narayan and his brother Sukladwaj, commonly known as Chila Rai, in the middle of the 16th century. CoochBehar became 'feudatory state' to the English East India Company by virtue of the Treaty of 1773. It as because of colonial penetration and the Land Revenue Reforms that totally metamorphosed the Cooch Behar State.

Keywords: Settlements, Pargana, Jotedars, patits, kshetrya

Cooch Behar a native state of India in Colonial terminology and situated in the North-Eastern part of India. The territory of modern Cooch Behar originally formed part of the ancient kingdom of Kamrup, and had no separate existence of its own as a district principality before the division of that country between the King Nara Narayan and his brother Sukladwaj, commonly known as Chila Rai, in the middle of the 16th century, Cooch Behar had never had a peaceful time since its birth⁽¹⁾. Earlier

¹ Shelly Das, Assistant Professor, Vivekananda College, Alipurduar

Cooch Behar was invaded by Muhammadan rulers of Bengal and later from Bhutan. British relation with Cooch Behar State developed in the later half of the 18th century in the wake of Cooch Behar -Bhutan conflict. Being threatened by Bhutan⁽²⁾, Cooch Behar asked to help of the East India Company. The appeal for military help by Cooch Behar offered the company not only a golden opportunity to fulfil their commercial interests through the Himalayas, and thereby link the British territories in India with the vast regions of Tibet and China, but also opened a new path to the Company for political foothold in this region which she was yearning for since the occupation of Rangpur. The occupation of Cooch Behar would secure their northern boundary as well. The company, under the governor generalship of Warren Hastings agreed to help Cooch Behar and a treaty was signed in the year April 15, 1773⁽³⁾. Cooch Behar first comes into close political relation with the British Govt. in 1773. A regular history of the land revenue administration of the state begun from that year when East India Company made a provision that "the Raja farther agrees to make over to the East India Company one-half of the annual revenues of Cooch Behar forever⁽⁴⁾."

Cooch Behar became a feudatory state to the East India Company by virtue of the treaty of 1773. Concerning Anglo-Cooch Behar treaty, it may be remarked, that the option and ratification, implied in clause-9, does not appear to have been carried into effect⁽⁵⁾. As a matter of fact, the precise amount was not finally agreed upon until 1780 when it was placed by Mr. Purling, collector of Rangpur. In that time the mode of assessment and the system of collection were both irregular and the dishonesty and greed of the State Officials caused great sufferings to the people. In subsequent years attempts were made by the British Government to introduce regulated

administration in the state but the refusal of the Maharaja prevented any further interference⁽⁶⁾.

In order to finalise a comprehensive settlement in the State initiatives were taken in 1872. The entire settlement operation in the six parganas (Mathabhanga, Lal Bazar, Dinhata, Cooch Behar, Tufanganj and Mekhliganj) of the state are generally known as the First Settlement. The settlement which had been carried out by Mr. W.O.A. Beckett, Assistant Commissioner, directly fixes the rates of rent payable by all classes of tenants. This settlement will last for a period of 12 years. One important feature of the settlement operation was resumption of the invalid rent-free lands, mukarrari (lands given at a fixed rate, free from all abwabs, with the exception of batta) and Jagirs⁽⁷⁾.

By this first settlement Cooch Behar State appears to have been enhanced by roughly 267.76% only. It was a major quantum jump and the enhancement of revenue could be made on the one hand by drastically revising the rate of rent and on the other bringing more land under revenue settlement. The total amount of revenue secured by the settlement was ` 9, 38,610 giving an increase of `5, 75,471 as detailed below in the first settlement.

Table 1: The Total Amount of Revenue

Pargana	Old Jama	First Settlement	Increasing
Mekhliganj	54,169	1,29,55	75,386
Mathabhanga	71,246	5	1,01,658
Lal Bazar	74,476	1,72,90	59,722
Dinhata	76,451	4	97,583

Cooch Behar	71,520	1,34,19	1,60,520
Tufanganj	16,277	8	79,602
		1,74,03	
		4	
		2,32,04	
		0	
		95,879	
Total	3,64,139	9,38,61	5,74,471
		0	

Source: K. C. Ganguly, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar 1913-1927.

All the patit (waste land) lands included within the jotes during the First Settlement and brought under cultivation. In cases where the quantity of the patit land shown in the papers was small, namely 3.3 areas and under it was assessed as cultivated land without further enquiry. This settlement is known as the Patit charcha settlement (1884-86)⁽⁸⁾. The increase of revenue obtained by it was `68,824 for the whole state. During the general resettlement of 1886-91 known as the Rakamcharcha Settlement no reductions were, however, made in the rents already paid by contract and the parties were left free as regards future contracts⁽⁹⁾. According to the new survey and settlement i.e. Final Settlement the area of the state was 8, 50,766.33 acres. This settlement is infact the last settlement of the Cooch Behar state during the tenure of the rule of the royal dynasty. Because after the integration of the Cooch Behar state the independent India 1947 new settlement operations in terms with the settlement operations in the neighbouring district of Jalpaiguri had taken place by the abolishment of the Jotedari system. The last settlement and the one namely the Dewani

Settlement before it achieved a radical change in the revenues income of this state. From a total revenue income `12,41,060 of the Rakamcharcha Settlement of 1889 to `17,98,984 in the 1927 settlement, an increase of 145% only was achieved. Consequently, a number of crucial issues have originated from drastic changes in the revenue assessment from the First Settlement to the Final Settlement. A number of areas of social unrest that caused a great deal of tension of the rural society of Cooch Behar may be attributed to the changes brought about in different settlement operations⁽¹⁰⁾

It has transpired from the settlement reports during a time period of fifty five years from 1872 to 1927 revenue of the state went up by about 394% only. Through seven periodic settlements the revenue income escalated from ` 3,64,140 in 1872 to `17,98,984 in 1927. From a total area of 24 ,82,183 bighas or 8,27,394.33 acres in 1872. The area increased in 1927 to 25,43,396 bighas or 8,47,798.66 acres in the Final Settlement i.e. an enhancement of 2.83% only. Further, the enhanced the area under final settlement i.e. 70,116 bighas or 23,372 acres are partly explained Patit charcha settlement and partly by resumption of land from the termination of the old service renures and reclamation of unauthorised holdings under the tenants. The enhancement of revenue, therefore, was caused by revision of revenue rates and the rental share of the tenants and undertenants. By allowing 35% profit to the Jotedars, 25% profit to the Chukanidars, 15% profit to Dar-Chukanidars, 10% to Dardar-Chukanidar, 10% to Tasya-Chukanidar, 5% to Tali-Chukanidar of the rental income the burden of rent upon the Tasya-Tali Chukanidar or the cultivating rayat had gone up to 95% in some cases even to 150% only. So the burden of rent appears to have been raised to 194.34% at the gross root level of the Krishiprajas in successive settlement.

Under the circumstances, it is likely that at every stage of revised settlement a part of the total jotes has been surrendered by the erstwhile Jotedars on account of inability to pay enhanced revenue. The Jotes, thus, obtained had been settled with new Jotedars, many of them were immigrants. On a rough calculation it is seen that 6.5% of the Jotedars in the Patit Charcha Settlement were outriders who executed the contract in allowance with the terms of enhanced revenue. It is presumable that in subsequent settlement operation in the Khasmehal and Jotedari Settlement areas large scale alienation of land from the local land-holders took place. Another noticeable feature in the land-control system of Cooch Behar is the prevalence of different kinds of land grants and hegemony, while Jotedars, Chukanidars, Dar-Chukanidars, Daradar-Chukanidars, Tali-Chukanidars, Tasya-Chukanidars etc. introduced as an element of linearity in the hierarchic structure, the segmentation of Krihni-prajas in to (a)Krishiprajas under the Jotedars and (b)Krishiprajas under the different grades of Chukanidars added a new element in the complexity of social structure in the Cooch Behar rural society. The other complexity that developed was the dichotomy between the locals and the immigrants on ethnic and cultural grounds.

Keeping in view these momentous developments one can hazard a conclusion from circumstantial evidences, as direct evidences are not too frequent, that some of the social movements in the Rajbansis society in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century have had their roots in it. Movements to differentiate the Rajbansis from the Koches in the Census Reports, Caste mobility movements, social reform movements, rent revision movements seem to be integral to the economic policies of the Cooch Behar Government. Each of these issues suggests an in-depth study. Emergence of Thakur Panchanan Barman at this stage as a mass leader of the Rajbansi Community,

his differences with the rules and finally his expulsions from the Cooch Behar state appear to augur an era of protest.

References

1. Mitra A., Census 1951 West Bengal District Hand books Cooch Behar, Calcutta, 1953, p.27
2. Ahmed Khan Choudhuri Amanatullah, A History of Cooch Behar (in Bengali), Cooch Behar, 1936, pp.83 -89.
3. Hunter H.H. , Statistical Account of Bengal, vol. X, London, 1877,p.411.
4. Ahmed Khan Choudhuri Amanatullah, op. Cit., pp 374-375.
5. Major Francis Jenkin's Report on Cooch Behar.
6. Choudhury Harendra Narayan, The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, Cooch Behar.1903.
7. Dalton G., Settlement Completion Report ,pargana Cooch Behar, Cooch Behar,1876, p. 1 and W.O.A Beckett's report on Cooch Behar.
8. Choudhury Harendra Narayan , op. cit., pp.454-455.
9. Ganguly K.C., Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar State 1913-1927.
10. Ibid.

SAROJINI NAIDU AND THE CAUSE OF INDIAN WOMEN

Roshani Rai¹

Abstract:

Sarojini Naidu symbol of Indian womanhood and a great freedom fighter was born at the time wherein the woman's role was cast in narrow mould, hemmed in with all sorts of restrictions.¹ However Sarojini Naidu "through her eloquent oratory and strategic campaign against British domination and for sexual equality, actively proved to her traditionally male oriented society that women as well as men could be leaders and responsible citizens in times of turmoil and in times of peace."² Though there were some women who took up the cause of women to fight for their rights, it was Sarojini Naidu who provided the thrust which was needed to advance the treatment of women in India. Being a modern 'liberated' woman, she made relentless efforts for the cause of women's emancipation.

Keywords: leader, women question, purdah, movements.

Sarojini Naidu who was the eldest of the five children of Dr. Aghorenath Chattopadhyay was born on February 13, 1879. Her education was of a strictly scientific in nature under the stern eye of her scholarly father.³ Dr. Aghorenath Chattopadhyay was a brilliant scientist, philosopher, poet, linguist and a pioneer educationist. He had received his Doctor of Science degree at the University of Edinburg and continued his studies in Germany where he excelled his brilliance. P.C. Roy, the great Bengali chemist described him as a man with a capacious head "full

¹ Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Tripura University, rai_rosh@yahoo.co.in

of grandiose ideas.”⁴ Around 1878 he was invited to Hyderabad where he established a school with English as its medium. The Nizam held Aghorenath in high esteem for his scholarship and on the Nizam’s encouragement and support, he founded the Hyderabad College and became its Principal.

Aghorenath along with the help of his wife Varada Sundari actively worked for women’s education and under his initiative a Girl’s College for women was started as a part of Osmania University. He championed the cause of women. He was a strong believer in the economic independence of women and in giving them equal opportunities with men. He also directed his energy towards abolishing child marriage and worked to establish the remarriage of widows. Very soon the New Hyderabad College grew into a cultural centre of Hyderabad where students flocked to his residence “to sit at his feet and hear him talk on any subject.” The gatherings became so important that it came to be known as the “durbars” of Dr. Aghorenath where various issues like emancipation of women, especially promoting their economic independence, prevention of child marriage and encouragement of widow remarriage and similar topics were discussed.⁵ . An intellectual group called the Angrimah-e-Ikwan-us Safa (The brotherhood Society) was formed which held absorbing discussions on social and political problems, including women’s emancipation of the country.⁶ Therefore Sarojini Naidu was born and brought up in such an environment that it was natural for her to take up the cause of women and become a part of the women’s movement of the time. In this context this paper attempts to narrate the activities of Sarojini Naidu for the cause of Indian women.

It was in December 1904 Sarojini Naidu first attended the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay and the Conference mostly deliberated on the issue of women emancipation, including such problems as women’s education, the

social status of women, polygamy, widow remarriage, child marriage, the purdah system and careers for women. At the ladies gathering, held at Framji Cowasji Institute, Ramabai Ranade, first women rights activist presided and made an illuminating speech on the status of women, which left a deep imprint on Sarojini's mind. Though at this particular meeting Sarojini seemed to have remained silent, but she enthralled the audience by reciting a patriotic poem 'Ode to India'. Through her brilliant oratory and poetry, Sarojini created a stir and upheaval which resounded throughout India. She addressed gatherings of men, strongly pleading with them to give their wives the freedom which was their birthright.⁷ Sarojini's activities soon became "a great social force" in the country.

Sarojini Naidu addressed the Indian Social Conference in 1906 in Calcutta where she spoke on the subject of 'The Education of Indian Women'. According to Sarojini the whole movement of striving for a common national ideal should be centred round the 'women question'. But she regretted that: "there is not even an unanimous acceptance of the fact that education of women is an essential factor in the process of nation building."⁸ She strongly appealed to the menfolk to restore women their ancient rights for according to Sarojini, women were the real nation builders and without their active co-operation there would be no progress. Therefore she categorically remarked: "Educate your women, and the nation will take care of itself for it is true today, as it was yesterday, and will be to the end of human life that the hand that rocks the cradle is the power that rules the world."⁹

In one of the first conclaves of women which was held on December, 1906 at Bethune College in Calcutta, under the auspices of the Indian Ladies Conference, Sarojini strongly urged women to keep pace with men and emancipate themselves from the age-old shackle of subordination.¹⁰ Immediately after this, Sarojini went

back to Hyderabad where she presided over a meeting of the Hindu Social Reform Association held in Secunderabad. At this meeting she fearlessly condemned evil customs, such as infant marriage, varna sulkam, kanya sulkam, nautches, extravagant expenditure on social and religious occasions and the glaring disparity of age between girls and men when marriages were arranged.¹¹ She strongly believed that women were a potent force in the political evolution of a nation. But she was sad to see that while men were advancing and imbibing new thoughts, women were sadly lagging behind.

In a meeting held in Bombay on March 1908 on the celebration of the Jubilee of Stree Bodha, a Bombay Gujarati monthly, Sarojini made an earnest appeal for the abolition of purdah system as she felt that the purdah system was one great stumbling block in the way of social reforms in India. Again in the session of the Indian National Social Conference held at Madras on December, 1908, Sarojini moved a resolution regarding Hindu widows as follows:

“This Conference invites all communities concerned to give their earnest endeavours to save Hindu widows from the customary disfigurement, to ameliorate their conditions by providing them with educational facilities and also with a Widow’s Home after the model of Professor Karve’s so that they may become better qualified than now to be sisters of mercy and useful and respected members of society and also by placing no obstacles in the way of their remarriage.”¹²

In the year 1917, Sarojini Naidu joined the Women’s Indian Association. The Women’s India Association was the first women’s organization started on an all India basis by Irish woman worker for India, Mrs Margaret E. Cousins and Mrs. Annie Beasant and her Home Rule League. Sarojini Naidu sponsored from its

inception. Following the example of Annie Beasant, Sarojini Naidu and Margaret Cousins, women came forward to work for the emancipation of women and the national cause and this gave a direct impetus to the women's movement in India. The Women's India Association provided this common platform for women to voice out their grievances and demand their rights. Margaret Cousins persisted that there should be equality between men and women and an "equipoise of male and female cooperation."¹³ And thus the struggle was started with Sarojini Naidu at the helm.

On December 1917, Sarojini Naidu led a delegation of fourteen women and met the Viceroy and Secretary of State for India Edwin Montague to press for women franchise. In 1919 Sarojini Naidu led a deputation which waited on the Southborough Commission on Franchise Reform. However the report stated that granting the franchise would be premature. "Lord Southborough decided Indian women did not want the vote and even if they did, social customs would impede its implementations."¹⁴ Nevertheless, under the guidance of Sarojini and other capable leaders, the women's movement gradually gathered force. In 1926, women were made eligible for membership of legislatures, but only by nomination, not by election.

In October 1926 the All India Women's Conference (A.I.W.C) came into existence which became the centre of women's activities in India and right from its inception Sarojini Naidu was its friend, philosopher and guide. Initially the activities of the A.I.W.C. was confined to the field of education and discussions of political questions were carefully avoided. However, it was soon realized that in a country growling under British rule it was impossible to isolate important social work from the basic question of national freedom. In this context it was Sarojini Naidu who played a significant role and was the first woman in Indian history to reconcile the struggle of

women into one united effort with the fight for freedom.¹⁵ The policies and activities of the Women's Conference under Sarojini's leadership began to reflect the deepening political consciousness of the women of India.¹⁶ By and large it was Sarojini who linked up the women's movement with the national struggle.

During the years 1928-29, Sarojini Naidu went to America primarily to counteract the effects of Katherine Mayo's book *Mother India* where Mayo had portrayed a dark and bleak state of Indian society, particularly the condition of Indian women. Therefore, Sarojini's mission was to acquaint the people in America with the Indian affairs, especially those of the Indian women.¹⁷ She was successful in clearing many misconceptions about India. She repeatedly asserted that: "The women of India are returning to their old consciousness of their proper place. They had been justly out of it and cajoled out of it in the last 150 to 200 years... Indian women have always been cultured despite the fact that the present appalling illiteracy might tend to make something otherwise."¹⁸ Therefore America acknowledged her as a symbol of Indian womanhood and the *New York Times* quoted: "Her sex in the new role will do more for the emancipation of Indian women..... Her coming to this country emphasized the great strides which the women of India have made towards equality and social freedom."¹⁹

Throughout her career, Sarojini's concern for women's welfare and progress remained uppermost in her mind. Though she could not always engage herself actively in campaign for reform of Hindu law relating to marriage and property rights of women because of her preoccupation with the freedom movement, yet she was vocal on the subject. Speaking on divorce she stated: "Why should men have the right to polygamy, to neglect one wife for another; and women to be bound to men with unbreakable bonds."²⁰

In 1933, Sarojini Naidu played an important part in the opening of the Lady Irwin College for Women. The initiative of its set up was taken by the All- India Women's Conference and was guided by a special committee of women who were educational experts.²⁴ At a meeting of the Women's Indian Association held in Madras on August 11, 1934, which she presided, Sarojini pointed out the great strides the women's movement had made. She appealed to women:

“to specialize in some line of work and become an indispensable unit in the progress of India. She appealed to them to become fitted with a pride that was progressive and dynamic and to cast off stupid humility. Every woman should say to herself that in her lifetime she would see that the women of India suffered no longer from legal or social disabilities.... Every woman must be faithful to her trust for she was not merely the guardian of yesterday's ideals, but the creator of tomorrow's ideas as well.”²²

By and large, it can be seen that Sarojini Naidu laboured extensively for the women's movement in India. She was forthright in expressing her views about the various handicaps through which the women of India suffered. She stirred and awakened the Indian women to realize their own latent powers and make them rise above their inferior position in society to which they had reconciled themselves to. In her view, women were 'the vessels of liberty and unity of future India' and that they could play a significant role in the national movement and influence the destiny of the country.

Reference

-
- ¹ 'Sarojini Naidu', an article by Tara Ali Baig in *Sarojini Naidu: Some Facets of her Personality*, The National Archives of India, New Delhi, p.12.
- ² <https://archives.columbusstate.edu/gah/1984/83-90.pd>.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ Prafulla Chandra Ray, *Autobiography of a Bengali Chemist*, Orient Book Co., Calcutta, 1958, p.7.
- ⁵ Hasi Banerjee, *Sarojini Naidu: The Traditional Feminist*, K P Bagchi & Co., Calcutta, 1998, p.3.
- ⁶ Padmini Sengupta, *Sarojini Naidu: A Biography*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966, p.15.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p.49.
- ⁸ G.A. Natsan, *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu* (3rd ed.), Madras, p.18.
- ⁹ *Ibid*, p.14.
- ¹⁰ Padmini Sengupta, *op.cit.*, p.67.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, pp.67-68.
- ¹² Cited in Hasi Banerjee, *op.cit.*, p.21.
- ¹³ Margaret Cousins, *Indian Womanhood Today*, Kitabistan, Allahabad, p.32.
- ¹⁴ Cited in Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1999 (Reprint), p.95.
- ¹⁵ Padmini Sengupta, *op.cit.*, p.193.
- ¹⁶ V.S. Naravane, *Sarojini Naidu Her Life, Work and Poetry*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1996(Reprint), p.96.
- ¹⁷ Hasi Banerjee, *op.cit.*, p.43.
- ¹⁸ Cited in *ibid*, p.52.
- ¹⁹ Cited in *ibid*.
- ²⁰ Padmini Sengupta, *op.cit.*, pp. 256-257.
- ²¹ *Ibid*, p.257.
- ²² Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 259-260

PARTITION AND THE SAGA OF UPROOTED WOMEN IN WEST BENGAL: A REVIEW

Madhuparna Mitra Guha¹

Abstract:

The partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947 was a shaping event which caused one of the greatest human convulsions of history. The partition of British India and subsequent creation of two antagonist countries was not just a surgical allegory or an operation; it was a line of division inside our heads and hearts too. The dark legacies of partition have thrown a long shadow on the lives of the people of India and Pakistan. If an elaborate analysis of Partition of India is made then it can safely be concluded that the miserable plight of women centering round the event of partition had long been neglected and ignored, though they were the worst victims of the Partition.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Noakhali, Annapurna, honour, Bhadrak

The womenfolk remained a closed chapter, with the 'high-politics' of Partition dominating all administrative and scholarly imagination. Recent historiography emphasized on the 'human' dimension of this tragedy, the women have finally found their rightful place in Partition historiography¹. The impact of the partition on the women from East Bengal was excessive and they unfortunately became the refugees in their own state which was united just before August, 1947. When thousands of refugees flocked towards Indian Territory from East Bengal every day after the February Riot in 1950, the women of East Bengal had to pay the cost of independence by their chastity, through the sacrifices of lives of their husbands, as well as the lives of their beloved children too. The victimized women hailing from

¹ Asstt. Professor, Department of History, University B.T & Evening College Cooch Behar

East Pakistan were exploited and assaulted in every possible way. Almost 12 million people were displaced; a million died; 75 thousand women were abducted and raped.² But brushing aside all adversities they got courage to face the hard reality and subsequently marched forward acquiring self reliance.

Objective of the paper

The prime objectives of the paper are:

- * To throw light on the migration of womenfolk to West Bengal especially after Partition of India.
- * To unveil the sufferings and bitter experiences of the women refugees from East Pakistan who migrated to West Bengal.
- * To describe the nature of hardship that the women confronted with and their ultimate success in coping with the new environment.

Methodology

For the preparation of the present dissertation materials from various sources have been procured. For the concrete paper both primary and secondary sources have been utilized. Oral sources have acted as an important source for preparing this paper. Data procured from valuable experiences of the refugee women as valuable sources. Memories and experiences of the most vulnerable section of the society like women got special attention of the historians since 1990s. The issue of women related to the partition of India began to be highlighted with the publication of the articles and book by Urvashi Bhutalia, Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin on Punjab. 'The Other Side of Silence', the path-breaking book of Urvashi Butalia, probably first documented the experiences of the women on Partition. The focus, therefore, was on

the theme of women as victims of partition. The way of rebuilding their shattered lives and accommodating with the nascent nation-state is the main focal point of the recent scholar. Another remarkable book 'Borders and Boundaries' by Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin emphasized on the 'gender accent of Partition Narrative' confined its discussion within the region of West.³ They tried to understand the experiences of women during partition in terms of gender and patriarchy. Patriarchy constructed women in a strange way - her sexuality was a threat to her; her respectability confirmed the degree to which she was able to retain her sexual purity, moreover her body was not her own. It was not only the question of her own honour and respect but also of her family and community⁴. Every woman represented her community and she was the repository of her community's honour. From the point of view of Bengali women in partition of India got touch of the trained historians only with beginning of 21st century. Historian Joya Chatterji in her a book 'Bengal divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition' related how a large and powerful section of Hindu society i.e. 'bhadralok' in Bengal insisted that their province by deciding to create a separate Hindu homeland.

The partition of India in 1947 is still considered as the largest human migration that the history has ever witnessed. During the turmoil concerning the partition of India Women became the most common targets of attack. Forced marriage, intimidation, rape and abduction of women became the order of the period. Those maltreatments on a large scale were very common ways of attacks upon the Hindu minority women. The refugee women were humiliated and inhumanly tortured on their way to West Bengal in the plea of search by the Pakistani customs officers and staffs.⁵ Thousands of women of minority communities left their homes overnight to protect their honour and dignity. They were allowed to carry minimum requirements with them. In 1946,

contemporary news papers like the Amrita Bazar Patrika recorded the arduous journey of women across the borders. Streams of women clutching their babies on one arm and their small belongings on the other were seen walking down the rail tracks. Many died on the way⁶. Figures showed that in the interim period between August 1946 and December 1947 several millions of Hindus poured in prolific numbers in eastern India alone in to the states of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura altering the lives of the people and socio-economic profile of the states forever. The partition of Bengal not only killed thousands of people, but also uprooted and displaced millions from their traditional homeland, their desh.⁷ The refugees who were ousted from their 'Bhita'(homeland) and expatriated to a different land following the exchange of population after the partition indeed faced a grave misfortune in their new abode. They realized that the natural surroundings, social customs and the daily rituals of the people were sometimes starkly different from their own. For instance, the arrival of the migrants from the villages of East Pakistan to a big city like Calcutta gave birth to several jokes, which were mostly variations of the clinched encounter between a country bumpkin and a sophisticated urbanite or a village simpleton's embarrassment with elegant life style of the city.

The predicament of the exile in the hellhole of these transit rehabilitation camps reminds us of the terrible life-in death situation of the concentration camps in Europe. Yet those people were better off than those who were thrown in the shelter of railway platform. The Amrita Bazar Patrika described Sealdah station swarming with flood of refugees, the 'Gateway to Hell'. Kolkata became a suffering city for refugees who were afflicted with innumerable ordeals in their new abode⁸. Partition stories have become so poignant because of the direct or indirect violence associated with them". Violence lied not only in shooting or putting daggers through people or

raping them, which was also found in the strict prescription of the people irrespective of their own feeling in the matter⁹. Noakhali was the epicentre or breeding place of communal violence. The Noakhali experience was shocking for both men and women alike. A large number of cases regarding forced marriage between the Hindu girls and Muslim boys, forced abduction of Hindu women, and conversion to Islam became the order of the day. In many cases incidents of abduction complaints could not be reported following sheer terror. Women had to watch the atrocious murder of their husbands.¹⁰ 'Vermilion marks' (Sindur) were forcibly erased from the foreheads of women and conch shell bangles broken.¹¹ In the leading news paper 'The Hindustan Standard' on November 5, 1946 published a report that 300 women were raped in Noakhali and about 400 cases of rape of defenseless women in another area were recorded¹². 'The Noakhali violence marginalized women, who became victims of male chauvinism'.¹³ The paramilitary forces like Ansars incited Muslim hooligans in this disgraceful act. In Kurmitala air port which was situated near the military head quarters of Dhaka where a large number of Hindus passengers including women and children were brutally killed or seriously injured¹⁴. At Darshana station 500 Ansar troops looted the belongings of the migrants on the pretext of custom checking and at the same time they robbed the women's ornaments. When one lady refused to offer her ornaments she was made captive in a locked room. In this connection it may be mentioned that when the Barishal Express reached Shealdah station on 3rd March, 1950 it was found that the train was empty¹⁵. The grim irony of fate was that there were two options remained open before the women; one was to embrace glorious death in the hands of their kin which was considered to be the act of martyrdom and the second option was violation of their honour at the hands of the 'other'. During the discourse of partition victimhood of the Hindus of East Pakistan a sense of insecurity regarding dhon(wealth), pran (life)

and maan (honour) reflected¹⁶. However, the experience of violence was not always so explicit and direct. There were other forms of violence which were often dismissed as mere 'psychological fear'. Such instances of violence were vivid through many of the later day narratives and memoirs of the refugees who flocked from East Bengal. To honour their chastity and womanhood the Hindu refugees from East Pakistan were determined to shift themselves to safer and secured abode in West Bengal so far other places of India were concerned. A good number of women at the time chose to commit suicide in order to thwart the corporeal holocaust.¹⁷Hiranmoy Bandopadhyay, the then Rehabilitation Commissioner for West Bengal, narrated in his 'Udvastu' that often when the women went to take a bath in the pond, some Muslim men would remark, '*Pak Pak Pakistan, Hindur Bhatar Mussolman*' [This is Pakistan, the husband of a Hindu will be a Mussalman]¹⁸. It became obvious from that period onwards that it would no longer be possible to stay in the beloved motherland in such a filthy environment and untoward situation.

The journey of displaced women towards the unknown destination was riddled with hurdles. Extensive looting, indiscriminate arson, horrible murders and abduction of women became the distinctive features of the riots during 1950 and onwards. The migrants' women travelled on overcrowded steamers, motor launches, trains etc. A huge number of refugees traversed a long way through jungle areas bare footed. They had no other alternative but to bring few clothing or a small trunk with them. The mass movement of the people on foot, by bus, train, and car left women, children, the aged and infirm, the disabled particularly vulnerable'.¹⁹During the 1947 partition of India, an estimated 75,000 to 100,000 women were abducted by the

members of other religious communities. Some of them were raped and murdered or sold into prostitution, or forced into marriage.²⁰

The economist Ashok Mitra espoused in an article published in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Nov. 3, 1993) that initially in West Bengal “the widely publicized make-belief was that it was all a temporary upheaval and the refugees would soon return home. A life of alternating insecurity and hope prompted a large section of the refugees to shuttle back and forth between East and West Bengal, wanting to make the best of both worlds but ending up with the worst of both”²¹. The object of such heinous crime created a traumatic situation. After much maltreatment and distress, the refugees migrated over to West Bengal where there was none to entertain their settlement. As a matter of fact the West Bengal Government was not prepared for such a massive exodus of people. At first the uprooted persons were inoculated and then they were asked to present themselves as a ‘family grouping’ to an officer from the Relief and Rehabilitation Department. The idea of ‘family grouping’ perplexed the migrants. They actually belonged to the joint families and it was beyond their imagination to be grouped as smaller and nuclear units according to the order of the officer. This ultimately broke the joint families into male headed groupings²². The Women, who were accustomed to stay indoors, abruptly came out of their homes. It was beyond imagination on the part of the uprooted women of East Pakistan. During the period of anarchy following partition forced marriage became rampant and common feature. To accept and recognize the abductors as husbands were really unthinkable, painful and pathetic in the truest sense of term. The central and state government had launched ventures to bring back those affected unfortunate women and to send them back to their parents. But it was not an easy task. The initiatives rendered by the Government to rescue the affected women failed miserably.

The act of recovery and the scheme of restoration of abducted women in the East were not as adequately planned like that of West. It was the misconception of leaders that the women in the East were not real victims of 'direct' violence. Such a projection could be defined in two ways, firstly toning down the act of violence with a view to discourage migration and secondly there was a general apathy of the State towards the plight of the minorities in the East, which in turn was governed by the economics of rehabilitation.²³ For the restoration of confidence among the minorities on both sides the Delhi Pact was inked by the two Governments. Following this pact the Search Service Bureau in Calcutta was set up. Along with it a Search Service Section/ Liaison Office attached to the Deputy High Commission in Dacca was set up. In this office the Dacca Transit Home was started by Mridula Sarabhai. She was very closely associated with the refugee relief operations in Delhi also used to get daily reports from Congress workers of Bengal. She came to Calcutta in March 1950 to oversee operations and report on the prevailing circumstances.²⁴

It will not be out of place to mention in this connection that the recovery and restoration programme in the West where the State itself would take the decision of migration in respect of woman. The women had no option of their own to take decision to migrate or not. The abducted women were not allowed to stay long in a particular place of a state with the apprehension that the abductor family would try to influence either the officials in getting her back, or the mere presence of the woman in the same state could influence her decision in favour of staying back. Hence, almost as soon as they were recovered, these women were quickly shifted to the Transit camp, and thereafter, restored to their families. As observed in the records, very few women used to seek asylum in Dacca Transit Camp. The Government of India made frequent instructions and orders for immediate shut down the home. But

the Deputy High Commissioner summarily rejected the proposal on the plea that the closure of this Home would create repercussion and would leave 'a demoralizing effect not only in the minority community in East Pakistan but it would also become the object of criticism of the public in India.'²⁵

In post 1950 the Migration Certificate (MC), was the only legal means to enter India from East Pakistan, but to obtain these Migration Certificate (MC) was hard task. It was much easier for women in procuring the migration certificate because the State itself was in favour of certain categories of women. In certain cases priority was given in issuing Migration Certificates to the women considering the magnitude of the issue in question. The following categories of women were given priorities: Unattached women and widows with no livelihood in East Pakistan; Wives joining husbands in India; Families living in areas considered unsafe, for example, in isolated pockets or where there is apprehension about abduction of girls and elopement under influence; Adult girls going to India for marriage. This facilities were not applicable to the others members of the family.

During the whole period of migration dual role played by the State, on the one hand the role of a protector and on the other a benevolent patriarch. As the protector, the State recovered the women from the 'enemy' territory, and also restored the 'other' women. In its role as that of the benevolent patriarch, the State took the responsibility of rehabilitating the single or unattached women in the special homes. Some production-cum-training centres were set up for those recovered women. Kasturba Niketan in Delhi and Uday Villa in Kolkata became the most prominent of such Homes for women. The main purposes of those homes were to enable the women to come out of the trauma of partition and victimhood, and also encourage them to be self dependant. The Government of India became concerned with the

issue of rehabilitation of refugees. In fact, the state government was quite watchful in its approach towards the issue of Homes or Infirmaries. Abala Basu was the main motivating force behind the home 'Uday Villa'. This project for displaced persons began with ten resident women members. Abala Basu's aim was not only to provide vocational training but also to open a production centre.²⁶ Under this scheme Uday Villa obtained financial assistance for the adult women worker. The Art Department of Uday Villa was inaugurated in 1954. Arrangements were made for providing training to the women who had natural talent for artistic cottage crafting. Attempts were also made to revive the folk-motifs. Under the active initiative of Dr. B.C. Roy and Renuka Roy, the Rehabilitation Department of Government of West Bengal arranged a stall at the Kalyani Congress Exhibition in 1954 where handicraft produced in Uday Villa were exhibited. In an exhibition at Jahangir Art Gallery of Bombay in 1959 articles of worth 5 Lakhs were sold in a single day that eventually increased the demand of artifacts of Uday Villa within short span of time.²⁷ Apart from opening vocational training centres for the women, there were other facilities provided to them as well. The Employment Bureau, which had been set up for the exclusive purpose of providing employment opportunities to the displaced persons, attempted to secure employment for the refugee women as well. There were many women who did not find accommodations in these camps were forced to seek refuge in Kashi or Brindaban. Even after 29 years of the creation of Bangladesh there were 2910 Bengali women struggling for survival in Brindaban²⁸

Many of the abducted women considered the recovery operation conducted by Governments as a second uprootment. Following Partition 30 lakhs refugee came over to West Bengal by 1960. In the 1970s the state witnessed another massive exodus from East Pakistan during the period of the formation of Bangladesh. At the

same time many of them lodged protest against the recovery operation and expressed their unwillingness to return to their parents or relations. They were quiet conscious regarding their destiny in the days to come. They were confident enough that their affectionate parents and sweet relations would not accord their returns cordially. In some cases they were forced to come back leaving behind their infants. The eternal question of motherhood was left unanswered by the male protagonists of recovery operations. Instead of protecting the abducted women, the recovery measures increased their agony. Undoubtedly they had the potentially to live a normal life if they were provided with the opportunity. But by the grim irony of fate some rescued women were sent to Ashrams (homes) as they were not accepted by their families. A scanty number of women had the opportunity to lead a much desired family. Sometimes in private Homes, the refugee women were forced to marry unknown persons from other provinces.

The women who were attached to their families had to shoulder the burden of displacement simultaneously with their male counterparts. In Bengal women were regarded as 'Annapurna', entrusted with the task of providing food to all family members. It was nothing but a long standing tradition of Bengali womanhood. Due to acute scarcity of food the women community had to undergo tremendous psychological pressure. Many of them committed or attempted to commit suicide for not being able to perform their expected duty properly. In their daily life and activities, the struggle for survival and existence with their male members was just like their shadow companion. The pity of whole thing was that even the local women of their own sex looked down upon them. They were treated as untouchables, irrespective of their caste and creed. The local people thought that the women East Bengal had been pulled by the Muslims. The refugee women were debarred from

collecting drinking water from the common water points. The successive deprivation of the displaced women gradually developed a sense of dignity, self-reliance and capability among them. In the long run this helped the refugee women to attain success in the teeth of healthy oppositions and insurmountable hurdles.

In the early hours focus was on the changing trends in presenting women's experiences, where emphasis was solely attached on the theme of women victimization. The time is ripe to look on women not from the point of victimization due to the 'greatest human tragedy', but also to represent 1947 as a period much beyond that. The present scholars concentrate more on the constructive role of the women in the process of rehabilitation. Common people in general and women in particular had made tremendous efforts for getting new identity. They had to traverse a long way riddled with hurdles. It is noticed with amazement that in spite of utter uncertainty, deep pain, irreparable wounds, and emotional strains said women had to come out braving all sorts of obstacles. The most remarkable feature in post-partition of West Bengal was the coming out of the refugee women from the private domain to the public. Defying the confinement within four walls they ventured to come out in public domains. Educated women set out in quest of employment especially in educational institutions, private firms, government and semi-government offices etc. Those who were educationally unsound engaged themselves in various domestic works; Most of them capitalized their training in household activities for commercial purpose.

References:

1. Bagchi,,Jasodhara, Dasgupta, Subhoranjan with Ghosh Subhasri,'The Trauma and the Triumph, Gender and Partition in Eastern India,vol-2,Stree,2009,p.1.

2. Bhutalia,Urvasi,The Other Side of Silence:Voices from PPartition of India, New Delhi:Penguin Books,1998,p.3.
3. Bagchi,,,Jasodhara,Dasgupta, Subhoranjan with Ghosh Subhasri,'The Trauma and the Triumph, Gender and Partition in Eastern India,vol-2,Stree,2009,p.1.
4. Nitali Kironkumar,'The Partition of India:Through the Experience of Bengali Refugee Women in The Criterion,june 2013,vol.4, issue-III
5. Amrita Bazar Parika,23, March,1950.
6. Chakraborty, Dipesh,"Remembered villages: Representation of Hind-Bengali Memories in the Aftermath of the Partition", Economic Weekly, Vol.31, No,32, August 10, 1996, p.2144
7. Nitali Kironkumar,'The Partition of India:Through the Experience of Bengali Refugee Women in The Criterion,june 2013,vol.4, issue-III
9. Gyan Pandey, 'Partition and the Poltics of History',in Madhusree Dutta,Flavia Agnes; Neera Adarkar (ed.), NationState and Indian Identity, Calcutta Samya,1996,p.19.
10. Chakravarty, Gargi,'Coming out of Partition: Refugee women of Bengal, Bluejay Books,2005,p.7
11. Chattapadhyay Basudeb,"Partition and Migration: Perspectives on 1947",Paper at Peace Studies Group, Calcutta:Department of History, University of Calcutta,,n.d;Indian Annual Register(1946),Vol. II,ED, H.N.Mitra and N.N.Mitra,1990,p.3
12. Indian Annual Register, p-196.
13. Chakravarty,Gargi,'Coming out of Partition: Refugee women of Bengal, Bluejay Books,2005,p.9
14. Ibid.p-18-19
15. Amrita Bazar Patrika,4 March,1950.
16. Nilanjana Chatterjee,"Interrogating Victimhood: East Bengali Refugeee Narratives of Communal Violence,<http://www.pstc.brown.edu/chatterjee.PDF>,

17. Bagchi, Jasodhara & Dasgupta, Subhoranjan , 'The Trauma and the Triumph, Gender and Partition in Eastern India, vol-2, Stree, 2009, p-3.
18. Bandopadhyay, Hiranmoy, 'Udvastu', Dip Prakashan, Calcutta, 1970, p-16.
19. Urvashi Butalia, "Abducted and Widowed Women: Questions of Sexuality and Citizenship During Partition", p.92.
20. Bede Scott, "Partitioning Bodies: Literature, Abduction and the State", *Interventions*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2009, p. 35.
21. Ashok Mitra espoused in an article published in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Nov. 3, 1993) in Mukherjee, Anupurna, "Reading Women's Journey through the Debris of Indian Partition in the "Charnel Ground of History", Rocky Mountain Review, special issue, 2012
22. Bagchi,, Jasodhara, Dasgupta, Subhoranjan, The Trauma and the Triumph, Gender and Partition in Eastern India, Stree, 2003, p.66-67
23. Ibid.p-255.
24. Roy, Haimanti, "Patitioned Lives: Migrants, Refugees, citizens in India and Pakistan, 1947-1965", Oxford University Press, N. Delhi, 2012
25. File note dated 28/1/1960 in F No. I(4)/60-BL, 'Transit Home for Abducted Women in Dacca, Continuance of.' MEA, NAI, in Phd thesis Post Partition Refugee rehabilitation in India with special reference to Bengal 1947-71 by Pallavy Chakravorty, University of Delhi
26. Gangopadhyay, Bolan, 'Reintegrating the Didplaced, Refracting the Domestic: A Report on the Experiences of 'Uday Villa' in Bose , Pradip Kumar, (ed) 'Refugees in West Bengal, Calcutta Research Group, Calcutta, 2000., p, 99
27. ibid.p, 100-101.
28. Interviews taken by Shubhoranjan Dasgupta, Excerpts of the interview published in "Widows of Brindaban: Memories of Partition", Refugee Watch, Nos. 10 & 11 (July, 2000) pp.44-45.

A Glance on the Movement for Democracy in Sikkim (1947-1975)

Anira Phipon Lepcha¹

Abstract

The Indian struggle for independence from the British Raj had an indelible mark on the democratic movement in Sikkim. The institution of kazi and thekadar survived under the patronage of the Chogyals since 1642 became more and more corrupt. They exploited/subjugated masses through various means. Although people were fuming because of the exploitation of the kazis and the thikadars, they didn't voice it loud until stimulated by the Indian Independence in 1947. A document named 'A few facts about Sikkim State,' which was published in 1947 can be regarded as an spark for the movement that followed later, which led to the merger of Sikkim with India, which many claim, was against the will of the majority of people who for all intents and purposes desired for democracy. This paper is an attempt to look into the episodes of the movement of democracy in Sikkim post 1947. Attempt has also been made to highlight the role of the Lepcha leaders, Ruth Lepcha in particular.

Key words: Sikkim, democratic movement, exploitations, kazis, thikadars, Lepcha.

Introduction

When India got liberated from the clutches of the British *Raj*, crave for democracy could also be seen in the Sikkimese politics. There was a mass discontent due to the

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of History, Sikkim University, Email: aplepcha@cus.ac.in

suppression of the *kazis* and *thikadars* and opinions were slowly building to get rid of such exploitations. Though the kingdom witnessed a few uprisings before yet the real and more open quest for freedom and democracy in Sikkim started after 1947. The country which became the de-facto protectorate of India in 1861 through the treaty of Tumlong, started to surge with slogans of democracy as more and more commoners came under the banner of political parties to oppose the oppressive rule of the *kazis* and *thikadars* under the patronage of the *Chogyals (Protector of faith)*.

The Nepalese, the Lepchas and even a section of Bhutia commoners revolted against the then existing system and ill practices of *Kalo-bhari*, *Jharlangi*, and *Kurua*.¹ These practices were laden upon the commoners and especially to the tenants by the *kazis*. Poor peasants had to work in the land of their lords, mostly *kazis* and *thikadars*, for weeks without any wages. A document written by Tashi Tshering in 1947 entitled 'A few facts about Sikkim State,' highlights this spiteful act and oppression of the *kazis* and the landlords. This document actually ignited many to oppose the polity of *kazihood* and towards the restoration of democracy. It was becoming more and more clear that the end of the British rule in India was the beginning of a new era in the political history of Sikkim. This was the era of democratic movements, of rights and freedoms, and of political agitations calling for amelioration from the bondage of exploitation. As time moved on the people got consolidated and mass opposition spilled over to various parts of the state, its capital being the hub. The Indian Independence and its affect on the Sikkimese society were immense.

The Lepchas who are regarded as the original inhabitant of Sikkim too participated in the movement. Sonam Tshering Lepcha, Dimik Singh Lepcha, Ruth Karthak Lepcha were some of the eminent Lepcha leaders. However, it must be noted that, although a good number of Lepchas supported the movement against the

kazis of Sikkim, a fraction of Lepchas were in favour of the *Chogyal* due to BL² slogan.

It may be noted that the BL did not have any political organization of their own before 1947 as their interest were adequately protected and represented through various proclamations issued by the *Chogyal* from time to time. Since the arrogation of the throne by the Namgyals a few pressure groups from the traditional Kazi families and Lamas of monasteries existed to safeguard their interests. Being parties to the ruling clique these groups played important roles both in creating channels for articulation of their demands and influencing political decision in favour of the group.³ They always looked for their own interest and despite knowing the people's outrage they remained arrogant,⁴ which led to much bigger rebellion.

The Movement

The Chogyal's indifferent attitude and helplessness to stop the long remained suppression of Kazis upon the commoners led to a mass agitation for democracy in Sikkim. The agitation opposing the tyranny of the Kazis, and demanding democracy was mainly headed by the Nepalese; nevertheless, some section of Lepcha and Bhutia commoners also took part in it. It was literally not possible to turn them down. It was due to this reason the rulers targeted the Lepcha leaders. Basnet (1974) remarks,

The policy of elimination of important Lepcha personalities continued even in the later half of the 20th century, when a new movement started in Sikkim, after Indian Independence. It is evident from the incident of Ruth Karthak, who in order to articulate socio-economic and political grievances and asserting a separate identity of the Lepcha community, was banished from Sikkim allegedly for questioning the legal basis of Bhutia rule in the land of the Lepchas.⁵

The Bhutia rulers and elites in Sikkim with an intent to create divide and dominate/douse off the revolt tried to create “systematic elimination of important Lepcha people of important families, lords and functionaries from the participation in the mass movement.”⁶ Some argue that “in spite of matrimonial linkages and blood brotherhood pact, a deep seated mistrust prevailed in their relationship.”⁷

Many events occurred post 1947. “The ‘peasants agitation’ broke out in 1949 which was followed by the short-lived ‘Popular Ministry’ of Tashi Tshering together with the support of the Government of India for ‘progressive association’ of the people of Sikkim in the Government accentuated the demand for representative governance in Sikkim.”⁸ Along with the question of ‘association of the people’, the problem of representation of different communities in the government acquired importance among the parties concerned. As such, in May 1951 Chogyal Tashi Namgyal called for a tripartite talk between royals, BLs and Nepalese, “to sort out the problem of representation in the proposed State Council.”⁹ The royal interest was represented by Palden Thondup Namgyal, the then Maharajkumar of Sikkim, Sonam Tshering represented the BL lobby and interestingly Nepalese’s voice was represented by Capt. Dimik Singh Lepcha and Kashi Raj Pradhan.

The Parity Formula

The tripartite meeting held in 1951, between the representatives of the Durbar, BL and Nepalese tried to find solution for the equal representation of the entire ethnic group in state council. Finally, “the ‘parity formula’ as the governing principle for equal seat sharing between the minority Bhutia-Lepcha and majority Nepalese was worked out”¹⁰ and agreed upon by all parties. As per the formula the state council was composed of 17 members legislative body where six seats were reserved for the minority Bhutia-Lepcha community, another six seats were allotted

to the majority Nepalese and remaining five seats were kept as the nomination of the Chogyal. However, this formulation was again opposed by the Sikkim State Congress's nominee Tashi Tshering on the ground of unequal representation. Sikkim State Congress demanded the restructuring of the council's representation but Chogyal paid no heed to it. Finally, "it was decided with the influence of Government of India that 25% Bhutia-Lepcha population was given equal representation with 75% Nepali population."¹¹ Besides, "since the Lepchas were not awarded any separate representation the Bhutias who constituted only 10 to 12 % of the population now exercised control over 50% of seats in the council."¹² The denial of the separate representation in the state council "effectively generated a feeling of deprivation among the minority Lepcha subjects."¹³ In the year 1953, 17 member State Council was formed and the elections were held for every term henceforth. The seat for state council was raised from 17 to 24 since 1967.

Lepcha Leader Banished and Voice for the Lepcha Identity Suppressed

In 1966, Ruth Mary Lepcha, a Sikkimese Lepcha woman married to A. Halim, an Indian muslim, formed a new party called 'Sikkim Independent Front' with an objectives to protect the socio-economic and political interests of the indigenous Lepchas. The party fielded six candidates comprising of 1 Nepali and 5 Lepchas for 1967 election but their nomination papers were rejected for no specific reasons. Ruth Lepcha, along with her husband was arrested on 23 March 1967 under the Sikkim security Act.¹⁴ Ruth was alleged of making adverse statement and criticism against *Chogyal*. She was alleged to have said "The Lepchas are being suppressed in Sikkim. The Sikkim Darbar is intending to rehabilitate 5000 Tibetan refugees in Sikkim. This move of the Sikkim Darbar is to harm the Lepchas."¹⁵ After her arrest she over reportedly escaped and reached the Indian house for safety. The Indian political officer, N.B.Menon however handed her over to the Sikkim

authorities and she was charged for additional offence i.e. running away from legal custody. On 15 August, 1968, she was sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment by the chief magistrate of Sikkim, a retired Indian Magistrate serving the Sikkim Government.”¹⁶ Infact, some of the allegations made by Ruth Lepcha were logical where as some were constructed by the authorities to debar her from active politics in Sikkim. Her allegations were logical in a sense that after Dalai Lama reportedly fled Tibet with some 60,000 odd followers, the *Chogyals* expressed his desire to provide refuge to some 5,000 Tibetans in Sikkim.”¹⁷ Since the majority Nepalese were against the establishment of *Chogyal*, the authority of Sikkim was desperately trying to bring the BL in one platform. However, a number of Lepcha leaders were averse to the will of the *Chogyal*. The *Chogyal* must have thought of increasing his supporter by giving refuge to the Tibetan refugees. Further, his Tibetan lineage might also have obliged Chogyal to rise for the cause of the Tibetans. Ruth Lepcha was leading the party which was against the formula of BL and was advocating for a separate identity and provisions for the Lepchas. Hence, the royal government which was facing the whirlwind of agitation must have felt insecure with the rise of Ruth Lepcha. So much so that her charges were neither made public nor was she tried under the Sikkim Public Security Rules 1962. She was branded as non-Sikkimese on the ground of her marriage with an Indian man. The Sikkim Subject Regulation of 1961 did not have such provisions but to banish her from Sikkim. She was asked to leave Sikkim immediately and not to enter Sikkim again.¹⁸ She was compelled to leave Sikkim for Kalimpong leaving her landed property and a house hoping to come back which however never materialized. Gurung (2011) remarks, “This recorded event was suggestive of the fact that the Lepchas under the Bhutia rule were subjected to various forms of dominations and their attempts for freedom were generally meted out with punitive actions.”¹⁹ In 1950, the Indo-Sikkim Treaty was

signed and Sikkim became the protectorate of India.²⁰ Following the earlier policy of British India government appointed political officer to Sikkim. However, it is worth mentioning that the attitudes of the Indian political officers were not found to be cordial and protective towards the autochthones Lepchas. The “non-associational group of the *kazis* (landlords) was very powerful and enjoyed both administrative and judicial authorities within their territorial jurisdiction. The officials of the *Darbar* were mostly chosen from among the *kazis* and by virtue of their proximity with the *Chogyal*, they used to influence decision in their favour.”²¹ It is due to this discriminating and divisive policy of the rulers the Sikkimese nationalism and identity could never flourish. The ethnic politics became more prominent but despite that the nascent urge for democracy brought people from all the ethnic groups together in the same platform.

The Merger

In the year 1963, the then *Chogyal* of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal died and Palden Thondup Namgyal was sworn in as the *Chogyal*. The era of Palden Thondup Namgyal remained chaotic as the people’s movement became more and more vibrant. On 26th October 1972, a new party ‘Sikkim Janata Congress’ was formed. The Sikkim Janata Congress was not in favour of the merger of the country with India. Immediately after its formation party declared that “Sikkim was not an Indian state but a separate country.”²² The Janata Congress also demanded the abolition of parity formula signed in 1951 and introduction of democracy in Sikkim with *Chogyal* remaining as the constitutional head. However, the demand of democratic form of government was restrained by the *Darbar*. In 1973 the movement for democracy became more vibrant. Immediately after the election of Fifth Council in January 1973, a joint petition by Sikkim Janata Party and Sikkim National Congress was handed over to *Chogyal*. The parties demanded “full-fledged democracy, a

written constitution, fundamental rights, universal adult franchise and abolition of parity formula.”²³ Later on a Joint Action Committee of two parties with L.D Kazi Khangsherpa, was formed to press their demand but the Sikkim Durbar was not at all willing to succumb to the demand of the Joint Action Committee (JAC). As a result thousands of general masses supporting the cause of democracy and party supporters demonstrated in the capital Gangtok continuously for three days from April 3rd to 5th 1973 leading the killing of six people and hundreds injured. The government of India and the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi was immediately approached by the political parties and the JAC. As a result, the government of India intervened in restoration of law and order situation in country, its protectorate. Further, “the political officer of Sikkim persuaded *Chogyal* to make a plea to the government of India for taking over the administration of Sikkim until some workable formula was evolved. The draft was endorsed by all the 20 members present, including *Chogyal*’s trusted Jigdal Densapa.”²⁴ Subsequently, a tripartite agreement was signed between the JAC, *Chogyal* and the government of India which “drastically reduced the power of *Chogyal*.”²⁵

As agreed the constituents assembly was formed and the number of seats was raised to 32, of which 15 seats were reserved for BL, 15 for the Nepalese and 1 seat each to SC and *Sangha*, the monk body. The assembly election held in 1974 was won by Sikkim Congress with thumping victory winning 31 out of 32 seats. The newly constituted Sikkim Assembly “unanimously adopted a resolution... to take immediate steps for Sikkim’s participation in the political and economic institutions of India.”²⁶ One of the very vital requests made to the government of India by the popular government under L D Kazi was “to provide representation for the people of Sikkim in Indian Parliament.”²⁷ This move of the state assembly provided a much awaited opportunity to the government of India. “After having a careful and detail

study of the requests of the government of Sikkim, the union cabinet of India took the crucial decision to accord Sikkim, the status of an 'Associate State' of India on 29th August 1974.²⁸ In this regard 'The Thirty Fifth Constitutional Amendment Bill 1974,' was introduced and passed in the Parliament. The clause 2(a) of article 35 stamped the association of territory of Sikkim with the union of India. The unfolding of the events disappointed the Chogyal of Sikkim. "In view of Chogyal's endeavour to internationalize the issue, Sikkim Assembly, on 10th April 1975, unanimously adopted a resolution abolishing the institution of the Chogyal and declared Sikkim as a constituent unit of India. The state assembly also conducted a special opinion poll [referendum] on 14th April 1975 and according to the verdict of the poll, the government of India decided to accord the status of a full-fledged state of India to Sikkim. On 23rd April the Lok Sabha passed the Constitution (Thirty Sixth Amendment) Bill, 1975, providing Sikkim, the status of a 22nd state of India. The president of India gave his assent to the Bill on 16th May 1975."²⁹ The Thirty Sixth Amendment Act also provided a special provision for the state of Sikkim under article 371F of the Indian Constitution, which safeguards the old laws of Sikkim including the interest of the 'domiciled Sikkimese.'³⁰

Conclusion

As India secured Independence the desire to have people's government in Sikkim grew and the movement for democracy got escalated. It was perhaps, obvious for the Sikkimese people to get more into the demand for democracy as they witnessed the development taking place in Independent India through Five Year Plans. As such, the aspirations of the people were fulfilled with the achievement of self-rule which also brought to an end of the 332 years' rule of the *Chogyals* and the tyranny of the *kazis* and *thikadars*. This period of Sikkim's history witnessed the

active participation of the autochthones Lepchas in the state politics. The leadership given by the Lepchas and concern shown towards the community's interest was both-encouraging and appreciating. However, one needs to research further whether the BL grouping in Sikkim after the post merger period safeguards the interest of the indigenous Lepchas and the opportunity for them to have the absolute participation in the socio-political domain or not.

Notes and References:

¹ Kalo-bhari means black load. Commoners were forced to carry the load covered with black tarpaulin which the Kazis, Thikadaars and later on the British, used to send to Chumbi, Zgyantse, Yatung and other places in Tibet. They had to carry the load back and forth from far off places of Sikkim, Dooars and Geil Khola, the last railway station during the time of British in Darjeeling and back from Tibet. It used to take weeks to reach and come back but the masters never used to pay them. Jharlangi was also a practice of forced unpaid labour followed by their masters. The general mass, especially tenants, under the lordship of their respective kazis and Thikadaars had to work on the private estates and farms of these lords, even after paying the rent. Kuruwa is forced labour in attendance at staying points in anticipation of his masters and tourists.

² BL is the abbreviation for the Lepcha and Bhutia communities in Sikkim. To safeguard their rights, these two communities jointly have reserved seats in the legislative assembly of Sikkim. In addition, the preferential quotas are also followed in administrative posts, certain economic facilities and further state sponsored activities. See, Sinha, *op.cit.*, p.74.

³ N. Sengupta, *State Government and Politics in Sikkim*, Sterling Publication Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1985.

⁴ *op.cit.*, p. 111.

⁵ L B Basnet, *A Short Political History of Sikkim*, S. Chand & Co. (pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, 1974 pp. 149-50.

⁶ Suresh Kumar Gurung, *Sikkim Ethnicity and Political Dynamics, A Tragic Perspective*, Kunal Books, New Delhi, 2011 p.160.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p.166.

⁹ Ibid., pp.166-167.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.167.

¹¹ L.B. Basnet, *op.cit.*, p.173.

¹² Suresh Gurung, *op.cit.*, p.168.

¹³ Ibid., p.170.

¹⁴ Sikkim Darbar Gazette, Ex. Gazette, No. 123, dated 21.12.1966, Gangtok, pp.148-151.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Lal Bahadur Baasnet, *op.cit.*, p.120.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁹ Suresh Kumar Gurung, *op.cit.*, p.197.

²⁰ P.R Rao, *Sikkim: The Story of its Integration with India*, Cosmos Publications, New Delhi, 1978, p.53, cited in Suresh Gurung, *op.cit.*, p.203.

²¹ N. Sengupta, *op.cit.*, pp. 117-118.

²² Sunanda K Datta Ray, *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim*, New Delhi: Vikash Publication, 1984, p.164

²³ Suresh Kumar Gurung, *op.cit.*, p.201.

²⁴ Ibid., p.202-203.

²⁵ Ibid., p.203

²⁶ P R Rao, *op.cit.*, p. 49, cited in Suresh Gurung, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

²⁷ Suresh K Gurung, *op.cit.* p. 206.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 207.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ A person possessing the Sikkim Subject Certificate issued by the Chogyal in 1960s, or his legitimate descendent, who either possess Sikkim Domicile Certificate or Certificate of Identification of Government of Sikkim are considered as Sikkim Subjects or Sikkim Domiciled, or the Local Sikkimese.

Bengal-Bihar Merger Movement of 1956 : A Glance of West Dinajpur, A District of West Bengal

Arun Ghosh¹

Abstract

The proposed study is on Bengal-Bihar merger movement of 1956, and the district of West Dinajpur of West Bengal. In the eve of independence of India and partition of Bengal in 1947, the northern part of West Bengal or North Bengal was separated from the rest of West Bengal. Along with this, there was demand of incorporation of Bengali speaking area of Bihar with West Bengal. In 1953, the States Reorganisation Commission was formed to examine this issue on linguistic line. After forming that Commission, West Bengal put forwarded memorandum, claiming partition of land of Bihar. But there was protest in Bihar against that. Then the Chief Minister of West Bengal and Bihar decided to merge Bengal and Bihar. But movement started against this merger proposal. Then they withdraw the merger proposal and a portion of land of Bihar added within West Bengal by the recommendation of States Reorganisation Commission, which effects on demography, economy, culture of that area of West Dinajpur district of West Bengal and which evoked separatist trend in form of political movements.

Keywords: *Reorganisation, Merger, Language, Culture, Demography.*

¹ Research Scholar, Department of History, University of North Bengal

Introduction:

The state of India, earned its independence on 15th August, 1947. During the time of independence and birth of two new countries of India and Pakistan, there was a necessity to partition the Bengal province. Because of partition and demarcation of boundaries between the newly formed East Bengal (East Pakistan) and West Bengal, Boundary Commission was formed under the Chairmanship of Sir Cyril Radcliffe. After the award of that Commission, there was a noticeable problem that took place. The northern part of West Bengal was separated from the rest of West Bengal, which was covered by the land of the state of Bihar. Along with this, after independence of India, there were several demands for the formation of a linguistic state. During this situation, the Government of India appointed the States Reorganisation Commission in 1953. After the formation of that Commission, the state of West Bengal and Bihar submitted several memorandums to that Commission. West Bengal demanded a few portions of land, which were part of Bengal geographically and historically, and for the regular connection of West Bengal and its northern part or North Bengal. During this time, several debates had come between West Bengal and Bihar. After that, Bidhan Chandra Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal and Sri Krishna Singh, Chief Minister of Bihar decided to merge these two states. With the decision, there were several movements, which took place against the Bengal and Bihar merger proposal in West Bengal and Bihar. In front of that huge movement, the merger proposal had to be withdrawn by both the Chief Ministers. After that, the Commission recommended to incorporate a few portions of land of Bihar with West Bengal. In this political background of Bengal, the paper attempts to analyse the origin, character and result of the movement against the Bengal-Bihar merger proposal. It highlights the anti-

merger movement in West Dinajpur district of West Bengal, and its effect on that region.

Formation of States Reorganisation Commission

The language and culture of an area had an undoubted importance as they represent a pattern of living, which was common in that area. In considering a reorganisation of States, however, there were other important factors which have also been borne in mind. The first essential consideration was the preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India. Financial, economic and administrative considerations were almost equally important, not only from the point of view of each state, but for the whole nation. The Government of India had come to the conclusion that the whole question of the reorganisation of the States of the Indian Union should be carefully examined objectively and dispassionately, so that the welfare of the people of each constituent unit, as well as of the nation as a whole, was promoted. The Government had accordingly decided to appoint a Commission to conduct such an examination.¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India was appointed in August 1953 the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) to examine objectively and dispassionately the entire question of the reorganization of the states of the Union.²

The States Reorganisation Commission, which was formed in 1953, consisted of Saiyid Fazl Ali, former Governor of Orissa, Shri Hriday Nath Kunzru, former member of the Council of States and Shri Kavalam Madhava Panikkar, former Ambassador of India in Egypt, of whom Saiyid Fazl Ali was the Chairman of the Commission.³ The Commission investigated the conditions of the problem, the historical background, the existing situation and the bearing of all important and

relevant factors thereon. The Government expected that the Commission would be in the first instance, not go into the details, but make recommendations in regard to the broad principles which should govern the solution of this problem and if they so choose, the broad lines on which particular states should be reorganised and submit interim reports for the consideration of Government. The Commission had liberty to devise their own procedure for their work for collecting information and for ascertaining public opinion. It had ordinarily held their sittings in private. The Commission had a Secretary and such staff and advisers as may be considered necessary.⁴ The Commission invited members of the public as well as public associations interested in the problems of the reorganisation of states to put their views and suggestions before the Commission by submitting written memorandum.⁵

The Memorandum, submitted by the Government of West Bengal to States Reorganisation Commission

According to memorandum, submitted by the Government of West Bengal that the areas which were proposed for inclusion in West Bengal had always formed parts of Bengal geographically and historically; and their affinities to Bengal on linguistic, cultural and ethnic considerations had always been pronounced. It was therefore suggested that the following areas and populations of Bihar named below be rejoined to West Bengal State of India: the whole of Kishanganj sub-division and four revenue *thanas* of the *Sadar* sub-division, namely- (i) Gopalpur, (ii) Kadwa, (iii) Amur and (iv) Katihar of Purnia district of Bihar, total area of 2,537 square miles and total population of 12,73,588.⁶

Report of the States Reorganisation Commission

The States Reorganisation Commission first examined the claims made on the Purnea district. The data of the census returned for this district regarding the language spoken, had been challenged by West Bengal. The main controversy in this district, however, related to the classification of the dialect or dialects spoken to the east of the river Mahananda. Grierson and following him O' Malley classified them as North Bengali, but the Bihar Government relying among other evidence on the views of Gait, the Census Superintendent in 1901, had challenged that classification. The affinities between *Kishanganjia* or *Sirpuria* as spoken in the extreme east of Purnea district, on the one hand, and Bengali on the other, seemed to be close. But that dialect was written in the *Kaithi* script, which was allied to Hindi and as one precedes west-wards its affinities with Maithili and Hindi became more marked. Arguments based on linguistic affiliations, whether advanced by Bihar or by Bengal were thus far from being conclusive.⁷

The members of the States Reorganisation Commission thought, that was a matter which should be examined on its merits rather than on the basis of complaints or counter-complaints against one state or the other. Commission attached great importance to the geographical compactness of administrative units was vital to their real political and administrative integration. Apart from the inconvenience in administering geographically detached areas Commission must take a note of the fact that the continued isolation of the northern districts from the rest of West Bengal would tend to foster and accentuate separatist trends in that districts. West Bengal therefore had a good case for a geographical integration of the northern areas. Besides that, even the Bihar Government would extend full co-operation in facilitating traffic between the north and the south of West Bengal, certain

difficulties were inherent in the existing arrangements. These difficulties would be eliminated if portions of the Kishanganj sub-division and the Gopalpur revenue *thana* were transferred to West Bengal. That would enable West Bengal to construct feeder roads connecting the national highway to its other territories and to control road traffic with Darjeeling and other places in the north by eliminating avoidable delays and cumbersome and inconvenient administrative arrangements. West Bengal would also acquire control of the Indo-Pakistan border in this region along its entire length. From an administrative point of view that would both convenient and desirable.⁸

Commission had carefully examined the suggestion that the entire area to the east of the river Mahananda in the Purnea district should be transferred from Bihar to West Bengal in order to provide geographical contiguity between the two disconnected parts of West Bengal. Commission did not consider that necessary, however, to recommend the transfer of any area which might not be absolutely essential in order to achieve the object in view. Taking all the relevant factors into consideration Commission proposed that,

- (i) the portion of the Kishanganj sub-division which was to the east of the river Mahananda; and
- (ii) a portion of the Gopalpur revenue *thana* contiguous to the territory mentioned in (i) and extending down to national highway in that *thana*,

should be transferred to West Bengal. The actual delimitation of the new boundary would have to be settled after a detailed survey. The details of this transfer would have to be left, therefore to the Government of India, acting in consultation with the State Governments concerned. But it should be ensured that control of the national

highway in the Gopalpur revenue *thana* was vested in the Government of West Bengal.⁹

During the time of making the recommendation, Commission had to take note of the fact that the eastern portion of the Kishanganj sub-division was predominantly inhabited by Muslims who would view with concern the transfer of this area to West Bengal on the ground that their linguistic and cultural rights might suffer and that the possible resettlement of displaced persons from East Bengal might dislocate their life. These fears were not without justification. It would, therefore, be necessary for the west Bengal Government to take effective steps such as the recognition of the special position of Urdu in this area for educational and official purposes. The density of population in that area was such that there was little scope for any resettlement of displaced persons. The West Bengal Government would, therefore, did well to make a clear announcement to the effect that no such resettlement would be undertaken. This would go a long way in their opinion in dispelling doubts and fears.¹⁰

The demand of West Bengal for the portion of land of Bihar

Bengal and Bihar was incorporated in same province, i.e., Bengal Province till 1912. In 1912 Bihar had been separated from West Bengal as a separate state. From 1912 to 1956 Bengal and Bihar was two separated state. After separating from Bengal, the Bengalis of Bihar demanded to incorporated Bengali inhabited and Bengali speaking areas of Bihar with West Bengal. The intellectuals and politicians of West Bengal supported this demand and they also demanded to incorporate these areas with West Bengal. West Bengal took a major role in National Movement.

Because of this reason British Government separated Bengal in three times- in 1905, in 1911-12 and in 1947 to diminish active role. No other state of India faced this type of misfortunes.¹¹ In every separation Bengal lost its size, Bengal became a state of 1,00,000 square miles area to a state of 30,000 square miles area.¹² Along with this, with the partition of 1947, West Bengal became a separated state. Because the northern districts of West Bengal were separated from the rest of part; and the gap were covered by the land of State of Bihar. That's why West Bengal claims a portion of land of Kishanganj of Bihar, to connect with the rest of part, and for regular boundary. Along with this, Bihar had become a separate state, isolating from Bengal, the Bengali speaking areas which was incorporated in Bihar, these areas were inseparable parts of Bengal, historically, linguistically, culturally and geographically.¹³ After the independence, the size of West Bengal became one-third so West Bengal demanded to incorporate the Bengali speaking areas of Bihar with Bengal, to increase the size of Bengal.

With Indian independence, West Bengal got a lot of miseries after the independence. The 2/3 areas of Bengal was incorporated with East Pakistan, which became the main reason to distort co-existence of agriculture and industry. This problem became more dangerous when *lakhs* of refugees came to West Bengal from East Pakistan. According to the Census of 1951, the total number of refugees was 20.99 *lakhs*, who came from East Pakistan to West Bengal.¹⁴ In this situation, there was a demand of Bengali speaking areas of Bihar with West Bengal to demolish the refugee problems and reorganization of economic structure of West Bengal.¹⁵ But in this time the Central Government of India rejected this demand. On 7th August 1952, Legislative Assembly of West Bengal accepted this demand, made by Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, a renowned politician of West Bengal.¹⁶ The basis of this demand was,

Bengali literature and culture was demolishing in Bihar because of Hindi dominance. So, to protect Bengali literature and culture from the Hindi literature, the Bengali speaking areas should incorporate with West Bengal.

Protest in Bihar against the decision of transfer of portion of Bihar to West Bengal

To prove the irrationality of West Bengals demand upon the areas of Bihar, Bihar Government also demanded upon those areas. They demanded that from very past, these areas was inseparable part of Bihar from the historical, geographical, cultural and social aspects.¹⁷ From the socio-economic and cultural context of West Bengal, these areas were totally different and co-related with the future of Bihar. So from every side Bihar Government denied this demand of West Bengal. The members of States Reorganisation Commission, H. N. Kunzru and K. M. Panikkar had come in Darjeeling in the 2nd week of May of 1955. During this time, a counter demand, against the demand of West Bengal was raised by the state of Bihar that, they wanted to form a state with three northern district of West Bengal, namely, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Bihar, which would be called as Uttarakhand. They also wanted the Maldah district of West Bengal also because, there was not any communication by land routes in between these districts and the state of West Bengal. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy met with Commission in Darjeeling and claimed that majority of the people of these districts were from Bengali speaking community.¹⁸

‘Bihari Association’ demanded that the areas demanded by West Bengal from Bihar were irrational and full of false-hood.¹⁹ The areas demanded as Bengali speaking area, actually most the people of these areas could not speak in Bengali and

their mother tongue was North Bengali too. A large part of population speaks in *Khotta, Kurmali, Santali, Radhi-Bali* and other languages which was different from Bengali language.²⁰ 'Bihari Association' and people Bihar realized that as an issue of protection of Bengali language and literature and solving refugee problems, West Bengal Government wanted to acquire the areas of Bihar.²¹ In 1955, the members of States Reorganisation Commission were visited in Purnia, when they entered in Purnia, a massive mass movement was started against the decision of the transfer of land from Bihar to West Bengal. Mainly the businessmen of Kishanganj led the movement. The business of sub-divisional Head-quarter Kishanganj was depended upon Islampur. Even Kishanganj was not agreed to losing four tea gardens including Debijhora. In another side, Islampur was a Muslim majority sub-division. Because of this, many cases of Islampur were filed, regarding the ancestral land; and all the cases were solved in Kishanganj court. For these, the lawers of Kishanganj were against the transfer of Islampur to West Bengal; and the then dwellers of Islampur were not agreed to lose the facilities of education and treatment (medical). Because, in that time there were no educational and medical facilities in Islampur. Along with this, it can be mentioned that the pre-eminent people of Islampur were also against the decision of incorporation of Islampur with West Bengal. It may be assumed that, the reason behind it was, they could not be afforded with the middle class Bengali community of Bengal.²²

Proposal of States Reorganisation Commission, 1955:

The States Reorganisation Commission formed in 23rd December 1953, published their report on 10th October 1955 and suggested to incorporate 800 miles area, situated in Kishanganj, eastern side of Mahananda river of Purnea district from

Bihar to West Bengal.²³ But this proposal did not make the people of West Bengal and Bihar happy.

In 1955, for linguistic, administrative and geographical interests, Chief Minister of West Bengal, Bidhan Chandra Roy demanded to incorporate Purnea of Bihar with West Bengal.²⁴ States Reorganisation Commission placed their report on 30th September 1955, in this report some part of the district of Purnea was suggested to add with West Bengal.²⁵ In this decision the people of Bengal were depressed because the demands of West Bengal were fully avoided. In the news paper of 14th January 1956, it was published that the volume of area which was recommended to given by the States Reorganisation Commission from Bihar to West Bengal had denied by the Government of India and the amount became half.²⁶ In this disappointing news, Bidhan Chandra Roy went to Delhi along with Sri Atulya Ghosh, Chief of Pradesh Congress, in 15th January, where the Chief Minister of Bihar Sri Krishna Singh was also present.²⁷

Proposal of Bengal-Bihar merger, 1956:

On 16th January the decision of the Government of India was declared about the report of States Reorganisation Commission. In this time one more important incident was happened, on 15th January 1956 both the Chief Minister of Bihar and West Bengal were discussing about the recommendation of States Reorganisation Commission. Exactly then Sri Krishna Singh proposed for reunification of Bengal and Bihar and Bidhan Chandra Roy confessed it.²⁸ On 23rd January 1956, Bidhan Chandra Roy and Sri Krishna Singh signed in a historical agreement to solve these problems, which was the unification of Bengal and Bihar; that means, unifying Bengal and Bihar, like the previous of 1912.²⁹ Both the Chief Minister thought that

this unification was only way to solve this problem. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru welcomed this proposal of unification and told that the peoples of these two states should accept the initiatives of these two leaders and the peoples of other places in India should wake up and solve their problems in this way. Congress Working Committee also welcomes this unification proposal and the President of this Committee, U. N. Dhebor told that, the unification was an important step.³⁰

The features of united Bengal and Bihar State:

- i) The name of the unified Bengal and Bihar state would be West Bengal and Bihar United Province, as it was in the case of Kochi and Travancore.
- ii) There will be two Government languages in this unified state- a) Bengali and b) Hindi. Bengali and Hindi language and cultural unity and selfness should be maintained.
- iii) There will be a Governor, a Cabinet Assembly, a Legislative Assembly (*Bidhan Sabha*), a Public Service Commission, two High Courts. Both the two High courts would work equally. There would be two zonal Council, to supervise the activity of Five Years Plan.
- iv) The first capital of this unified province will be Calcutta and the second one will be Patna. In this unified state the law and administration will be same.³¹

The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Bidhan Chandra Roy was confirmed that, it was necessary to merge West Bengal and Bihar for the prosperity of whole the country, and he gave hints that he might resign if the unification proposal should not be accepted. He believed that only the reunification can develop industries and

which can employ almost 15 *laks* unemployed. There was no hope for West Bengal to survive except unification.³² The fact was that, the two-third area of Bengal was incorporated within East Pakistan. The refugee problem was responsible for miseries of West Bengal. So Bidhan Chandra Roy might have thought that Bihar was a vast state and had resources like minerals. So that Bengal would be benefitted from merger with Bihar. But the question raises that why Sri Krishna Singh agreed the unification proposal? It can be presumed that he had thought that Bengal was divided and a small state also. So if the unification happens they would be able to govern Bengal-Bihar. The All India Congress Committee had also agreed to the merger which gave a strong effect to his demand. Both the Chief Ministers stated that if two states would be unified, then that would be the largest state in India and there will be more development in this unified state.

Support for Bengal-Bihar merger proposal:

The West Bengal Pradesh Congress President Atulya Ghosh supported the unification of West Bengal and Bihar province and told that it was a right step in right time. He also commented that, when there were debates about the reorganization of boundaries and Bengali speaking areas, this proposal of unification brought positive aspects.³³ The General Secretary of West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Bijay Kumar Nihar supported this unification and commented that Bengal should lead the country again.³⁴

The people of Bihar supported the proposal for unification of Bengal and Bihar with a very encourage. The Finance Minister of Bihar, Anurag Narayan Singh said that this unification should solve all these debates and West Bengal and Bihar should proceed for development.³⁵ R. L. Chandrapury, leader of All India Backward

Classes Federation appealed to the peoples of Bengal and Bihar to support this unification for a bright future, introduction of new age, message of new positive relation and a better lifestyle.³⁶ Supporting Bengal-Bihar merger, R. R. Divakar, Governor of Bihar, commented that it was a idea of reunion.³⁷

In spite of few protests, 157 members in Bihar Assembly voted for this proposal and 25 members voted against that. But all the 13 members of Jharkhand Party were forbearing from voting.³⁸ When Bengal-Bihar unification proposal got the majority in the Legislative Assembly of Bihar, in the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal the members opposed against this proposal.³⁹ The Muslim community of West Bengal had separate concept upon the unification of Bengal and Bihar. Regarding the unification proposal 19 Muslim leaders of West Bengal supported and welcomed it as a proper step. They also commented that the peoples who had affection for the country would not oppose the unification proposal because it was a right step in right time. The minorities hoped for the strong country so that they were criticizing against the opposition of this proposal.⁴⁰

Opposition to the Bengal-Bihar merger proposal:

Most of people of Bihar supported the unification of West Bengal and Bihar, but the Bengalis of West Bengal protested against it. On 24th February, the Chief Minister of Bihar, Sri Krishna Singh proposed for unification of Bengal and Bihar in Patna Legislative Assembly. On 25th February 1956 this proposal was accepted in 157-25 votes.⁴¹ Though in West Bengal Legislative Assembly, the majority of the ruling party voted for merger, but most of them thought that they would have to face problems for this merger. Violence spread all over West Bengal against this Bengal-Bihar unification proposal of Bidhan Chandra Roy. Politicians like Prafulla Ghosh,

Jyoti Basu, Meghnath Saha, Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, Atul Gupta, Bimal Singha, Mohit Moitra, Gopal Halder, Kazi Abdul Odud stood against this proposal.⁴²

Explaining the importance of Bengal-Bihar unification proposal, in context of this opposition Bidhan Chandra Roy said that 3 millions of Bengalis were living in Bihar then and 2.5 million people of Bihar were living in West Bengal, there were many industries in West Bengal but there were no natural resources in West Bengal which was in Bihar. So from every side both the states were dependent on each other. If they should be unified, it would become a strong state from every aspect. He also said that this unification was extremely needed to solve the refugee problem. So this Bengal-Bihar unification would enrich West Bengal. He also thought that Bengali language and literature will not be spoiled because of Hindi majority. He also remembered to the Bengalis that before 1912 Bengali language and literature was not spoiled and on the context of that time Bengali language and literature will be able to preserve the individualism.⁴³

In another side, explaining the unification of Bengal and Bihar, Sri Krishna Singha commented that after this unification the Bengalis of Bihar would think that they are living in their own state and the people of Bihar who resided in West Bengal would think the same. From the very past there was a good relation between Bihar and Bengal though they were separated just before few decades. In the unification of Bengal and Bihar, the people of Bihar would participate joyfully and none of the people of Bihar would think that they would be subdued by the Bengalis.⁴⁴

There were protests against Bengal-Bihar unification in Bihar also. The President of Bihari Association, Baldev Sahay organized a movement to preserve unity of Bihar and he strictly opposes this unification proposal. He said that the result

of this unification may become dangerous. He did not wanted to through the people of Bihar in uncertainty.⁴⁵

The opposition of the Left front parties of West Bengal and Bihar against the unification proposal was most important. The leftists of West Bengal explained that the unification proposal was a matter of unwillingness of the peoples. They proposed for reorganization of states in the basis of language. Bhupesh Gupta, politician and leader of C.P.I and Jyoti Basu leader of C. P. I. M. and later Chief Minister of West Bengal found the unification proposal a wrong step from the basis of language. In the unification proposal, the proposal of reorganization of states in the basis of language and the incorporation of Bengali speaking areas in West Bengal was strictly denied; for which they fought for a long time. They were confirmed that the peoples of Bengal and Bihar would not consent and they will be unified against the proposal which was happened never. Jyoti Basu also commented that the unification of Bengal and Bihar would make the entire problems complex, instead of solving them.⁴⁶ The Leftists participated in protest movement and strike against the merger of Bengal and Bihar. In 24th February 1956, there was strike in allover Bengal against the merger. The peoples of West Bengal spontaneously supported the strike. After the success of the strike, the leftists declared that if Congress High Command has the ability of watching and hearing then they would be able to realize that the peoples of West Bengal proved they were against the unification.⁴⁷

Within a very short period, anti-merger movement spread to more or less every districts of North Bengal. Charu Chandra Sanyal, Congress leader and member of Legislative Assembly of West Bengal and editor of the weekly Bengali newspaper "*Janamat*" wrote in the editorial, about West Bengal and Bihar unification problem that, to form a Hindi linguistic state, it was necessary to destroy Bengal. Consequent

Satyagraha movement was organized in Jalpaiguri against merger. Alok Mukherjee, Manash Basu, Badal Sarkar and many others P.S.P. members were imprisoned for 7 days. Mukulesh Sanyal, Nirmal Kumar Basu, Satyajyoti Sen participated in the movement from Forward Block. Strike was held for 2 days. In Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling district, the movement against Bengal-Bihar merger became massive. A strike was called for 48 hours. *Satyagraha* was held for two weeks in the court. Prabhat Das, Basanta Ghosh and others participated in *Satyagraha* movement from Socialist party. The agitators say was, “*Bangali Bihari bhai-bhai, bhasa bhittik rajya chai.*” (Free English translation: people of Bengal and Bihar were like brother-hood, but they want linguistic state). They were scared that the existence of the Bengalis might be demolished if the merger would be happened.⁴⁸

In the movements of West Dinajpur against the merger, Congress leaders also participated along with the Communist Party, P.S.P., R.S.P. and other leftist parties. In the district level movements against the merger R.S.P. leader Dhiren Bannerjee and Communist leader Jamini Majumder were in the leading role. The important leader of Raiganj Sub-division was Nisith Nath Kundu and along with him there was P.S.P. leader Satyaranjan Das, Rabi Bhowmick etc. Congress leader Prafulla Mukherjee, Sudhir Moulick and others also participated in the movement. Hundreds of *satyagrahis* participated in imprisoning programme daily. A special jail was inaugurated in Raiganj for the movement against the merger. In the rallies against the merger police charged *lathi* few times. Dhiren Banerjee along with other Communist leaders was arrested and sent jail.⁴⁹ In the leadership of Snehakana Singha, a member of ‘Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti’, Subhadra Ghosh, Jharna Ghosh and other women participated in the *satyagraha* and imprisoned themselves. Leftist students played a

drama at Milan Para, Raiganj, written by Digen Bandyopadhyay in which there were five thousand spectators were gathered.⁵⁰

When the people of West Bengal did not agree for the unification in any condition, Bidhan Chandra Roy met with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Gobinda Ballav Panth in Delhi to discuss about the future of unification. Pandit Gobinda Ballav Panth assured Bidhan Chandra Roy that if the unification proposal would not be effective then as a recommendation of States Reorganisation Commission the Bengali speaking areas of Bihar would be incorporated with West Bengal.⁵¹ Justifying all the sides, Bidhan Chandra Roy, wrote a letter to Sri Krishna Singh, Chief Minister of Bihar in which it was told that the peoples of all stages of West Bengal are against the unification. He also mentioned that, Bihar Government should confess reorganisation of boundaries between West Bengal and Bihar as the recommendation of States Reorganisation Commission.

Withdrawal of the proposal of Bengal-Bihar merger:

In the pressure of Leftists movement and in the demand of Bengali people Bidhan Chandra Roy agreed reorganization of boundaries between Bengal and Bihar. In 3rd May 1956, discussing with the Cabinet Ministers Bidhan Chandra Roy declared the decision of withdrawing Bengal-Bihar merger proposal. But he did not discuss about this topic with Sri Krishna Singh, Chief Minister of Bihar.⁵² The people of Bengal were against the merger, following that he yielded to public opinion. He informed his decision to Chief Minister of Bihar, Sri Krishna Singh and Minister in charge, Ministry of Home Affairs. In news of Anandabazar Patrika of 6th May 1956, it was told that the Government of west Bengal has ordered to release

prisoners who had been arrested for movement against unification of Bengal and Bihar. In a non-government report it was demanded that the number of the prisoners was approximate 10,000.⁵³

After the withdrawal of the merger proposal Bidhan Chandra Roy demanded to incorporate the Bengali speaking areas of Bihar to West Bengal and this demand made the people of Bihar more agitated. All the people Bihar had only one demand that they should never give any small portion of land to West Bengal. In another side, in the decision of the cancellation of Bengal-Bihar merger proposal peoples of west Bengal became very happy. Jyoti Basu commented that it was their huge achievement and their movement was not failed. He also commented that they will start a movement to incorporate the Bengali speaking areas of Bihar to West Bengal.⁵⁴

Implementation of the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Bill, 1956:

In this situation, B. N. Datar, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Home Affairs, placed the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) bill in Cabinet in 25th July 1956. He said that West Bengal Government demanded 11,840 square miles area but States Reorganisation Commission proposed to incorporated 2500 square miles area with West Bengal. West Bengal had huge similarities between language, culture and history with this proposed area. A traditional state like Bihar, where the great Ashoka was born, the great leader Rajendra Prasad was born; they will not oppose this proposal.⁵⁵ Hriday Nath Kunzru said that the Bengali speaking areas should be incorporated within West Bengal in the basis of linguistic majority. It was unable to decide that, with which language Kurmali and Khotta was related.

Ramaswami Mudaliar commented that Bengal had been divided to earn freedom. So West Bengal should get the proposed land to solve their refugee problem. But Joypal Singh, M. P. Mishra, B. N. Tiwari of Bihar opposed the proposal and told that they are against any kind of transfer of territories with West Bengal.⁵⁶

After many debates, in the initiative of N. C. Chatterjee, Hiren Mukherjee, Chaiti Majhi, Nirmal Chattopadhyay, Bhajahari Mahato, notable politicians, in 17th August 1956 the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Bill was passed in Lok Sabha (House of the people). In 28th August 1956 this Bill was placed in *Rajya Sabha* (Council of States). In spite of opposition of two non-Congress members, R. P. Singh and T. Borda, this Bill was accepted in *Rajya Sabha* in 22-2 votes. The member of *Rajya Sabha*, K. P. Singh said the people of Bengal and Bihar should set their mind to live together friendly their first loyalty was for India second loyalty was upon Bihar and then it should be upon West Bengal. West Bengal had a reputation of patience and kindness, the birth place of Rabindranath Tagore and Subhash Chandra Bose, should never misjudge with them.⁵⁷

The Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act, 1956:

It was decided to add the area with the state of West Bengal by the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act that the portion of Kishanganj subdivision of Purnea district which lies to the east of boundary line and that portion of Gopalpur *thana* of the said district which lied to the east or north as the case may be of the said boundary line of the State of Bihar.⁵⁸ After implementation of that Act, from 01.11.1956 Chopra and Thakurgaon police station of Kishanganj subdivision of the district of Purnea, Bihar was added within the district of Darjeeling of West Bengal with the Government Notification 3859 G. A., dt. 01.11.1956.⁵⁹ The Islampur police

station of Kishanganj subdivision was incorporated with Darjeeling district on 01.11.1956 by the Government Notification 3859 G. A., dt. 01.11.1956. Goalpokhor police station of Kishanganj subdivision was incorporated by the Government Notification 3861 G. A., dt. 01.11.1956.⁶⁰ Karandighi of Katihar subdivision of the district of Purnea, Bihar, was incorporated by Government Notification 3862 G. A., dt. 01.11.1956, with the district of Darjeeling.⁶¹ The areas of the police stations of Chopra, Karandighi, Islampur, Goalpokhor which were included in the district of Darjeeling from the State of Bihar in pursuance of the provisions of the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act of 1956, by the Government Notification 3858 G. A., dt. 01.11.1956, is further added with West Dinajpur from Darjeeling district by the Government Notification 3875 G. A., dt. 02.11.1956.⁶²

Conclusion:

During the time period of 1950's with the formation of States Reorganisation Commission, there were several demands of creation of new states, and reorganisation of existing states. One of them was the demand made by the Government of West Bengal as reorganisation of state by incorporation of portion of land of state of Bihar with the state of West Bengal. Because northern part of West Bengal was separated from the main land of West Bengal, and that gap was covered by the land of Bihar. In that situation, there were several protests in Bihar, regarding the claims of West Bengal. So the situation was difficult, at this juncture the two Chief Ministers of West Bengal and Bihar, Bidhan Chandra Roy and Sri Krishna Singh decided to merge Bengal and Bihar province. After that, there were several movements in Bengal and Bihar also, regarding the Bengal-Bihar merger proposal. In West Bengal, the protest movement was leded mainly by the leftists. In Raiganj of West Dinajpur district of West Bengal, there were huge mass movements

regarding the merger proposal. Not only in West Dinajpur, there were movements in another district also. So at this situation Bidhan Chandra Roy decided to withdraw the merger proposal and claims portion of lands from Bihar, for regular boundary and few areas which were formed part of Bengal historically and geographically. After that, there were huge protests in Bihar, claiming that they would not give any portion to West Bengal. But after so many debates, the States Reorganisation Commission recommended to incorporate portions of land of Purnea district of Bihar, which lied to the east of the river Mahananda.

During the time of States reorganisation, Commission kept focus on the Muslim peoples of eastern part of Kishanganj subdivision, because they were worried about their language, culture etc.⁶³ That is why Commission promised about preference of Urdu language in those places. This area was affected by migrants of Bangladesh (East Pakistan) and several other places, in this way the demography of this area changed. This evoked several movements and organizations like T.T.P.D.O. (Transferred Territory Peoples Development Organization), T.A.P.O. (Transferred Area Peoples Organisation) and T.A.S.O. (Transferred Area Suryapur Organisation) during 1980's and 1990's, based on separatism.⁶⁴ So the reorganisation of that region of West Bengal and Bihar did not bring happiness to the people of that area specially the Islampur sub-division of West Dinajpur, and which had immense negative effect. Because the inhabitants of that area started movements claiming separate district, separate constituency; because they think that they had been neglecting in the facilities of economy, politics, education, health etc. So the reorganisation did not solve their problems.

Notes and References:

- ¹ Monmohan Chakrabatti, '*A Summary of the Changes in the Jurisdiction of Districts in Bengal, 1757-1916*', revised and updated by Kumud Ranjan Biswas, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Department of Higher Education, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta, 1999, p.222.
- ² Bipan Chandra and others, *India since Independence*, Revised and Updated, Penguin Books, India, 2008, p.128.
- ³ Monmohan Chakrabatti, *Op.Cit.*, p.222; and Bipan Chandra and others, *Op.Cit.*, p.128.
- ⁴ Monmohan Chakrabatti, *Op.Cit.*, p.222.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p.223.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p.224.
- ⁷ Monmohan Chakrabatti, *Op.Cit.*, p.228
- ⁸ Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, New Delhi, 1955.
- ⁹ Monmohan Chakrabatti, *Op.Cit.*, p.229
- ¹⁰ Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, New Delhi, 1955, *Op.Cit.*
- ¹¹ Memorandum submitted to the States Reorganisation Commission by the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Calcutta, 1954, p.i.
- ¹² The Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Bill, New Delhi, 1956, p.iv.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Memorandum submitted to the States Reorganisation Commission by Bihari Association, Patna, 1954, p. 124.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.70
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 116.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 166.
- ¹⁸ Saroj Chakrabarty, *Mukhyamantrider Sangey (Suhrawardi Theke Bidhan Chandra Parjanto: 1947-1962)*, Part-I, Saroj Chakrabarty, Calcutta, January, 1977, p. 207.
- ¹⁹ Memorandum submitted to the States Reorganisation Commission by Bihari Association, Patna, 1954, *Op.Cit.*, p.166.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 258.
- ²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 207-208.
- ²² Dr. Partha Sen, 'Paschim Dinajpur Jelar Sangey Islampur Mahakumar Sangjuktikaran-Itihas O Mulyayan' in *Madhuparni, Bishesh Paschim Dinajpur Jela Sankhya*, Ajitesh Bhattacharya (ed.), Balurghat, 1399 B. S., p.3.
- ²³ Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, New Delhi, 1955. *Op.Cit.*
- ²⁴ Saroj Chakrabarty, *Op.Cit.*, p.206.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 218-219.

²⁶ *Anandabazar Patrika*, (A daily Bengali newspaper, published from Calcutta,) Dated: 14.01.1956.

²⁷ Saroj Chakrabarty, *Op.Cit.*, p. 230.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p.231.

²⁹ The Statesman, (A daily English newspaper, published from Calcutta,) Dated: 24.01.1956.

³⁰ *Anandabazar Patrika*, Dated: 24.01.1956.

³¹ The Statesman, Dated: 01.02.1956.

³² *Anandabazar Patrika*, Dated: 25.02.1956.

³³ The Statesman, Dated: 25.01.1956.

³⁴ *Anandabazar Patrika*, Dated: 25.01.1956.

³⁵ *Jugantar*, (A daily Bengali newspaper, published from Calcutta,) Dated: 24.01.1956.

³⁶ The Statesman, Dated: 28.01.1956.

³⁷ The Statesman, Dated: 01.02.1956.

³⁸ The Statesman, Dated: 26.02.1956.

³⁹ The Statesman, Dated: 15.02.1956.

⁴⁰ The Statesman, Dated: 29.02.1956.

⁴¹ Saroj Chakrabarty, *Op.Cit.*, p.235.

⁴² *Paschimbanga, Purulia Jela Sankhya*, Tathya o Sanskriti Bibhag, Paschim Banga Sarkar, June 2007, p. 202.

⁴³ *Jugantar*, Dated: 06.02.1956.

⁴⁴ *Anandabazar Patrika*, Dated: 25.02.1956.

⁴⁵ The Statesman, Dated: 26.01.1956.

⁴⁶ *Anandabazar Patrika*, Dated: 24.01.1956.

⁴⁷ *Jugantar*, Dated: 25.02.1956.

⁴⁸ Ratna Paul, 'Banga-Bihar Sangjuktikaran Andolan, 1956: Ek Bismrita Adhyay', in *Bhutan O Himalay Banga : Prasanga Siksha, Samaj O Sanskriti*, Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Ratna Paul, N.L. Publishers, Siliguri, 2015, p.117.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Dilip Ghosh Roy, 'Shahar-Kendrik Gana Andolan : Raiganj Mahakuma', in *Madhuparni, Bishesh Paschim Dinajpur Jela Sankhya*, Ajitesh Bhattacharya (ed.), Balurghat, 1399 B. S., p.217.

⁵¹ The Statesman, Dated: 26.03.1956.

⁵² The Statesman, Dated: 04.05.1956.

⁵³ *Anandabazar Patrika*, Dated: 06.05.1956.

⁵⁴ *Anandabazar Patrika*, Dated: 04.05.1956.

⁵⁵ The Statesman, Dated: 26.07.1956.

⁵⁶ The Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Bill, New Delhi, 1956.

⁵⁷ The Statesman, Dated: 29.08.1956.

⁵⁸ Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Bill, New Delhi, 1956, *Op.Cit.*

⁵⁹ Jatindra Chandra Sengupta, *West Bengal District Gazetteers: West Dinajpur*, Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁰ B. Ray, Census 1961 West Bengal, District Census Handbook, West Dinajpur, The Superintendent of Government Printing, West Bengal, Calcutta, p.iv.

⁶¹ Monmohan Chakrabatti, *Op.Cit.*, p.282.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.293.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁶⁴ Ratna Paul, 'Swadhinata Uttar PaschimBanger Uttarangser Punargathan Janita Samassa', p. 134; and Abhijit Dutta, 'Uttar Dinajpur Jelar Islampur Mahakumar TASO-r Bikash', pp. 182-183, in *Bharat Tirtha Uttarbanga*, Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, and Dr. Ashim Kumar Sarkar, (ed.) Sangbedan, Maldah, 2011.

Lepcha-Bhutia Relations in Sikkim from mid-Seventeenth Century to mid-Nineteenth Century: A Study of its Historiography

Rupan Sarkar¹

Abstract:

A study of historiography of an incident, in the sense that it is the history of history of the incident induces a new dimension in the discourse. The centrality of the study is shifted from narratives to synchronicity and dia-chronicity and to ideology and culture. Taking the example of Lepcha-Bhutia relations in Sikkim which has meandered through both cordiality and discord I propose to argue in the following pages that the historical construction is not singular.

Keywords: ideology, functionality, Rankean Aphorism, narrative history, culture.

A study of historiography of an incident, in the sense that it is the history of history of the incident induces a new dimension in the discourse. The centrality of the study is shifted from narrativity to (i) synchronicity and dia-chronicity and (ii) to ideology and culture. Taking the example of Lepcha-Bhutia relations in Sikkim which has meandered through both cordiality and discord I propose to argue in the following pages that the historical construction is not singular. A plurality of constructions makes it appear to be more complex in closer scrutiny than as it appears to be uni-directional. The paradigms which appears to have been applied, amidst a couple of the minor and inadequate paradigms resorted to for this purpose, and therefore making this study reasonably interesting are (a) the construction of

¹ Assistant Professor of History, P.D. Women,s College, Jalpaiguri,

H.H.Risley¹ and (b) The History of Sikkim.² Another interesting paradigm tends to appear from the article titled '1826: The end of an era in the social and political history of Sikkim' written by R.K.Sprigg in the Bulletin of Tibetology.³ On the basis of the theoretical scrutiny of the three constructions of Lepcha-Bhutia relations one may conclude that the notions engaged respectively are (i) imperial (projecting power struggle), (ii) national (focusing on national interest and homeostasis) and (iii) functional (addressing political consequences). Comparative study of the three 're-constructions' furnish the under-current of 'ideology' and 'functionality' in the writing of history of the incident under examination.

The incidents which took place in the Lepcha-Bhutia relations in Sikkim and which have been used by three authors to narrate their individual version of the story may be first stated in a chronological order:

- (a) The earliest episode of Lepcha-Bhutia relations in Sikkim is stated to be the blessing for a son by The-Kong-Tek and Nyo-Kong-Ngal on the immigrant Tibetan wrestler Gyad-Bhum. The-Kong-Tek has been taken for a Lepcha Patriarch and a wizard and also reputed to be the incarnation of Guru Rinpoche. The blessing having materialized with the birth of a son followed by two more male issues had laid the foundation of Lepcha-Bhutia cordiality in Sikkim. Gyad-Bhum-gSag appointed his third son as the ruler of Sikkim for his kindly disposition. Of the four of his sons namely Tong-du-ru-gi, Sangpodar, Tsechudar, Nima-Gyalpo and Guru Tashi) which he had sired the fourth one succeeded him. The Chohyal dynasty of Sikkim had originated from this son viz. Guru Tashi's son Jowo Nagpo, his son Jowo Aphag, his son Guru Tenzing, his son Phuntsho Namgyal (1604 A.D.) become the first ruler of Namgyal Dynasty.⁴

- (b) After his coronation in 1642 A.D. Phuntso Namgyal appointed twelve Kazis from amongst the chief Bhutia clans and twelve Lepchas as Jongpons (governors of forts) from amongst the chief Lepcha clans of Sikkim.⁵
- (c) The second king Tansung Namgyal having the illicit relation with the wife of a Lepcha official named Tasa Aphong had a son namely Yugthing Arup. He was appointed the head of the Lepcha and later he became Chagzod (army chief).⁶
- (d) During the ruler ship of Chagdor Namgyal (1686 A.D.) Bhutan for the first time attacked Sikkim in the course of a conspiracy of his elder sister Pande Wangpo. The minor king was rescued by Yugthing Tishey (Tasa Aphong) and his son Yugthing Arup was appointed the head of the Bhutias and Lepchas of Sikkim.⁷ In the course of invasion the Bhutan army took Arup as prisoner of war and placed him at the disposal of the Druk Desi. By some magical contrivance Arup impressed the Desi and somehow managed to obtain fair and respectable treatment. During his absence the Bhutan army occupied the Rabdentse Palace for about eight years (1702-1710 A.D.) until, due to intervention from Tibet, Chagdor Namgyal returned to Rabdentse and the Bhutan army withdrew from that place. However, the East-Teesta region of Sikkim such as Damsong, Daling, Jongsa and places near Tongsa La Hill was ceded to Bhutan.⁸
- (e) Soon after, another invasion from Bhutan had occurred presumably induced by one Shal-ngo-Acchok/Gyabo Acchok resulting in the formal occupation of land lying between the Teesta and Rongpo. Acchok is said to be unfriendly to the Chogyal. Being apprehended by the Sikkim army he sought political asylum in Bhutan and encouraged the Bhutan government to initiate the

retaliatory invasion. Acchok is held to have been assassinated by the Bhutan army at Ambiok near Daling Fort.⁹

- (f) After the coronation of fourth Chogyal, Gyur-med Namgyal in 1717 A.D. five Lepchas appeared and claimed to be the incarnation of Tesha-thing, the ancient Lepcha wizard chief. Having failed to substantiate their claim to magical power they are said to have been stoned to death by the Trapas of Pemionchi.¹⁰
- (g) Immediately after this incident another Bhutani invasion is registered in the contemporary records and Shal-ngo Changzod and Nyerchen Ba-gyal (both Lepchas) were sent to repel them and another Lepcha Shal-ngo A-dzin was appointed Jongpon of Sodah.¹¹ During the reign of Gyur-med Namgyal Tisha Bidur, a Lepcha collected some Teshe followers and revolted against the king. Though Bidur sought help from the Mangar Raja he was finally killed along with all the Teshe rebels by the general Yugthing Desit (Lepcha).¹²
- (h) The legitimacy of the fifth Chogyal, Namgyal Phuntso was contested by Shal-ngo Changzod Tamding and his brothers. They assumed power and ruled Sikkim for three years viz. from 1738 to 1741 A.D. The political situation turned out, at this time, to be complicated by rebels and counter rebels by different groups of Lepcha officials. One group of officials led by Changzod Karwang supported the Chogyal, another faction of Lepcha extraction occupied Sikkim being led by Kazisor Jongpon. However peace was restored by Tibet when one Rabden Sharpa was sent by it in 1747 A.D.¹³ The regent Rabden Sharpa made a proclamation, called Mangshar Duma and defined the powers and privileges of the Lepcha Headman titled as Tu-myangs and the Bhutea Jongpons.¹⁴

- (i) The most important event during the reign of Tensing Namgyal, the 6th Chogyal was intermittent invasion of Sikkim by the Gurkhas. From 1775 A.D. the Gurkha invasion, with occasionally repite, had continued to destabilize the administration of Sikkim. While the Nepal-Sikkim relation engendered interest among political analysts the one episode that remains to be equally interesting is the role which some Lepcha military officials had played to resist Gurkha invasion. One such army officers was Changzod Chuthup, the son of Changzod Karwang. Having shown untiring spirit and having continued to fight relentlessly against the invading Gurkha army he had earned from the people the edifying sobriquet Satrujeet and had over-written the chapter on Lepcha-Bhutia cordiality.¹⁵
- (j) However, an incident having taking place in 1826 A.D. and during the reign of Tsugphud Namgyal, the 7th Chogyal caused a rupture in Lepcha-Bhutia relations. The youngest son of Changzod Karwang, namely **Changzod Bolog** (Bolak) continued to defy the authority of the king and **arrogate his power** by using the Red Seal. Three times i.e., in 1819, 1820 and **1824 A.D.** the kazis and Lamas tried to persuade Bolog to renounce his defiance. **Finally**, the king issued order in 1826 A.D. to kill Bolog. The execution of **capital punishment** on Bolog and on his faithful brothers resulted in the migration of the Lepchas from 800 houses under the leadership of his nephews named **Dathup**, Jerung and Kazi Gorok and subjects from Chidam and Namthang to **settle in** Illam in Nepal.¹⁶

II

While the incidents are commonplace in a general narrative of political history what infect tends to be interesting is the historiography of their construction in the three studies previously mentioned. Two prominent trends could be clear discerned from those studies. The third one may not of course be that prominent but it is also significant in a relatively small measure. The shifts in their paradigms may be deciphered now to underpin why they could be so interesting as they tend to be.

1. Narrating the above course of historical development Risley emphasized on several points because he had been examining the issues from the angle of 'struggle for power.' So, in his narratives

- (a) the Lepcha ancestry had been given in all details of their myths and of kinship, treated in as much space as was given to write the narrative of Bhutia fugitives and their history. The different sets of the Lepchas had been stated in details in order to be able to establish that the Lepcha community is not a monolith that struggle amongst the different sets for chief ship was not uncommon. Some of the sets were more inclined towards the rulers of Sikkim for power and prestige than other.¹⁷
- (b) The incidents of conspiracy, revolt, usurpation of power and finally assassination of Changzod Bolog tend to suggest that the dissidents amongst the Lepchas had nurtured the idea of the legitimacy of Lepcha claim to the throne of Sikkim.
- (c) The association of some Lepcha leaders in the Bhutani invasion of Sikkim had been fore grounded with discreteness so that it might under-pin (i)

Lepcha rejection of the Chogyal dynastic rule and at the same time (ii) indicate no legitimacy of the Bhutani occupations of Kalingpong.

Now, why Risley had to engage some element of interpretive ness in his narrative may integrated with ideological and political imperatives of the colonial administration. They may not be too many but the few of them which can be identified are indeed significant to regulate academic decisions.

(a) The British India administration was sensitive to security of India in the north. It could not take Chaina and Tibet as reliable political ally. Therefore the intimacy of the Sikkim Royal family with Tibet and Tibetan chief priests had been viewed with suspicion. The consequence of which was the imprisonment of Thutob Namgyal at Kurseong.

(b) To serve the objective of the colonial administration to lay their hands on Sikkim affair it had turned out to be necessary to indicate that (i) neither the Lepchas are united amongst themselves as an indigenous centre of power, nor (ii) their alliance with Bhutia Royal family was free from rival political ambition and from rupture in Lepcha-Bhutia alliance.

2. The History of Sikkim written a decade after the publication of the Sikkim Gazetteer had focused on the following points viz.

(a) Instead of going too much into the details of Lepcha ancestry, as Risley had done, because that might suggests competitiveness for political authority The-Kong-Tek, the Lepcha patriarch was posited as the incarnation of Guru Rinpoche to suggest eclectism. Lepcha Jongpons are always mentioned to indicate that the Lepcha component in the structure of power is not inconsiderable.

- (b) The incidents of conspiracy, dissidence and revolt had been posited as individual's lapse rather than the collective will or decision of the Lepchas. The importance that was attributed to Changzod Karwang and his son Changzod Chuthup (a Lepcha family) had overwhelmed the incident of revolt and assassination of Changzod Bolog, the youngest son of Changzod Karwang and brother of Changzod Chuthup taken for being aberration of ambition for personal power. Sikkim History mentioned 800 houses to configurate migration after Bolog was killed while the Gazetteer gave the figure of 1,200 Lepchas as post-assassination migration statistics. Presumably, the Lepcha and Bhutia population being the same, around 15,000 in 1826 the migration could not be taken to have any serious consequences on the majority of the Lepchas.

The reasons why the Sikkim History had taken moderate view of the incidents relating to Lepchas-Bhutia relations are;

- (a) The Sikkim government required consolidation of power by easing out irritants in Lepcha-Bhutia relations. Sikkim History being written in 1907 after the Kurseong episode, appointment of Claude White in 1889 as the first political officer of Sikkim and colonial penetration in Sikkim had reflected a nationalist ambition to project a united will to contain the colonial ambition.
- (b) The policy of consolidation continued to prevail even in the subsequent years when some important Nepali families were involved in several spheres of government activities. The primary objective of the Sikkim History is to state that 'power' in Sikkim had emerged through a process of assimilation, internalization and consensus. The result of which was homeostasis than homogeneity and unity than discord.

3. The position held by R.K. Sprigg can be surmised from the concluding section of this paper. He wrote, 'I offer this series of ten linked misfortune as my justification for claiming that the consequences of that political murder, within the royal family, in 1826 were most grievous, not merely for the Lepchas, who suffered more from those consequences than either of the other two races of Sikkim, the Bhutias and the Limbus, but also for Sikkim as a country.'¹⁸

(i) Sprigg has taken an eclectic view without employing any critique for the fact that David Macdonald, the grandfather of Mrs. Sprigg had Lepcha connection and from that calculation he turns out to be grand father-in-law's maternal great-grand father of Prof. Sprigg.

III

In the final analysis the narrative furnished by the three texts differ both in tone and temper for ideological and functional imperatives. Even if the incidents remained same the varying dimensions brought into use for the construction of narratives had implied propositional truth function than correspondence. The historiography of the Lepcha-Bhutia relational history tends to suggest that the Rankean aphorism that the 'truth, the only truth and nothing but the truth' meaning correspondence to facts is more metaphysical than logical.

Notes and References

1. Risley, H.H., Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894, Calcutta, reprint, 1972, 1985.
2. Sir, T. Namgyal and Maharani Dolma, History of Sikkim (type script), 1907, Gantok.

3. Sprigg, R.K., '1826: The end of an era in the social and political history of Sikkim', Bulletin of Tibetology (Seminar Volume) 1995, Gangtok.
4. History of Sikkim, p.1921.
5. History of Sikkim, p.28.
6. *ibid.* pp.34-35.
7. *ibid.* pp.36-37.
8. *ibid.* p.36.
9. *ibid.* pp.38-39.
10. *ibid.* p.49.
11. *ibid.* p.50.
12. *ibid.* p.51.
13. *ibid.* p.58.
14. *ibid.* p.59.
15. *ibid.* p.67.
16. *ibid.* pp.85-90.
17. Risley, H. H. *op. cit.*
18. Sprigg, R.K. *op. cit.* p.90.

FROM OBSCURITY TO A SUB-DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTER: SILIGURI IN COLONIAL PERIOD

MINAKSHEE KUMARI¹

Abstract

Siliguri is a city which spans across the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts in the Indian state of West Bengal. The city is located on the banks of the Mahananda River and the foothills of the Himalayas. Siliguri is known for its "4T": Tea, Timber, Tourism and Transport and is one of the fastest developing and growing metropolis of the state and also of the country. This city with sky scrapers, big hotels, many residential townships, three Railway stations and airports is boosted as the "Uncrowned capital of North Bengal" by the newspapers. However, a hundred years before this metropolis was only a small village. This research article tries to trace the colonial history of Siliguri, the conduct it received from the colonial rulers and the reasons for its quick unprecedented development.

Keywords: *terai/tarai, sanyassis, Raikats, Tongas, Teesta/Tista, urban markets, toy train, Hill-cart road, tea.*

Introducing the Region

Oxford dictionary defines 'region' as a continuous part of surface, space or body; administrative division. Brudel remarks 'mountains as much as monkey maketh Man'. Regions are areas that are broadly divided by physical characteristics, human impact characteristics and the interaction of humanity and the environment. Siliguri is spread over two districts in West Bengal, viz., Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. Naxalbari, Jalpaiguri, Rajgunje, and Malbajar are some important towns near Siliguri. Siliguri is the headquarters of the

¹ PhD Scholar at Centre of Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal.

plains sub-division of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Situated in Darjeeling district, it is the district's largest city; however, the district headquarters is located at Darjeeling.

Siliguri town the gateway to North East, Sikkim and Bihar also shares borders with three countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. The town's cosmopolitan character, grown out of it being "an island of prosperity," makes it prone to both external and internal threat. Pakistan and China may pose an external threat via Bangladesh and Nepal through this narrow strip of land called the Siliguri corridor (which at its narrowest is 20 kilometers long and just 20 kilometers wide in the general area south west of Siliguri). It also connects hill stations such as Gangtok, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Mirik and the northeast states with the rest of India.

The Contested landscape:

The district of Darjeeling was part of the Dominion of Raja of Sikkim. In 1706 what is now called as kalimpong subdivision of the district was taken from the Raja of Sikkim by the Butaneese. The Raja later became engaged in unsuccessful struggles with the Gurkhas who had seized power in Nepal and invaded Sikkim in 1780. During the next 30 years they overran Sikkim as far as the Tista and conquered and annexed the terrain. In the meantime, war broke out between East India Company and the Nepalese. The war ended in 1817 by the treaty of Titaliya and the tract which the Nepalese has wrested from the Raja of Sikkim was ceded to the company. The company restored the whole of the country between the Mechi and the Tista to the Raja and guaranteed his sovereignty. Sikkim was thus made the buffer state between Nepal and Bhutan. Under the above treaty the Raja was bound to refer to the arbitration of the British government in all disputes between his subjects and those of neighbouring States. Ten years after it was signed, the disputes on the Sikkim-Nepal frontiers rose and were referred to the Governor General. Two officers Captain Lloyd and Mr. Grant were deputed in 1828 to deal with the disputes. Lloyd spent 6 days in February 1829 in the 'old Goorkha station of Darjeeling' and was attracted by its advantages as a site for a Sanatorium. Darjeeling was then deserted although it had been occupied by a small

village around the residence of one of the principal kazi. Mr. Grant reported to the Governor General Lord William Bentinck about the numerous advantages promised by a sanatorium at Darjeeling and also recommended its occupations for military purpose as the key of a pass into Nepal. The Governor General then deputed Captain Hebert, the Deputy Surveyor-General to examine the country with Mr. Grant and in due course the Court of the Directors approved the project. General Lloyd was directed to open negotiations with the Raja of Sikkim and he got the opportunity to negotiate only when he was deputed to enquire into the causes of an incursion from Nepal of Lepchas who had taken refuge there from Sikkim. Thus, Lloyd succeeded in obtaining the Grant from the Raja of Sikkim on 1st February 1835 and it was worded as follows-

“ the governor general has expressed his desire for the possession the Hills of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, has been introduced for the purpose of enabling the servant of his government, suffering from the sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages and I, the Sikkimputta Raja, out of friendship and for the said Governor General, help present Darjeeling to the East India company, that is, all the land south of great Ranjit river, East of Balasun, kahail and little Ranjit river and west of Rungno and Mahanadi.” This was an unconditional cession of what was then an inhabited mountains but in 1841 the government granted the Raja an allowance of Rupees 3000 per annum as compensation and this was raised in 1846 to Rupees 6000 per annum. After the cession, General Lloyd and Dr. Chapman was sent in 1836 to explore and investigate the climate and the capabilities of the place. They spend the winter in 1836 and part of 1837 doing this when it was finally decided to develop the site as a Sanatorium. General Lloyd was appointed as a local Agent to deal with applications of land which began to pour in from residence of Calcutta. In 1836, Lloyd and Chapman found only few Huts erected by Raja of Sikkim and by 1840 a road had been made from Pankhabari thereby Staging Bungalow there and a Hotel had been started at Kurseong and other at Darjeeling, about 30 private houses were erected.

The rest of the ceded area was however under forest and practically uninhabited. According to **Captain Herbert** this was because previously about hundreds of able bodied lephas forming two third population of Sikkim had been forced by the operation of the Raja of Sikim to fly from Darjeeling and neighborhood areas and take Refuge in Nepal.

Sikkim threat and Dr. Campbell

In 1839, Dr Campbell of the Indian Medical Service, British resident in Nepal as transferred to Darjeeling as superintendent. He was not only in charge of Civil, Criminal and Fiscal administration Of the District but also in charge of establishing political relations with Sikkim and adjoining foreign areas. Dr Campbell encouraged Cultivators and the population of the area which was hundred in 1839 rose to 10,000 in 1849. 'Whatever has been done here' said Mr. W.B. Jackson, an inspecting officer in 1852, was done by Dr Campbell alone and it was the efforts of Campbell that led to the establishment of no less than 70 European houses, Buildings for the accommodation of the sick in the depot and other public as well as private buildings.

However in the mean time relations with Sikkim deteriorated. The increasing Importance of Darjeeling brought a sense of loss and frustration to the Lamas and other leading men of Sikkim headed by the Diwan Namguay. The lamas and the Diwan had to bear huge loss because many slaves from Sikkim had settled as free men in and around Darjeeling. The Sikkimese restored to frequent kidnappings and demanded for return of slaves. The climax took place when in November of 1849, Sir Joseph Hooker and Dr. Campbell, while travelling in Sikkim with the permission of the Raja, were made prisoners at the command of the Diwan of Sikkim. Various demands were made as conditions of release but after some days on 24th December both were released unconditionally. In February of 1850, small punitive force entered Sikkim and remained there on the north Bank of great Ranjit river for a week but the serious retaliatory action by the British was the withdrawal of the grant of Rupees 6000 for the Raja and annexation of the Terai, the portion of the Sikkim Hills

bounded by the Ramman and the great Ranjit on the north, by the Tista on the east and by the Nepal Frontier on the west. The area annexed was 640 square miles in extent.

Immediately after the annexation of the Terai in 1850, the Southern portion of the Terai was placed under the Purnia district, but in consequence of the dislike of the inhabitants, this whole area was attached to Darjeeling. The Terai and the Hill territory annexed from Sikkim and managed by the superintendent who from 8th may 1850 was called the Deputy Commissioner. The change was welcome by the inhabitants who now had to pay only some fixed sums in the treasury in Darjeeling instead of having to meet uncertain and fluctuating demand in kind or for personal services made by the Raja and the Diwan.

The annexation brought about significant changes in the relation between Sikkim the British. Previously the Darjeeling district had been an Enclave in Sikkim territory and to reach at, the British had to pass through a country acknowledging the rule of a Foreign, though dependent Raja. After the annexation the British territory state in Darjeeling was continuous with the districts of Purina and Rungpur in the plane and Sikkim Raja was cut off from access to the plans except through British territory.

For some years after the annexation, relations with Sikkim were not disturbed but raids on British Territories latter recommenced and British Subjects were carried off and sold as slaves or detained in Sikkim. The raja was now an old man of nearly eighty and retired to Chumbi Valley in Tibet leaving the Government to Diwan Namguay who had arrested Campbell and Dr. Hoker in 1849. Six months negotiation proved fruitless and it was decided to take possession of the portion of Sikkim North of the Ramman and west of the great Ranjit until British Subjects were released, offenders handed over and security obtained against a recurrence of similar offences.

With this objective Dr. Cambell with a small force of 160 rank and file crossed the Ramman in November 1860 and advanced as far as Rinchipong. He was however attacked and forced back to fall on Darjeeling

Latter Colonel Gawler with Sir Ashley Aden as envoy and special Commissioner moved with artillery and a force of 2,600 men and entered Tumlong, the Capital of Sikkim in March 1861.

The Diwan fled and the abdicated in favour of his son with whom on the 28th March, a Treaty was made which was of particular importance to Darjeeling, because it finally put an end to frontier troubles with Sikkim and secured full freedom for commerce across the Sikkim boarder.

The Bhutan Menace

The British Northern policy of Annexation made the Terai and Doars strategically important. The land between southern Siliguri and Jalpaiguri was a bone of contention between the Bhotias and Koches.¹ The Koch Chieftains hotly contested Bhutanees hold over extensive area which also included the large southern tract of land between Siliguri and Jalpaiguri. However, post first Anglo-Bhutanese war (1774) a large area was ceded to Bhutan as a part of the policy to appease the Bhutaneese and is the interest of Trans-Himalayan trade.² This move of the Britishers was not acceptable by the Koch Zamindars. The large tract remained subject to the plundering by both Bhutaneese soldier and the Koch Zamindars.

The Bhutanese were responsible for a series of incursions in which property was plundered, lives take and many innocent persons carried off into captivity. Due to these activities the British Government took control of a large part of this disputed territory in 1842 on an annual rent of Rs. 2000 to the Bhutan Government. But 18 years after in 1860 the payment was discontinued for alleged act of aggression. In 1862 news came that the Bhutanese were preparing to make an attack on Darjeeling and troops were hurried up from Dimapur to restore confidence. This was followed in 1863 by a dispatch of a special mission to Bhutan under Sir Asley Aden to settle differences and obtain the restoration of plundered property.

The mission failed as the British envoy was compelled by threats to sign a document giving up all claims to Bhutan Dooars on the Assam frontiers. He was treated with indignity and only with difficulty in April 1864 succeeded in leaving Punakha by night and returning to Darjeeling.

Negotiations continued fruitlessly and the Government of India decided to annex the Bengal Dooars and such Hill Territory as might be necessary to prevent Bhutanese incursions into Darjeeling district. Small expeditions were sent into Bhutan in the winter of 1864. This met with very little opposition and the operations terminated when, in November 1865 the Treaty extorted from Sir Asley Eden was replaced by a fresh one by which what is now the Kalingpong Sub-division as well as the Bhutan Dooars and passes leading into Bhutan Hills were ceded to the British in return for an annual subsidy.

During the campaign of Eden in 1864 these tracts were “permanently annexed to British Dominion”.³ The proclamation regarding the annexation read that the British Government, under Article 11 of the Treaty concluded on the 11th day of November 1865, had obtained from the Government of Bhootan, forever the cession of the whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Dooars bordering on the districts of Rungpoor, Cooch Behar, and Assam, together with the Talook of Ambaree Fallacottah and the Hill territory on the left bank of the Teesta, up to such point as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for the purpose. “It was declared that the territory ceded by the Bhotan Government as aforesaid is annexed to the territories of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen of England. It was further declared that the ceded territory was attached to the Bengal Division of the Presidency of Fort William, and that it will accordingly be under the immediate control of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, but that it shall not be subjected to the general regulations.”⁴

In the days of the Dooars war, Chandra Shekharthe “Sixteenth Raikat”⁵ Petitioned the Government stating the services he had rendered to Eden’s mission and supplies provided to

the Bhutan Duar Force “Amounting to fifty or Sixty thousand rupees”⁶ and in lieu of his service the British Government should restore the Zamindari rights of his forefathers over the large tract of land ceded to the Bhutaneese. The British Government reject the plea of Chandra Shekhra Deva and henceforth the areas south of Siliguri was permanently annexed by the British Government. Thus the area which was considered as no man’s land became part of the southern sub-urban of Siliguri towns.

The Town

L.S.O’ Malley never mentioned Siliguri as a town and he stated that in the Darjeeling District “there were only two towns Darjeeling and Kurseong which between them account for only 21393 persons”⁷. Prior to O’Malley, W.W. Hunter in his the Statistical Account of Bengal, do not mentions about Siliguri, however, makes a sweeping statement that these places were “chiefly uninhabited by the Meches and Dhumals, two tribes who are said not to suffer from the unhealthy nature of the climate.”⁸

O’ Malley wrote about Siliguri that Siliguri is a “village is the South of Kurseong Sub-division near the left bank of Mahananda is 26°43’ N and 88°26’E. Population (1901) 784. Siliguri is the northern terminus of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, where it is joined by the Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway. It is also the terminus of the Cart Road from Kalimpong and Sikkim and it thus focuses the local trade. Several jute firms are established here and in addition to the permanent shops there is a biweekly Government market. It is the Headquarter of a Deputy Magistrate who disposes of the criminal work of the *Tarai* and manages the large Government estate; he was formerly stationed at Hansquar (Hanskhawa) near Phansidewa, but his headquarter were removed to Siliguri 1888 on the extensions of the railway to that place. It also contains a small sub-jail and post office, dak bungalow, inspection house, police station and a dispensary with 20 beds, all situated on fairly high ground and its name means “the stony site” presumably because the bed of the Mahanadi close by is a mass of broken stone brought down from the hills.”⁹

The area is and around Siliguri was always dreaded by the Europeans is the beginning of the twentieth Century. It was considered as “a tract of reeking moisture and rank vegetation it (Siliguri) has always been dreaded by Europeans, who used is the days before the railway, to hurry through it as fast as they could travel and if possible in the early morning in order to get beyond the fatal fever zone. That such speed was necessary was proved by the fate of lady Canning, who caught the fever which ended in her death while halting to sketch by the road side on her return journey from Darjeeling, by for the greatest mortality is caused by fevers, which are generally malaria is nature They are commonest is *Terai* where they account for 80% of the total mortality, the death rate from fever being 51 per mile is 1905. The foremost frequently met with is intermittent fever with the enlargement of spleen, quotidian double quotidian and tertian being very common, but a great variety of fever are found including the deadly *Kalaazar* and Black water fever.¹⁰ The death rate is appalling the average mortality being nearly 60 per 1000 is the ten years ending (i.e 1890-1900). In 1900 while it exceeded, 71 per 1000 is that year and on the other hand, the average birth rate is the decade was nearly 19.4 per annum.¹¹ The Europeans found this place unsuitable to inhabit but O'Malley confessed that “there is however, one race which inhabitsthis sickly region with comparative immunity the aboriginal Meches; and the Rajbanshis are also to a certain extent free from fever largely occurring to their cleaning away the rank Jungles around their homesteads and to the high platform on which they erect houses.¹²

The Land of Lawless Bandits

This tract of land was also popular for giving refuge to the sanayasis who were branded as bandit and robbers. The British official records these Sanyasis as “lawless bandits” who pretenses of charity unleashed terror. The Sanyasi were held in high veneration by the people is the countryside and put up a stiff resistance to the expanding British power at the end of the 18th Century.¹³

Baikunthapur, a place nearby Siliguri was considered to be head-quarter of Sanyasis. The Baikunthpur forest, nested these 'bandits' who ravaged the country in armed bands numbering hundreds. Mr. Glazier described this area in the following manner, "In 1789, we have an account of a large body of bandits who had occupied the Baikunthapur Forest, Which lies at the northern apex of the district (Rangpore) right under the hills, whence they issued on their predatory excursions." The forest was composed of tree jungles enter woven with cane and was impossible except by narrow winding paths known only to the dakoits. The collector, says Glazier, got together a force of two hundred *barkandazes* and held all the entrances into the forest. Several skirmishes ensued but months elapsed before any decisive result was obtained. The marauders were at length starved out. Some escaped into Nepal and Bhutan but great numbers were captured including their leaders and several of his principal associates. Within twelve months in this and other parts of the district the collector arrested and brought to trial 549 dakoits. Lieutenant Macdonald was sent against them with 180 sepoy, and brought in the leaders of the gang, but their followers escaped into the hills. Three years later, as many as 1,500 crossed the Brahmaputra at Diwanganj; they had rockets, *jinjal* pieces, and 110 horses. Besides these wandering thieves, there were numbers of sanyasis who settled down in hermitages, which they fortified, and where they carried on their trade of moneylending, combined with dacoity. A report to the Board of Revenue, dated 29th April 1789, makes mention of the seizure of two dacoit boats of 80 and 100 cubits in length, belonging to head sanyasis, and gives a detailed account of the oppressions practised by these scourges, not only on the cultivators, but on the zamindars and their officers, whom they carried off and confined until their demands were satisfied."¹⁴

Administrative Developments after 1866

The year 1866 thus mark an epoch in the History of the District. Peace was then established within and all its border and development, which had been considerable in spite of pioneering difficulties and interruptions due to political disturbances now proceeded with more certainty and momentum. The Kalinpong area was first notified as a subdivision under

the Deputy Commissioner of the Western Doors district but in 1866 it was transferred to the district of Darjeeling. This was the last addition to the district which then reached its present dimension.

After Kalimpong had been brought under British administration the district was divided into two subdivisions the headquarter Sub-Division with an area of 960 square miles including all the hills on the both sides of the Testa and Terai Sub-Division with an area of 274 square miles which included the whole of the country at the foot of the hills. The Headquarter of the Terai subdivision were at Hanskhawa near Phansidewa from 1864 to 1880, when they were transferred to Siliguri. The meter gauge Railway of the North Bengal State Railway had been extended to Siliguri and Siliguri, at that time in the Jalpaiguri District was transferred to Darjeeling district with a small surrounding area and made the headquarters of the Terai subdivision. In the mean time Kurseong had begun to develop and 1891 it was made the Headquarter of a new subdivision which included both the Terai and the lower hills west of the Testa.

Later in 1907 Siliguri was made a Subdivision, thus re-establishing the Terai Subdivision which had in 1891 been absorbed into the Kurseong Subdivision. Till 1907 there had been a Deputy Magistrate at Siliguri working under the Subdivisional Officer, Kurseong, and managing the Terai Government Estate under the Deputy Commissioner. Kalimpong in the meantime had been in the Sadar Subdivision with a manager of the Khas Mahals working at Kalimpong under the Deputy Commissioner, police work being controlled by an Inspector. In 1916 the Kalimpong Subdivision was created as a preliminary to working out development schemes in Kalimpong. The District was included in the Rajshahi Division until October 1905 when, as a result of the Partition of Bengal, it was transferred to the Bhagalpur Division. With the re-arrangement of the provinces it was retransferred to the Rajshahi Division in March 1912.

A similar transfer and retransfer took place of the jurisdictions of the District and Sessions Judge. The District was under the District and Sessions Judge of Dinajpur until October

1905 when it was placed under the Judge of Purnea and again in April 1912 it was brought under Dinajpur. The District is peculiar in respect of civil judicial powers. The Sub-divisional Officers of Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri all have powers of a Munsiff and Small Causes Court Judge up to Rs. 50. Appeals from these Munsiffs and from the Munsiff at Darjeeling lie to the Deputy Commissioner. The Court of the Deputy Commissioner has been invested with jurisdiction under the Insolvency Act where declared debts do not exceed Rs. 5,000. The Senior Deputy Magistrate of Darjeeling was formerly vested with the powers of a Subordinate Judge, Munsiff and Small Causes Court Judge. But since March 1939, a Munsiff with powers of a Subordinate Judge and Small Causes Court Judge up to Rs. 500 has been posted in Darjeeling and he performs the work of a Magistrate in addition to his civil judicial work. The Sub-divisional Officer, Siliguri, had powers to dispose of rent and other suits under Act X of 1859. Appeals from the Subordinate Judge of Darjeeling lie to the District Judge of Dinajpur and to the High Court in Calcutta. By the exercise of these special powers the Deputy Commissioner could do something to secure the Hillman interests. He has in addition powers as Registrar of Births and deaths under Act VI of 1886 and powers to control the movements of Europeans across the frontiers of Nepal, Sikkim or Bhutan.

The authority of the Deputy Commissioner is greater in Darjeeling than that of the District Officers in other Bengal Districts by reason of his powers of control over a very considerable khas mahal (233 square miles), over most of the Bazaars in the District, over the work of the District Board as Chairman and over the Darjeeling Town Administration as Chairman of the Municipality. Administration in the District has peculiarities due to the special application of various enactments. The Bengal Tenancy Act is not in force and Act X of 1859 and Act VIII of 1879 regulate the rights and liabilities of the rural population. The Bengal Local Self-Government Act and the Bengal Municipal Act have special modifications adapting them to local conditions.

The Bengal Village Self-Government Act was in force only in the Siliguri Town area and the Chaukidari Act only in the non-tea rural areas of the Siliguri Sub-division and it is not in

force anywhere in the hills. A number of special amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act was found necessary to meet hill conditions. To regulate amenities in the small residential area of the abandoned Takdah Cantonment, one Union Committee has been established.

Roads, Railways and Communication:

The importance of Siliguri, as pointed out earlier arises because of its proximity to Darjeeling and Duars. Before any part of what is now the Darjeeling District, had been made over by the Raja of Sikkim to the Government of the East India Company, means of Communication were very rudimentary, far narrow rough tracks through forests and occasional cane bridges over torrent rivers were all that existed. It was quite possible that the Sikkim authorities considered that southward communications were of less importance than those going northward, for the ruling Family was of Tibetan Origin and showed a fondness for summering in the Chumli village, finding even Sikkim too damp for its taste.¹⁵

The area, which was taken over from Sikkim was almost entirely covered by forest and indeed it was reported in 1830 to be totally uninhabited. Grant's memorandum of 1830 mentioned two routes then existing northward from the plains into Sikkim. One was by "Nagree" pass and the other by the "Bubbook Galah". A Third route by the Mahananda was mentioned as having been deserted and overgrown with Jungle. The pioneers who came to open up Darjeeling after it had been ceded in 1835 were confronted with an arduous journey from Calcutta before they reached the hills. Guide to Darjeeling published in 1838 mentioned 98 hours as the time the journey took from Calcutta to Darjeeling via Siliguri.¹⁶

54 hours Calcutta to Malda

16 hours Malda to Darjeeling

20 hours Dinajpore to Titaliya

8 hours Titaliya to the foot of the hills Terai and Siliguri

The whole journey to Darjeeling labeled five or six days and the discomforts were graphically described by Sir Joseph Hooker. Who in 1848 at a cost of Rs.240/- had occasion to perform the journey from Karalgola Ghat on the Ganges to the foot hills. The first measure taken to improve communication was the deputation of Lieutenant Napier to construct a road from Siliguri to Darjeeling. This was carried out from 1839 to 1842 and the road can still be seen winding its way by sharp ascents from Pankhabari to Kurseong and the onto the Dow hill and Ghoom. The section of this road from Pankhabari to Kurseong is part of what is now known as the Siliguri MatigaraKurseong Road.¹⁷ This road was not practicable for wheeled traffic and the development of Darjeeling and cost of transporting military stores (Rs 2 per mound from Darjeeling was very heavy for those times) led to search for an alternative road. This alternative road is known as the Hill Cart Road and this road starts from Siliguri and ends in Darjeeling town. Work was started in 1860 and the road was completed in 1896 the specification was a road 24 feet in breadth with a general gradient of 3 in 100 and maximum gradient of 1 in 18. The road system was not only of local utility but also facilitated in national and Tran-frontier trade. The District Board is responsible for subsidiary lines of road communication and in addition there are roads of importance to the public maintained by the Forest Department and the villagers of Government Estates in the District. The various controlling authorities were shown in the list of District Roads given below. It was not thought necessary to give many details of the engineering of the roads listed; it should be understood that construction and maintenance of roads is troublesome and expensive in the hills and adjoining areas because of the mountainous nature of the land, the heavy rainfall and the liability to landslips and in the Terai because of heavy rainfall and flooding.

Meanwhile decision was taken to construct in road from the Ghat of Ganges to Siliguri at a cost of Rs. 14,68,000/-. This road was 126 miles long and connected Sahibganj to Siliguri. Therefore, Siliguri became the terminal point of the Ganges- Darjeeling Hill Cart Road. Importance of Siliguri grew as it became a junction of the two roads – one leading to the

North and the other to the South.¹⁸ Before the completion of the Northern Bengal Railway, people wishing to reach Darjeeling were obliged to proceed from Calcutta to Sahibganj, a distance of 220 miles from Howrah terminus of the E.I.Railway, then by ferry steamer to Caragola, a journey of five hours and often more, where the unfortunate travelers were disembarked on the river side and were often obliged to wade a mile or more through the sand under a blazing sun. From there onwards the route laid along Ganges-Darjeeling road via Purneah, Kissanganj and Titalaya to Siliguri.¹⁹ The visitors to Darjeeling jolted at *Dak Gharry* and on reaching Siliguri avoided any halt in evening or at night due to malaria mosquitos nightmares and the popular Lady Canning death story.

In 1860 the East Indian Railway had been extended upto Sahebjanj and thereafter it was only necessary to travel by road north of this point in order to get to Darjeeling. "The journey to the foot of hills could be performed from the Karagola (Ganga Ghat) either by Palki (Palanguin) or bullock cart or by Ganga from Siliguri to Darjeeling. This road was from Karagola passed through Purnea, Kishanganj and Tituliya to Siliguri."²⁰

'The opening of the rail line from Calcutta to Raniganj in 1855 reduced the laborious cart journey to Darjeeling by 120 miles, and the East Bengal State Railway pushed steadily northward in the following decades.²¹ Until the advent of the railways in the hills, '*Tongas*' continued to be the only faster means of travelling from the foothills to Darjeeling. The two most important factors in the development of the district have been the choice of Darjeeling for a health resort and the subsequent planting of tea in the hills. It was by chance or destiny that in 1878, Franklin Prestage, the man who made the hill railway possible, came to Darjeeling along with his brother-in-law Sulyard Bernard Cary. The same year the Northern Bengal Railway was inaugurated in the foothills. On that occasion the Lieutenant Governor Sir Ashley Eden had made the some remarkable speech, to quote '...the wearied and exhausted citizen of Calcutta within a short journey of what I have no hesitation in saying is the finest scenery and almost the purest air in the world. It brings the rapidly developing tea interests of Darjeeling and the *Doars* into direct communication with

the ports of export...the cotton goods, metals and salt of Europe and the indigo, tobacco and the tea of India to be exchanged with the gold dust and wool of Tibet, and the silks of China. I even hope that his dreams of social intercourse with Lhasa may be so fully realized that we may have, someday, the honor of carrying the Grand Lama to exchange religious views with the bishop of Calcutta.²² According to Newnan's Guide to Darjeeling and its surroundings Sir Eden 'with his practical commonsense, recognized the fact that a light railway, if it could only be constructed to Darjeeling, would infinitely develop that town, as well as the country through which it passed, and also put Calcutta and the whole of Lower Bengal in rapid, cheap, and easy communication with its only existing sanatorium.'²³

The Rail-Road Competition

The course of trade and its volume depended much on the cost of transport. Costs of other means of transport would be more readily understood if consideration is first given to those of road haulage by bullock cart. There was a steady carting business in Siliguri during the colonial days. The Rangpo-Siliguri route which was approximately 46 miles , 7 annas per mound was charged and war time charges got doubled.

Coolie and pack transport were much more expensive than carting. In forests, for moving timber and wood coolie transport would costs from 3 to 12 times as much as carting. Pack transport (by mules) were highly organised on the Tibet trade routes. From Phari Dzong in Tibet to Kalimpong via the Jalap La, a distance of 90 to 95 miles, Rs.6 per maund was the peace time rate. From Phari to Gangtok via the Nathu La, 65 to 70 miles, the rate was Rs.4 per maund. These rates are equivalent to about 12 pies per maund mile. The routes are severe and probably rates were cut to a competitive minimum. Rates in war time soared and at one time for the Kalimpong Phari trip touched Rs.35 per maund.

The road system of the District as well the Darjeeling Railway system both converged at Siliguri and practically the whole of the import and export trade from the plains passed through the Bengal and Assam Railway at Siliguri. A very much smaller volume of imports and exports took place via the Darjeeling- Himalayan Branch Railway to Kishanganj. In neither direction the roads were in a condition to carry an appreciable volume of trade, incoming or outgoing, and so practically all import or export took place by rail.

The Hill Cart Road from Darjeeling and the main line of the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway carried the greater part of the produce of the Sadar and Kurseong Subdivisions, the supplies needed for the towns of Darjeeling and Kurseong and for the tea gardens and industries of these Subdivisions as well as the traffic from Nepal crossing the frontier at Simana Basti and northward (potatoes and chiratta). The Kishanganj branch of the Darjeeling- Himalayan Railway and the Terai road system serve the Terai tea gardens via Siliguri and there is a certain amount of traffic with Nepal through Naxalbari Station some of which passed through Siliguri.

The Kishanganj Section of the Railway was opened for traffic shortly before the war of 1914-1918. Its construction presented few of the peculiar engineering problems which had to be solved in constructing the main line. It lies wholly in the plains and did not use any road alignment.

Passenger fares charged by the Railway were as follows:-

Siliguri to Darjeeling (61 miles) 1st class Rs.10, 2nd class Rs.7 and 3rd class Rs.4 (Rs.4 for mail trains):

Siliguri to Guelle (29.5 miles) 1st class Rs.5-10, 2nd class Rs.2-13 and 3rd class Re. 1-6;

Siliguri to Kishanganj (69.5 miles) 1st class Rs.13-2, 2nd class Rs.6-9 and 3rd class Rs. 2-3.

Third class fares were thus one anna per mile for the Kishanganj branch and anna per mile for the hill sections. Rates were enhanced by 25 percent or more during the 1939-45 war.

Freight rates vary according to the class of goods carried. On the Tista Valley and Kishanganj branches war-time rates varied from 1 to 3.2 pies per mound mile according to the class of goods. From Siliguri to Dareling rates varied from 3.7 to 6.2 pies per/mound mile and downhill from Darjeeling to Siliguri upwards of 2.25 pies per mound mile according to the class of goods. Rates before the war were about 20 percent, less than those quoted.

It should be explained that freight rates on the hill were high. The fact however remains that for many years the railway had practically a monopoly of the handling of the import and export trade of Darjeeling town and the hill areas of the District and the only competition they had to face was bullock cart traffic which was only appreciable in the Tista Valley and in the Terai.

The advent of motor vehicles from about 1930, coupled with the improvement of the roads introduced a direct form of competition with Railways. The Government tried to limit the number of Lorries and busses plying for hire.

The problem of rail road competition in the area had by no means solved till independence.. War conditions severely tested the transportation system in the hills and had temporarily confused the issue. For instance the Railway system proved unable to handle the traffic needed to supply the greatly increased temporary war-time population of the Darjeeling town and had to be supplemented by extra mechanical road transport (some of its military) which did not operate on a strictly commercial and competitive basis.

For a long time consumers of goods complained about the cost of transportation. The construction of ropeways to cheapen costs hds been under consideration but had only

resulted in the construction of two minor public ropeways which operate as feeders to the railway system and did not appreciably reduce transportation costs from Siliguri to the hill areas of the District. The solution of the road-rail problem was complicated by the interest Government had in maintaining the traffic receipts and profits of the Railway and Government exercised their powers of limiting road transport on the Hill Cart Road with this interest in view.

The principal commodities moved by the Railway on the main line were rice and other food-grains, cement, iron, salt and building materials, Coal, provisions and miscellaneous merchandise in the upward direction and potatoes, tea, cardamoms oranges and timber in the downward direction.

In 1942-43 for instance there was an import of 7,104 tons of rice to Darjeeling, 1,007 tons of salt, 540 tons of sugar, 417 tons of grains and pulses other than rice, 773 tons of provisions and 2,769 tons of coal. Downward from Darjeeling in the above year, moved 1,080 tons of potatoes and 98 tons of tea.

Imports from below to Ghum included 3,505 tons of rice, 513 tons of salt, 434 tons of provisions and 1,167 tons of coal. Downward export from Ghum included 1,629 tons of potatoes, 2,190 tons of tea and 515 tons of timber.

The Siliguri-Kishanganj line handled timber, rice and jute while the Tista Valley branch carries imports of food-grains, salt, piece-goods, provisions and building materials and exports oranges, cardamoms, potatoes, timber and wool. The total, number of passengers traveling during 1942-43 over the different sections of the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway was Main Line 3,08,872; Siliguri Kishanganj Extension 4,59,204; Tista Valley Extension. 35,988

Conclusion:

Thus, Siliguri being situated in the border of hill district, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Assam and Bihar served as a Vital link of communication after the establishment of the road system and railway line. Siliguri which was a small hamlet covered with Jungle became an important entry and exit points of the commodities meant for Assam, Bihar, Sikkim, Nepal and the hill districts. At the time of independence Siliguri had already established its future prospects as it became the most developing town in whole of North Bengal. The Growth rate of Siliguri for the period 1941-51 was 209.72 as per census datas of 1951.

Growth Rate of Towns in North Bengal (1941-51)

Name of Towns	Growth Rate
1. Siliguri	209.72
2. English Bazar	31.41
3. Coochbehar	07.76
4. Jalpaiguri	48.60
5. Darjeeling	23.44
6. Kalimpong	30.46
7. Kurseong	37.95
8. Dinhata	65.38
9. Matha Bhanga	41.54
10. Haldibari	101.66
11. Hili	20.05
12. Tufanganj	64.02
13. Mekhliganj	4.47

Source: Census of India 1951, Volume VI, West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore.

The future of a city depends on their resilience. Siliguri was once messy, unplanned, organic, marshy, and feverish but still captured the imagination as a center for financial, business, cultural and social development. The following chapter will discuss about the social landscape of Siliguri with focus on population and peoples.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Deb. Arabinda, *Bhutan and India: A Study in Frontier Political Relations (1772-1865)*, Firma Klm Pvt. Ltd. ,Calcutta, 1976, p. 112-132
- ² Ibid.,p. 133-160
- ³ Proclamation Regarding Annexation of the Duars, 4th July,1866 published in Aitchison, C.U., *A collection of Treaties, Treaties Engagements and Sanads relating to India and neighbouring countries*, vol 2, CXI, Calcutta, 1909, p. 306
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ The Raikats were a branch of the Koch royal family. Siswa Singha, the founder of the house, had held the umbrella over the head of his step brother, Maharaja Viswa Singha at the time of his coronation in 1529-30. His successors at Baikunthopur had to resist persistent encroachment of the Bhutanese, the Mallas of Nepal. Also see S. C. Ghosal, *A History of Cooch Behar*, 1942, Chapter XIU, The Baikunthopur Estate of BiswaSingha survived for 410 years (1545-1955). It was abolished under the Bengal Estate Acquisition Act of 1954; C. C. Sanyal, *TheRajbansis of North Bengal*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 8.
- ⁶⁶ Deb. Arabinda, *Bhutan and India: A Study in Frontier Political Relations (1772-1865)*, Firma Klm Pvt. Ltd. ,Calcutta, 1976, p.94
- ⁷ O'Malley,S.S., *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot,Calcutta 1907,reprint 2001, p. 189
- ⁸ Hunter, William Wilson., *A statistical account of Bengal*, 1876,VOL X, P. 67
- ⁹ O'Malley,S.S.,” *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*”, 2001, p. 209
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 50
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 54
- ¹² Ibid., p. 54. Hunter in ”*A statistical account of Bengal*,” 1876,VOL X, P. 65 pointed out the names of two more tribes, Meches and Dhimals , who did not suffer from the unhealthy nature of the climate.
- ¹³ Gupta, M.D. ”*Sanyasi Rebellion in North Bengal*”, Ankur, Calcutta, 1979, p.9.also see Lorenzen, D.N., ”*Warrior Ascetics in Indian History.*”*Journal of the American Oriental Society.* American Oriental Society,1978, 98 (1), p. 617-75;Marshall, P.J.*Bengal: the British Bridgehead. The New Cambridge History of India.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 96.
- ¹⁴ Glazier, E.G. *Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers: Rangpur*, Allahabad,1911, p. 29. For a detailed study on the sanyasi rebellion see J.M. Ghosh, *Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal*, Calcutta,1930., A.N. Chandra, *The Sannyasi*

Rebellion, Calcutta, 1977; Peter van der Veer, *Gods on Earth: The Management of Religious Experience and Identity in a North Indian Pilgrimage Centre*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 146-151; In Farquhar, "The Organisation of the Sannyasis of the Vedanta", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1925; B S Cohn, "The Role of Gosains in the Economy of 18th and 19th Century Upper India", Indian Economic and Social History Review, I, No 4, 1964; N B Roy, "Naga Sannyasi Geneshgeer and the Kutehbihar Disturbances of 1787", in H R Gupta (ed), JadunathSarkar Commemoration Volume, 1958.

¹⁵ Ibid.,179

¹⁶ ibid.,p. 183

¹⁷ Ibid.,p. 185

¹⁸ Ibid.,p 188-203

¹⁹ O'brien,R.D. Darjeeling: The Sanitorium of Bengal and it's surrounding, W.Newman Publication, Calcutta, 1878, pp. 1-3

²⁰ Dash. A.J.,Op.cit., pp.190-203

²¹ Kennedy, Dane –The Magic Mountain Hill Station and the British Raj, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p.90

²² Ibid., p.30

²³ Newman, W. Newman's Guide to Darjeeling & its Surroundings, Newman And Co., Calcutta, 1900, p.4

MEGHNAD SAHA: SCIENTIST AND CRITIQUE

Gourav Lama¹

Abstract

The paper will attempt to look at Meghnad Saha's involvement in scientific discourses with Jawaharlal Nehru and his contemporary scientist Dr. Homi J. Bhabha. The idea is to understand the contestation over knowledge production within scientific discourse in India. Meghnad Saha a leading scientist of 1940s in a series of letters to Nehru and Bhabha, expressed his views that reflected both his vision, perceptions and dissatisfaction over the Indian Atomic Program.

Keywords : *Laboratories, Cyclotron, energy, nuclear, discourse.*

The historiography of Nuclear Science for the last one decade notably by historians like Robert S. Anderson, Jahanvi Phalkey, has tried to focus on the history of laboratories and the fundamental role played by the scientists and the government that led to the development of Nuclear power in India. the trend has shifted from that of the history of the making of the atom bomb to the more complex historical exploration of different actors and institutions. In continuance of this tradition, the paper will look at the Saha's efforts for establishing Nuclear 'Cyclotron' in Calcutta and also try to bring in, his criticism of the Indian Atomic Program. The paper is limited in its scope in the sense that it does not include Meghnad Saha's as a

¹ Assistant Professor of History, Presidency University, Kolkata

Member of parliament of the Independent India, where he debated, opposed and critiqued many of the decisions about Atomic Energy Program.

SCIENTIST AND NATION BUILDING

Meghnad Saha was born to a meager income earning family on 6th October 1893 in the small village of Sereotal, which was situated 45 km from Dhaka. Being a brilliant student he was able to get merit scholarship through which he pursued his higher studies. He subsequently in the year 1916 joined Calcutta University as a faculty member for post graduate classes.¹ Saha further gained fame in his field after the publication of his paper “Ionisation in the Solar Chromosphere”.² He later on explained that his idea was largely shaped by his readings of the German literature that arrived in Calcutta after four years gap due to World War (1914-1918).³ Meghnad Saha upon his return from Berlin in 1921 joined the Department of Physics as Khaira Professor at the University College of Science in Calcutta but within two years he joined the University of Allahabad.⁴ As soon as Saha moved to Calcutta after his long fifteen years stay at Allahabad, he joined as the Palit Professor of Physics, the chair which was earlier held by C.V. Raman. Meanwhile Uranium fission was discovered in 1938-39 by Otto Hahn, Lise Meitner and Fritz Strassman in Germany, which kick-started the interest in Nuclear Physics.⁵ Saha grasped the importance of Nuclear research and thus introduced Nuclear Physics as a course of study in the M.Sc. Physics syllabus of Calcutta University. He also started a research program work in Nuclear Physics and Cosmic Rays at the Palit Laboratory.⁶ He started a journal “Science and Culture” in 1935, which was also the journal of the Indian Science News Association, wherein in 1940 he published a paper on “Uranium Fission” (1940).⁷

SAHA ON ENERGY AND POWER

To look into the background of his vision and critique for the development of energy and power. It could be well documented from a symposium held on March 1938 when Saha was still in Allahabad. A National symposium was organized by the National Academy of Sciences, which was attended by leading scientists of the time viz., Prof. Meghnad Saha himself, Professor B.C. Chattopadhyay and Professor N.N. Godbole of Banaras Hindu University, Prof. N.C. Chatterjee of Cawnpore, Prof. B.P. Adarkar, Dr. G.R. Toshiwal and A.N. Tandon of Allahabad University. Jawaharlal Nehru had presided over a session and it was here that Saha expressed his opinions and views about the energy and power requirement of India.

He stated that “one of the objects of the National Academy of Sciences was to organize a discussion on subjects of great importance than that of cheap and abundant poor supply for whole industrial efficiency of a nation depends upon”.⁸

He further added that “there are countries in the world which have completely harnessed all their power resources e.g. Norway, USA, England and Germany and there were others who are half towards it, e.g. Russia. There are others who are still dependent on a medieval economy, e.g., India, China and Abyssinia.”⁹

He held the view that the reason for India being poor was her low output of work per head, which was twenty times lesser than that of an advanced country, thus in order to bring India to a level of Europe, America, Japan, India was to solve her problems of poverty and unemployment. Following this he laid down the functions of the states, and stated that the development of abundant and cheap energy and power was one of the “Prime” duty of the state and cautioned that powers like water and air, should be protected from becoming a commodity for exploitation and profit by any profit oriented group. So he laid down the proposal to institute a Power Supply

Department, whose primary function would be to make a systematic survey of the available resources of power like coal, petrol, running water and others which existed within the control of the State. He criticised the state for being responsible for the backwardness of the country. India as a whole during 1938 produced only two percent of its hydroelectric capacity, whereas Japan had developed 80 percent of her capacity. The Indian Electricity Act of 1910, granted licenses and rights for the generation or production and supply of electricity, without imposing any safeguard rules against exploitation.

Saha stated, "Though now, owing to the technical efficiency of new machinery, one ton of coal produces nearly four times as much electricity as it used to do 25 years ago, our transmission losses have been reduced to a minimum, the rates have not undergone corresponding reduction."¹⁰ He gave example of the Calcutta Electric Supply Company, which produced electricity at the cost of thirty-five annas but charged two annas per unit for domestic use. Which according to Saha was six times higher than the cost of production. Different power and electrification schemes like Mundi Scheme in Punjab, western Ganga Hydro-electric scheme in United Province resulted in losses which were according to Saha, was due to the absence of proper survey of the hydro-electric sites, distribution of the produced electricity without any sound economic principles and lack of expertise in the science of technology as no steps were taken to train the indigenous technicians.¹¹ This criticism was based on his understandings, and all could not have been possibly true, but it does bring out his critical approach that he linked up with the state and its functioning.

Saha had a large international experiences, and this might have driven him to develop India into a country which was, if not at par but at least competitive with the advanced countries. His vision seems to be quite farfetched as India was still a

British Colony but Saha being aware of the existing problems of his time, shared his analysis with his colleagues and Jawaharlal Nehru. Thus a discourse on future planning and the problems were pointed out for possible future solutions in these symposiums and seminars, which preceded the formation of the National Planning Committee in the same year. These seminars thus reflect the critical enquiry and analyses made by Saha.

SAHA'S INVOLVEMENT IN NATIONAL PLANNING

Saha was invited by Subhash Chandra Bose to a meeting in October 1938 at Delhi. The meeting was intended to form the National Planning Committee. It was initially decided that M. Vivesvaraya would be the Chairman of the NPC but Saha suggested that Jawaharlal Nehru to be chosen as the Chairman, as this would not lead to limiting NPC to a small group of academic personalities. This argument found to be pragmatic, and thus Nehru accepted the chairmanship.¹² In a letter dated October 7th 1938 to Jawaharlal Nehru, Saha mentioned that "The National Planning, which is to meet afterwards, and in which the Planning Committee will be merged will decide how the policy is to be carried out and what lines of campaigns to be adopted"¹³ and his "hopes and ambition is that the Planning Committee should prepare a Report, which will serve as a guide to the whole Indian people and to the Congress Governments, in matters of full constructive work."¹⁴ Saha in his capacity as a scientist freely expressed his view about developing India and position in the NPC since its inception. This phase witnessed Saha's importance in the NPC.

He further adds: "I find that there is a great confusion ideas regarding the ideal, the program and the plan of action of National Reconstruction. This haze must be removed by a clear cut new philosophy of life and action. You hold, as you have often told me, that it will not be possible to do anything substantial unless the

congress captured power at the centre and you may think that work of the National Planning committee may be like putting the cart before the horse. I agree that if and when the congress captures the center, any more tools of power will be at its disposal, for example, control of the fiscal policy, the power to give real protection to infant industries struggling for life and to possible future industries which might come into existence, are an important condition precedent to successful industrialization.”¹⁵

Saha was since the inception of the National committee very much involved with the development of Industries, which would be facilitated by the Indians themselves. Various sub committees were formed to look into the report of each sub-committee under the National Planning Committee, Meghnad Saha himself chaired one such Power and Fuel Sub-Committee held on 19th October 1940, which was appointed to discuss and examine the Electrical Act and how to provide cheap power. The sub-committee passed a resolution, and recommended the centre and the provincial power board, to chart out a plan for the better use of power for industrial and agricultural purposes.¹⁶ However, the NPC by this time had receded in its activities, when the second world war began in September 1939, and Nehru was also imprisoned in November 1940. Working in NPC brought Scientists and the politicians together to a common platform. It was a time which led to the articulation of voices of scientists in the field of development in both agriculture, fiscal problems and industries. There was a shared assumption between Nehru and Saha when it came regarding developing electricity and power. They held that harnessing power would elevate India out of poverty and would solve many problems. Along with Saha, there was also another leading scientist figure like Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, who too were in direct touch with Nehru. These discourses led to developing a group

of scientists which according to Deepak Kumar led to the formation of “scientocracy” that developed in 1940s.¹⁷

SAHA AND CYCLOTRON

By 1940 Meghnad Saha was in Calcutta and had already started to work on Cyclotron, a nuclear machine in the physics department of Calcutta University, to establish the Nuclear research program around it. It was a costly machine, so he had to depend on the grant, which was provided by the Tatas to Calcutta University which was recommended by Nehru, and the Birlas.¹⁸ The grant was sanctioned about five years earlier than the grant that was approved to Homi Bhabha for the establishment of the Tata Institute of Fundamental research. The work proceeded very slowly as expected, which Saha confessed to Nehru in a letter dated October 24, 1941. Saha had sent about sixteen hundred dollars to his student B.D. Nag for the procurement of the part for the cyclotron from the USA, who was working under the supervision of Dr. Lawrence, who had invented the cyclotron machine. Meghnad Saha had direct access to the latest technology as he was in touch with the leading scientists of the time. Dr Nag by 1941 had returned to India and was working on the building of Cyclotron. The materials he ordered for cyclotron could not reach in time due to shipping difficulties during wartime crisis. In the same letter he mentions “if the east does not flare up, we expect to get the remaining materials by the end of next November”. Nehru, in turn, had asked Saha, the reason for the delay on the progress work of cyclotron at Saha’s laboratory to which Saha in a letter dated November 14, 1941, replied that: “even in the USA, it generally takes three years to complete a cyclotron, so we have not asked for any unusual length of time. But war has made it difficult for us to get things”.¹⁹

The cyclotron was one of the major projects of Meghnad Saha, and a huge amount of money was already invested but the progress was rather going too slow, and this had

made Nehru quite anxious. However, Meghnad Saha shared, as mentioned before, a very cordial relation with Nehru. Though Saha a scientist and Nehru, a politician, both Saha and Nehru exchanges was not only limited by the scientific development but also touched upon the topics related to culture and development. In the letter, Saha referred to the article published in Science and Culture about “all India languages”²⁰, at a time when Nehru was in jail. Thus correspondence between them reflected both business and cultural conversations. Saha seemed very supportive of Nehru at this point, as in the same letter which was written on Nehru’s birthday. He wrote “we have been hearing of your impending release and hope you will soon be out and give the country the lead which is badly needed at the present moment.”²¹ Immediately after Nehru was released from prison in 1941, Saha asked Nehru if he “happen to visit Calcutta he should visit his Laboratory, where the cyclotron was under construction.” By that time the construction was going on “smoothly”, and parts like Magnet had already arrived in Calcutta. The work on cyclotron by then was progressing, but Saha was facing difficulties to procure the apparatus. Saha also tried to purchase a magnet from England for making a powerful spectrometer but without any success. Professor Scherrer had suggested him that whatever was required could be done by M/S Brown Boverie, a big engineering firm from Switzerland and M/S Oerlikon of Geneva, which made high-class magnets. Prof Scherrer, according to the letter, had promised Saha that he would secure the materials and training of one of Saha’s student, Ambuj Mukherjee as a research scholar. Saha was very much interested in sending his son Ajit and his student Ambuj Mukherjee to work for some time with Professor Scherrer. Saha wanted a grant for Ajit from, The Atomic Energy Committee so that he could travel to Europe for a year and also get his apparatus to India. Bhabha in his reply to Saha on 25th August 1947 agreed to Saha’s proposal regarding the grant for his son’s visit to

Europe. He also touched upon certain agreements by pointing out that both Saha and Bhabha were essentially theorists, who were not yet ready to provide detailed “advice on matter of experimental techniques” therefore he thought it to be prudent to invite scientists from foreign countries to get excellent experiments and also suggested Saha to do the same as Bhabha thought that it would “give the experimental work in nuclear physics and cosmic rays a great fillip”.²²The importance of leading scientist from foreign countries were thus encouraged, in Indian Institutions, with a view in keeping in mind the latest development in the scientific field, which would help Indian scientists.

Saha held different reasons for the lack of development of experimental techniques in India. According to him, the real bottlenecks were the dearth of good mechanics and laboratory men, unavailability of significant engineering and manufacturing firms producing machinery and electrical appliances, scientific instruments and chemicals. He also remarked that Professor Scherrer in Zurich Polytechniqueinstitute had an excellent and efficient laboratory, but smaller compared to American standards. The nuclear physics laboratory, in Zurich consisted of Cyclotron, Betatron, beta ray spectrograph, mass spectrograph,etc. Professor Scherrer had promised to tender instruments made by leading manufacturerslike Messrs Brown, Boveri, Oerlihon and others. Saha was well aware of the development of the nuclear laboratories around the world. The machinery for cyclotron and Betatron in England were made in the workshops of Metropolitan, Mullards,etc., in Switzerland by Brown, Boveri and Oerlihen and the same was the case in the USA. Saha also ordered the instruments from USA and England in 1945. According to Saha organising first class workshops and technicians was the supreme necessity for India. The apparatus for the cyclotron were all bought in the USA in 1941 by Dr B.D. Nagchaudhuri through the Radiation Laboratory in California, where he was working

under Professor E. Lawrence but few important parts like valves and pumps did not arrive owing to outbreak of war with Japan, and this had considerably hampered Saha's and his team progress. Saha and his team tried to make the valves and the pumps in their laboratory, but they gave many troubles. They firstly made two types of pumps with a grant received from Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. The vacuum could not be made on account of difficulties in procuring large brass tube, and were not able to make them big enough for their purposes. In the course of his (Saha) trip to the USA in 1941-45, Meghnad Saha was able to place an order for oscillating valves, in spite of the prohibition due to Atomic Secrecy rules that did not allow the sale of the cyclotron parts, which arrived in India by the end of 1946. In his trip to the UK in 1946, Saha tried to procure these pumps in England, but later found out that pumps were imported from the USA for their cyclotron. USA being the most technologically advanced nation to manufacture pumps and valves, Saha finally placed orders for mechanical pumps. In this regard Saha in a letter to Bhabha dated 17th February 1947 stated: "we hope to overcome these difficulties, with the large pump which we expect from America and get the beam high energy particle out."²³ Owing to the costs and the expenses required for the construction of the laboratories machine, Saha had requested to the Atomic Energy committee a grant of Rs.40000, lying with CSIR to be placed to Saha and his Institute on a permanent basis.

SAHA AND BHABHA

Saha's correspondence with Bhabha reflected a love and hate relationship between them. Both by 1946 established themselves as leading scientists of India. In a letter dated June 1st, 1946, Saha expressed his disagreement on the report of Atomic Research Committee meeting held on 15th May 1946. He opposed the selection of

Bombay as site for the construction of “central station“ for Nuclear Energy Research, which according to Saha was not strategically wise as “Bombay with its exposed position appears to be quite unsuitable to be the proper site for such an institution”.²⁴ This report might had come as a blow to Saha, because a similar proposal was presented by Saha’s student, Dr Nag Chowdhury for establishing a similar central Nuclear Physics Station, which was not discussed by the Atomic Research Committee, owing to the prematurity of considering the founding of a central Nuclear Physical Laboratory in India. Naturally the report and its resolutions according to Bhabha were not disputable.²⁵ The contestation among the leading scientists thus became an important discourse that became manifested in the course of time, where Saha felt like being sidelined to the periphery. In the same report, the committee appreciated the measures taken up by the state of Travancore to preserve Thorium and set-up a subcommittee to draw up proposals to carry out a chemical geological survey of the Uranium bearing minerals in India. The committee too noted that the atomic research and development was of prime importance for the defence of the country, and for the production of atomic energy.

The development of nuclear energy was encouraged by the committee for security and the development of large scale industries in India. The next recommendation that was made was to establish a Betatron which would produce 200 million volt rays at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research with a team of 10 scientists for its operation. It was the phase where it seems that Saha was losing his earlier influence yet Saha was not kept outside and his work on the cyclotron was taken up by the committee which provided grants to cover the expenses of his project.

The correspondence between Bhabha and Saha also reflected scientific and personal exchanges, that they shared with each other. In a letter, Saha mentioned about his son Ajit. He had worked on spectroscopy and according to Saha was in touch with

the exact theories of emission and of associated Nuclear Isomerism, and had surveyed the whole work on beta rays, According to Saha "There are 500 artificial nuclei but even in the most frequently investigated nuclei...we are not in possession of sufficiently accurate knowledge in which the sound theories can be built".²⁶ Thus Saha being aware of his son's capabilities suggested Ajit fit for planning the Nuclear experiments. In doing so he was pushing for his son's career based on merit and not nepotism.

CRITICISM OF THE ATOMIC ENERGY PROGRAM

As the process of decolonization set in, the tides blew against Meghnad Saha. Already mentioned earlier Saha had by this time realised the ongoing decline of his position and the elevation of Homi J. Bhabha along with Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar. Saha in a letter dated 22nd May 1947, made a scathing attack on the Atomic Energy Committee. He was of the view that "the committee should define in precise language the ground it wanted to cover, regions of interest, the effort required and should propose the lines of action, and steps to be taken in order of priority to implement the plans, like the Atomic Energy Committee of USA, UK and other countries have done, and should define its attitude with respect to the requirements of the defense department as well as the peacetime utilization of Atomic energy". He also held that the committee should draw up plans for a central Atomic Research Institute on the lines of Canadian, British or French Institutes. Thus the ideas to order the research Institute was thus seriously thought out in these correspondences, at the time when India was going through political upheaval. These discussions and discourses thus not only give information about them but at another level, it opens upon the ideas of the scientific communities, that was crucial for the future development of India and thus reflects on the scientific institutions and projects that

developed in course of time, which Nehru termed as the “Temples of Modern India”. However, notwithstanding that, at the same time, Saha shared certain differences with the Atomic Energy board. By this time the power of the Board was beyond the radar of Meghnad Saha. One case exemplifies this where one of his student and colleague Dr A.K. Saha, had proposed a schema regarding the beta ray activity to which the Atomic Energy Board discussed on August 26, 1947, and pointed out certain problems in the proposal, which they had published in the minute report. Saha had raised certain objections to the resolution on the Schema as recorded in the minutes and was thus not satisfied with the decision of the Board. However, later on, after consultation with Dr A.K. Saha, an element that had featured earlier in the proposal, the Mass Spectro Meter was omitted from the Schema. This case though not of so much significance but gives us hints how Saha’s position was not as same as earlier. Saha had stopped climbing at a certain point in a mid way but young scientists like Bhabha was quick to keep proper channels and climb up at every opportunity.

BREAKING DOWN WITH NEHRU AND ATOMIC COMMITTEE

The strain in the relationship between Saha and Nehru can be traced back to 1942 when Saha submitted his resignation from the membership of the Board of scientific and Industrial Research since according to Saha it was “being awfully managed and his resignation was an expression of his protest.”²⁷ This was just before the establishment of the Council of scientific and industrial research that was established in India and headed by Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar in 1942.

By 1952 Saha, with Nehru had reached a low ebb, but this was more to do with the differences that he had with CSIR and its head Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar. Moreover, he expresses his differences in a letter to Nehru dated 23rd April 1952, where he

writes, "I had submitted to you my resignation from the Advisory Board of the Glass and Ceramic Research Institute as a protest against Bhatnagar's uncalled for remarks in the meeting of the Governing Body of CSIR".

The split between the two scientists was a known fact, but by 1952 it had escalated to a great extent. Nehru was the prime minister and also the chairman of CSIR, so Saha complained about various aspects of malfunctioning of CSIR. He writes "I believe that every National Laboratory should have a strong and active advisory committee, if it is to be useful to the nation. It ought to be composed of non-officials scientists, industrialist and also officers and commercial men, otherwise the Director and his staff would be living in an ivory tower, cut off from realities of life and from contact with the people interested in the promotion of the industry on the science represented by the National Laboratory, this view was debated, in the council before the National Government came and was accepted and I had a hand in drafting the duties of the Advisory Committee ...I do not think they had ever been liked by Bhatnagar, for he thinks Advisory committee are brakes to his power".²⁷

Saha felt that the situation in the laboratories was deploring day by day and it was important to get away from the "lepers", which had turned out to be a bone of contention for the proper functioning of the National Laboratories. This letter also brought out the feeling of extreme dislike that Saha had towards Bhatnagar, he writes, that Bhatnagar wanted to work as Dictator in all respects as far as the laboratories and research committees of the CSIR are concerned. Bhatnagar was accused of being authoritarian when it came in term of making appointments and policy of the National Laboratories, which was paving the way for jeopardising the future of CSIR by using his power for distributing his patronage. To substantiate his position, Saha also mentioned that Dr Bhabha had remained in the post of the

chairman of the Atomic Energy board for over eight years and “Dr D.N. Wadia has remained chairman of the geological Age Committee for over seven years. Thus he accused Bhatnagar of being extremely “power loving”.²⁸ This expression might hint to the frustration that Saha had because of the inability of Saha to establish his laboratory as the centre for nuclear research in India, but Saha’s accusations were not without reasons and his critique does shed lights on the lacunae of the functioning of CSIR. So merely analysing these letters as a sign of Saha’s marginalisation is a bit problematic. In the field of Nuclear research too, Saha was quite upset with the functioning of the Atomic Energy commission. The dissatisfaction continues when in another letter dated 23rd May 1953 he writes about the problems that plagued the Nuclear research and development in India. He writes, “The atomic Energy Act of 1948, which gave the central Government the right to control the development of Industries connected with the production and the use of Atomic Energy, mentioned Uranium, Thorium, Plutonium, Beryllium and their respective compounds as the prescribed substances, which came under the purview of the Act”.²⁹

This he felt was quite problematic as the elements Plutonium (94), and Neptunium (93) mentioned in the notification did not occur in nature but had to be produced by massive efforts in Production Piles. They were manufactured in USA, Britain, and USSR as raw materials for the Atom Bomb in Plant costing several hundred million dollars, and according to him, India had no resources to produce them “within the fifty years at the present tempo (1952)” of technological development. He mentioned about the decisions that he finds quite unpractical for he says “extension of control of radium, deuterium and lithium is questionable.” Radium was not manufactured in India during the early 1950s and no large bodies of Uranium had yet been discovered, which allowed its manufacturer to sell them on a commercial scale. So

for Saha, the control of unit production was meaningless. He mentioned that Deuterium was not produced in bulk in India, and would be impossible to be produced unless there was extensive hydro-electric work. He also shared discrepancies regarding the ban on lithium and stated that “we cannot understand why lithium should come under the ban. Lithium is probably used for Hydrogen Bomb, but it is not really like Beryllium. It occurs in plenty in other parts of the world, so control on its production has no meaning.” The criticism was, directed towards the Atomic Energy Act. Saha in his criticism not only touched upon the policies that was taken up the AEC, for the promotion of Atomic Energy but was quite ambivalent about how the government was distancing the mechanism of the AEC from the general public and masses, i.e. a notion of “secrecy” had engulfed the AEC programs and its functioning.

SAHA AGAINST SECRECY

Saha had reservations and “misgivings” towards the AEC. In a letter he mentioned, “The AEC has now been in operation for five years” and it had “enveloped itself” within a “cloud of secrecy” which according to him was extremely undesirable. Saha was against this notion of secrecy that government of India was advocating. This letter which he was addressing to Nehru, was written on behalf of “many eminent scientists interested in Atomic Energy”. The major issue that troubled Saha was the idea of Secrecy, he held that the Atomic Energy Commission of other countries was not as secret as that of India. He questioned the ground on which the government was keeping the progress of commission secret, “as if secrecy was from foreign countries” as there was hardly anything to keep back from any other countries. There was also no military or technical secrets involved which had to be protected, as Saha states “our government have no military ambition and have no intention of

developing atomic energy for military purpose".³⁰ At the same time, Saha left no stones unturned to criticise Bhabha. He stated that Cosmic Ray research had great importance for knowledge of fundamental particles but nowhere in the world was the Cosmic Ray research included in Atomic Research Commission. Even major countries like "UK, USA and all other countries, had a separate body to deal with cosmic Ray Research. Nucleonics, a journal dealing with Nuclear Science featured no issue, which dealt concerning the cosmic ray, included in the atomic energy commission of any countries. In a direct scathing attack to Bhabha, he states "the chairman i.e. Homi Bhabha wanted to create the impression that India's efforts have achieved very great work in cosmic Ray physics is good news, but the public would like to know what it is and how it has furthered atomic energy development in this or any other countries".³¹

CONCLUSION

The paper has centred around the ideas and views of Meghnad Saha taken from his correspondences. The story of Meghnad Saha according to Jhanvi Phalkey is the "story of marginalization". The points that I have referred above in the paper too corresponds to this argument, but this would be a reductive analysis. Meghnad Saha till the end of his lifetime, continued to be critical of government's policies. He was also elected as the Member of the Parliament in the first general election of 1952. The dissatisfaction and the criticism that his letters reflected, a separate episode where a prominent scientist was very critical to the scientific development of his own country. It certainly brings out the democratic structure within the picture, and participation of the scientists in the deliberations concerning the planning of Scientific Institutions in India.

Saha had long term relations with Jawaharlal Nehru, Homi J. Bhabha, Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar and also other leading scientific and political personalities. He had maintained relations with Nehru and other scientists all along his life. His scathing criticism of the government policies regarding the Atomic Energy Commission directly addressed to Prime Minister cannot be taken as his marginalization but can be argued as the importance as a Scientist he held, that made his voice more vocal, where the criticism brought out real issues. It is true that Saha's institution in Calcutta was not chosen by the government to establish as the Nodal centre of Nuclear Research, and this had upset Saha, but this cannot be linked with the assumption that it was the major reason for his dislike towards Bhabha or Bhatnagar. The dislike that reflected in the letter, cannot assume to be grounded on their personal conflicts as the letters are limited to scientific debates, the disagreement regarding the policies, its implementation and the functioning of the institutions. Thus it would be prudent to premise it within a discourse, where each problem and criticism that Saha expressed should be taken up as "scientific critique".

Reference:

¹Chatterjee, Santimay. Meghnad Saha – *The scientist and the Institution Builder*. Indian Journal of History of Science, 29(1),1994. Page no. 1

²Ibid

³Anderson, Robert S. *Nucleus and Nation: Scientists, International Networks, and Power in India*. University of Chicago Press, 2010. Page no. 31

⁴Phalkey, Jahnvi. *Atomic state: big science in twentieth-century India*. Permanent Black, 2013. Page no. 165

⁵Ibid. Page no. 172

⁶Chatterjee, Santimay. Meghnad Saha – *The scientist and the Institution Builder*. *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 29(1),1994. Page no. 8

⁷Ibid

⁸*Times of India*. March 31st, 1938

⁹Ibid

¹⁰Ibid

¹¹Ibid

¹²Anderson, Robert S. *Nucleus and Nation: Scientists, International Networks, and Power in India*. University of Chicago Press, 2010. Page no. 94

¹³Meghnad Saha to Jawaharlal Nehru . October 7th, 1938

¹⁴Ibid

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶Meghnad Saha to Jawaharlal Nehru. no specific date, 1940

¹⁷Kumar, Deepak. "Emergence of Sciencocracy": Snippets from Colonial India." *Economic and Political Weekly* (2004): 3893-3898

¹⁸Chatterjee, Santimay. Meghnad Saha – *The scientist and the Institution Builder*. *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 29(1),1994.

¹⁹Meghnad Saha to Jawaharlal Nehru, November 14th, 1941

²⁰Ibid

²¹Ibid

²²Homi J.Bhabha to Meghnad Saha. 25th January 1947

²³Meghnad Saha to Homi. J. Bhabha. 17th February 1947.

²⁴Meghnad Saha to Homi J. Bhabha. June 1st, 1946.

²⁵Homi J. Bhabha to Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar. January 15th, 1947

²⁶Meghnad Saha to Homi J. Bhabha. January 17th, 1947

²⁷Meghnad Saha to Jawaharlal Nehru, April 23rd, 1952

²⁸Ibid

²⁹Meghnad Saha to Jawaharlal Nehru, May 23rd, 1953

³⁰Meghnad Saha to Jawaharlal Nehru, November 11th, 1953

³¹Ibid

Role of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Combating Women Trafficking in Darjeeling Hills

Dr. Ujjwal Bhui and Persis Mukhia¹

Abstract

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) perform a variety of humanitarian services. Different NGOs cater solutions to different kinds of social issues and their focuses are on a wide range scale ranging from human rights to improving health, providing education to the underprivileged, spreading awareness on environment, upliftment of women and children, combating human trafficking and so on. Several NGOs in Darjeeling Hills are working to combat women and girl trafficking. The existing article aims to analyze empirically the roles play by these NGOs to prevent and control the trafficking of women.

Keywords: *gender, sexuality, bondage, Shakti Vahini, prostitution.*

Human Trafficking: A Brief Introduction

Human Trafficking is a grievous crime in human society. It is the inhuman act where the main aim is to make profit at the cost of trading humans mostly for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labour, begging, drug peddling, forced marriages, pornography or commercial sexual exploitation along with extraction and trade of organs, forced surrogacy and some are also used as combatants by some terrorist and insurgent groups, a grave violation of human rights. Trafficking can occur anywhere,

¹ Dr. Ujjwal Bhui is Associate Professor, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal and Persis Mukhia is Ph. D Scholar, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal & Assistant Professor of Sociology in North Bengal St. Xavier's College

in an urban or rural area, within a country or outside country where there is illegal migration. Both men and women may be victims of trafficking but the primary victims worldwide are mostly women and girls who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Article 3, Paragraph (a) of the United Nation's Trafficking Protocol is related to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. The Protocol declares "Trafficking in Persons" as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. *The Global Alliance against Trafficking* defines 'women Trafficking' as: All acts involved in the recruitment and/or transportation of a woman within and across national border for work or services by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position , debt bondage, deception or other forms of coercion. Every minute of a day, the most vulnerable women and children are raped for profit and pushed into the flesh trade. According to the *SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, 2002*, 'trafficking' means moving, selling or buying women and children for Prostitution within and outside a country for monetary or other considerations with or without the consent of the person subjected to trafficking (Nair, P.M. 2011: 11).

Trafficking in human beings takes place for the purpose of exploitation which is general and could be categorized as (a) Sex based and (b) non sex based. The former category includes trafficking for prostitution, commercial sexual abuse, pedophilia, pornography, cyber sex, and different types of disguised sexual exploitation that takes place in some of the massage parlours, beauty parlors, bars and other

manifestations like call girls racket, friends clubs etc. Non sex based trafficking could be for different types of servitude, like domestic labour, industrial labour, adoption, organ transplant, camel racing, marriage related rackets etc (Roy, Rekha 2010: 2). But the growing trafficking in women is principally for the purpose of prostitution, an international problem found in developing as well as in industrialized nations.

Trafficking in Women: Theoretical Discussion

Theories provide a concrete basis to a particular subject of discussion. For the existing study which deals with women trafficking, the "Theory of Gender and Sexuality" is being incorporated in view of the fact that it has been used since the early 1970s to indicate culturally constructed femininity and masculinity as opposed to biological sex differences. The 'female sex' is generally considered subordinated in comparison to the 'male sex'. Theories of gender oppression portrays women's position as the outcome of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men have primary and material interest in controlling and dominating women as they are the weaker sex and this leads to their exploitation. Trafficking in women is such a social and power relation issue among men and women wherein men dominate on females' body and mind.

Trafficking in women is local issue but it is obviously a global issue. It unlocks the national and international boundaries. The 'Theory of Globalization' is specifically relevant to throw light on the gloomy issue of women trafficking in our society. Since there is an extensive awareness which is expanded beyond our conventional boundaries, the 'Global Consciousness' - a consciousness that not only drives our life but also, at an empirical or practical level, is a source of socio-cultural change in societies throughout the world. As well as globalization refers to those practices

which tend to build and strengthen a unified world economy. The process of globalization as a discourse as well as an economic program has been laid down in India since the 1990s. Throughout the decade and subsequently the agenda of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) was set into action by India. Globalization as a process encourages even insists migration of people from one region to other regions within a country or one country to other countries. Globalization gives way to migration of women and children from one country to other countries which can also make them the drudges/slaves of globalization where they befall as easy targets as victims for the traffickers.

Objectives of the Study

The existing research work primarily is based on these theories which provide necessary direction to the work to obtain an empirical base. Considering the factors or the causes which have led to the uprising of trafficking of women in Darjeeling hills, it has been observed that several NGOs are working to combat this social evil out from the society. Those NGOs have taken up a well spirited team effort to organize outreach programmes, creating and spreading awareness in rural areas as well as in schools and colleges. Street plays are organized so that each and every age category of individuals become conscious as to preventing them from falling prey in the hands of traffickers. There are several NGOs in Darjeeling hills which play important roles to combat trafficking of women. The present paper mainly focuses on this aspect of NGOs like MARG, (Mankind in Action for Rural Growth), Hill Social Welfare Society, Cross Roads, Bal Suraksha Abhiyan, CINI, Tiny Hands, Kanchanjunga Udhar Kendra Welfare Society, and Mary Hill Ward Society which provide their every effort for preventing and controlling women trafficking in and around Darjeeling Hills. Following are the objectives of this study:

- (i) To study the nature of women trafficking in Darjeeling Hills
- (ii) To know the roles played by the NGOs to combat women trafficking
- (iii) To understand the ways and methods applied for preventing women trafficking

Research Methodology

The whole study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected by direct interviewing the NGO members. Purposing sampling technique has been applied to select the NGO members as informants from whom relevant information have been collected. Pilot survey was done before framing a semi-structured interview schedule used for collection of primary data. Primary data collected from different NGO members have been presented as case studies. Secondary data have been collected through books, newspapers and internet.

Women Trafficking in Darjeeling Hills: Some Aspects

Shri Rishi Kant, the Director of *Shakti Vahini*, an NGO working against trafficking stated in a National Seminar on “Trafficking in Person: Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation on 26th and 27th of November 2016, organized by the Law Department of N.B.U., stated that many girls from Darjeeling Hills were trafficked to Kashmir, North India and many other places. He also mentioned that North Bengal particularly Darjeeling Hills has been a very easy target for trafficking in women as it shares porous boundaries with other nations. It also has a prolonged history of movement of people, goods and commodities.

Darjeeling district is the northern part of West Bengal which shares its boundaries with Nepal to the west, Sikkim to the north, and Bhutan to the east. Irrespective of having potentialities for a better development, it still has low pace of development and economic growth paving the way for youngsters to seek employment opportunities elsewhere in other towns, cities and other countries. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, closed tea gardens and many other factors have given advantage to the traffickers to lay their firm grip on the innocence and simple minded people from Darjeeling hills. We can also say that this porous nature of the area allows and gives ample opportunity to the traffickers, who are also known by the term 'Dallas' or 'Dalalis' who could be either neighbours, relatives, lovers, people who have been trafficked before, or sometimes even the parents. The recruiters pick the victims from bus stops, railway stations, airports, streets, beauty parlours or even from their homes. The 'Dallas' or 'Dalalis' move to the potential sites for victims especially poverty stricken areas where there has been no proper rehabilitation. The traffickers are very calculative as to from where and when they can pick up their victims. They have a very large scale networking, spreading all across, and are using modern methods to track their victims. Regions which have been hit by earthquakes, floods, cyclones, drought or any natural calamity can be their softer targets. Poverty and hunger makes women and children belonging to the poorer sections of the society highly vulnerable to human trafficking. As per our observation in the region besides the factors like poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, natural disaster etc one unique feature exists there that even if the girls go missing hardly there is any missing complaint filed in the police station by the family members due to the fear of social disgrace. They also do not file complaint as they are with the hope that the girl would return after three days. This unique cultural practice in the hills is term as "*Chor ko Shor*" when family members assume that the girl has eloped and would come home

after tying the knot with the boy but within that period of time *i.e.* three days they are either taken to different cities or flown abroad. Over the years many women and children went missing but there was no initiative to trace their abductors or to realize the cause of their abduction. These incidents became a sensation only for the moment and soon forgotten.

Role of the NGOs

The Darjeeling Hills facilitate many Non Governmental Organizations or NGOs to work actively to combat women and children trafficking. They have been spreading awareness among people consequently people are also becoming active to prevent trafficking of women and children. Officials from some of the NGOs were interviewed in the course of the study. These NGOs are the Mankind in Action for Rural Growth (MARG), Hill Social Welfare Society (HSWS), CROSSROADS, Bal Suraksha Abhiyan, Tiny Hands, Mary Hill Ward Society, IMPULSE etc. The following table shows the activities of some of the selected NGOs which they acknowledged during their face-to-face interview with the researcher:

Table No 3: Activities of the NGOs

Questions	MARG	HSWS	TINY HANDS	CROSSROADS
1. What are the causes of Human Trafficking?	Unemployment, alcoholism, fake marriage, Socio-cultural practice of “ <i>chor ko shor</i> ”	Unsafe Migration, easy money, unemployment, fake marriage, School dropouts.	Lack of job opportunities, intra country migration, deception by lover or spouse	Poverty, politics, family problems, sex abuses, no proper implementations of legislation
2. How do you	Police is	Asking the	Regular	Organization

act, if girls /women are being trafficked?	mobilized immediately & information gathered about the victim.	parents & relatives to file a missing complain & then organization takes up the case.	monitoring are done along with inquiry	directs people to child line in case of minor & assists people to report the case.
3. How do you get information of the victims?	From parents, police, & Sansthas (Committees)	Parents, relatives, friends	Staffs & SSB (Seema, Sashtra Bal)	It is through awareness programmes people come & share
4. What are the difficulties faced during rescuing?	Victims consider NGOs & police as outsiders	Non-cooperation from the police, as without the of assistance of the police they cannot functions	Victims at time do not accept that they are being trafficked as they are brain washed & hence they retaliate with the staffs.	Organization does not rescue but assists people to report cases, do not face much difficulty
5. After rescuing where are the girls/women kept?	Shelter homes / protection homes in Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar	Kept in shelter homes or reintegrated with their families	Minors are kept at CINI, majors are reintegrated with their families	Organization refers to other organization/s which work in the nearby areas
6. Are the victims accepted by the society or	Not easily accepted by the society	Not easily accepted	Pre-trafficked rescuing leads to easy acceptance by	Not easily accepted but more awareness programmes in

not?			the society.	this regard are required
7. What type of counseling is given to the victim and by whom?	Professional counselors	Since professional counselors are not there, so seniors of the organization do the counseling	All the staffs counsel the victims & handover them to the shelter homes	Organization does not have trained counselors so senior members counsel the victims
8. If not, how do you provide relief to the rescued victims?	Organization does not provide relief, it only rescues	Organization does not provide relief, but provide training courses & encourages them	Organization does not provide relief, but ensures home safety	Organization does not provide relief, but assists in reporting the cases
9. Women/girls are mostly trafficked from which ethnic group?	From all categories - General / ST / SC / Others	Mostly scheduled tribes as compared to others	Nepalese from Nepal in big groups and in most of the time Adivasi (ST) girls in small groups or as individual	All categories are vulnerable to trafficking but ST and Nepalis are more vulnerable
10. From which subdivision / district / country you have rescued the most?	All Sub divisions	Kalimpong	Nepal, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling	Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Doars

11. Any help from NGOs / Religious communities or any Union / Samajs?	Yes, DAT (Drivers Against Trafficking) clubs are formed who provide help	Yes, the organization has received help from the Panchayats, Sansthas & also from GDNS (Gorkha Dukh Niwarak Samelan)	Yes, other organizations, churches, taxi drivers, travel agencies provide help	Yes, the organization has received help from the locals and Panchayats
12. How often do you organize outreach programmes and where?	Awareness programmes are held in every month in schools, colleges, hotels, samajs etc	Once in two months especially in rural areas	Once in a month with Christian communities in Malbazar, Panitanki along with distribution of pamphlets	Regularly, sometimes 6 to 8 times in a month on drug addiction, domestic violence, trafficking issues etc
13. How willing are the police to join hands at the time of rescue?	Police forces are very cooperative	Police forces is much required at the time of rescue ,though the cases are not taken seriously	Police are casual, they stop the traffickers only when order comes from higher authority	Very cooperative and help to prevent trafficking
14. Is there any financial aid given by the Government	Yes, but it is a very long process	No financial aid is provided but funds are collected through	There is no fund at present as the organization has to prove	No fund but organization is supported by providing donations

while rescuing?		donations and membership fees	itself independent at least for a year	
15. Is there any political pressure in the functioning of the organization?	No	Yes	No	No
16. What are your future plans?	More focus on prevention of trafficking	Control and prevention of trafficking	Organization is willing to work more for the society	By listening and welcoming new ways and strategies

Case Studies of Some Well-Known NGOs in Darjeeling Hills

1. **MARG:** It was established in Darjeeling on 8th September 2006. It focuses on issues relating to women and children. It provides basic education to the underprivileged women, children, marginalized sections and rescued trafficked victims. The General Secretary of MARG, Nirnay John Chettri stated that flesh trade is on the rise in Darjeeling hills mainly due to unemployment resulting from political unrest, and porous borders in Darjeeling Hills. He also informed that 420 girls were found missing in 2010 which rose to 923 in 2012 as per the survey conducted by the NGO in the district. MARG has been organizing outreach programmes regularly, conducting awareness programmes in schools and colleges. They have formed clubs in schools /colleges and presently there are 7 numbers of clubs in Darjeeling and 4 numbers of clubs in Kalimpong. They also held awareness camps among the Local Samaj, Drivers Samaj, and also with the

Police forces. The NGO has rescued 43 victims since 2011-2012 from various age groups. 5 traffickers were convicted for 2 to 4 years of imprisonment. 150 victims have been recovered and they were kept in the Coochbehar Rehabilitation Centre as they lack a home to keep the rescued victims. Most of the victims were minors.

2. Kanchanjunga Uddhar Kendra Welfare Society (KUK) is a very old NGO of Siliguri which was established on 15th December 2004. It focuses on prevention of trafficking, child protection, issues related with any type of violence against women. Its focused areas are Siliguri, Darjeeling hills and Dooars. It has built a good rapport with Police administration, schools, and other organizations which inform them about missing cases. They have been rescuing women and girls from trafficking as they receive help from “*DECOIR CUSTOMER*” meaning to say some known staff acts as a customer and make their search for missing individual. Just after information of the missing person, they immediately report the police. They have been playing a big role in providing training to the members like teachers, advocates etc coming from the nearby villages. They have formed the *Village Protection Committees* which alert people in the villages regarding trafficking. They have staffs for counseling the trafficked victims. Shri Prabhat Pathak, a member of the organization stated that trafficking has two types: CSW (Commercial Sex Worker) - when girls, women are trafficked for commercial sexual purpose and the other one is LRW (Labour Related Work) - when children especially boys are trafficked for labour purposes for camel jockeying and other uses. Awareness campaigns like workshops are held. Many Christian missionaries and institutions have come forward to help the organization. They also get information from travel

agencies which also help them in their endeavors in combating trafficking. He stated that the main reason behind trafficking in North Bengal is due to the limitation of jobs in the region. Being a tea garden belt where thousands of labourers were employed few years ago are now unemployed particularly due to the use of machines in tea factories. Consequently, requirement of labour power is less, so supply of jobs goes down and people are forced to migrate out of the region. In 2016, three batches of girls were taken to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar for organizing orchestra songs where Bollywood item songs were played and the abducted girls were forced to dance. And later, these girls were sold one by one to the people who attended the orchestra event. Eight girls were rescued in Raxaul (Bihar) out of which 5 girls were trafficked from Nepal, 2 girls from Dooars and 1 girl was abducted from Assam. During the period 2004-2008, approximately more than hundred cases of trafficking mostly girls from Nepal who were running away to escape the Maoist threat and fear were handled and solved. Five numbers of traffickers were convicted in 2013.

- 3. Hill Social Welfare Society, Kalimpong:** The NGO was established on 23rd November, 2000. It mainly focuses on the upliftment of women, children and other marginalized groups. They organize health checkups, monitor nutrition intake and provide training to the youths. It also focuses on agriculture (multi-crop farming, square feet farming, and animal husbandry). They also have started the Self Help Group or Neel Kamal Group scheme to empower rural women. They watch over areas like Kalimpong, Algarah, Gorubathan, Rangli-Rangliot blocks and the tea gardens found in these regions. The main role of HSWS is to provide a platform for training to young girls and women as beauticians, handloom and weaving workers. They

are trained in cutting and tailoring. They make khadas, shawls, incense sticks etc. Horticulture is also practiced like mushroom cultivation so that they can sustain their livelihood. HSWS also conducts awareness programmes in rural areas, tea gardens to educate them so to prevent forced migration. They have rescued 42 victims since 2011-2016 who belonged to the age group of 21-35 years. Some of the rescued were sent to missionary homes, one victim who was trafficked from Nepal sent to Maiti in Nepal. Others also were reintegrated. Shri Govind Pradhan stated that those who were rescued from brothels were not accepted by their respective society whereas those victims who were rescued before pushing to the brothels were accepted by their society.

4. **Tiny Hands, Siliguri:** This NGO is one of the recently established NGOs set up on 1st June 2016, but has taken a major role in transit monitoring, preventing of trafficking by conducting awareness programmes at bus stops, junctions, railway stations etc. They have also conducted many awareness camps with the stakeholders, rickshaw pullers, auto drivers and travel agencies. They also have established Monitoring Cell in Panitanki situated in the Indo-Nepal border. The Organization has handled 52 cases in Siliguri, New Jalpaiguri Railway Station, Siliguri Junction, and bus stations etc where two traffickers were caught out of which one trafficker was convicted and sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment as per appropriate the law of Nepal. In India, the punishment is only for 5 to 7 years and occasionally it is of 10 years. Three cases were found from Malbazaar, Jalpaiguri in which no traffickers were arrested as the victims failed to give their statements. Most of the girls are tribals from the tea garden areas of Terai and Dooars (sub-Himalayan regions).

5. **Mary Ward Social Centre, Siliguri:** This NGO was established in 2016 in Champasari situated in the outskirts of Siliguri. It is run by the Loreto Sisters. The main role played by the NGO is to monitoring the nearby tea gardens like Mohargaon, Gulmarg, Sukna, New Chumta, Putin Bari, Nischaritapur tea garden so that trafficking cases should not happened. Margret Horo is an active member who has been organizing special awareness camps in these tea gardens. She herself rescued three minor girls from Bagdogra. She said that the rescued minor girls are handed over to CINI, and the rescued adult girls/women are reintegrated with their families. She has been keeping a strict vigilance on the tea gardens as the tribals are very much vulnerable for trafficking.
6. **Bal Suraksha Abhiyan (BSA), Kalimpong:** It has been looking after children and rescuing them from being trafficked. At the present they have 96 children who were rescued from different districts of West Bengal. Sister Subeshna says that children used to elope and generally they are falling in the wrong hands. She handled a case when two minors were being taken to Haryana but with the help of Child Line in Delhi they could bring them back home in Kalimpong.
7. **CROSSROADS, Kalimpong:** it is an another organization which has been helping to prevent trafficking by registering cases of missing girls and children as most of the time cases go unregistered as parents are hesitant and out of fear they do not file cases. Sometimes, the traffickers are residents in the same village who keep pressurizing the parents that their children would be back and not to file a complaint. CROSSROADS helps the parents to register complaints and hands it over to other organizations working on it. It

also holds awareness camps on domestic violence, drug addiction and on trafficking. The organization has rescued three girls from Darjeeling, and two girls from Sikkim.

Observations and Opinions

Observations have been made here taking into consideration the roles played by the NGOs. Above mentioned NGOs in Darjeeling Hills (District) are actively working and rescuing victims of trafficking of women but the problems which are being observed by them are many which are as follows:

- ***Lack of Shelter Homes for Rescued Victims:*** There is an organization named 'CINI' which keeps only minor girls and boys even after rescuing the major girls are let off who are again re-trafficked. There is one shelter home named 'KORAK' in Jalpaiguri, so girls from Siliguri and Darjeeling Hills have to be kept either in Jalpaiguri or in Coochbehar. It would be better if a home is set up by the Government either in Siliguri or in Darjeeling.
- ***Fewer Co-operations from the Police:*** On occasions, the NGOs do not get sufficient as well as timely co-operation from the Police administration and the delay in their arrival creates a lot of instability which provides chance to the traffickers to escape never to be traced again.
- ***Change in the Statement by the Victims:*** Sometimes, victims do not accept that they are being trafficked and they tend to change their statement due to the fear of threat and prolonged court hearings. NGOs have to be very vigilant and need to counsel them appropriately.

- ***Lack of Good Professional Counselors:*** Majority of the NGOs lack good professional counselors especially to motivate parents to lodge FIRs against the trafficker/s. According to a member of 'Hariyo Kharka' meaning 'Green Pasture' a Christian Organization in Kalimpong which provides counseling to the youths and empowers women by organizing awareness programmes. Ms. Saru Koirala stated that even after the rescuing, the girls are kept in shelter homes provided by the Government in inhuman conditions. These shelter homes are crowded resulting in several inmates fleeing back to the brothels.
- ***Organization of Additional Awareness Campaigns:*** More awareness campaigns through awareness programmes, skits, distribution of pamphlets and sensitization on the grass roots of different sections of people like in different clubs, hotels, drivers, teachers, students, and shopkeepers could help prevent trafficking from rural and urban areas.
- NGOs are trying their level best to do the follow ups for the rescued victims so that they do not return to the same profession and also providing them some opportunities like trainings in beauty parlour, sewing and other types of skill development related trainings which can help them to sustain on their livelihood.

Though, in Darjeeling hills, NGOs are working individually. According to Ms. Hasina Kharbhih, Managing Director of IMPULSE, an NGO working against trafficking stated that NGOs have to form a nexus in order to work against trafficking. Since North Bengal specifically Darjeeling district is the corridor to the North East. Therefore, the focus of IMPULSE is to make all NGOs pro active for combating trafficking and facilitating chain of robust undergone umbrella so that they could function more properly and effectively.

Concluding Remarks

Women Trafficking in Darjeeling hills can be controlled and prevented only when people from different walks of life irrespective of their differences, join hands together to fight for uplifting women in society and helping them to acquire a position of respect, also teaching the young ones the revival of values which has now been disappearing from our society. Then only can our society be a better place for humankind – free from all kind of domination and bondage. NGOs are playing a significant role in this respect in Darjeeling hills.

References

1. Bales, Kevin. (2005). *Understanding Global Slavery*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
2. Bhumali, Anil, and S. Anil Kumar. (2007). *Women in the face of Globalization*. New Delhi: Serials Publications.
3. Chattopadhyaya, B.D, and Roy, Kumkum. (2005). *Women in Early Societies*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers.
4. Hart, Joyce. (2009). *Human Trafficking*. New York: Rosen Publishing.
5. Kara, Siddharth. (2009). *Sex Trafficking*. New York: Columbia University Press.
6. Mills, Bright. (2011). *Human Trafficking*. USA: Trafford Publishing.
7. Nair, P.M. (2011). *Human Trafficking*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
8. Perera, Ariyapala. (2011). *Human Trafficking: A Crime that Shame humanity*. New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House.
9. Roy, Rekha. (2010). *Women and Child Trafficking in India*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.
10. Shelly, Louise. (2010). *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
11. Upadhyay, Minal H. (2012). *Human Trafficking*. Jaipur: Shree Niwas Publications.

Other Sources

1. Interview with Mr. Nirnay John Chettri. General Secretary of MARG. 25th March 2015 and again on 19th March 2017, Darjeeling.
2. Interview with Mr. Govind Pradhan of Hill Social Welfare Society. 10th October 2014.

3. Interview with Mrs. Yuden Bhutia of Hill Social Welfare Society. 27th October 2014.
4. Interview with Mr. Ashim Rai, Tiny Hands. 27th March 2017.
5. Interview with Ms. Margret Horo, Mary Ward Social Centre. (27th March 2017).
6. Interview with Ms. Hasina Kharibhieh, MD of IMPULSE foundation, Meghalaya. 17th January 2017.
7. Interview with Saru Koirala. Hariyo Kharka. 21st February 2017.
8. Interview with Kylie Duncan, CROSSROADS, Kalimpong. 16th March 2017.
9. Interview with Prabhat Pathak, KUK, Siliguri. 28th March 2017.

Newspaper Sources

The Telegraph, 19th January 2017; 10th March, 2017; 24th November, 2016.
Himalya Darpan, 20th July 2016; 22nd December 2016.

Fifty Years of Naxalbari Uprising: Looking Back

Dr. Swapan Kumar Pain¹

Abstract:

The Naxalbari uprising was an event of great significance not only in the history of the agrarian movements but also in the subsequent movements also. After this movement the name 'Naxalbari' became a well-known place in the political atlas in India and abroad. The present paper is an attempt to look back on the problem of peasant mobilization in pre-Naxalbari days in the light of recent available documents after five decades.

Keywords: *Adhial system, Terai, Kisan, Panchayat, Labours, Tribes*

"Fifty years later, Naxalbari is getting restive again. A local youth was allegedly picked up last week by border security guards on what villagers suspect are trumped-up charges of drug-dealing. The villagers are in foment....the next time a border security person enters the village, they vow to tie him up and thrash them. But they appear unsure and a mention of the scary consequences is enough to expose their desperation.

No one is willing to listen to us babu. What about the local leaders? The Panchyat? The Police? No one. We have no leader. The Naxalbari uprising is history. Charu, Kanu and Jangal are all dead. And a new revolution is nowhere in sight."

Hindustan Times, 23rd May, 2017

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of History, Raiganj University, West Bengal, India

Fifty year ago on 24th & 25th May, 1967 an agrarian movement broke out at Naxalbari and its adjoining areas on the outskirts of Siliguri of the northern part of Bengal known as *Naxalbari Movement*, which rocked the whole world. The Naxalbari uprising was an event of great significance not only in the history of the agrarian movements but also in the subsequent movements also. After this movement the name 'Naxalbari' became a well-known place in the political atlas in India and abroad. The present paper is an attempt to look back on the problem of peasant mobilization in pre-Naxalbari days in the light of recent available documents after five decades.

The local jurisdictions of Naxalbari and its adjoining Khoribari and Phansidewa Police Stations were the scenes of the series of movements. These three police stations form the extreme southern tip of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The total area covered by these three PSs will be about 274 square miles, with a population of about one lakh and fifty thousand, out of which about fifty thousand were labours engaged in the 32 tea- gardens located within this area. The topography of this area is an admixture of jungles, bushes and tea-gardens on a fairly flat landscape. Cultivation is practically confined to paddy and the yield is of an average type. This area has borders with Nepal, Bangladesh and Bihar.¹ Here the peasants are mostly comprised of the subaltern- Santals, Oraons, and Rajbanshis, formed a large portion of population.² These people were exploited by Jotedars under the '*Adhiar System*'. It means the landlords provided seeds, ploughs, and bullocks, in exchange, of which they cultivated the plots and got a share of crops. The peasants were least satisfied with the 'Adhiar System' because they felt exploited in the hands of the jotedars.³

The movements of the peasants took place not only over specific issues and demands of the peasants, but also against defective land-tenancy system introduced by the British Indian Government. The formation of an organization of the peasants in 1937 marked a turning point in the history of the peasant movement in Bengal. Between 1937 and the end of the British rule in 1947 peasant revolts and resistance occurred in waves. Under the leadership of *Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS)* the peasants were drawn into struggles which were not only unique in character but had no parallel in the previous history of the peasant movement in Bengal.⁴ While previous peasant movements were movements of a local and sporadic character, the movements led by the BPKS were more stable, organized and widespread. A large section of the peasants were involved in such movements and they had behind them the support of the largest section of the rural people. The style and methods of the protest adopted in these movements were also unprecedented. These were not merely constitutional agitations: these included violent demonstrations, armed insurrections and courting of arrests.⁵

Mahasweta Devi, a social activist and creative writer, also pointed out in the preface of her novel '*Agnigarva*' (in Bengali),

"...the main causes of the grief of these areas are the land owned by the tea-gardeners. Here, almost all the labourers are brought by the tea-gardeners from outside. These outsiders have become local settlers with the passage of time. They have always faced disaster due to severe exploitation. The tea gardeners here had surplus land and they distributed it among the labourers fully loyal to them. The Government witnessing this transaction deliberated over the question of taking over this surplus land, but the plan of doing this was later for shaken which generated disaffection in the community of the labourers. In the mid 50s these tea-garden adherers began agitating against the tea-gardeners. Mainly the demand was bringing

the surplus land of the tea garden owners within the Government control and thereafter the distribution of this surplus land among them. This agitation became vehemently violent after 1959. Consequently, tea gardeners drove out the adhiars from the tea gardens, demolished their hutment with the elephants. The result was that the peasants and labourers of these areas took up arms against this and protested in an organized manner...."⁶

The fact is that Naxalbari, Khoribari and Phansidewa areas of Darjeeling District witnessed continuous peasant movement since 1946. In an article published in 1973 titled '*Report on the Peasant Movement in the Terai Region*', Kanu Sanyal, one of the architects of the peasant movement of the areas focuses on the various phases of the peasant movement. It was during the *Tebhaga Movement* of 1946 that the bargadars were first drawn in the peasant movement in 1948-50. The *Tebhaga Movement (three parts)* demanded the reduction of the share of the landowners from one half of the crop to one-third. The peasants were allowed to cultivate the fields and the land owners snatched away two-third of the harvested crops to their granaries. The movement spread like wildfire from village to village from Dinajpur and Rangpur in North Bengal to 24 Parganas in the south of the province. Although, primarily launched on economic demands, the rebellion in some areas led to the flight of landlords leaving the village at the mercy of the peasants, who often virtually turned them into *liberated areas* administering affairs in the villages through Kisan Sabha.⁷

From 1951 onwards, there was a continuous peasant upsurges. The Kisan Sabha built up its organization during 1951-54. From 1955 to 1956, the demand for bonus of tea-garden labourers and the peasant movement went on simultaneously. Responding to the call of the BPKS, the Naxalbari Unit carried on the movement for the occupation of the '*benami land*' during 1958-62. Naturally, clashes unleashed between the

jotedars and the peasants, and about two thousand peasants were arrested in 1958-59. Apparently, the Kisan Sabha carried on a long and patient campaign to woo peasant support. Kanu Sanyal claimed that "*these struggles could be organized because there was a leading team of self-sacrificing cadres.*"⁸

Until the events of 1966 and 1967 which reached its crescendo by the uprising at Naxalbari the general belief was that rural India had always been a mass sleeping villages accepting and acquiescing in every form of injustice and oppression. This belief, contrary to the actual history, was nurtured by the values preached and the stresses laid by the Indian bourgeois leaders, both during the anti-British movements and after the transfer of power of 1947.⁹ While Gandhiji no doubt was the first among the Indian bourgeois leaders to highlight the depressing poverty of the rural masses and recognize the need for utilizing them in the national struggle. Nirmal Kumar Bose, one of Gandhi's most brilliant disciples, said that, "*the ancient tradition in which people answered hatred by love, anger by calmness, or in other words, invited self-suffering instead of inflicting suffering and punishment upon other for the vindication of a just cause....found a new expression....under the leadership of M.K. Gandhi.*"¹⁰

Thus the militant actions by the peasantry were discouraged by the Congress leaders. Naturally, violent expressions of the protest by the peasants were underplayed in official histories of the national movement. Conflicts between the feudal landlords and the peasants were ignored and harmonizing aspects of the rural tradition were upheld. The ideal view of the '*Panchyat*' as they concord of all rural classes was counter posed against the grim reality of class antagonism in the villages.¹¹

In 1974, Kanu Sanyal gave an account of the background to the Naxalbari peasant uprising. He also indicated the beginnings of his differences with Charu Majumdar and provided the basic theoretical scaffold to the movement. According to Mr.

Sanyal, the communists of North Bengal built up the peasant's organization in Naxalbari during 1951 and 1954 by fighting against the petty oppressive acts of the jotedars. Later, between 1955 and 1957, the tea-garden labourers were organized and rallied along with the peasants. In 1958-62, the Naxalbari movement embarked upon a more militant phase when the total peasants' organization under the leadership of the communists gave the call for the harvesting of crops and their collection by the tillers, hoisting of red flags in their respective fields, arming of the peasants for the protection of their crops and defense against police attacks.¹²

Dr. A.P. Mukherjee, the then Superintendent of Police, Darjeeling District, and noted academician also raised the unsatisfactory land settlement behind the peasant unrest. He suggested the Cabinet Committee that *"....to induce sincere and emergent administrative measures to look into the alleged unsatisfactory land settlement operations in the affected areas and also into the alleged misappropriation of vested lands by certain jotedars and also into the prevalence of benami lands as well as eviction of bargadars.....In the first place, we must be morally, and not simply legally, convinced that a sincere attempt has been made to sort out the alleged misgivings of a section of the agitated peasantry. Any police officer who has had occasion to serve in rural areas knows only too well that the majority of the cases of the murder and deadly rioting in the rural areas primarily originate from our unsatisfactory land tenure system and land settlement administration..."*¹³

In the pre-Naxalbari peasant movement women also played a vital role. But till now their role was not highlighted by any scholar. Before the Naxalbari uprising many women were connected with the peasant organization. Among them one was Galeswari Devi. Since 1955 she had been a member of Krishak Samity. From that time onwards till her death she went on fighting against the rowdies of the landlords. She had 20 bighas of land of her own and she fought many legal battles against

Tinkadi Kundu of Siliguri in connection of her land ownership. She had to tackle a series of police vandalism. As a leader of Krishak Samity of hatighisa she had conducted many agitations. During the Naxalite struggle her house was used as a centre of liaison.¹⁴ The activities and the programmes of the leaders like Shanti Munda, Lila Majumdar (wife of Charu Majumdar), Galeswari Tharu and many others set an example and imparted courage to them. These women were the active members of women's wing of the Communist party of India (CPI). At this time the ultra leftist leadership of the Mahila Samity comprised the mother of Jangal Santal and Babulal Biswakarmokar, Barki Devi, Galeswari Tharu, Leela Majumdar, etc. These women crossed the villages in processions with their supporters with red flags in their hands. From her teenage Shanti Munda, known as Lungi Munda, engaged herself with the duty of convincing women about the struggle for occupying ownership of excess lands from the Jotedars, inequal distribution of crops and other problems. From that time her political consciousness began to grow and take shape. In the Peasants' Struggle of Naxalbari of 1967 she actively participated.¹⁵ It may be recalled here that among the women who participated in the armed peasant struggle of Naxalbari, she is the only one surviving till now. Presently at the age of 74, Shanti Munda walks with a hunch and her coarse cotton saree clashes violently with the trendy jeans and buzz cuts of her grandsons. She is still living in her ancestral village of Hatighisa, around 10 K.M. away from Naxalbari, a pristine region of rolling greens and tea gardens cradled by the Himalayas—in another world, this could be paradise.¹⁶

In September 1966, during the 16 day strike in the tea plantations, the ground was prepared for the peasants' uprising. At the beginning of 1967, the Siliguri Sub-division peasant convention gave out the call to i) establish the authority of the peasant committees in all matters of the villages, ii) get organized and be armed in

order to crush the resistance of jotedars and rural reactionaries, iii) smash the jotedars monopoly of ownership of the land and redistribute the land through the peasant committees. The convention further brought to light the peasant struggle against feudalism would have to face the repression of all reactionaries.¹⁷ Suniti Kumar Ghosh, an old age Leftist leader and renounced academician also pointed out in his book "Naxalbari: Before and After" that "*the peasants of Terai....swept into the dust the political, economic and social authority, dignity and prestige built up in the villages by the landlords and jotedars, who represent feudalism, and established the rule of the peasant committees in the villages through their armed revolt*"¹⁸

In the meantime, in the Assembly poll in West Bengal the Left Parties came out in flying colours with convincing majority and formed the 14 Party United Front Government. The U.F. Ministry tried to arrest the peasant movement which was taking the form of forcible occupation of land in the Naxalbari, Khoribari and Phansidewa areas.¹⁹ Mr. H.K. Konar, the new Land and Land Revenue Minister and a Veteran CPI(M) peasant leader arrived at Siliguri, called of Kanu Sanyal and announced a policy of quick distribution of surplus land among the landless and stopping of eviction of sharecroppers. Later in may 1967, in an interview with his party's Bengali mouthpiece '*Ganashakti*' he said that the government had decided to distribute the land among the landless and the poor peasants on the basis of consultation with the members of *Gram Panchyat*, representatives of *Kisan Sabha*, *M.L.A.* and *Anchal Pradhans*. But the demonstrating peasants refused this proposal on two grounds: *Firstly*, Mr. Konar promised to distribute the land, but he was not sure how to recover the land transferred malafide by the landlords. He admitted in the same interview, regarding benami (malafide) transfers, the Government had not yet been able to take any decision. *Secondly*, the demonstrating peasants also began realizing the rural landlords, who were in possession of surplus land, could always

take the help of the law to delay the seizure of their land, and thus postpone for an indefinite period distribution of the surplus land.²⁰

Thus, the Siliguri Unit of CPI(M) (Naxalbari, Khoribari and Phansidewa falls under Siliguri Sub-division of Darjeeling District) chose to reject this proposals and decided to continue the movements. The movement became violent and finally set an example for militant activities which in West Bengal people never witnessed in the peasant front. It became electric and spread different parts of the country.

The incidents of 24th May of 1967 rocked the whole world. Till today the circumstances that led to this incident and the incidents themselves are a mystery to many of us. On the 24th May 1967 a big detachment of the police entered the villages of Naxalbari to resist the peasants from carrying on with their armed looting and a plundering. The police had at that time an additional responsibility to save the jotedars too. When the police tried to enter through the Vijayanagar tea garden at least 50 to 60 women led by Krishnamaya Charjon and Sabitri Das obstructed them. When this obstruction was underway the police beat with batten, a pregnant woman named Padma Karigar died of bleeding due to miscarriage. This triggered a counter attack by hundred of armed peasants who were equipped with bows & arrows, stick and lances, clubs and spears. Due to this attack of peasants, Sonam Wangi, a police officer died on the spot. Narayan Chakraborty, SI of police was pierced by a number of arrows. Seeing that the situation was taking an untoward direction other policemen got back. But the next day i.e. 25th May, an innumerable policemen and para-military forces made forays into these villages killed indiscriminately eleven people. Among these eleven people nine were women, a child and a peasant.²¹ After this brutal incident, the Naxalbari peasant movement was well-known all over the world.

Thus, it may be summed up that the pre-Naxalbari peasant unrest prepared the stage for 'Naxalbari Uprising'. It was basically a movement of the agricultural and tea-garden labourers and their militant association in the limited areas of North Bengal. Its success was limited and was less significant from the point of view of the total success of the peasant movement in the countryside. It had openly instigated the peasants into violence and terror and made an attempt to usurp party leadership, to violate all norms of peasant and organization. But after five decades some of the agitators realized their blunder. Shanti Munda was one of them. In the words of Shanti Munda *we got a stupendous support from people in 1967 but we do not get it now any more. People fear us and avoid us. Definitely, we have committed certain blunders.*

References

- ¹. Superintendent of Police's Note to the Cabinet Committee on the Current Disturbances in Naxalbari-Khoribari-Phansidewa P.S. elekas of Siliguri Sub-Division, Darjeeling, dated. 10/11 June, 1967, also see Dr. A.P. Mukherjee's book 'The Naxalite Movement (1967-1972)', K.P. Bagchi & Company, Kolkata, 2007, p.40
- ². Sen Sunil: Peasant Movements in India, Kolkata, 1982, p.214
- ³. Journal of Indian History published by University of Kerala, Vol. LXXXV, Parts. 1-3, 2007, An article entitled 'Women in the Naxalbari Uprising: A Historical Overview' written by Swapan Kumar Pain, pp. 275-276
- ⁴. Rasul M.A.: A History of the All India Kisan Sabha, National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd., 1989, 2nd edition, Kolkata, pp. 5-7, also see Krishak Sabhar Itihas in Bengali

-
5. Chatterji Rakhahari, (ed): Politics in West Bengal, The World Press, Kolkata, 1985, An Article entitled 'Peasant Movements and Associations in West Bengal' written by D. Chakraborty, p. 147
 6. Devi Mahasweta: Agnigarva (in Bengali), Karuna, 1978, Preface of the book
 7. Banerjee Sumanta; In the Wake of Naxalbari, Subarnarekha, Kolkata, 1980, pp. 24-25.
 8. Sen Samar(ed): Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology, Vol-II, Katheshilpa, Kolkata, 1978, pp. 329-333
 9. Banerjee Sumanta; op.cit., p. 18
 10. Bose N.K: Studies in Gandhism, Merit Publisher, Kolkata, 1962, pp. 86-87
 11. Banerjee Sumanta; op.cit., p. 18
 12. Purba Taranga, May,1, 1974, An Article by Kanu Sanyal
 13. Superintendent of Police's Note to the Cabinet Committee on the Current Disturbances in Naxalbari-Khoribari-Phansidewa P.S. elekas of Siliguri Sub-Division, Darjeeling, dated. 10/11 June, 1967, also see Dr. A.P. Mukherjee's book 'The Naxalite Movement (1967-1972)', K.P. Bagchi & Company, 2007, pp. 78-79
 14. Journal of Indian History published by University of Kerala, Vol. LXXXV Parts. 1-3, 2007, An article entitled 'Women in the Naxalbari Uprising: A Historical Overview' written by Swapan Kumar Pain, p. 277
 15. An Interview with Shanti Munda, dated 02.03.2007
 16. Hindustan Times, Dated. 23.05.2017
 17. Deshabrati, Dated. 24.10.1968, An Article written by Kanu Sanyal titled 'Report on the Peasant Movement in the Terai Region', and also see Liberation Anthology, Vol-I, Edt. By Suniti Kumar Ghosh, 1992, Kolkata, p. 348
 18. Ghosh S.K: Naxalbari: Before and After, NAPL Publisher, Kolkata, 2009, p. 129
 19. Sen Sunil: op. cit. p. 212
 20. Pain S.K: unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation titled ' Role of the Students in the Naxalbari Peasant Movement', NBU, 2007, p. 7
 21. Majumdar Khokan: Naxalbari: Bharater Booke Basanter Vajranirghos, (In Bengali), Siliguri, 2004, p.56

Exploring Roots of Ethnic Convergence of the Indigenous and the Exogenous Hill People: A Historical Study of Colonial Darjeeling.

Tahiti Sarkar¹

ABSTRACT

The Article posits that the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century colonial material imperatives had congealed impacts on the indigenous people and the exogenous hill people settled in colonial Darjeeling. The study explores how the dialectics of such transformations gave rise to ethnocide of the indigenous population at the one end, and strong ethnic consolidation of the hill populations on the other. The idea of 'Other' being different from the people living in the plains was purposefully injected in the minds of the hill people by the colonizers which produced synergic effects. Throughout the colonial period, Darjeeling was administered differently. This idea of separate administration injected aspiration in the minds of the hill people who consolidated under a single umbrella of Nepali language as the lingua franca of the majority hill people. The hill people preferred Gorkha ethnic consolidation in place of Nepali to distinguish them from Nepalis of Nepal. The Article establishes that such ethnic consolidation has had its deep-seated roots in the nature of colonial governability.

Key-Words: *Indigenous, Exogenous People; Colonial Darjeeling; Ethnocide; Governability, Ethnic Consolidation.*

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of History, Raiganj University e-mail: tahiti.sarkar@gmail.com
Mobile: 8250422275

The term 'indigenous people', randomly used in this article, refers to a group of people or a community having cultural distinctiveness, living in a defined space/ region, a sense of belonging together, having its own knowledge production system which is distinctly different from modern positivist knowledge system. Thus, endogen provides for a distinctive cultural system, a place and her people different from place, people and culture system of the 'Other'.¹ This sense of 'other' in respect of the majority population settled in colonial Darjeeling has been conspicuously absent. Such emigrant population settled in Darjeeling principally from eastern part of Nepal had only a thin veneer of Hinduism. The 'Mulki Ain' in Nepal, which codified Hindu Caste laws and incorporated Tibeto-Burmese speaking minority population basically non-Hindu minorities practicing animism into the caste hierarchy in Nepal, was promulgated in 1854. The immigrated Nepali populations in Darjeeling were therefore fewer barriers between them.² Thus the exogenous Nepali population settled permanently in Darjeeling for over generations has had so many commonalities in terms of place and culture system with the indigenous people.

The study attempts to unravel the impact of colonial interventions on this maiden hilly tract which largely affected her indigenous people and immigrated population settled permanently in Darjeeling tract. An attempt has been made to understand the status of both the indigenous and immigrated exogenous population, forming majority Nepalis population of the Darjeeling tract, penetrated by colonial modernity. As far as the records show the Lepcha are the original inhabitants of Sikkim as well as of the district of Darjeeling which was at one time a part of Sikkim. Bhotias of Sikkim had come from Tibet in the 17th Century A.D. and converted the indigenous animistic Lepchas into Tibetan Buddhism and established monarchy as a centralized theocratic political system in Sikkim.³ These immigrant Bhotias freely intermarried with the Lepcha and the native population was welded to the wider system of the greater Tibetan civilization. The native Lepcha population started to wear Bhotia dress and hold annual festival according to the Buddhist

calendar and today, they and the Bhotia constitute one religious and cultural entity, thus producing one of the distinctive frontier cultures within the Tibetan cultural area.⁴ In the early part of the 19th Century the Nepalis migrated to Sikkim in waves from their relatively infertile and overpopulated land of Nepal. They worked as a dependent tenant under the Bhotia or Lepcha land lords and gradually made their entrance into the socio-political scene of Sikkim and Darjeeling, ultimately becoming a major force to reckon with. The trilingual setting of the region has given the native people the advantage of social and economic contacts with Nepali and Tibetan speakers. This helped them to interact with different cultures. In such a social system, interaction did not lead to the liquidation of ethnic differences through acculturation, cultural differences persisted despite interethnic contact and interdependence.⁵

In the pre-colonial setting, the Lepcha could maintain ecological equilibrium with their environment. They lived in the zones of abundant natural resources to support a relatively small population, which they successfully exploited with a low level technology of hunting and gathering. As the number grew, a primitive form of cultivation like slash and burn or shifting hill cultivation was adopted. In course of time as population further increased and the Nepali immigrants settled in the area in large numbers the land gradually became scarce and the Lepcha were somewhat compelled to take up settled plough agriculture in the terraces and thus began the era of better use of natural resources with pre-modern technology.⁶ But the Lepchas had never been in a position to compete with the immigrant Bhotia and Nepalis. First the Bhotia and later the Nepalis, as stronger groups had intruded in the region in search of better economic prospects. With a higher level of technology they took control of the better resources and the Lepcha subsisted on poorer and scanty natural resources. In Darjeeling except a few villages in Kalimpong sub-division Lepchas' control over the natural resources were being minimized by the Nepalis. However,

this competition for resources acted in a different way in the case of the immigrant Bhotia who had come earlier than the Nepalis. Bhotias were fewer in number and they did not really compete for land rather they controlled the political structure of the region (Sikkim) till 1864.⁷ In the economic sphere Bhotias preferred to work more in trans-Himalayan trade and trans-humans than to settle down in one place and till the soil. The tremendous amount of in-migration of the Nepalis in the hills of Darjeeling badly affected the ethnic composition, ethnic balance and both social and power structure of the region. The end result of such processes, as encountered by the Lepchas, was what Stavenhagen has called "ethnocide".⁸ Ethnocide for the Lepchas also meant the almost total replacement of their traditional values, beliefs, festivals, rituals and even language. Although few of them restricting them to the remote corners had been retaining their culture and language, the overall impact was devastating.⁹

During pre-colonial phase, the Rajah (King) of Sikkim, Phuntshog Namgyal, divided the country into twelve regions (Dzongs). One of such Dzong was the sparsely populated forested tract- Darjeeling- in which Bongthing (Lepcha Priest/Kazee) supported by a council of monks had the authority. The Monks (Lamas) induced the Dzongpens (people living under the Dzong) to symbolically surrender their lands to the Rajah of Sikkim.¹⁰

Every Lepcha family in Zongu was supposed to have an ingzong across the border in Tibet. This was a formal relationship with a religious sanction and the two ingzongs were regarded as brothers and inter-marriage between their descendants was forbidden. The Lepcha used to set up the trading relationship only with the Tibetan Bhotias and Bhutanese but never with the Nepalis. Bhotias were basically traders and trans-humans so there was less conflict. The Lepcha and Bhotias mutually lived in the same niche with mutual exploitation of allocated resources. Moreover, the Bhddhist Bhotias (the King belonged to this class) converted the animistic Lepcha into Buddhism which helped them to maintain a

brotherly relation with them. But the Lepcha fled from the invading Nepalis, whom they considered war-like enemies, representing death and slavery, at the least, loss of their possessions.¹¹ Lepchas were unable to compete with the more industrious and competent Nepalis. Consequently, they developed “a way of life suitable for isolation; neither in war nor in competition could they stand up to other people”¹²

Immediately after colonial occupation of Darjeeling tract in the mid- thirties of of nineteenth century, it was the Lepchas that the British first came into contact which followed, by the Tibetans, the Bhutias and finally the Nepalese. As reported in the British official records, Darjeeling tract had been sparsely populated if not “uninhabited”.¹³ Captain Herbert described Darjeeling as a place “completely clothed with forest from the top to the bottom”. However, Lloyd reported that the spot so identified as Darjeeling “was formerly occupied by a large village or town (an unusual circumstance in the country) and some shops were set up in it; one of the principal Lepcha Karjees resided here, and the remains of his house, and also of a gombah or temple built of a stone are still extant; also several stone tombs or chatyas of different forms, Karjees and Lamas”. Captain Herbert reapproves the fact that twelve hundred able bodied Lepchas forming two thirds of the population of Sikkim, have been forced to fly from Dorjeling and its neighbourhood, owing to the oppression of the Raja”.¹⁴

To the indigenous people of Darjeeling Hills, respect for Nature was reflected in their attitude to land.¹⁵ To them, land was not a commodity but a gift of Nature and their allegiance to the King, the Raja of Sikkim, was without question. The proprietary right over land and forest was a concept traditionally alien to them. The traditional economy was run on barter system and taxes due to the Sikkim Raja were paid in kind or through labour. Hope Namgyal informs us that the land was not assessed and the subject was only obliged to give a small share of his labour, or the result of his labour to the State.¹⁶ This system of

paying the government through labour was prevalent in all the Himalayan kingdoms throughout nineteenth century.¹⁷

Till Darjeeling tract was brought under colonial control, the indigenous people were continued to be governed by their customary rules, rituals and practices. The British occupation of Darjeeling and their concomitant interventions in forests significantly altered their vision of life and pattern of subsistence of the indigenous people. The replacement of barter economy by the monetary economy brought about fundamental changes in their life and pattern of livelihood. The imposed political boundary, fundamentally altered new system of economy prevented indigenous people from natural inner transmigration which was essential both for shifting cultivation and cattle grazing and even for small trade.

The British historiography approves the fact that Lepchas (originally called "Rong") are considered to be the most ancient of all communities and are the original people inhabitants of Sikkim-Darjeeling. Historians like Gorer, E.C. Dozey, G.B. Mainwaring, J.C. White, and many others have agreed to this argument. Campbell informs us, "*Lepchas are most interesting people, and I believe the undoubted origins of the mountain forests surrounding Darjeeling.*"¹⁸ Hooker writes, "*The Lepcha is the original inhabitant of Sikkim and the prominent character in Darjeeling....the race to which he belongs is a very singular one; still he differs from his Tibetan prototype, though not so decidedly as from the Nepalis and Bhutanese between whom he is hemmed into a narrow tract of mountain country, barely 60 miles in breath*".¹⁹

In his account of the principal aboriginal tribes and races, Hunter describes, "The Lepchas are considered to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the hilly portion of the district. At all events they are the first known occupiers of this tract and of independent Sikkim".²⁰ Gorer observes, "*The Lepchas are a Mongoloid people living in the Himalayas on the southern and eastern slope of Mount Kanchanjunga. It seems certain that they were originally the*

only inhabitants of this large tract of mountain land, but during the last three centuries, or possibly longer, their land has been taken from them by conquering invaders, the Tibetans, the Nepali, and finally the English."²¹

L.A. Waddell informs us that the Mountainous tract of Darjeeling belonged to Lepchas.²² Lepchas call their homeland 'Mayel Lyang' which was spread over a large areas of land initiating from Arun, Tamor and Koshi rivers in the west up to Tagong La, Thong La and Rudok river in the east. In the north, the land included Kanchanjunga, Gopmochi peaks and Chumbi Valley and was extended up to Titalia in the south.²³ Due to power struggles and politico-geographical reorganizations at different phases of history, Lepchas were subjugated by different exogenous rulers and were divested from their own homeland. Lepchas experienced Tibetan Rule in Sikkim, Bhutanese Rule in Sikkim, and Gorkha Rule and finally colonial occupation of Darjeeling from Sikkim and subsequent occupation of Kalimpong had segregated Lepchas in their homeland. The original Mayel Lyang of the Lepchas has been divided among five countries: India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and Bangladesh.

Lepchas used to rear animals to supplement agriculture like cows, buffaloes, pigs, goats, sheep, country chicken etc.²⁴ Lepchas became familiar with the forest ecology from their childhood as they spent their life time with the forest zone for shifting cultivation and grazing the cattle. Thus the indigenous people depended fully on forest and forest produce for their subsistence. This material linkage of life with forest came under strain with the advent of colonialism in Darjeeling Hills. The functioning of the Lepcha subsistence agricultural system had received jolts within an increasingly changing environment which resulted transition of this indigenous population from hunting-food-gathering and shifting agricultural stage to settled agriculture resulting complex production system.

The British held absolute proprietary rights over forests. The Forest Act of 1865 reads, "the local government may from time to time constitute any forest land or waste land which is the property of government, or over which the government has proprietary rights, or to the whole or any part of forest produce of which the government is entitled, a reserved forest." The provisions of the said Act provided for management and preservation of forests and regulated exploitation of forest resources. Regulations were imposed on the dwellers of forests on the collection of forest produce. The Act provided for a series of prohibitions but nothing was there regarding the principles of managing the forests. The Forest Act of 1878 was more comprehensive than 1865 Act and divided the forests into (a) Reserved; (b) Protected; (c) Village Forests. Local Governments were given the right to notify any forest or land as protected forest. The Forest Act of 1927 consolidated further the state control over forest. Duties were levied on transit and forest produce such as timber and other forest products. The Forest Act of 1878 was more stringent and ruthlessly restricted the users of forest. Grazing, pasturing of cattle, shifting cultivation by burning woods, was also strictly prohibited in the Reserved forests. The Government held unfettered rights of ownership in reserved forests and their products were not to be used by forest dwellers unless specifically permitted by way of grant of privilege and not as a matter of entitlement. In the meanwhile, cattle-trespass Act, 1871 prohibited pasturing of cattle in the reserved forests.

The most serious consequence of colonial forestry was the diminution of customary rights as well as the decline in traditional conservation and management systems. The curtailment of communitarian ownership of forests of Darjeeling by the colonial state had severely undermined the subsistence economy of the indigenous Lepchas. Collection of Bamboos, Wax and Lac from the Darjeeling forest was prohibited by issuance of licenses. Like all other British India forests Jhuming or shifting cultivation was discouraged without providing appropriate alternative arrangement or land to the Lepchas for settled agriculture.

As a consequence, there had been displacement of Lepchas from their natural forest land habitats. Restrictions on collection of forest produce imposition of prohibitory norms on grazing and gradual dwindling of grazing grounds of different seasons affected badly the indigenous people of Darjeeling hills. Nowhere in the British forest policy or in the colonial Acts, had the rights of the indigenous Lepchas been specifically mentioned. Ultimately Lepchas had to leave Reserved Forest of Darjeeling and they were instructed to move south-west part of the District, between the hilly tract and the plains.²⁵ Again during 1920s Lepcha tenants were evacuated and resettled. For their resettlement due to expansion and construction of Kalimpong as an urban area, deforestation of 999 acres of forest land in Lolegaon Reserved Forest was proposed and sanction for such deforestation was granted by the colonial government (proceeding of the Government of Bengal in the Revenue/forest Department for the month of April, 1921.²⁶ Being displaced time and again, the Lepchas became refugees in their own land.

No official records on Colonial Darjeeling or oral narratives would have us believe that there had been forest conflicts or intensive indigenous opposition to the colonial state sponsored forest conservancy at the one end and forest clearance on the other in the name of scientific forest management. What the indigenous people of Darjeeling Hills had to witness as a dormant spectator was the expanding power play of the colonial state in reorganizing and reshaping the landscape by way of infusing colonial capital in tea cultivation. In fact, forest clearance had taken place for Tea Plantation well before scientific forestry initiated in Darjeeling. Massive expansion of commercial tea cultivation, Cinchona Plantation, Forest Management, Military Installation and Civic Urban formation, Roads and Railways construction impacted heavily on the people, flora, fauna and human land use in particular and on the environment in general.

The experience of colonization of Darjeeling Hills largely transformed the socio-economic profile of this sparsely populated hill tract. The fundamental change replaced the primordial pre-capitalist traditional production relations and had brought forward modern capital-based production relation economy. The old clan-based communities, traditional class hierarchies got dismantled in the process of material landscape transformation. Darjeeling witnessed fundamental ecological changes too due to growing tea plantation, roads and railways construction, making of towns and military institutions. The imported labourers, principally Nepalis, Bhutias and Sikkimese from the neighbouring areas as wage earners forming a new working class could not form any meaningful voice. The new eco-imperialist order drastically replaced the indigenous ecosophical order and attempted to invest the idea of "difference" in the minds of the inhabitants through all possible channels of social engineering. The "natural" difference between the hills and the plains was purposively indoctrinated through the system of colonial governability that distinguished Darjeeling as a unique socio-economic and cultural zone and finally as a separate ecological region as a whole.²⁷

A close look at the colonizing process of forested Darjeeling hills would have us believe that colonized Darjeeling had been a unique experience of environmental landscape transformation devoid of any consideration for the indigenous population whose existence and survival were in the face of crisis. It may be argued that under colonialism, though the Lepcha subsistence economy had changed from hunter food gatherer to the terrace agricultural type through the intermediate stage of shifting cultivation, but the social structure of the Lepcha society, during initial years of colonial intervention, did not change considerably to accommodate the economic transformation which caused a 'cultural lag' in the Lepcha society.²⁸ Rapid change in the economic or subsistence part created strains and disturbances in the other closely related parts like social, political and religious asserting 'cultural lag' in lepcha society.

In an agrarian society, the ownership and non-ownership of land provides an important basis for social cleavage and conflict.²⁹ But the dichotomy does not fully explain the complex agrarian class structure as there are some land owners owning small amount of land while others with large amount of land. In some areas of Darjeeling conflict of interests exists between the landless Nepalis and land owning Lepchas on one hand and within the Lepcha society between the large land owners and small landowners on the other.

The understanding of cultural transformation of the people who are living between two great civilization viz. Indian Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism, and aspiring to link themselves with values other than that of the Varna Jati based Hindu great tradition is somewhat different, because India is not under any single 'great tradition', rather two or even more 'great traditions' are operative in the Indian sub-continent. The sub-Himalayan regions like Sikkim, Bhutan and a portion of the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, like many other regions of India, are under the influence of Buddhist great tradition in addition to dominant Hindu tradition.³⁰

Importantly, on the other, Nepali settlers in Darjeeling under colonial rule did face both the processes of peasantization and proletarianization. Provided with the lowest rank in the Hindu Caste hierarchy, majority of the Nepalis in the Eastern part of Nepal, due to their extremely pitiable socio-economic position, did not have much mixing with the Hindu cultural fold rather they felt more affinity with people having tribal mongoloid background. The landless Nepali labour force got migrated to Darjeeling and started working as wage earners. At the economic level, the presence of market oriented cash economy and a complex land tenure system along with other peasant features brought them nearer to the peasant pole of the continuum. The transformation from tribe to peasantry, outside the Hindu society, had taken place without caste being a referent group.

Tibetans, Bhutias and Nepalese came later after their conquests and majority of the Nepalese came as immigrants. The term 'immigrants' or 'exogenous population' referring people settled in Darjeeling has been randomly used to distinguish Lepchas as indigenous people being fully aware of the fact that the colonial Darjeeling emerged out of Sikkim which was partly ruled by Bhutan and partly by Nepal for a considerable time in history. Thus, people coming from such conquering countries cannot be termed as 'immigrants' or 'exogenous' population.³¹

The requirement of labour to be engaged for building of roads and other infrastructures for making Darjeeling a health and military station was largely felt by the East India Company official deputed for the purpose. It was indeed an uphill task to find and depute labourers at this hazardous hilly forested rain-clawed terrain. Scarcity of labour had remained a constant headache due to low number of people and their expressed unwillingness to work without the consent of the ruler of Sikkim. It was due to the constant encouragement of Dr. Campbell to invite people from the neighbouring eastern part of Nepal, the first Darjeeling road connecting Darjeeling hill station with the plains was built in 1839. In addition, the EIC Officials encouraged migrant labourers from Nepal to cultivate the fertile hills. Thus, well before coming to work as tea garden labourers, a large number of people from eastern Nepal toiled on British road building projects, in the making of buildings, in menial activities as supporting staff and above all in the British army as soldiers had settled down in Darjeeling.³²

Thus, immediately after the political consolidation, the British Raj encouraged migrant labourers from Eastern Nepal to settle in Darjeeling tract where a level of economic success and social mobility appeared within the reach that would be unimaginable in the caste-constrained traditional Nepal society. The permanent settlers in Darjeeling represented Nepali ethnic groups such as Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Rai, Tamang or Thami and few such

other groups. Historically, migration from eastern Nepal began on a small scale as a response to the Gurkhali conquest of both the terai and hilly tract of Darjeeling originally belonging to Sikkim. Such area of Sikkim was inhabited mainly by Kiranti population. The Gurkha ruler conquered the Darjeeling tract and a portion of Western part of Sikkim in 1780 and held on to these territories until 1816. The peasant cultivators, principally landless peasants belonging to lower rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy of Nepal (Rai and Limbu), were encouraged to migrate to the less densely-populated conquered land.³³ The Rais and Limbus emigrated in large numbers. (The term “emigrated” is purposefully used keeping in mind that for most of such people, the distance involved would have been only a few score miles and that too at a time when nations were less clearly conceptualized and national boundaries had remained porous.

Not only the attraction of works in tea gardens, “the body of men formed to build and maintain roads in Darjeeling district in 1839 was composed almost entirely of Nepalis”.³⁴ Another major pull factor which augmented Nepalis emigration in Darjeeling had been the recruitment of Gorkha soldiers into the British Indian Army. Such recruitment process was initiated immediately after the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-1816. 4500 able-bodied Nepalis got themselves enlisted being attracted by the fact that the British paid in cash and not in kind. The Gurkha rulers of Nepal, due to inevitable loss of manpower having potentials to fight in the war fronts in the upper Himalayan front, imposed restrictions on the recruitment of British army inside Nepal. As a part of strategy the Nepalis were encouraged to settle in the British part of the hills remained outside the borders of Nepal for recruitment in the British army.³⁵

Despite restriction, the British recruited soldiers from inside Nepal through their agents. Between 1887 and 1902, Gorakhpur in India’s plains having close proximity with Nepal and Ghoom near Darjeeling along with close proximity with eastern part of Nepal had been

the formal centers of recruitment of Gurkha soldiers. These recruitment centers attracted mostly Rais and Limbus of the Nepalis origin. By 1908, approximately, 55000 men had been enlisted. Most of the Nepali soldiers got permanently settled in and around the Darjeeling district after their retirement and wrested lands from indigenous Lepchas.³⁶

Interesting to note that in order to provide a generic name to the people migrating from Nepal representing different sects and communities, the British authority in their official communication started using the term 'Nepali' moving away from the use of 'Gorkha' or 'Gorkhali'. Significantly, majority of the Nepali emigrants in Darjeeling tract who founded the Diaspora communities were of Tibeto-Burman extraction. It has been well approved by the British historiography that the majority of the emigrants in Darjeeling tract had come from eastern part of Nepal. Such emigrant populations had only thin veneer of Hinduism. It has been referred to that the 'Mulki Ain', 1854, in Nepal, codified Hindu caste laws and incorporated Tibeto-Burmese speaking minority population basically non-Hindu minorities practicing animism into the Hindu caste hierarchy in Nepal. The emigrated Nepali population in Darjeeling had, therefore, little barriers to accommodate with indigenous people Lepchas practicing animism having Tibeto-Mongoloid origin.³⁷

The ethnic consolidation in Darjeeling hills had its deep seated colonial roots of governance. In order to enjoy Darjeeling hills for bodily comfort and to extract her natural resources to augment revenues, the colonial rulers attempted to invest the idea of natural 'difference' in the minds of hill people through all possible channels of social, administrative communications that distinguished Darjeeling as a separate administrative unit, as a unique economic formation, as a distinctive cultural and linguistic zone and a separate region having distinctive topography, climate and ecology. The idea of 'other' or the cultural insularity invested in the minds of the hill people of Darjeeling had gained patronage, if not a tacit approval of the colonial masters represented by the assemblage of

the planters, foresters, bankers and above all the colonial state apparatus. Thus the 'aporia of self-rule of the hill people in Darjeeling, the origin of which was rooted in colonial governmentality, had become manifest since the beginning of twentieth century. The term 'governmentality' has been used here in Foucaultian sense. To Foucault, 'to govern means to govern things or to govern human beings by turning them into 'things'. To fulfil this task, the governmental rationalities embark upon an assemblage of institutions, procedures, calculations, tactics, strategies etc. which are being used for governance and thereby to transform the ruled into 'things'. These complex institutional processes backed by knowledge of science of governing constitute in essence what is called as governmentality.³⁸

Nepalis settled in colonial Darjeeling or elsewhere in British India for generations together strived hard to popularize Gorkha identity as a replica of Indian identity for the Nepalis of Indian identity and origin and such categorization would separate them from the Nepalis of Nepal. These differentiated community identities of the Nepalis, the Lepchas and Bhotias had been ultimately converged into a generic identity called Gorkha identity at least at the superficial level to realize the socio-economic and political aspirations living within the colonial fold. The colonial governmentality and the corresponding material transformations had significantly brought changes in the socio-political demographic consolidation in colonial Darjeeling which continued unabated in different forms of ethnic convergence and assertions in the post-colonial period.

³⁸ Deshpande, Satish, "The Practice of Social Theory and the Politics of Location", *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLIV March, 7, 2009

- ² Hofer, T. *Himalayan Deforestation, Changing River Discharge and Increasing Floods: Myths or Reality?*, Mountain Research and Development, 1993, 13(3): pp.213-233.
- ³ Risley, H.H., *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Reprint, 2001, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1928, p.21.
- ⁴ Nakane, Chie, 'A Plural Society of Sikkim', in C.V.F. Haimendorf, edited, *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966, p. 221.
- ⁵ Barth, Fredrik, 'Ecologic relationships of ethnic groups in Swat, North Pakistan'. *American anthropologist*. 58(6): 1079-1080, 1956.
- ⁶ Ghosal, S., *Lepchas of Darjeeling and Sikkim: A Study in Cultural Ecology and Social Change*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, North Bengal University, 1990, pp. 197-233.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Stavenhagen, R.: *Ethnocide or Ethnodevelopment: The New Challenge; Development: Seeds of Change*, 1, 1987, pp. 74-75.
- ⁹ Subba, T.B., *Politics of Culture*, Orient Longman Limited, Hyderabad, 1999, p.125.
- ¹⁰ Singh, K.S., 'People of India: Sikkim' in *Anthropological Survey of India*, Vol.xxxix, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1993, P.2.
- ¹¹ Morris, John, *Living With the Lepchas: A Book About Sikkim Himalayas*, Heinemann, London, 1938, p.29-32.
- ¹² Gorer, G., *Himalayan Village: An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*, Thomas Nelson & Sons, London, 1938, Reprint, 1996, Gyan Publishing House, Delhi, 1996, p.449.
- ¹³ Bayley, H.V., *Dorje-ling*, G.H Huttman, Bengal Military, Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1838, p.6.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Lepcha, Dennis, "Indigenous Lepchas: Philosophy of life and World View", *Salesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol-3, no.2, Dec, 2012, Salesian College Publication, Siliguri.
- ¹⁶ Namgyal, Hope, "Bulletin of Tibetology", Sikkim Institute of Tibetology, Referred in Wangyal, Sonam.B, *Sikkim & Darjeeling: Division and Deception*, KMT Press Pvt.Ltd, Phuentsholing, Bhutan, 2002
- ¹⁷ Wangyal, Sonam.B, *Sikkim & Darjeeling: Division and Deception*, KMT Press Pvt.Ltd, Phuentsholing, Bhutan, 2002
- ¹⁸ Campbell, A., 'Note on the Lepchas of Sikkim' in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. IX, Part I, Calcutta, 1840, p.379.
- ¹⁹ Hooker, J.D., *Himalayan Journal*, London, 1854, Reprint, 1980, Today and Tomorrows Printers and Publishers, Delhi P.47.
- ²⁰ Hunter, W.W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol.X, Trubner & Company, London, 1876, Reprint, 1984, Concept Publishing House, Delhi. P. 47.

-
- ²¹ Gorer, G., *Lepchas of Sikkim*, 1938, Reprint, 1996, Gyan Publishing House, Delhi P.35.
- ²² Austine, Waddell, L., *Among the Himalayas*, Constable Press, London, 1899, p.12.
- ²³ Tamsang, K.P., *The Unknown and Untold Realities of the Lepchas*, Luen Sun Offset Printing Company Ltd. Hong Kong, 1983, Reprint, 1998, Mani Printing Press, Kalimpong P.1.
- ²⁴ Das, A.K. *The Lepchas of West Bengal*, CRI Edition, Calcutta 1978 p.42.
- ²⁵ *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Lower Province of Bengal for the year 1874-75*, p.3.
- ²⁶ File 10 10-R(1) of 1920, No.4
- ²⁷ Sarkar, S., "Autonomy, Self rule and Community in Darjeeling Hills...", *Occasional Paper VI*, Department of Sociology, University of North Bengal, 2012, p.7.
- ²⁸ Ogburn W.B., *Social Change*. Viking Press, New York, 1922, P.54.
- ²⁹ Beteille, Andre, *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, OUP, New Delhi, 1974, p.129.
- ³⁰ Ghosal Samit, *Op cit.* pp.197-219.
- ³¹ Subba, T.B., *Ethnicity, State And Development : A Study of Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, HAR-ANAND Publications, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd ,Delhi, 1992, p.38
- ³² Pinn, Fred, *op.cit.*
- ³³ Subba, T.B., *Op cit.* pp. 27-50.
- ³⁴ *Ibid* p.20-21.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, p.32.
- ³⁶ Subba, T.B, *Opcit.* p.58.
- ³⁷ Hofer, *Opcit.* p.41.
- ³⁸ Sarkar, S, *Gorkhaland Movement: Ethnic Conflict and State Response*, , Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2013, pp.42-43 and 67-68.

CRIME, CRIMINALITY AND PUNISHMENT IN COLONIAL DARJEELING DISTRICT

Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya¹

Abstract

Crime is behaviour against the rules of the society by which it achieves the status of crime and individual is treated as criminal. In the pre-colonial period the concept of crime and criminality existed in an elaborate form in texts and scriptures. But the legal perception of crime and criminality in the British period is essentially a colonial construction. They adopted a new method of identifying crime and criminality and of punishment in colonial India. In this article the crimes and criminality in Darjeeling and the methods of imprisonment is highlighted.

Keywords: *Criminality, Britain, Darjeeling, Behavior, Labour, Jail*

Crime is an integral part of a society which existed from the beginning of civilization. It is a social phenomenon. There is no consensus among historians of criminology and social historians regarding the definition of crime and perceptions of criminality. Yet crime can be defined as an action punishable by criminal law in a given society within a particular period of time¹. Crime again, is a behaviour which breaks the acceptable norms of the society. It cannot be defined without reference to any law because no action can be judged without the legal provision of punishment

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal

for the same. Thus crime is behaviour against the rules of the society by which it achieves the status of crime and individual is treated as criminal.

The pre-colonial definition of crime and criminality existed in an elaborate form in texts and scriptures. But the legal perception of crime and criminality in the British period is essentially a colonial construction. Britain started since the nineteenth century considering the criminals as a separate 'species' and as 'others' in Britain and in the same way they started to treat the Indian criminals. In India they adopted a scientific approach and a method of scientific classification of criminal behaviour was assumed and the conclusion was reached that the Indian society was full of 'hereditary' and 'habitual' criminals². They assumed it too that Indians as uncivilized tribes and are to be reformed through a system of punishment. As Michel Foucault states that by the beginning of the nineteenth century imprisonment was becoming the favoured form of punishment for the 'offenders' in Britain and Europe. Foucault argued that there as a shift towards punishment aimed at modifying behaviour rather than mortifying the body through the infliction of physical pain. Such shift was taken up by the colonial masters in creating prisons and introducing the concept of imprisonment and penal institutions over physical punishment³. In this article an attempt has been made to study the crimes, the changing concept of criminality and system of imprisonment in Darjeeling district in the colonial period.

Crimes in Darjeeling district

After the annexation of Darjeeling from the Raja of Sikkim by the East India Company in 1817 by the Treaty of Titaliya, the town underwent great changes in urbanization and growth. There was increase in population and economy with the introduction of tea gardens in the region. Darjeeling with the beginning of the twentieth century became an important hill station with flourishing tea economy,

tourism and strategically important centre. Immediately after the annexation of the Terai portion of the district in 1850 from Sikkim the southern portion was placed under Purnea district and later the whole area was attached to Darjeeling. At the time of annexation there were Bengali officers called *chaudhuris* who exercised civil and criminal powers in the region. From 1850 both the hills and plains of territory were to be managed by the Superintendent called Deputy Commissioner. With the increase in urbanization in the town and population crimes started to grow ⁴.

As early as 1852-53 W.A. Jackson in his Report on Darjeeling gives a detailed description of crimes in the district. Besides assaults and wounding against persons - 5; abduction -27, petty affray - 57, child lifting-1, suspicion of murder- 2, false impersonation-8, and also cases gainst property , offences against currency and miscellaneous offences such as damaging of crops, gambling and drunkenness etc. Nevertheless, the district of Darjeeling has a lower incidence of crime in Bengal ⁵.

The British with the 'scientific' classification of criminal behaviour came to the conclusion that Indian society was full of 'hereditary' criminal communities. The concept of 'habitual' crime was thus reflected in the passing of Criminal tribes Act, 1871. In the post mutiny period more emphasis was laid on the 'science' in explaining Indian criminality. The colonial officials, however, gathered a different attitude regarding the Darjeeling hills and plains. They connected criminality with race and ethnicity. As Bernard Cohn noted, for many British officials caste, and religion were integral to understanding the Indian people and how their society functioned ⁶. A similar understanding of race was reflected in the statement of L.S.S.O Malley who mentions that, 'As regards criminal cases, the Nepalese , who constitute a large portion of the inhabitants , are remarkably law-abiding and both they and other hill races are very different from the plainsmen in having dislike for

litigation". Incidents of serious crimes were much rare. There were common offences as affrays, assaults and cases of wounding, which are common among a people of considerable courage, a keen sense of honour and quick temper with whom the *kukri* is the national weapon ⁷. It is also mentioned in the Darjeeling district Gazetteer (1947) that, 'Crime was very light in this district . Dacoities occurred only in the Siliguri Subdivision adjoining Nepal where from the wilds of Moorang, maraunders, taking advantage of dark nights during the dry season, try to loot jotedars. There were fear of criminals from Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim. In 1944 there were 2158 criminal cases which were brought to trial; 206 sentences of imprisonment and 26 of whipping were passed and an amount of Rs. 20,000 was realized in fines ⁸.

Police administration

In 1854 the police administration of the district was apparently superior to that in the districts of Regulation Provinces. About the same time , the district had police stations and sub ordinate *chowkis* manned by personnel as in Sadar (Darjeeling)P.S. there were 1 Darogah, 1 Jemedar , 17 Peons ; In Matigara P.S. there were 1 Darogah, 1 Jemedar , 10 Peons ; etc. The report gives a detailed description of the various police stations and the personnels taking care of it. Police administration in the district has been steadily strengthened since then and in 1860 prior to the constitution of a regular police force, police personnel in Darjeeling , as reported by the Deputy Commissioner , consisted of 16 Indian officers and 102 footmen ⁹. According to W.W. Hunter, at the end of 1872 the regular police had the strength: 1 District Superintendent, 35 sub-ordinate officers, and 177 foot police constables. According to these figures, there was 1 police man to every 5.79 sq. miles of the district area, and one to every 445 persons of the population ¹⁰.

In 1907 for the law and order administration of the district was divided into 4 police thanans or circles, namely, Darjeeling, Jorebangla, Kurseong and Siliguri. Besides these there were 4 independent out-posts and 23 dependent outposts, including 11 patrol posts. The regular police force consisted of a District Superintendent of Police, 5 Inspectors, 24 Sub Inspectors, 2 Sergeants, 49 Head Constables and 351 constables. In addition to this there were dafadars and chaukidars in the village level. Owing to the mountainous nature of the area and the difficulties communication, the force was proportionately stronger than other parts of the province, there being one policeman for every 2.7 square miles and for every 576 persons. The cost of maintenance in 1905 was one and one-fourth lakhs¹¹.

Changes were visible in the administration in 1944 when the district was divided into three circles in charge of Inspectors, twelve police-stations under the sub inspectors and 26 police outposts. The regular police force consisted in 1944 of a District Superintendent of police, a Deputy Superintendent, 6 inspectors, 33 Sub-inspectors, 2 Sergeants, 46 Head Constables, and 521 Constables. In the hills the police are almost all Nepalis, recruited from Jimdars, Murmis, Mangars and Gurungs. In the plains area of the District there is a rural force of village watchmen consisting of 24 daffadars and 142 chaukidars. In the hill portion of the District there were no chaukidars or daffadars. Their duties were performed by ordinary policemen¹².

The district frontiers were guarded by a chain of police patrol posts to watch criminals and the foreigners crossing the borders. There were posts at Debiganj, Adhikari, Naxalbari, Raniganj Panighata, Mirik and Tanglu. The posts on roads leading to Sikkim are Lodhoma, Singla, Rangit, Rangpo and Pedong. There was only one post on the Bhutan frontier. The Drajeeling Police had to prevent criminals from

escaping to Nepal as extradition from Nepal is difficult and rarely successful. The cost of maintenance in 1943 was Rs. 3, 13,000¹³.

Violence and Protests

The British notions of what constituted a serious criminal offence impacted upon their perception of Indian morality. During the colonial period, the British definitions of criminal offences were being broadened and property crime and larceny were increasingly considered to be serious offences carrying severe penalties. David Arnold has pointed out that, 'crimes of violence and protests that threatened the security of property received the most attention from colonial authorities while serious crimes such as murder and sexual crimes went unheeded'¹⁴. There were incidents of violence in Kurseong and Siliguri Subdivision, where tea garden labourers protested and in 1921-22 the tea garden labourers had boycotted foreign goods. There were violence and protest in the hills from 1931 to 1939. Lebong became the scene of a murderous attempt on the Governor of Bengal, Sir John Anderson. Later, such political protests took place in Siliguri Subdivision as in 1942, there was a riot and police had to fire. There were numerous protests by the All India Gurkha League and the Darjeeling District Communists among the tea garden workers since 1943. The Radical Democratic Party also organised successful strike among the railway workers in 1944. The police in each of the cases took severe steps to maintain law and order without disturbing the property of the area¹⁵.

Prison administration

India experienced a shift in the process of punishment by inflicting imprisonment for criminals instead of pain. Arnold stated that the British began to condemn India's harsh and cruel penalties such as branding, whipping and mutilation¹⁶. Arnold

established that the prison system in India grew out of the British preoccupation with maintaining law and order and the desire to ensure economic viability¹⁷. The main punishments which were now being presented as an alternative way to effectively discipline prisoners, which demonstrated a correlation between Britain and colonial India, were promotion of separate confinement, labour and education. These three aspects of prison discipline demonstrated the shift away from physical punishment and reflected the desire to change the behaviour of prisoners rather than simply punish them¹⁸.

In the nineteenth century, separate confinement and certain amount of solitude were seen by the British as an effective scheme for encouraging prisoners to reflect upon their situation and supposedly learn the error of their ways. But the Darjeeling jail as reflected in the report of Jackson gives a different picture. He writes that “the space allotted for the convicts is very small in proportion to their numbers..... The average number of prisoners now is between 40 and 50 and the average number of sick for the past two years is about 12 per cent. The convicts are fed by rations and are employed chiefly on the roads”. In 1907 the situation improves and there was a district jail in Darjeeling, and small subsidiary jails at Kurseong and Siliguri. The latter have accommodation for 24 and 8 prisoners, respectively and merely lock-ups in which prisoners sentenced to imprisonment for a fortnight or less are confined. The District Jail was an old fashioned building which could contain 130 prisoners; there were cells for 11 prisoners, and barracks without separate sleeping accommodation for 119 prisoners, including the hospital which contains 10 beds, a building reserved for 9 under trial prisoners, and another intended for European prisoners¹⁹. In 1947 the District Jail at Darjeeling had accommodation for 114 prisoners in barracks and 6 in cells. The barrack accommodation includes that of a

hospital for 10. There are separate buildings for 9 under-trial prisoners and for 4 European prisoners²⁰.

During the colonial regime, enforcing labour for prisoners was primarily aimed at the reform of the prisoner's character. Bentham theorized that labour would teach the idle criminal to love work, since the only alternative to labour in prison was boredom²¹. In the prison reports it was stated that introducing prisoners to a trade would make criminals as industrious and convert the idle into labourers, and plunderers into honest men²². Labour in Indian prisons was perceived primarily by the British administration as a way of keeping the prisoners productively occupied or to add to the deterrent factor of prisons. The labour provided the coverage of the cost of the prisoners food and cloth. In Indian prisons the labour was valued because it funded the upkeep of the prison and its occupants. In the Darjeeling district jail in 1907 the chief industry was the bakery, from which bread is supplied to the troop and the general public. Oil-pressing, bamboo and cane work, carpentry and boot-making are also carried on²³. Dash mentions in 1947 that the jail industry were cane and bamboo manufacture, gardening, bee-keeping, oil-pressing and wheat-grinding. Hunter mentions of gardening and stone-breaking. The penalty for not working by any prisoner was very severe²⁴. The prisoners were not allowed to work if they were sick. He also mentions of the profit in prison labouring for the jail. In 1870 the total credit from prison industries and jail manufactures amounted to 328 pound, 18s. 4d and the total debits to 318 pound, 17s. 9 1/2d., leaving an excess of credits over debits, or a profit of Rs 100.4.3. There was profit per prisoner engaged in manufactures to Rs 16.11.4²⁵.

The health and sanitation of the prisons was poor as the rate of mortality was high in the jails. Hunter remarks in 1857-58 the proportion of prisoners admitted into

hospital amounted to 250 percent, and the death to 12.50 percent. Situations improved with new sanitary regulations introduced by the Jail recommendations. A medical officer was appointed in every jail and civil surgeons should be placed in every district jail ²⁶. In 1947, the Darjeeling District Jail consisted of a superintendent, a deputy jailor, a sub-assisted surgeon, three head warders, twenty four male warders, and one female warder; twenty three of these are hill men ²⁷.

Conclusion

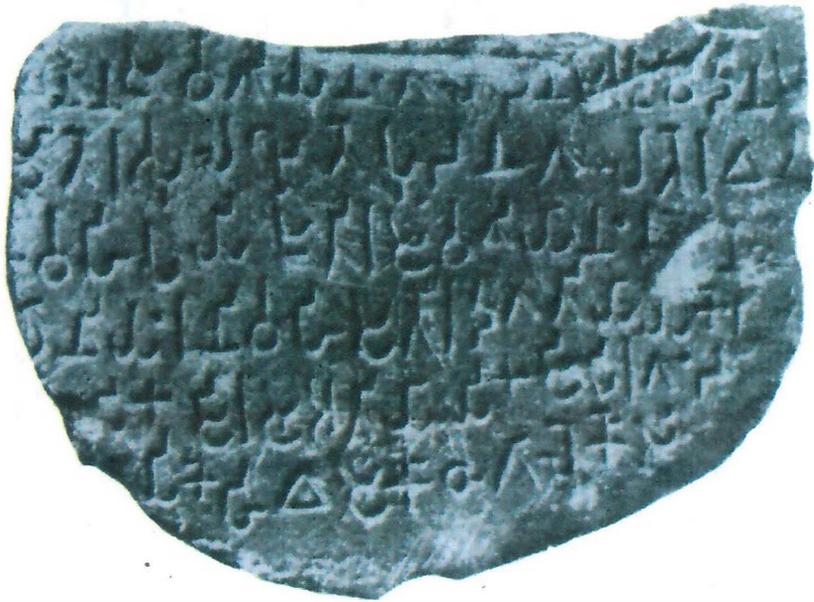
Crimes in Darjeeling seemed to be within control in the colonial period. Criminality in the colonial period was defined according to the British concept of Indian criminals in identifying them from the perspective of caste and ethnicity. Indians were often constructed as criminals by the British on the basis of their lifestyles and practices. Drawing on Darwinist theories that backward races are more prone to commit crimes, criminal behaviour were considered to be hereditary trait for groups classified as "Criminal Tribes" ²⁸. They were judged from the idea of loyalty pursued by the race towards their colonial masters. The British identified the Indian criminal as a disloyal subject. On these theories the British classified the hill men as more 'law abiding race' and the plains men less. It is true that the Nepalese being hardy and strong were recruited as Gurkha soldiers in the British Indian army in the colonial period. Thus questions of disloyalty did not arise in the minds of colonial masters during the early part of the colonial regime. For the British during this period, the prison was an institution symbolic of order and civility. The prison was for them not just a system to preserve and reform the criminals but to make the colonized country realize the political presence of the authority. Such was also reflected in the system of police administration and trial cases introduced by the Raj in the Darjeeling district. Separate confinement and labour in the prisons were

introduced. In the Darjeeling jails too more emphasis were made on laboring on marketable skills like bakery which potentially undermined the legitimacy of the British as competent rulers.

Notes and references

1. Mark Brown, *Penal Power and colonial Rule*, London, Routledge , 2014, p-5-7
2. David Arnold, Crime and control in Madras, 1858-1947, in *Crime and Criminality in British India* ed Anand Yang, Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1985, p-86-87
3. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, Vintage Books, 1979, p-7-8,11.
4. Barun De, Amiya Kumar Banerjee, and others , *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling*, Calcutta, Government Press, 1980, p-92
5. W.A. Jackson, *Report on Darjeeling: Selections from the Record of the Bengal Government*, Calcutta, 1854, Appendix XV
6. Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and other Essays*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987,p-242-243
7. LSSO' Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling*, New Delhi, Logos Press, 1907, Reprinted 1985, p- 162
8. A.J.Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling*, Government Printing Press, Calcutta , 1947, Reprinted N.L.Publishers 2011, p-235-236
9. W.A.Jackson, *op cit*, p-19
10. W.W.Hunter , *Statistical Account of Bengal , Darjeeling*, Trubner & Co, London, 1876, Reprinted by N.L.Publishers , 2012, p- 166-171
11. LSSO' Malley, *op cit*, p-163
12. A.J.Dash, *op cit*, p-235-236

13. Ibid, p-236
14. David Arnold, 'Race, Place and Bodily Difference in Early Nineteenth Century India', *Historical Research*, Volume 77, No-196(2004), p-254-273
15. A.J.Dash, *op cit*, p-236
16. David Arnold, 'The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology in Nineteenth Century India', *In A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995*. Ed Ranajit Guha, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p-147
17. Ibid.
18. William James Forsythe, *The Reform Of Prisoners 1830-1900*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1987, p-56
19. LSSO' Malley, *op cit*, p-163
20. A.J.Dash, *op cit*, p-237
21. Robert Alan Cooper, 'Jeremy Betham, Elizabeth Fry and English Prison Reform', *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Volume 42, No-4(1981), p-675
22. The Committee of the society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and for the reformation of Juvenile Offenders, Fourth Report, London, 1822
23. LSSO' Malley, *op cit*, p-163
24. A.J.Dash, *op cit*, p-237
25. W.W.Hunter, *op cit*, p-169-171
26. *Ibid*, p- 170-171
27. A.J.Dash, *op cit*, p-237
28. Mark Brown, 'The Most Desperate Characters in All India: Reconsidering Law and Penal Policy in British India', *Punishment and Society*, Volume 3, No-3 (2001), p-436



Mauryan Brahmi Script found at
Vasuvihara Mahasthangarh

Published by: The Registrar, University of North Bengal
Printed at: The University Press, University of North Bengal
Dist. Darjeeling, West Bengal, India, PIN - 734013